What About the Family? Exploring the Role of Familial Dysfunction in Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Offending

Frederica Martina Martijn

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 2024

Dedication

To all who have been hurt by child sexual abuse.

Acknowledgements

First, I want to express my deep gratitude to the participants of this research. Thank you for wanting to share your time and experiences with me. I also want to thank the staff of the prison for their help, assistance, and insights. I want to thank Dr. Alink, Dr. Langevin, Dr. Mason, and Dr. Schaefer, as well as the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), and by extension, Dr. Finkelhor and Dr. Turner, for sharing their data or output with me. Last, I want to thank Dr. Seto and Dr. Babchishin for sharing their collected data with me, as well as the research assistants who collected the data in Canada and the UK.

My supervisors —

Nick: thank you for taking me on. It's been an unpredictable and, at times, bumpy ride; as you know, that is exactly what I like. Thank you for the continued efforts to figure out our bi-directional translation of interpersonal relating — I think we have found our way. Thank you for encouraging and challenging me, and opening up the enthralling world of qualitative research to me. I am very grateful for your mentorship and support.

Thom: thank you for support and guidance. It has been truly great to see your mind wander through statistics and glimpse some of your vast knowledge of it. Your calm and hands-on support have steadied me through unsteady times, for which I am very thankful.

Jenny: thank you for your enthusiasm and engagement with this project. Your gentle support throughout has been essential to be able to complete this dissertation. Your insights and sensitivity to the subject have been integral to explore topics in a more nuanced way.

Michael: thank you for your continued mentorship, intellectual stimulation, and challenging commentary. I am very grateful for your formative influence in my academic development, and your ongoing encouragement to sharpen my thinking and narrative.

I am grateful to others who have been of inspiration and influence in the past years: Sander, for recognising and encouraging my academic passions. Jolanda, for sharing your knowledge and compassion, and for forever imprinting the importance of system onto me. Kelly, for prompting my interest and impactful understanding of "big" analyses. And Elisabeth — I am so grateful for the friendship we have formed. Your insights and dedication continue to be in- and aspirational, both as a friend and an academic.

My friends —

There are many people who have been important in my life these past years, in minor and major ways, but essential in all their many forms.

My ‘new’ friends in the UK: thank you for the support you brought me. For sharing joy and misery, exploring unknown places, becoming part of a new day-to-day, for enriching my life, learning and laughing, and the privilege to get to know whole new persons. I miss you and look forward to seeing you again.

My ‘old’ friends, in Amsterdam and other places: you are what makes life full. It brings me immeasurable joy to have people who know me so intimately, with warm and soft hearts, with inquiring minds, to feel recognised and seen by. Your friendships overflow my heart, however long the in between times and the in between distances may be. I am stoked to be closer again.

I also want to thank some people specifically —

Anna, for reminding me to be free, for showing me you can find paths not walked, for being soft yet strong, for being there for me, for becoming even closer despite distance. The borrelclub, for continuing what was, for creating what is new, for your encouragement, for being my anchor in Amsterdam. Alex, for allowing me to witness your perseverance and development, personally and academically, for being my pebble in a new country, for the immense luck to find someone who I have grown so close to — I miss you.

My family, my heart. Thank you for supporting me in all these extra-country wanderings, for being there for me, for cheering me on when there was another sentimental overload and tear-filled goodbye. For lentil soup and grounding me. For the joy of seeing you and the sadness of leaving you. I am lucky to have you and to miss so deeply and love so endlessly. I am so grateful to have you be interwoven in my daily life again.

Ryan. Thank you. Thank you for wanting me to sprout and blossom and explore whatever brain cloud I get lost on. You expand me, encourage my curiosity, build me up, envelop me in softness, create different ways with me, sharpen my thinking, fill my heart. I can’t wait to sail endlessly more oceans in the tub with you. Thank you for wanting to do this with me. It is so wonderful to finally love you from close by.

Abstract

Intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is a serious and prevalent form of sexual offending, but it is poorly understood. Evolutionary psychology explanations theorise that intrafamilial child sexual abuse happens when kinship recognition mechanisms fail – however, research findings so far are inconsistent. Individual disposition explanations theorise that intrafamilial child sexual abuse happens when motivating (i.e., atypical sexuality) and facilitating (i.e., antisociality) dispositions are sufficiently high to overcome barriers to offending – however, research finds that men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are relatively low on these dispositions. Familial dysfunction explanations of intrafamilial child sexual abuse seem logical and intuitive. For example, intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending might happen when abuse is continued through generations, when children are used as a sexual surrogate, or within a wider pattern of familial transgression and abuse. However, research on these family dysfunction explanations has been markedly lacking. Thus, the aim of this dissertation is to multi-methodologically explore what the role of familial dysfunction is in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

The first study meta-analysed risk (k = 18) and prevalence (k = 39) of familial dysfunction across several domains (i.a., socio-economic stressors, dysfunctional relationships, and nonsexual abuse), and found that familial dysfunction was significantly higher in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred, than in families with extrafamilial or no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse. The second study (N = 118) explored three theoretical explanations of father-child incest, comparing 34 (biological and sociolegal) fathers convicted of incest offences with 37 fathers and 25 non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual offences, and 22 fathers convicted of nonsexual offences. The findings indicated little support for kinship recognition mechanisms, some nuanced findings for individual dispositions (particularly sexuality), and most support for familial dysfunction. The last study qualitatively explored the intimate relationships of six fathers convicted of incestuously abusing their children, and identified intergenerational dysfunction, utilitarian fathering, entitlement to intimacy, and rejection and humiliation as central experiences.

The findings of this dissertation emphasise that familial dysfunction is pathognomonic to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, and that familial dysfunction might have an important precipitating and perpetuating role. Contextualising intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending as situated in familial dysfunction could therefore greatly advance our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending and sexual offending in general, and could subsequently aid the further development of prevention and intervention efforts in child sexual abuse victimisation.

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Conference presentations

Martijn, F. M., Babchishin, K. M., & Seto, M. C. (October 2024). *Exploring three theoretical mechanisms of incest.* Symposium presentation "Testing explanations for father-daughter incest" (Seto, M.C., Babchishin, K. M., McAskill, M., & Martijn, F. M.) at the 43d Annual Research and Treatment Conference of Association for the Treatment & Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA), San Antonio, TX, USA.

Martijn, F. M., Blagden, N., Baguley, T., Leroux, E. J., Mackay, J., & Seto, M. C. (May 2024). *What about the family in intrafamilial child sexual abuse? A meta-analysis on family dysfunction.* Conference presentation at the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abuse (NOTA), Birmingham, UK.

Martijn, F. M., Blagden, N., Baguley, T., Mackay, J., & Seto, M. C. (September 2023). *Intrafamilial sexual offending by fathers: A multi-method study into familial contexts.* Conference presentation at the 42nd Annual Research and Treatment Conference of Association for the Treatment & Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA), Denver, CO, USA.

1. Dissertation Rationale, Aims, and Structure

1.1 Chapter 1. Dissertation Rationale, Aims, and Structure

This chapter briefly outlines the rationale, aims, and structure of the dissertation. The overarching research question of this dissertation is: "*What is the role of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending?".* This question will be addressed by the three main aims of this dissertation:

- To determine the risk of and prevalence of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse.
- To examine the three main theoretical explanations of father-child incest (kinship recognition mechanisms, individual dispositions, and familial dysfunction).
- To explore the intimate relationships of men convicted of incestuously abusing their children.

1.2 Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter provides the background to this dissertation. Intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is a common form of sexual offending (i.a., Office for National Statistics, 2020; Snyder, 2000) that is poorly understood (Seto, 2018). Explanations for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending fall generally within three main frameworks: evolutionary psychology (section 2.2), individual dispositions (section 2.3), and familial dysfunction (section 2.4). Evolutionary psychology explanations theorise that intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurs when kinship recognition mechanisms fail, i.e., when children are not recognised as kin. But so far, research situated in evolutionary hypotheses has found inconsistent results (i.a., Kresanov et al., 2018; Pullman et al., 2019). Explanations of individual dispositions posit that intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurs when there are sufficient individual dispositions (centrally, atypical sexuality and antisociality) to overcome barriers to commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. However, research thus far has

found that the relatively low presence of these individual dispositions in men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences means these factors do not serve as adequate explanations for related over unrelated victim choice (Seto et al., 2015). The last explanatory framework, familial dysfunction, seems like an intuitive nexus to contextualise intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending and victimisation, and is part of many clinical explanations of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. For example, these explanations focus on the intergenerational continuation of abuse, using a child as a sexual surrogate when there is relational breakdown, or sexual abuse as part of a wider pattern of familial transgression and abuse. But, research so far has been sparse, dated, and unspecific (i.a., Assink et al., 2019; Williams & Finkelhor, 1992). Thus, the overarching research question of this dissertation is: "*What is the role of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending?",* and will be addressed in the three empirical chapters.

1.3 Chapters 3 to 5: Empirical Chapters

The proposed three studies to address the three aims of this dissertation are a multi-method examination of familial dysfunction in relation to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, and are contained in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. The three studies will examine familial dysfunction in a multi-faceted way: with large level, applied, and qualitative data. The study set-up can be envisioned as a funnel, going from broad to narrow. Using metaphors of several components of a theatre play: first, "setting the stage" of the dissertation in Chapter 3, with a large, quantitative study to establish whether familial dysfunction is a prevalent problem in intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Then, the "plot" of the dissertation in Chapter 4, with a quantitative, prison-based study that examines three theoretical explanations of father-child incest. And last, the "script" in Chapter 5, with a qualitative study that examines the intimate relationships of men who are convicted of incest offences more closely.

1.3.1 Chapter 3. A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Familial Dysfunction and Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

This chapter addresses the first aim of this dissertation: to determine the risk and prevalence of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse. This study is a systematic review and meta-analysis of familial dysfunction in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place. This meta-analysis determines the relative risk of multiple expressions of familial dysfunction compared to families in which extrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place and families in which no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse has taken place. The meta-analysis includes several domains of familial dysfunction: socio-economic stressors, disorganised family structures, dysfunctional relationships, nonsexual abuse, and parental vulnerabilities. It also aims to determine the prevalence of nonsexual abuse in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place.

1.3.2 Chapter 4. A Quantitative Analysis of Three Theoretical Explanations of Father-Child Incest

This chapter addresses the second aim of this dissertation: to examine the three main theoretical explanations of father-child incest: kinship recognition mechanisms, individual dispositions, and familial dysfunction. This study's goal is to quantitively compare (biological) fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological/sociolegal) children to fathers and non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences, and fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against adults.

1.3.3 Chapter 5. A Qualitative Exploration of the Intimate Relationships of Fathers Convicted of Incestuously Abusing Their Child

This study addresses the third aim of this dissertation: to explore the intimate relationships of men convicted of incestuously abusing their children. This study is an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the intimate relationships of fathers who are

convicted of incestuously abusing their child. The analysis explores relationships to parents, partners, and children, and how the participants make sense of those relationships in relation to their conviction.

1.4 Chapter 6. Discussion and Integration

This chapter summarises the key findings from the three previous empirical chapters, and will provide an integration of these findings, recommending potential areas of interest and focus to further our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. It further discusses limitations and reflections, and implications and future recommendations.

2. Literature Review

This focused literature review contextualises intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending within three research frameworks. Section (1) argues the relevance of research on intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Section (2) discusses and critiques evolutionary psychology explanations of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Section (3) discusses the individual disposition explanations of risk for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, focusing on the most central theoretical risk factors for sexual offending, atypical sexuality and antisociality. The concluding section (4) discusses the central research focus of this dissertation, familial dysfunction in relation to intrafamilial child sexual abuse.

2.1 Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Victimisation

Intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation is a prevalent type of sexual abuse victimisation. Population prevalence estimates of intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation range from 1% (L. Radford et al., 2013; Stroebel et al., 2012), 3% (Kim & Kim, 2005), 7% (Finkelhor et al., 1990), up to 12% (Andersson et al., 2020; Fanslow et al., 2007), and even 16% (Russell, 1983). Around a third of reported and convicted sexual offending against children is perpetrated by a family member: around 30% in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2020); 33% in Denmark (Helweg-Larsen & Larsen, 2005), around 34% in the USA (Snyder, 2000), and 36% in the Netherlands (Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al., 2016). More than half (58%) of the estimated 153,300 sexually abused children investigated in the Australian Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect were sexually abused by a parent; 36% by a biological parent (Sedlak et al., 2010).

Intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are characterised by the victim being younger at onset, more intrusion (penetration), longer duration, and higher frequency than extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (Bagley & Pritchard, 2000; Eher & Ross, 2006; Fischer & McDonald, 1998; Goodman-Delahunty & O'Brien, 2014; Smallbone & Wortley,

2000; Ventus et al., 2017). In a newly emerging research field on child sexual exploitation material production, parental figures make up a significant percentage of producers (Salter & Wong, 2024). An estimated 40 to 50% of child sexual exploitation material is produced by parents or other family members (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2017; Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2018). The most highly traded child sexual exploitation material includes prepubertal daughters with their fathers, and familial involvement in the production was found in 60% of child sexual exploitation material involving infants and toddlers and in 60% of the most egregious (e.g., drugging, bestiality, sadism) content (Seto et al., 2018). Additionally, parents are involved in a significant portion of sexual child trafficking (Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, 2024).

Sexual abuse victimisation is gravely underreported (R. Mills et al., 2016), but sexual abuse within the family is particularly underreported. Victim studies indicate that barriers to reporting intrafamilial sexual abuse are especially high: the relational allegiance to or dependence on the family member who has perpetrated the abuse, and the perceived or real negative consequences of disclosure (family breakdown, disbelief) are major deterrents for victims (Allard-Gaudreau et al., 2024; Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Stroud et al., 2000). The chances of adverse mental and physical health outcomes after child sexual abuse are especially dire when abuse was ongoing, intrusive, by someone known to the victim, and started young; as such, it is regrettably not surprising that intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation outcomes on average are worse than extrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation outcomes (Beitchman et al., 1992; Stroebel et al., 2012; Tyler, 2002). Nevertheless, intrafamilial sexual abuse perpetration and victimisation is poorly understood.

For the purposes of this dissertation, “intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending” is defined as any form of contact sexual offending against a child (as defined by the relevant age of consent), to whom there is a biological or sociolegal relationship, or when there has

been a relationship of caretaking between child and the adult person who has sexually abused this child. Further, unless otherwise specified, this dissertation and the discussed research is specific to men, and not women, who have committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. The next sections discuss the three main explanations of intrafamilial child sexual abuse: evolutionary psychology, individual dispositions and risk, and familial dysfunction.

2.2 Evolutionary Psychology Explanations of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

Intrafamilial child sexual abuse is particularly puzzling from an evolutionary psychology perspective. Even though the living arrangements of nuclear families provide plenty of opportunity to engage in sexual behaviour, incest is not a universal behaviour. The presently dominant approach in evolutionary psychology assumes that sexual behaviour between related humans is constrained by incest avoidance (evolutionary driven indifference or aversion to the idea of incest) and incest taboo (social norms and rules about the prohibition of incest) to prevent the negative effects of inbreeding depression. However, as described in the introduction, intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is *also* a serious and frequent problem. The evolutionary perspective, then, is that intrafamilial child sexual abuse happens when constraints to incest fail. This next section details the framework of evolutionary psychology and intrafamilial child sexual abuse: (1) discusses natural selection and inbreeding depression, (2) mechanisms of incest avoidance (phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity, and physical proximity), (3) incest taboo, (4) disgust and arousal, (5) theoretical and empirical inconsistencies, and (6) the conclusion.

2.2.1 A (Very) Brief Explanation of Natural Selection and Inbreeding Depression

Natural selection fuels the evolution of species, and species' survival and reproduction are based on their gene-trait (phenotypic) expression. Advantageous genes and traits increase the likelihood of survival and reproduction, thus are more likely to be passed on throughout generations (Gardner & West, 2014). Whether specific trait expressions

remain in the population depends on their effect on *inclusive fitness:* an individual's own reproductive success plus the effects of the individual's actions on their genetic relatives' reproductive success (Hamilton, 1964).

Selection pressures affect the ability of the individual and their genes to survive and reproduce in interaction with their environments and influence how populations are shaped. Common environmental selection pressures are climate, predators, or competition for resources and mates (O'Connor, 2020). From this perspective, selection pressures promote mechanisms to avoid *inbreeding depression*: the heightened risk of detrimental inherited biological deficits when closely related species' members mate and reproduce. Most genes inherit one allele from each parent, and when these genes differ (heterozygosity), one allele can offer protection against deleterious mutations in the other allele. So, when two alleles are identical (homozygosity), the chances of deleterious mutations manifesting increase, which consequently increases mortality and morbidity (Charlesworth & Charlesworth, 1987). The probabilistic selection of genes that promote the avoidance of inbreeding depression (i.e., incest avoidance) will have evolved over thousands of years, through the inbreeding depressed offspring of inbreeding parents dying – and so their inherited non-avoidant inbreeding genes – before they themselves procreated (Endler, 1986, p. 4). While perhaps less universal than previously assumed (de Boer et al., 2021; Vega-Trejo et al., 2022), mechanisms to avoid inbreeding are adaptive for the many species in whom inbreeding depression causes serious malfunction, such as humans (Pike et al., 2021).

Reproductive costs are higher for women than for men: women carry and birth the child, who is (ancestrally) dependent on the mother to survive its first few months (Trivers, 1996). Women also pay higher reproduction opportunity costs, as they cannot simultaneously inbreed and outbreed, while men can breed indiscriminately (Buss & Schmitt, 2019; D. L. Smith, 2007). But, maternity is certain, while paternity is not: the child may have been

conceived with a different man (Tal & Lieberman, 2008). Studies estimate that the rate of extra-pair paternity of children ("cuckoldry", i.e., the discrepancy of genetic and social fatherhood) is around 1.0 – 3.7% (Anderson, 2006; Voracek et al., 2008; M. Wolf et al., 2012). As it is evolutionarily disadvantageous to spend one's limited resources on non-biological children, who require intensive and time-consuming caretaking, paternity certainty informs men where to direct their resources (Buss & Schmitt, 2019). Theoretically, then, men who are less certain of their paternity should have a higher propensity (or less avoidance) to engage in sexual behaviour with their offspring, as mating with non-biological children does not risk inbreeding depression.

2.2.2 Mechanisms of Incest Avoidance.

To prevent inbreeding depression and determine where to direct resources, natural selection pressures should lead to psychological and behavioural adaptations that exclude family members as mates; in other words, mechanisms that promote incest avoidance must identify kin. This dissertation focuses on the kinship recognition mechanisms most applicable to men. As men can not directly assess paternity, perceived relatedness is based on kinship recognition cues, i.e., cues that ancestrally indicate genetic relatedness. The most prominently developed distal paternal-child kinship recognition cues are phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity, and physical proximity in childhood (the Westermarck hypothesis). Disgust and arousal are discussed as a proximate mediating mechanism between kinship recognition and incest avoidance.

2.2.2.1 Phenotypic Similarity. Phenotypic similarity is the extent to which relatives share the same expression of genetic traits, for instance through physical resemblance. A breadth of studies have found that paternal investment is higher for children who are believed to look more like their fathers (e.g., rural Senegalese fathers in Alvergne et al., 2009; men from Heathrow Airport in Apicella & Marlowe, 2004; domestically violent fathers in Burch

& Gallup, 2000; Dutch fathers in Heijkoop et al., 2009), but these socio-anthropological samples have generally been small and varied, raising some questions about their generalisability.

If phenotypic similarity is a kinship recognition cue, resemblance should invoke sexual aversion. Paradoxically, similarity is also highly attractive in potential mates (Buss & Schmitt, 2019). Fraley and Marks (2010) proposed we find people *more* attractive if they look like our parents, but as Lieberman et al. (2011) countered: being attracted to familiarity does not equal incest proclivity[1], nor annul incest avoidance mechanisms. In the studies exploring this incest avoidance mechanism, Billingsley and colleagues (2018) found a positive association between physical resemblance and daughter-directed altruism (but no negative association with daughter-directed sexual appeal), and the studies presented by Babchishin and colleagues (2024) and McAskill and colleagues (2024) found a negative relationship between physical resemblance and incest propensity.

2.2.2.2 Partner Fidelity. Paternity certainty is influenced by partner fidelity, i.e., the belief if a partner was sexually faithful around the time of conception. Partner fidelity can be influenced by numerous factors: relationship quality, sexual activity and time spent together around time of conception, or spousal conflict and infidelity (Billingsley et al., 2018), but its importance to paternal child-rearing willingness might be culture specific (Prall & Scelza, 2020). Some Western studies have found a relation between lower partner fidelity and lower direct (e.g., divorce) and indirect (e.g., time spent with children) paternal investment (Anderson et al., 2007; Apicella & Marlowe, 2004; Fox & Bruce, 2001).

But, the methodological rigour of these studies is questionable. For instance, low participation, low base rates of partner fidelity uncertainty, and socially desirable responding

[1] I propose “incesterest”.

was unaccounted for in these studies (Anderson et al., 2007; Fox & Bruce, 2001). In addition, Fox and Bruce (2001) used an unvalidated measure with very low consistency ($\alpha = .41$). The convenience sampling strategies in Apicella and Marlowe (2004) can only be described as peculiar:

> About 75% of the men were recruited from London's Heathrow Airport and a major train/subway station in London. The researcher attempted to approach all men who were alone and appeared old enough to be a father. [...] Men who appeared overly busy or on a cell phone were not approached. (pp. 372-373)

More recently and robustly, Billingsley and colleagues (2018) and Kresanov and colleagues (2018) found that partner fidelity was related to increased sexual disgust and decreased sexual arousal. Similarly, Babchishin et al. (2024) and McAskill et al. (2024) found that suspected partner infidelity was related to incest propensity.

2.2.2.3 Physical Proximity: The Westermarck Hypothesis. The Westermarck hypothesis is the most prominently developed kinship recognition cue hypothesis. Westermarck (1894, p. 453) hypothesised we have an "aversion to sexual intercourse between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and generally persons who have grown up in the same home". In other words: close physical proximity during childhood promotes sexual indifference and aversion (A. P. Wolf, 2015b). Initial naturalistic support for this hypothesis was found for *sibling* incest avoidance. Shepher (1971) observed that children raised together before the age of six in Israeli *kibbutzim* rarely, if ever, had sexual relations or married, even when this was not explicitly discouraged. A. P. Wolf (1995) studied Taiwanese minor marriages, a practice where the bridegroom's family adopted the infant *sim-pua* ("little bride") and raised her alongside the groom until marriage (Lieberman et al., 2000). A. P.

Wolf observed that minor marriage couples had more extramarital affairs, fewer children, and more divorces when compared to marriages where the bride and bridegroom did not meet until their wedding day— in his view, evidence that growing up together leads to sexual indifference.

A substantial number of studies have found support for the Westermarck hypothesis in siblings: co-residence duration of (opposite sex) siblings correlates positively to sibling sexual aversion and indifference (i.a., Antfolk et al., 2018; Bevc & Silverman, 2000; Fessler & Navarrete, 2004). This makes sense, as siblings are often raised together in the same household. But why, and how, should the Westermarck effect apply to father-child incest aversion? Obviously, a father's children are not present during *his* critical Westermarckian window of sexual indifference, hypothesised to be before three (A. P. Wolf, 1995), six (Shepher, 1971), or ten (Bevc & Silverman, 2000) years of age.

Putatively, the Westermarckian incest avoidance mechanism may be activated in fathers *a posteriori* through high exposure to children in their early developmental years, i.e., when a father is actively present during a child's early development (Pullman et al., 2019). Indeed, Parker and Parker (1986) found that biological and sociolegal fathers convicted of sexually abusing their daughters were less present and less involved with their children than non-offending fathers. But, spurious reasons could explain these differences: these fathers might have been absent in their children's lives because they were antisocial and uninterested in child-rearing, or because marital conflict precluded involvement – not because they did not recognise the child as kin (Pullman et al., 2019).

Most other research indeed does not support the posterior activation of the Westermarck effect in fathers. In a more direct test of the Westermarck hypothesis, Williams and Finkelhor (1995) compared biological Navy and civilian fathers convicted of sexually abusing their daughters with matched controls, so absence in their daughters' childhood years

was not voluntary. Williams and Finkelhor (1995) found that risk factors such as family-of-origin childhood (sexual, physical, rejection) abuse histories and marital dissatisfaction increased the risk of father-daughter incest, but paternal time involvement was unrelated to father-daughter incest risk – counterintuitively, being the sole caregiver for at least 30 days even increased that risk. Incestuous fathers did report significantly lower paternal caretaking (e.g., bathing, feeding) than non-incestuous fathers. But this relationship was not uniform: 19% of incestuous fathers reported the highest levels of caretaking, and some incestuous fathers even said they intentionally engaged in infant caretaking behaviours to groom their children for later sexual abuse.

In two more recent studies, Kresanov et al. (2018) and Pullman et al. (2019) tested the Westermarck hypothesis in population-based parental samples. Kresanov et al. (2018) found that co-residence predicted neither sexual disgust nor arousal for biological fathers or stepfathers. Similarly, Pullman et al. (2019) found that physical proximity was *not* associated with incest disgust or propensity, nor did Babchishin et al. (2024) or McAskill et al. (2024) find a relation between paternal caretaking in the first six years of a daughter's life and fathers' incest propensity. Concludingly, research thus far has found insufficient support for the posterior activation of a Westermarckian incest avoidance mechanism in fathers-to-children (Pullman, 2018).

2.2.3 Incest Taboo

Incest taboos are near universal, with most societies' norms and laws proscribing sexual relationships and marriage between first-, second-, and often third-degree relatives (Bagley, 1968; Murdock, 1949; Thornhill, 1991). Why incest taboos are so universal is not well explained. Some speculate that incest taboo is the social representation of incest avoidance — but this does not explain why we disapprove of *others* having sex with their relatives (A. P. Wolf, 2015a). Others speculate that the incest taboo exists precisely *because*

humans innately want to have sex with close kin (i.e., the Oedipus complex: the presupposition that humans innately want to have sex with their parents; Freud, 1905). That is, we only need laws to prohibit what we desire: we need laws to prohibit people from stealing, but not to prevent them from burning their hands in a fire. Accordingly, incest prohibitions will have been imposed to prevent intragroup collapse (e.g., because of intra-family jealousy; Freud, 1918), and to bolden inter-group relations (e.g., to promote group alliance through marriage; Lévi-Strauss, 1971). However, it seems improbable that our ancestral peoples universally recognised the intergenerational problems related to incest, let alone were capable of institutionalising effective norms and solutions (A. P. Wolf, 2015b). Regardless, these universal norms and constraints interact with incest avoidance through disgust.

2.2.4 The Role of Disgust and Arousal

Tybur and colleagues (2009) proposed that disgust serves three evolutionary purposes: 1) pathogen disgust, to avoid infectious micro-organisms; 2) sexual disgust, to avoid sexual behaviours and partners that jeopardise reproductive success; and 3) moral disgust, to avoid social norm violations. Sexual disgust has two components: to avoid low-value mates and low genetic compatibility. This would explain why, for example, siblings might be high-value mates (by physical composition and social status) but imagining mating with them still elicits a disgust response (due to low genetic compatibility). Moral disgust serves both an individual and social network purpose, as individuals who violate socio-moral rules inflict costs directly (through e.g., injury or rape), and indirectly (through disruption of cooperation; Tybur et al., 2009). A disgust response to social situations leads to corresponding (i.e., negative) conclusions about the situation's morality (Marzillier & Davey, 2004; Moll et al., 2005; T. Wheatley & Haidt, 2005). Disgust might be especially salient to incest, with intertwined sexual and moral dimensions, and incest vignettes elicit high disgust

ratings in numerous studies (Antfolk et al., 2012; De Smet et al., 2014; Fessler & Navarrete, 2004)

Disgust, and its counterpart arousal in the context of incest, function as a proximate mediating mechanism for incest avoidance. Disgust and arousal are not direct kinship recognition mechanisms, but they mediate the expected association between kinship recognition and incest avoidance: i.e., if a father recognises his daughter as kin, he is disgusted or at least not aroused by the idea of having sex with her. Vice versa, when a father is less certain of his paternity, he might be more aroused or less disgusted by the idea of having sex with his daughter. Pullman and colleagues (2019) found that daughter-directed incest disgust was negatively related to incest propensity, and Billingsley and colleagues (2018) found that increased partner fidelity was associated with increased disgust and decreased arousal to incest vignettes. Thus far, however, it has not been assessed whether men convicted of intrafamilial sexual abuse offences have differentiated (e.g., to their children versus their siblings), lowered, or even absent disgust responses to incest.

2.2.5 Theoretical and Empirical Inconsistencies

Sociolegal parenting is complex from a socio-evolutionary perspective. A partner is largely advantageous for the survival of a mother's offspring. But sociolegal paternal investment is evolutionary puzzling: why invest time and resources in non-biological offspring (Archer, 2013; Daly & Wilson, 2008)? Consanguinity also influences kinship recognition cues, as there is obviously no paternal certainty in sociolegal fathers: no similarity, no partner fidelity, and, in many cases, no physical proximity in early childhood. In the absence of kinship cues and absence of inbreeding depression risk (when impregnating a female stepchild), evolutionary theory anticipates that sociolegal fathers should show markedly less incest disgust and more incest propensity than biological fathers to their children.

To my knowledge, these expectations about disgust and propensity have been examined in five studies, all with null results. Neither Kresanov et al. (2018) nor Pullman et al. (2019) found significant differences between biological and sociolegal fathers on rates of incest disgust or propensity, regardless of time spent together in childhood, or the reproductive value of the vignettes. Albrecht (2019) also did not find differences in incest propensity towards biological or sociolegal daughters. Nor did Pezzoli et al. (2022), who found no significant differences on viewing time measures between biological and sociolegal fathers on incest propensity; surprisingly, biological fathers even reported higher arousal to the incest vignettes than sociolegal fathers (non-significant $d = .29$). An explanation for these null findings could be that incest vignettes trigger a different but similarly strong disgust response in biological (sexual) versus sociolegal (moral) fathers. Or, an explanation might be that it is *fatherhood* that determines disgust, regardless of consanguinity. Curiously though, recall that Billingsley et al. (2018) and Kresanov et al. (2018) found that higher paternal uncertainty was related to less incest disgust; however, sociolegal fathers with absolute absent paternal certainty do not seem to differ from biological fathers in terms of their disgust response in the aforementioned four studies. These contradictory findings raise doubts about the explanatory power of evolutionary mechanisms for father-daughter incest offending and require further study.

Emphatically, most stepfathers do not abuse their stepchildren and take care of their stepchildren in varying fatherly roles with varying degrees of investment. Still, the presence of a stepparent increases the risk of (physical and sexual) abuse and neglect of children, the so-called “Cinderella effect” (Archer, 2013; Assink et al., 2019; Block & Kaplan, 2022; Daly & Wilson, 2008; Mulder et al., 2018; Sedlak et al., 2010). The evolutionary explanation is that parents do not want to “squander” their resources on non-biological children (Daly & Wilson, 1980, 1987). This explanation fails to account for the many biological parents who

abuse their children, even when this is evolutionarily disadvantageous, or for the many sociolegal family systems that provide safe and loving family environments to their (sociolegal) children. The lack of meaningful differences between biological and sociolegal fathers on inbreeding avoidance mechanisms adds to scepticism whether explanations of father-daughter incest – however puzzling from this perspective – should be so chiefly focused in evolutionary frameworks (Seto et al., 2015).

A more plausible alternative seems to be that, rather than "the stepfamily" being an evolutionary risk factor, "the stepfamily" in actuality is a proxy for other variables that are related to risk for abuse (Finkelhor, 2008). While non-biological family structures are not by definition dysfunctional, they do indicate that there was dysfunction and instability at some point in time. Such factors can include, for example, family and economic instability, absent parenting, child mental health issues, social isolation, or high conflict and dysfunctional family situations – factors that also occur in families with biological children (Debowska et al., 2021; Finkelhor, 2008; Malvaso et al., 2015; Schacht et al., 2021; Turner et al., 2007, 2013). Familial dysfunction in relation to intrafamilial child sexual abuse is more extensively discussed in Section 2.4.

2.2.6 Conclusion

Incest avoidance and incest taboos are thought to be universally present among humans, with some variability relative to relatedness and relationship. It is conceivable that the described incest avoidance mechanisms such as disgust, or the fear of the social repercussions by breaking the incest taboo, are sufficient barriers for most people to not engage in incestuous behaviours, even when families present with plenty opportunity and time. However, intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation happens with some frequency (the most conservative, and likely underestimate, is 1% of the general population; L. Radford et al., 2013; Stroebel et al., 2012), and recent animal research further raises questions about

the presupposed universality and strength of evolutionary incest avoidance mechanisms (de Boer et al., 2021; Pike et al., 2021). Existing evolutionary driven studies examining proposed kinship recognition mechanisms to explain incest avoidance (phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity certainty, the Westermarck hypothesis) fail to present unambiguous evidence for these mechanisms. The most salient shortfall is that when testing these mechanisms in biological versus sociolegal fathers — of whom the latter should not be sensitive to any of the incest avoidance mechanisms — studies fail to show meaningful differences aligned with evolutionary hypotheses. However, these mechanisms have not been tested in fathers who have sexually abused their children, and we also do not know how these fathers compare to other convicted fathers – which will be part of this dissertation's research.

2.3. Individual Dispositions and Risk Explanations of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

What other factors could overcome barriers to incest? A plausible hypothesis is that individual dispositions theorised to be related to the propensity for sexual offending also facilitate incest offending. Research into these individual dispositions, or risk factors, in relation to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending are described in the next section: (1) risk frameworks of offending, (2) risk and sexual recidivism, (3) recidivism risk and intrafamilial child sexual abuse, (4) difficulties with classification, (5) conceptualisations of risk, and (6) conclusion.

2.3.1 Risk Frameworks of Offending

Assessing, managing, and attempting to reduce sexual recidivism has been a priority in child sexual abuse research and policy for decades (Lussier & Cale, 2013). One, if not the, most influential applications within this risk-centric paradigm is Andrews and Bonta's "What works?" Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model (Andrews & Bonta, 1994). At the core of the RNR model is the concept of "criminogenic needs": aspects that directly contribute to criminal behaviour and are dynamic in their capacity to change (Wormith & Zidenberg,

2018). Succinctly, the *Risk* principle is twofold: risk should be assessed before treatment, and treatment should be allocated to those most at risk. The *Needs* principle refers to criminogenic needs: primarily those needs related to recidivism risk should be treated. The last principle, *Responsivity*, refers to both general (treatment should be based on behavioural or cognitive-behavioural paradigms) and specific (treatment should attend to the specific characteristics of the individual in treatment) responsivity (Polaschek, 2012). While widely implemented, the RNR-model has its limitations: for instance, no recidivism risk prediction instrument, sexual or otherwise, has managed to break the "glass ceiling" of a predictive Area Under the Curve (AUC) accuracy hovering around .70 (i.a., Coid et al., 2011; Smid et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2010). More worryingly, a recent evidence synthesis has shown that the underlying evidence for the RNR model is mixed, mostly low quality, and influenced by potential authorship bias (Fazel et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the advent of the RNR-model, with empirically founded recidivism estimates and treatment targets, has generated a vast amount of research and, arguably, the foundations of our current interpretation of forensic psychology.

2.3.2 Risk and Sexual Recidivism

The RNR-model is in origin not offence-specific, and broadly fits domains relevant to sexual offending (Thornton, 2013). But R. K. Hanson, based on observed recidivism pattern differences between sexual and violent offending in Canada, suspected a sex-offence specific adaptation of risk-relevant domains might be incrementally useful (R. K. Hanson & Bussière, 1998; R. K. Hanson et al., 1995). This culminated in the seminal works of R. K. Hanson and Bussière (1998) and R. K. Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005), meta-analysing the characteristics that predict sexual recidivism. Across studies, the strongest static risk factors for sexual recidivism are having an offence history and having male or extrafamilial victims (Craig et al., 2005). The strongest dynamic risk factors (i.e., criminogenic needs) for sexual

recidivism are 1) atypical sexual interests, i.a., paedohebephilia and other paraphilias, excessive sexual preoccupation or drive, and sexualised coping, and 2) antisociality, i.a., antisocial and criminal behavioural traits (e.g., psychopathy), impulsivity and self-regulation, and offence-supportive attitudes (R. K. Hanson & Bussière, 1998; R. K. Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010; Seto et al., 2023). Individuals who are high in either or both of these domains are more likely to sexually reoffend (Seto, 2019).

While static factors predict recidivism, they are historic facts that cannot be changed. Research and treatment therefore overwhelmingly focuses on dynamic risk factors: individual dispositions – pervasive patterns of interpersonal "deficits" – related to offending behaviour. Mann et al. (2010) argued that research and treatment with people convicted of sexual offences should focus on psychologically meaningful dynamic risk factors: factors that 1) have a plausible causal role in sexual offending, and 2) have strong evidence they predict sexual recidivism. Unavoidably, atypical sexual interests and antisociality play a central role in all major comprehensive sexual offending models, in the earliest, the *preconditions model* by Finkelhor (1984), to the latest, the *motivation-facilitation model* by Seto (2019). Other dynamic risk factors proposed to be meaningfully related to sexual recidivism are intimacy deficits (emotional congruence with children, conflictual intimate relationships, social skills deficits), hostility towards women, and dysfunctional coping, but the evidence and magnitude of these factors on recidivism are less robust than atypical sexuality and antisociality (R. K. Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Knight & Thornton, 2007; Mann et al., 2010; Seto et al., 2023). Theoretically, managing and improving these dynamic risk factors leads to a reduction in recidivism risk; argued retrospectively, these factors should explain the onset,

maintenance, and desistance of sexual offending.[2] The two most central ones, atypical sexual interests and antisociality, will be briefly discussed hereunder in application to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

2.3.2.1 Atypical Sexuality. The domain of atypical sexuality broadly encompasses atypical sexual interests (e.g., paedohebephilia and other paraphilias), excessive sexual preoccupation, drive, and coping (R. K. Hanson & Bussière, 1998; R. K. Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010). The relation between atypical sexuality and sexual offending is not one-to-one: for example, sexual interest in children is related to increased risk of sexual offending against children (McPhail et al., 2019; McPhail & Schmidt, 2023) but it is estimated that around half of men convicted for sexual offences against children are not paedophilic (Nationaal Rapporteur Mensenhandel en Seksueel Geweld tegen Kinderen, 2018; Seto, 2018).

There is a substantial body of research, often using penile plethysmography, that has tried to determine the relative sexual interest in children and adults, and violent and coercive sex in men convicted of sexual offences (Freund, 1963). Findings tend to indicate that:

a) Men who have committed extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences have stronger sexual arousal responses to children than men who have committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. The latter in turn (also) tend to show arousal to adult women (Freund et al., 1991; Marshall et al., 1986; Quinsey et al., 1979; Schmidt et al., 2013; Seto et al., 2015),

[2] The theoretical foundations, importance, and changeability of dynamic risk factors have started to be seriously questioned (and defended) by some researchers (see e.g.: Heffernan, 2020; Olver et al., 2022; Olver & Stockdale, 2020; Thornton, 2016; van den Berg et al., 2018; Ward & Beech, 2015). But, at this moment in time, individual dispositions or dynamic risk factors for offending are fundamental to existing models and theories of what drives sexual offending against children and will be discussed as such.

b) Men who have committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences do, however, have stronger sexual arousal responses to children than men who have not committed sexual offences against children (Barbaree & Marshall, 1989; Blanchard et al., 2006; Frenzel & Lang, 1988; Marshall et al., 1986; Rice & Harris, 2002; Seto et al., 1999), and
c) There is little difference between biological and sociolegal fathers who have committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences in terms of sexual arousal to children, regardless of consanguineous relatedness (i.e., biological fathers have similar sexual arousal patterns to children as sociolegal fathers; Blanchard et al., 2006; Langevin & Watson, 1991; Pullman et al., 2017; Seto et al., 1999).

2.3.2.2 Antisociality. The domain of antisociality encompasses both behaviours (e.g., criminal history, polyform offending behaviour) and traits and characteristics (e.g., psychopathy, impulsivity and self-regulation, offence-supportive attitudes; R. K. Hanson & Bussière, 1998; R. K. Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010). Generally, men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences score low across the board on measures of antisociality when compared to other sexual offending groups. They often have minimal and mono-form criminal histories (Bagley & Pritchard, 2000; Beggs & Grace, 2008; Eher & Ross, 2006; Smallbone et al., 2003) and score low on measures of psychopathy and impulsivity (Firestone et al., 1999; Oliver, 2004; Olver & Wong, 2006; Porter et al., 2000; Rice & Harris, 2002). In a broader pro-social context, they are often employed (S. M. P. Mills, 2004; Rice & Harris, 2002; Simourd & Malcolm, 1998) and, logically, have been able to engage in a durable relationship, i.e., have a history of being married (Firestone et al., 2005; Seto et al., 1999).

2.3.2.3 Comparing Intrafamilial and Extrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Offending on Risk Factors. The past decades' research on intrafamilial child sexual abuse

offending has culminated in two meta-analyses by Seto and colleagues: the first comparing men convicted of intra- versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (k = 78, $N_{Intrafamilial}$ = 6,605, $N_{Extrafamilial}$ = 10,573; Seto et al., 2015), the second comparing biological with sociolegal fathers convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (k = 27, $N_{Biological}$ = 4,192, $N_{Sociolegal}$ = 2,322; Pullman et al., 2017).

Theoretically situated in evolutionary and risk paradigms, the outcomes of the first meta-analysis were not surprising, but still puzzling. By evolutionary reasoning, incest avoidance and taboo create high barriers to commit familial child sexual abuse offences; to overcome these barriers, men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences should score higher on factors driving sexual offending than men who commit extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. However, the contrary was found: the intrafamilial group scored significantly lower on atypical sexuality as well as antisociality than the extrafamilial group, which was unsurprising given the extant forensic literature previously described, but puzzling from an evolutionary perspective (Seto et al., 2015). These findings indicate that atypical sexuality and antisociality do not explain why an individual sexually abuses a related rather than an unrelated child.

The outcomes of the second meta-analysis were surprising as well as puzzling: sociolegal fathers were only marginally more antisocial than biological fathers, and there were no significant differences on measures of sexuality (except on sexual self-regulation). This was contrary expectations, as sociolegal fathers were expected to be more similar to men who commit sexual offences against extrafamilial children than to biological fathers, that is, more sexually atypical and more antisocial (Pullman et al., 2017). These findings indicate that consanguinity might influence fatherhood more complexly than expected when it comes to overcoming father-child incest inhibitions.

This does not necessarily mean that atypical sexuality and antisociality are not useful explanatory mechanisms for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending at all. Some men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are very sexually atypical and highly antisocial. There is also research that indicates that men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences show stronger sexual arousal to children than general population controls (Blanchard et al., 2006; Seto et al., 1999), and than men convicted of sexual offences against adults (Olver & Wong, 2006). Men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are also likely more antisocial than men from the general population. For instance, childhood antisociality was related to incest propensity in the general population studies of both Babchishin et al. (2024) and McAskill et al. (2024). As a further incomplete example, men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences had a weighted average total score of 13.92 (*SD* = 7.49; range: 11.64 to 21.17) on the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) based on four studies and 668 participants (Firestone et al., 2000; Oliver, 2004; Olver & Wong, 2006; Porter et al., 2000). For comparison, the 224 men without a personality disorder diagnosis (note: 4.4% of these men had a violent conviction) from the general population study of Robitaille et al. (2017), and the 203 corporate professionals in Babiak et al. (2010) had an average PCL-R total score of 3.11 (4.92) and 3.64 (7.35), respectively. So, while men with intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are, as a group, not highly psychopathic (the cut-off score for psychopathy on the PCL-R is 30 in North American samples and 25-26 in European samples; Hare et al., 2000), they do seem more antisocial than the general population. But, extensive comparative research with non-offending or general offending populations is lacking, and these theoretically important comparisons are not fulsomely understood. So, while atypical sexuality and antisociality factors might be useful to explain within- or between-group differences or general sexual offending, they do not convincingly explain why some men choose to sexually offend against a related over an unrelated child.

2.3.3 Recidivism Risk and Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual recidivism risk across studies for men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences is generally low on both static (i.e., being on a first-time conviction with a single, related, female child victim) and dynamic (i.e., scoring low on both atypical sexuality and antisociality) risk predictors and instruments. Those convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are on average also older than other offending groups, which in turn is also related to lower sexual recidivism risk (R. K. Hanson, 2002). Sexual recidivism rates among men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are among the lowest when compared to other sexual offending groups, with some studies estimating sexual recidivism rates as low as 2%; (i.a., Firestone et al., 1999; R. K. Hanson et al., 2007; Nilsson et al., 2014).

An additional explanation considers the interaction of individual dispositions with situational contexts (Smallbone & Cale, 2016; Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). Counterintuitively, frequency, duration, and severity of sexual abuse have little relation with risk of sexual recidivism. The severity and chronicity of intrafamilial child sexual abuse might be a product of opportunity, rather than motivation: familial living situations provide "easy access" to many more opportunities to commit frequent and escalating sexual offences against young children than in extrafamilial situations (Leclerc et al., 2015; Seto, 2018). Men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences might also have different goals and strategies, employing event- rather than victim-oriented strategies: limiting the number of victims but maximising opportunities to abuse the same victim (Lussier & Cale, 2013).

Had the situational barriers been higher, some men might have not sexually abused their children. It is exactly the situational barriers that often are changed when child protective services and the criminal justice system intervene: for example, placing the child out of home, imposing restraining orders, or, most relevant for this section, prosecuting the

individual accused of the sexual abuse (Cross et al., 1999; Stroud et al., 2000; White et al., 2015). It seems a plausible assumption that these interventions that prohibit victim access contribute to the low within-household sexual abuse recurrence rates compared to, for instance, neglect and physical abuse (Bae et al., 2009; C. M. Connell et al., 2007; Lipien & Forthofer, 2004; Way et al., 2001).

We should also consider, accordingly, that the low recidivism rates of men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences might merely reflect a situational change in access or a change in modus operandi after their conviction (Leclerc et al., 2009; Smallbone & Cale, 2016). Iffland and Schmidt (2023) recently found that psychological experts often argue for complete or partial contact restrictions between (step-)fathers with sexual offence histories and their children – and argue that this line of argumentation is ill-informed because sexual recidivism rates after intrafamilial child sexual abuse offence convictions is low – however, they fail to consider the possibility that recidivism is low, exactly *because* family reunification is not encouraged.

There is regrettably little information on the post-release relationship and parental situations after intrafamilial child sexual abuse offence convictions. In one of the very few studies reporting on post-release living situations, Owen and Steele (1991) report that of their 43 participants who had been previously incarcerated for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences, 63% lived with a female partner, and 25% lived with a minor child post-custody. In Beech et al. (1998)'s post-custody study of 41 men previously incarcerated for a sexual offence, 35% lived with a new or their old partner, 4% with their new partner's children, and 2% with their victim. However, none of these studies report if sexual recidivism occurred, and if so, whether the men recidivated with the children within these post-release households. Recidivism research more generally does not report against who and under what circumstances reoffences are committed: they only report sexual, nonsexual violent, and

nonsexual nonviolent recidivism. While it might seem unlikely or unadvisable that people who have sexually abused their children re-enter living situations wherein they have frequent and unsupervised access to children under their care, it is not prohibited or unheard of (see e.g., guidelines for family reunification in Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA), 2014; DiGiorgio-Miller, 2002; Gilligan & Bumby, 2008).

2.3.4 Difficulties with Classification

Men who commit sexual offences against intrafamilial children are often characterised as "sexually specialised" (Eher & Ross, 2006), i.e., they have a conviction against one related female victim. However, a different picture emerges when considering self-reported victims. In English and colleagues (2003), 65% out of 104 men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences also reported having non-familial victims. In Faller (1991)'s study of 65 families wherein biological incest had taken place, a third of the fathers admitted to also having sexually abused extrafamilial victims, and 80% admitted to sexually abusing more than one child. In Weinrott and Saylor (1991), nine out of 18 men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences had also abused children outside of their family. In Seto and colleagues (1999), 27% of 70 biological fathers, 40% of 73 extended family members, and 15% of 87 stepfathers convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences had multiple victims (and, obviously, 100% of the 64 men with mixed intra- and extrafamilial offences). And in Studer and colleagues' (2000) study, based on file review of 150 men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences, 22% had sexually abused at least one other related child, and 59% at least one other unrelated child. Two polygraph studies about polymorphic relational sexual offending present similar findings. In the largely intrafamilial sample of Hindman and Peters (2001), the 76 non-polygraphed men reported 2.9 victims, while the 152 polygraphed men reported 13.6 victims. And in the Heil et al. (2003)'s sample of 144 men convicted of sexual offences, initially 63 men (44%) in their sample admitted to having

sexually abused intrafamilial victims, but after the polygraph this total number rose to 108 men (75%).

Yet, it is debatable whether "discovering" undisclosed offences is actually useful when it comes to therapeutic and recidivism outcomes. The polygraph is a popular tool in the Northern Americas for sexual recidivism containment and has been called the "missing link" to recidivism prevention (Elliott & Vollm, 2018; Heil & English, 2011). But, the validity, ethics, and standardisation of the polygraph are sharply critiqued (Meijer et al., 2008), and, more pressingly, its utility is contentious: a recent meta-analysis by Gannon and colleagues (2019) showed that programs that use polygraph testing actually have higher sexual recidivism rates than programs who do not, likely through the negative impact of the polygraph on therapeutic alliance[3] (Elvin et al., 2021). But, the aforementioned studies about non-polygraphed self-report disclosures neither report whether additional disclosures led to better recidivism assessments or treatment outcomes.

Nonetheless, the dissimilarity in convicted and undisclosed offending complicates our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending as truly specialistic and raises serious questions about its low-risk characterisation. This disparity becomes even more nebulous for intrafamilial child sexual abuse research as most research categorises people who have committed any (detected) polymorphic relational child sexual abuse offences as extrafamilial (Bartosh et al., 2003; R. K. Hanson et al., 1995; R. K. Hanson, 2002;

[3] I would like to draw attention to some parallels between the polygraph and the penile plethysmograph (PPG). Especially in Northern-American contexts, assessing sexual interest patterns with PPG is part of many sentencing and parole decisions (Babchishin et al., 2017; Bickle et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2020). The PPG, just as the polygraph, has been critiqued on its validity, standardisation, and its ethics and intrusiveness (Kalmus & Beech, 2005; Marshall, 2014; Odeshoo, 2004). There are modern other (less intrusive, but of similar moderate validity) measures to determine sexual interest (Thornton et al., 2018), such as viewing time measures and Implicit Association Tests (Pedneault et al., 2021; Schmidt & Banse, 2022), or simply file review (Seto et al., 2017). Unfortunately, there is currently no equivalent research like the Gannon et al. (2019) meta-analysis on the PPG versus other types of sexual arousal measurements (or, none at all) and their utility for recidivism reduction or effects on therapeutic alliance and outcomes.

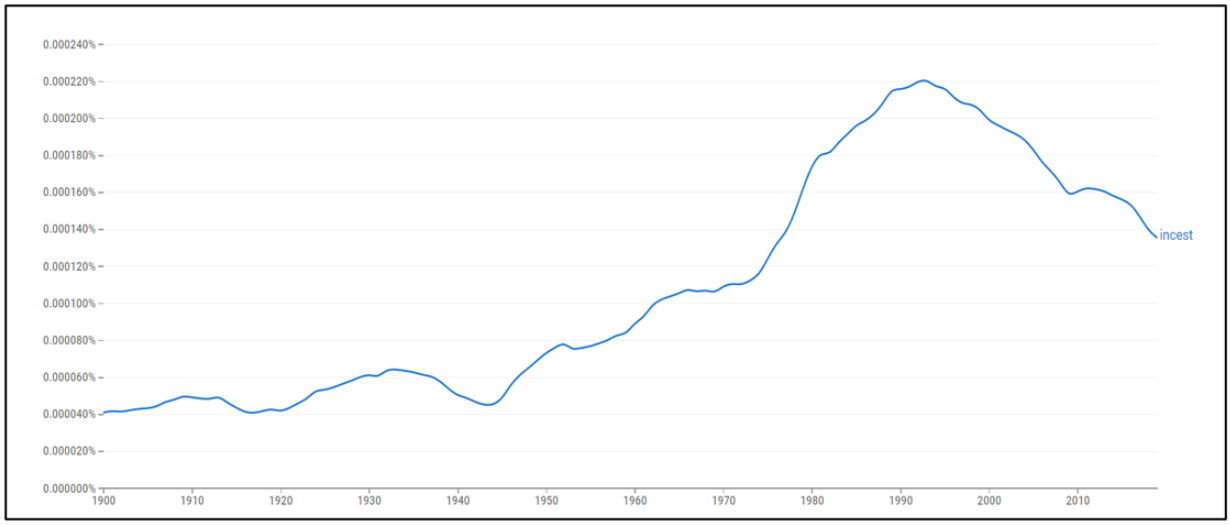
Nicholaichuk et al., 2014). For example, in Seto and colleagues' (2015) meta-analysis, 26 out of 78 included studies indicated their extrafamilial group included participants with both extra- and intrafamilial victims (half of the studies did not report this information). Importantly, people who commit polymorphic relational offences may present with more psychopathic characteristics (Oliver, 2004), criminogenic needs (Smallbone & Wortley, 2000), recidivism risk (Cann et al., 2007; Day et al., 2017; Kleban et al., 2013; Matala, 2008), and recidivism outcomes (Stephens et al., 2018) than people who commit monomorphic relational offences. However, the categorisation of men with intra- and extrafamilial victims as extrafamilial means that our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is mostly based on men convicted of only intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences – while in reality, intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending might often be but one aspect of a plurality of other types of sexual offences.

2.3.5 Conceptualisation of Risk

Last, it is important to question how we conceptualise risk. Existing risk assessments obviously only tell us something about the chances of committing a new *detected* sexual offence and are mostly assessed based on overt indicators. It is possible that risk dispositions of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending map onto relevant risk domains, but expressions idiosyncratic to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending are not well captured by current risk assessments. Antisociality within these risk frameworks is largely conceptualised by the (willingness of) transgression of unrelated people and is often conflated with violence. This construal of antisociality considers an impulsive bar fight with a stranger as more antisocial than the intentionality and manipulation required to abuse a biological child sexually and physically. Similarly in terms of atypical sexuality, masturbating a 12-year-old neighbour boy is seen as more atypically sexual than raping a four-year-old daughter. On the spectrum of atypical sexuality and antisociality, intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending might be

expressed more covertly in personality traits or interpersonal deficits currently not captured in risk assessments. It is possible that these covert expressions enable intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending to go unnoticed or unreported for years – and, perhaps, for intrafamilial child sexual re-offending to go unnoticed or unreported. Nevertheless, within the setting of an increasingly risk-management oriented forensic intervention system, the treatment and research of men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences has not been prioritised given their overarching low risk profile – which is putatively illustrated by the proliferation of incest-related research in the eighties and nineties, and the sharp drop-off in incest-related research that seems to have coincided with the advent of risk prediction research, with a limited illustration in in Figure 1.

Figure 1. ***Google Ngram of Books Containing the Word "Incest" Between 1900-2019***



2.3.6 Conclusion

Just over two decades ago, Rice and Harris (2002) wondered if a special explanation was required for men who molest their sexually immature daughters. Their answer was negative: “Our findings suggest that the important factors to consider for father-daughter child molesters are the same as for other sex offenders, especially history of sexual and other offences, psychopathy, and deviant sexual preferences” (p. 337). Based on the culmination of evidence in the last half century, Rice and Harris (2002) seemed correct in their assertion that the same risk factors apply for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending as for other types sexual offending– at least, when it comes to sexual recidivism. I posit, however, that their assertion does not extend to the aetiology of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

Current sexual offending theories and models lack explanatory power for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, even though it is a prevalent form of sexual offending. The most prominent factors explaining general sexual offending and recidivism, atypical sexual interests and antisociality, fall short when applied to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. As such, we should examine other explanatory factors. One of these most promising theoretical causal nexuses of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending are familial and relational dysfunction. It seems almost tautological to point out that intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending by necessity occurs within the *family* system and is therefore likely associated with family relevant factors. However, there is a surprising dearth of systematic primary research into the family context of families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending has taken place, even when the sparse research on intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending in the last decade has continuously called for more research on familial and relational functioning (Martijn et al., 2020; Pullman et al., 2017; Pusch et al., 2021; Seto, 2008, 2018; Seto et al., 2015). As such, the following section details familial, parental, and relational dysfunction of families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place.

2.4. Familial Dysfunction Explanations of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

While clinically and intuitively important, familial dysfunction specifically in relation to intrafamilial child sexual abuse is poorly understood. Additionally, the problematic research history of incestuous abuse has rendered the construal of family and systemic factors in intrafamilial child sexual abuse a point of high contention. For instance, Freud implicated (female) children in their own sexual abuse, through their Oedipal wishes of paternal seduction (Freud, 1933). Family systems theory blamed mothers, as "the cornerstone of the pathological family system" (Lustig et al., 1966, p. 39), failing her motherly and wifely duties, disbelieving her daughters, and even facilitating the abuse (McIntyre, 1981). It took the advent of second wave feminism to bring child sexual abuse from the private to the public domain (Breines & Gordon, 1983), and a series of prevalence studies to lay bare how endemic and gender-skewed sexual violence was (Finkelhor, 1980; Finkelhor et al., 1990). Feminist efforts (and child abuse scandals) drove Western-worldwide changes surrounding child welfare and protection policies (Powell & Scanlon, 2015), and the righteous un-blaming of victims and their non-offending parents for their sexual victimisation (Azzopardi, 2022).

However, this also seems to have led to an uncomfortable silence in the discussion of any factors – other than the individuals, and more specific, the men who have offended – that might contribute to child sexual abuse victimisation, especially when considering familial factors. The fear that scientific exploration of familial factors might be misconstrued as victim blaming diminishes our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse, and in the end diminishes opportunities to intervene and prevent child sexual abuse. There is some recent research with non-offending partners and their responses post sexual abuse disclosure (e.g., Bux et al., 2016; Duncan et al., 2022; Kamitz & Gannon, 2023), but these do not assess possible factors that preceded offending and are not intrafamilial sexual abuse specific. While the role (and co-offending) of male partners is highlighted and indicated as a major

contributing factor to female sexual offending (Budd et al., 2017; Gillespie et al., 2015; Wijkman et al., 2010), the reverse – the role of the female partner – is seldom assessed for male sexual offending. This is even when emerging research on female sexual offending finds that a substantial number of women who are convicted of sexual offences sexually offend against their children, and that their partners are often implicated in this offending (Gannon et al., 2008; Gillespie et al., 2015; Johansson-Love & Fremouw, 2009).

One of the reasons we currently do not have a good explanation of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is that psychological research has overwhelmingly focused on individual-level factors. But, systemic factors might prove to be crucial to the understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. The following section discusses existing research on familial dysfunction. In part (1) risks for child sexual abuse victimisation, (2) familial dysfunction and intrafamilial child sexual abuse, (3) distal family factors, (4) proximal family factors, and (5) conclusion.

2.4.1 Risks for Child Sexual Abuse Victimisation

In contrast to research on child sexual abuse offending, the research on child sexual abuse *victimisation* has firmly centred familial dysfunction as a crucial factor for vulnerabilities for childhood sexual abuse victimisation (Bidarra et al., 2016; Dong et al., 2004; Hébert et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2013). The risk predictors for child sexual abuse victimisation onset and recurrence are strikingly different from risk factors predicting sexual recidivism (atypical sexuality and antisociality). Assink and colleagues (2019) delineated the following seven risk domains for child sexual abuse victimisation in their meta-analysis of 72 studies (*N* not given):

1) (prior) Victimisation of the child and the child's family, such as prior child sexual abuse victimisation or other forms of child abuse in the home or elsewhere of child or siblings, or parental history of child abuse victimisation;

2) Parental problems and difficulties, such as intimate partner violence, parental substance use, or mental health problems;
3) Parenting problems and difficulties, such as low parent-child relationship quality, low parental attachment, care, and affection, and low (sense of) parenting competence;
4) Disorganised family structures, such as stepparents, non-nuclear family structures, or large families;
5) Other family system problems, such as familial dysfunction, social isolation, low socio-economic status, and a high frequency of moving or resettlement;
6) Child problems, such as children's physical and mental health conditions, as well as children's delinquent behaviour and substance use;
7) Children's characteristics, such as low social skills and frequent Internet use, and being a girl.

Evidently, risk factors for childhood sexual abuse victimisation are largely related to systemic factors, such as familial dysfunction, child maltreatment, unstable family situations, and dysfunctional parent-, partner-, or child-relationships. Risk factors for childhood sexual abuse victimisation are similar to risk factors for child maltreatment victimisation broadly, child physical abuse, and child neglect (Assink et al., 2016; Mulder et al., 2018; Stith et al., 2009). The most central risk factors across are related to intimate partner violence, caregiver emotional absence, and the caregivers own distal family-of-origin histories of child maltreatment (Vial et al., 2020).

These risk factors for child sexual abuse victimisation are notably distinct from factors theorised to predict sexual offending against children. However, to stress this point, the above risk factors are risk factors for children becoming victims of any type of child sexual abuse, *not* per se risk factors for intrafamilial child sexual abuse or parents or a family member perpetrating child sexual abuse. Unfortunately, too few studies reported on the

different relationships to victims to systematically investigate risk factors specific to intrafamilial versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation (Assink et al., 2019). There are reasons to argue that the amalgamation of intra- and extrafamilial childhood sexual abuse is theoretically not problematic, for instance given the high crossover of intra- and extrafamilial sexual offending and murky delineations of offence groupings (see section 2.3.4, Marshall et al., 2015, and Thornton, 2021). It is also possible that risk factors of familial dysfunction heighten children's vulnerability for extrafamilial sexual victimisation, for instance through decreased parental monitoring, social isolation, and low parental affection. However, given that a substantial amount of childhood sexual abuse happens within the family, it seems plausible that many of these *familial* risk factors critically relate to intra*familial* childhood sexual abuse. When we consider the differences in situational and systemic contexts between extra- and intrafamilial child sexual abuse, moving beyond the paradigms of individual dispositions, these factors seem highly relevant for intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending theory, but also detection, prevention, and intervention (Finkelhor, 2008; Smallbone & Cale, 2016).

2.4.2 Familial Dysfunction and Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Victimisation

Victimisation studies widely report pervasive family and relational dysfunction in the families within which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place. Structurally, families experience socio-economic stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and social isolation (e.g., Burton, 2020; Gordon, 1989; Loinaz & Bigas, 2019). Within the family, relationships are generally poor and dysfunctional, characterised by high family discord and control, low affection, intimacy, and cohesion, absentee parenting, and deficient parenting skills (e.g., Alexander & Schaeffer, 1994; Burton, 2020; Carson et al., 1991; Kim & Kim, 2005; K. C. Ray et al., 1991). Many parents have mental health problems and alcohol and substance abuse issues (e.g., Drummond, 1995; Fleming et al., 1997; McCrae et al., 2006). Low marital

satisfaction and quality, and relational problems characterise the parental dyad, with high marital discord, low intimacy, and low sexual satisfaction within the relationship (e.g., Baxter, 2013; Mian et al., 1994; Saunders et al., 1995). Finally, intrafamilial child sexual abuse is often not the only form of abuse, with many studies reporting additional forms of nonsexual abuse, including physical, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence (e.g., Alter-Reid, 1989; Bowen, 2000; Hulme & Agrawal, 2004; Koçtürk & Yüksel, 2019; Loinaz & Bigas, 2019).

Given how pathognomonic familial dysfunction seems to be to intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation, and its intuitive and logical importance, it seemed a reasonable assumption that sexual offending research in turn has also widely examined these familial dysfunction factors (to pre-empt: they have not). Two recent reviews sought to examine familial dysfunction and intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. Seto et al. (2015)'s systematic review explicitly intended to include family-level variables, but had to conclude that there were too few offending studies that included family-level variables to meta-analyse. A more recent qualitative synthesis of 15 studies by Pusch et al. (2021) concluded that there are indications for dysfunctional partner and parent-child relationships among adolescents and adults who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. However, their inclusion and reporting criteria were unclear, and several key papers were not contained within their research, which raises questions about the scope and completeness of their review. More importantly, they did not conduct analyses to cumulatively substantiate their findings. As such, the following section details sexual offending studies on familial dysfunction and intrafamilial child sexual abuse.

2.4.3 Distal Family Factors in Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Offending

When thinking about familial factors related to intrafamilial child sexual abuse, it is important to distinguish between factors within the family-of-origin of the individual who has

perpetrated the intrafamilial child sexual abuse (i.e., distal family factors), and the family unit within which the intrafamilial child sexual abuse has occurred (i.e., proximal family factors). Individuals are systematically affected by their families-of-origin and their childhoods, and the intergenerational transmission of dysfunctional dynamics may play a role in the onset and maintenance of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Broadly, research reports pervasive family-of-origin dysfunction and child maltreatment in the histories of men convicted of all types of sexual offences (Aebi et al., 2015; Alanko et al., 2017; Levenson, 2016), and one of the most prominent hypotheses of child sexual abuse offending is the "sexually-abused abuser" hypothesis (Jespersen et al., 2009).

More specific to intrafamilial child sexual abuse, early clinical theorists posited that dysfunctional families-of-origin are characteristic of men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse (Trepper & Barrett, 1986). Men who have committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences report family discord and mistreatment (Parker & Parker, 1986), deprivation of parental love and affection (Bogaerts et al., 2005; Lu & Lung, 2012), rejection by parents (Williams & Finkelhor, 1992), and highly dysfunctional (Lipovsky et al., 1992) and chaotic (R. F. Hanson et al., 1994) families-of-origin. Substantially, men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are systematically more likely to experience childhood sexual, physical, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence within their families-of-origin than men convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (Goodman-Delahunty, 2014; Seto et al., 2015; Smallbone & Wortley, 2000).

2.4.4 Proximal Family Factors in Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Offending

Incredibly, there is very sparse research on proximal family dynamics and dysfunction and intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending– and the majority was conducted over two decades ago. Some studies report general family discord and dysfunction (R. F. Hanson et al., 1994; Julian & Mohr, 1980; Saunders et al., 1995). Parker and Parker (1986) and Williams

and Finkelhor (1995) found that fathers who had sexually abused their children were less involved in child-rearing activities than their comparison groups. Lang et al. (1990) reported that men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences did not report lacking sexual relationships, while the fathers in Hartley (2001) indicted that sexual dissatisfaction was the main driver for incestuously abusing their daughters. Additionally, these last three studies found that men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences experienced low marital satisfaction.

Nonsexual abuse perpetration prevalence was high in the three studies[4] that reported on this: of the 21 men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences in Weinrott and Saylor (1991), 43% reports having hit their partner, and 62% reports having hit a child in their household. Of Williams and Finkelhor (1992)'s 118 fathers convicted of sexually abusing their daughters, 87% had spanked their children, 40% had used severe violence, 83% had emotionally abused their children, and 19% of their sample had been violent to their partner. Last, 65% of the 38 men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences in Stermac et al. (1995) reported using violence against their children, wives, or both; 13% used emotional violence, and 55% used physical violence.

To my best knowledge, there are no other post-1995 published sexual offending studies specifically reporting on the comorbidity of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending and other types of nonsexual intrafamilial abuse. A literature search of over 10,000 articles (see Appendix 1) yielded a mere three offending focused studies that even mentioned

[4] To be complete, there is one other study on intrafamilial child sexual abuse and nonsexual abuse perpetration: a study on only women (and mostly mothers) by Faller (1987). As this dissertation is focused on men, and as the role of women in intrafamilial child sexual abuse is argued to be different from men (see e.g., Azzopardi, 2022), Faller (1987) is not included here.

intrafamilial nonsexual abuse and sexual offending[5]. Stalans et al. (2010) report that in their sample of 846 men convicted of sexual offences (of which 30% against intrafamilial children), 21% also had a conviction of nonsexual domestic violence. Swinburne Romine et al. (2012) report that in their sample of 744 men convicted of sexual offences (5% intrafamilial), 18% were reconvicted for domestic violence. Zara et al. (2022) report that within their sample of 100 men convicted of sexual offences (42% "in family context"; 14% "incest"), 34% had perpetrated intimate partner violence. However, the cross-relations between intrafamilial child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence were not reported (and authors did not respond to contact requests or could not provide further information).

While not about an offending population, in two recent general population studies on the relation between incest propensity and family dysfunction, Babchishin et al. (2024) and McAskill et al. (2024) found a positive relation between parent-child conflict and distance and incest propensity. Strangely, Babchishin et al. (2024) found a negative relation between marital conflict and incest propensity, whereas McAskill et al. (2024) found the reverse. In the only somewhat recent study that includes an intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending sample and relational dysfunction, Leclerc et al. (2014) describe three pathways of 146 participants to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending: an *opportunity* pathway (47%), characterised by few general or sexual problems; a *sexual deviance* pathway (23%), characterised by sexual compulsion and fantasising, loneliness, anger, and premeditated sexual offending; and a *problems* pathway (30%), characterised by conflictual partnerships, relational sexual dissatisfaction, interpersonal problems, social isolation and alcohol abuse.

[5] There is a budding research area of sexual violence perpetration against intimate partners as a form of intimate partner violence (see e.g., Thomas et al. (2022) for review), which arguably also fits the definition of intrafamilial sexual and nonsexual abuse perpetration. However, as this thesis concerns the sexual abuse of intrafamilial children, and not adult romantic partners, this literature has not been systematically explored.

However, the relational contexts of this last pathway were only superficially described, and there are no studies building further on these findings.

2.4.5 Conclusion

In summary, there is a wide disconnect between the theory and research of sexual victimisation versus sexual offending, and both fall short in being able to provide a comprehensive explanation of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. In childhood sexual victimisation theory and research, systemic factors, such as familial dysfunction and domestic violence, play a central role. In sexual offending theory and research, individual dispositions, notably atypical sexual interests and antisociality, play a central role. In order to understand intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, it seems pertinent to combine these two research frameworks, integrating the systemic with the individual: centring the family in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. The premise of this dissertation, based on the previously discussed literature, is that a substantial amount of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending happens within the context of familial dysfunction.

Despite the seemingly obvious logical and intuitive nexus between intra*familial* child sexual abuse and *familial* dynamics, the absence of comprehensive research on familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending research is startling. This is worrying, given the prevalence and long term serious sequalae of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. The main aim of this dissertation is therefore to examine familial dysfunction and its relation to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

3. A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Familial Dysfunction in Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

A slightly different version of this chapter is currently under review under the name *"What About the Family in Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse? There is Significantly More Family Dysfunction in Families with Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Than in Other Families."*

Co-authors on this submitted manuscript are Nicholas Blagden, Thom Baguley, Elisabeth J. Leroux, Jennifer Mackay, and Michael C. Seto. The authorship contributions of this submitted manuscript are as follows:

- Frederica M. Martijn, MSc: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing
- Nicholas Blagden, PhD: Supervision, Conceptualisation, Writing – review & editing
- Thom Baguley, PhD: Supervision, Methodology, Writing – review & editing
- Elisabeth J. Leroux, PhD: Validation, Writing – review & editing
- Jennifer Mackay, PhD: Supervision, Writing – review & editing
- Michael C. Seto, PhD: Supervision, Writing – review & editing

Overview

There are important lacunae in understanding the role of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending and victimisation. This chapter presents the findings of a systematic review and a comparative (k = 18) and prevalence (k = 39) meta-analysis of intrafamilial child sexual abuse and familial dysfunction, comparing 3,676 families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred with 1,120 families in which extrafamilial and 1,145 families in which no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse had occurred. Families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse experienced more familial dysfunction across all domains compared to comparison families, with odds ratios ranging from 1.10 (lower education) to 5.06 (parental alcohol abuse). Families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse experienced more socio-economic stressors (e.g., homelessness), disorganised family structures (e.g., non-intact parental structures), dysfunctional relationships (e.g., spousal conflict), nonsexual abuse (e.g., exposure to intimate partner violence), and parental vulnerabilities (e.g., mental health and substance abuse problems) than the comparison families. The prevalence meta-analysis indicated that almost half of the families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse experienced one or more co-occurring forms of nonsexual abuse – 47% physical abuse, 37% emotional abuse, 34% neglect, and 41% exposure to intimate partner violence – and that this was significantly higher than the comparison families. The results of this meta-analysis highlight gaps and directions for further research on the role of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse, and the aetiology and prognosis of polyvictimisation.

3.1 Introduction

Intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is a prevalent and serious form of sexual abuse. General population estimates of sexual victimisation by a family member range from 1 to 3% (Kim & Kim, 2005; L. Radford et al., 2013) to more than 10 to 15% (Andersson et al., 2020; Russell, 1983) Around a third of sexual abuse convictions are intrafamilial cases (Dettmeijer-Vermeulen et al., 2016; Office for National Statistics, 2020; Snyder, 2000). Existing models of sexual abuse offending largely focused on individual level risk factors, particularly atypical sexuality and antisociality (Mann et al., 2010). However, these do not adequately explain intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. In Seto and colleagues' (2015) meta-analysis, there was less evidence of atypical sexuality among the men who had committed intrafamilial sexual abuse offences and these men scored lower on indicators of antisociality. This does not necessarily mean that these risk factors are not relevant in explaining differences between non-offending men and men who commit intrafamilial sexual abuse offences, but it does mean that these individual level risk factors do not adequately explain why someone would sexually offend against a related child versus an unrelated child (Seto et al., 2015).

3.1.1 Family Systems Explanations

One of the reasons we do not currently have a good explanation for the offending of intrafamilial child sexual abuse may be a focus on individual-level risk factors in psychological research, despite the seemingly obvious logical nexus between intra*familial* child sexual abuse and *familial* dynamics. As discussed in section 2.4, it is possible this type of abuse is better explained through a family systems lens. Socio-ecological and family systems approaches emphasize that individual behaviour is dependent on the dynamic relationships between an individual and their environment. These factors encompass a broad spectrum of domains, from macro-level to individual-level factors, which can include

sociodemographic factors such as family poverty, dysfunction in the distal family (i.e., histories of childhood abuse in the families-of-origin), proximal familial dysfunction such as spousal relationship issues or the occurrence of other nonsexual abuse, and individual parent mental health.

In contrast to offending research, victimisation research has firmly centred the role of familial dynamics as crucial factors related to vulnerabilities for childhood sexual abuse *victimisation* (Bidarra et al., 2016; Dong et al., 2004; Hébert et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2013). Risk factors for childhood sexual abuse victimisation are primarily related to expressions of familial dysfunction, including, for example, children's previous sexual and nonsexual victimisation, spousal relationship problems and parenting problems in the proximal family, and parents' experience of childhood abuse in their distal families-of-origin (Assink et al., 2019). Unfortunately, there has not been cumulative research to identify which of these risk factors are differentially important for intra- versus extrafamilial child sexual victimisation. Similarly, there has not been sufficient research in the victimisation realm to identify which of these familial risk factors are relevant for the perpetration of intrafamilial child sexual abuse.

3.2 Rationale

In summary, two bodies of literature have examined the phenomenon of intrafamilial child sexual abuse, but both stop short of being able to provide a comprehensive explanation of how and why it happens. The sexual offending literature has focused on identifying factors to differentiate intrafamilial and extrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. However, it has not applied this approach to family dynamic variables, despite this being a promising explanatory domain. On the flip side, the sexual victimisation literature has focused on the role of family dynamics as an explanatory domain for sexual abuse. However, this work has

rarely identified factors to differentially explain intrafamilial versus extrafamilial victimisation.

The current meta-analysis aims to bridge these bodies of literature by examining familial dysfunction variables *and* identifying which of these variables are more or less relevant to families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse or no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse has occurred. By leveraging the work that has been done in both the offending and victimisation fields we will hopefully move toward a better understanding of what factors are relevant for both intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation *and* offending: for instance, if victims report more exposure to intimate partner violence, we can infer that a family factor that might be related to risk of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending is evidence that a man is physically abusing his spouse.

3.2.1 Domains of Interest

Family dysfunction captured various expressions across a spectrum of domains, as: 1) intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences may be perpetrated in the context of wider family dysfunction; 2) intrafamilial child sexual abuse victims may be abused in the context of wider family dysfunction; and 3) these contexts of familial dysfunction are practically and theoretically interconnected. The chosen domains broadly reflect a nested systems approach, and include social factors (e.g., sociodemographic stressors), family level factors (e.g., disorganised family structures, such as not having both genetic parents), family relationship factors (e.g., dysfunctional relationships between specific family members), family abuse factors (nonsexual abuse of children and/or partners), and parent level factors (vulnerabilities in parents, such as mental health issues or criminal histories). For meta-analyses, target variables need to be present in at least three samples to be included (see methods). As a result, several highly relevant domains such as antisociality, atypical sexuality, separate non-intact parental structures (e.g., stepfamilies, single families, death of a parent),

multigenerational households, parent-child relationships, distinct problematic parenting practices, distal familial dysfunction measures, and risk and recurrence instruments could unfortunately not be included.

3.2.1.1 Sociodemographic Stressors. These variables capture socio-economic stressors in the proximal family. This includes family income, education, and employment. Socio-economic stressors, for instance financial, work, and housing insecurity, can create unstable and stressful living situations, which in turn can lead to psychological stress and negatively influence family functioning (Skinner et al., 2023). Socio-economic stressors are also implicated in theories of general crime (Agnew & Brezina, 2019) and are related to general (re-)offence risk (Pratt & Cullen, 2005).

3.2.1.2 Disorganised Family Structures. Family structure disorganisation is an expression of familial dysfunction: for instance, when the two genetic parents no longer parent together, it is a rather obvious sign of relationship collapse. Or large families can put strain on parenting capacity and supervision because there is only so much time and attention to distribute across many children (Finkelhor, 2008).

3.2.1.3 Dysfunctional Relationships. Most early theorising on intrafamilial sexual abuse offending prominently features relationship dysfunction in the proximal family context as a core explanatory mechanism (Herman & Hirschman, 1981; Russell, 1983). For instance, one hypothesis is that a poor spousal relationship can lead some men to using their daughters as an emotional and sexual spousal surrogate (Cohen, 1983). Another hypothesis is that parents with worse parenting skills and a negative perception of the relationship to their children are more likely to abuse their children (Milner et al., 2022).

3.2.1.4 Nonsexual Abuse. This domain represents arguably the most severe expression of familial dysfunction outside of sexual abuse, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure intimate partner violence. Previous (nonsexual)

victimisation is one of the main predictors of child sexual victimisation (Assink et al., 2019), and the co-occurrence of child sexual abuse and other forms of nonsexual abuse is well established (Bidarra et al., 2016; K. L. Chan et al., 2021; Finkelhor et al., 2007). However, the specific co-occurrence of intrafamilial child sexual and nonsexual abuse has not yet been cumulatively established.

3.2.1.5 Vulnerabilities in Parents. Parental vulnerabilities span domains that are important in both offending and victimisation research. Criminality, mental health problems, and substance abuse problems have all been linked to perpetration of child sexual and nonsexual abuse (Assink et al., 2019; Seto et al., 2015). This relation can be direct (e.g., neglecting a child because of a psychotic episode), and indirect (e.g., criminal history being a proxy for aggressive behaviours). While all other variables are about the proximal family, the experience of childhood abuse in the distal family-of-origin was also included, given the importance of possible intergenerational transmission of abuse: for instance, parents might not have learned what healthy boundaries are, or only know physical punishment as a response to badly behaving children (Madigan et al., 2019; Plummer & Cossins, 2018).

3.2.2 Aims

Based on the previous literature, the two main aims of this systematic review and meta-analysis to research familial dysfunction and intrafamilial child sexual abuse are:

1) To determine what expressions of familial dysfunction are related to risk of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending and victimisation across several domains: sociodemographic stressors, disorganised family structures, dysfunctional relationships, nonsexual abuse, and vulnerabilities in parents.
2) To determine the prevalence of nonsexual abuse in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, exposure to intimate partner violence.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

This study comprises two types of meta-analyses: a comparative meta-analysis and a prevalence meta-analysis. The aim of the comparative meta-analysis is to compare families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has occurred to relevant comparison groups on familial dysfunction factors. The information about these families could come from direct (self-report) or indirect (e.g., clinical or social work report) sources, for instance the victims, the mothers of victims, or the men who had perpetrated the intrafamilial child sexual abuse.

For the comparative meta-analysis, studies had to include (1) information about at least ten families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred; (2) report a proportion of (1) who had also experienced nonsexual abuse (physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence); (3a) include information on families in which children experienced extrafamilial child sexual abuse, or (3b) include information on families whose children had not experienced (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse; and (4) report the proportion of either comparison group who had experienced nonsexual abuse.

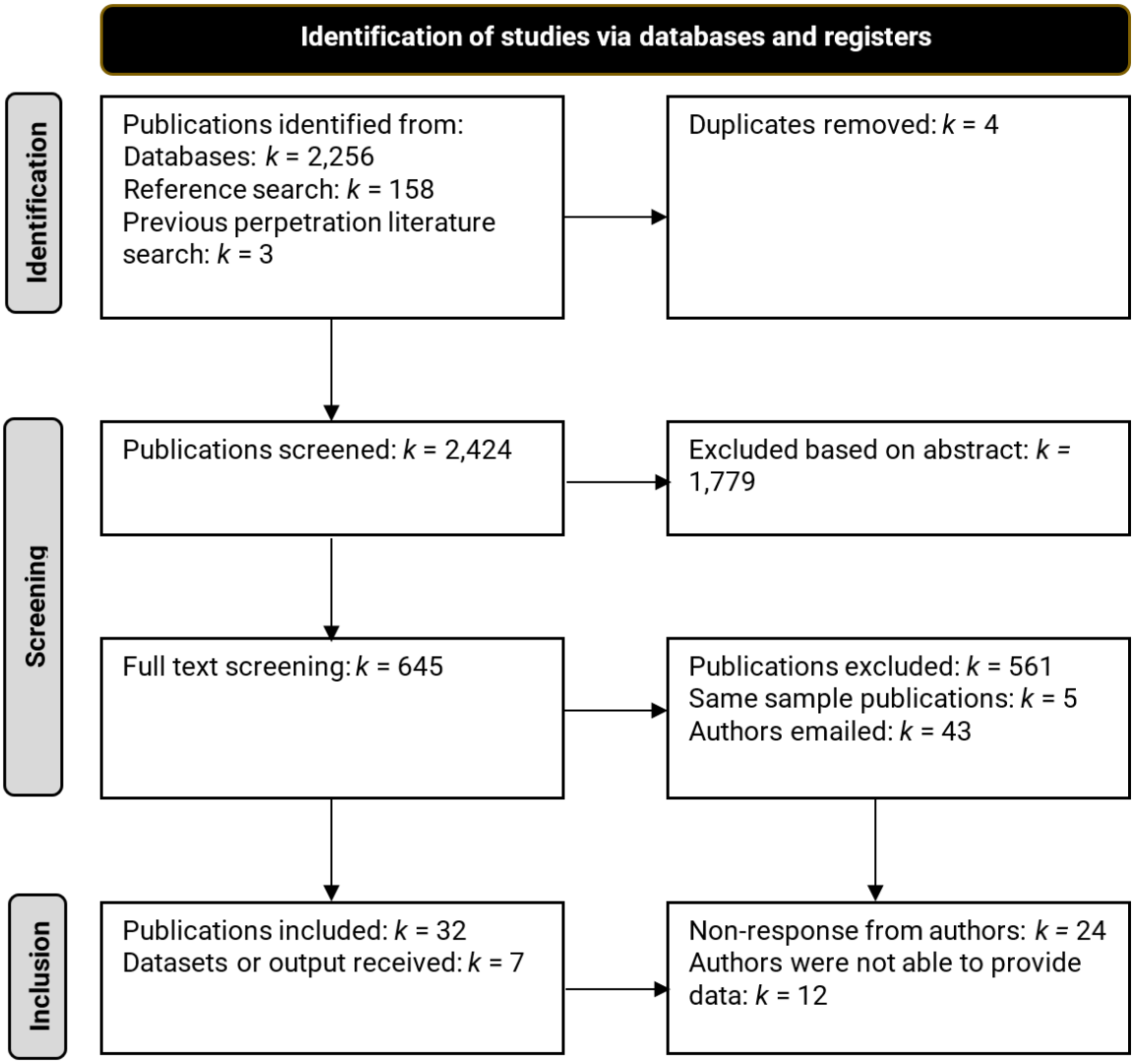
Studies where the comparison group was selected to either have or not have nonsexual abuse were excluded: for example, Bethscheider (1972) because the comparison group was all neglected children, and Shipman et al. (2000) because the comparison group was children who had no sexual or nonsexual victimisation history. An additional main goal was to assess the prevalence of nonsexual abuse in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurred more widely. For this, studies had to only include (1) information about at least ten families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred, and (2) report a proportion of (1) who had also experienced nonsexual abuse.

3.3.2 Selection of Studies

The literature search was conducted on July 17, 2023, of PSYCINFO, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar, and updated on March 20, 2024, plus reference list searching (see Figure 2). The used key words were: "incest*, intrafam* sex* abus*, intra-family sex* abus*, father-daughter incest*, familial sex* abus*, sexual abuse by a relative" AND "physical abus*, neglect*, domestic violen*, emotional abus*, intimate partner violen*, child maltreat*, child abus*". The second search term was limited to forms of nonsexual abuse as one of the main goals was to determine the prevalence of nonsexual abuse. Studies from 1979 to 2023 were included. The literature search yielded 29 studies that met inclusion criteria, plus three studies from a previous extensive sexual abuse offending literature search (namely, Stermac et al., 1995, Weinrott & Saylor, 1991, and Williams & Finkelhor, 1995).

Some manuscripts had indications their data contained the information needed for this meta-analysis but were not as such reported. I contacted 43 authors with relevant studies published in the last 15 years (2008-2023) to request data or output, for reasons of data availability and typical requirements for data retention. From these requests I received three Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR; https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/) datasets (Finkelhor & Turner, 2014, 2016a, 2016b), and raw data or output from four authors (Alink et al., 2013; Langevin, Hébert, et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2022; Schaefer et al., 2012). I received the last dataset on December 6, 2023. All included publications were in English, except Alink et al. (2013) and Draijer (1988) which were in Dutch.

Figure 2. ***PRISMA 2020 Search Strategy Meta-Analysis Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse***



3.3.3 Procedure

The systematic review and meta-analyses adhered to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The guide by Harrer and colleagues' (2022) supported the execution of the meta-analysis. Data were analysed in R (R Foundation for Statistical Computing, 2022) and modelled using the *metafor* package (Viechtbauer, 2010). The *irr* package was used to calculate inter rater reliability scores (Gamer et al., 2019). The quality assessment figure (Figure 5) was created using *robvis* (McGuinness & Higgins, 2021). Effect sizes requiring pre-calculation (i.e., for analyses containing both dichotomous and continuous variables) and transformations (i.e., *g* to *OR* and vice versa) were calculated with D. B. Wilson's (2023), DeCoster's (2024), and Lin's (2024) calculators. The coding manual (Online Appendix A1), variables of interest (Online Appendix A2), variable coding (Online Appendix A3), and quality assessment scheme (Online Appendix A4) are made available online.

3.3.4 Aggregation of Findings

For each study, two sets of information were coded: descriptive information (i.e., information about the sample and assessment of quality) and sample effect sizes (i.e., frequencies, means and standard deviations, or *t*-tests). Only variables coded in at least three studies were included in the analyses. Interrater analyses were conducted on nine randomly selected studies (25% of total sample), with Dr. Leroux as second coder. The studies were independently coded, compared, and inconsistencies solved. Agreement was excellent for continuous variables ($r = 0.983$) and categorical variables ($\kappa = 0.963$). Overall agreement on the subcategories of the quality assessment was good ($\kappa = 0.801$), and excellent for the overall appraisal ($\kappa = 1.000$). All other studies were singularly coded.

Some variables consisted of superordinate and subordinate categories. For instance, substance abuse is the superordinate aggregate category of the subordinate categories of

alcohol abuse and drug abuse. The tables present the weighted average superordinate effect sizes, including the rounded weighted average *N*, and indented subordinate categories.

3.3.5 Comparative and Prevalence Effect Sizes

Considerable heterogeneity was to be expected given the relatively small number of studies included in this meta-analysis. Consequently, it was decided to use a random-effects model to pool effect sizes in both the comparative and prevalence meta-analyses (Harrer et al., 2022). The Knapp-Hartung adjustment was used in both meta-analyses to reduce the chance of false positives, which is suitable for binary outcomes and a small (k <20) number of studies (Langan et al., 2019). For the comparative meta-analysis, the exact Mantel-Haenszel method without continuity was used as there were no specific cells that were expected to be zero in all of the included studies (Harrer et al., 2022). The Paule-Mandel method was used to estimate τ^2 (and its accompanying square root, τ), as this is a suitable method when both binary and continuous outcomes are included (Veroniki et al., 2016), and for meta-analyses with a small k (Bakbergenuly et al., 2020). For the prevalence meta-analysis, a generalised linear mixed effects model with logit-transformed proportions was used, as recommended by Schwarzer et al. (2019). Reported effect sizes were odds ratios (*OR*) for binary data, and Hedge's g (g) for continuous data. To benchmark the findings, the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile of absolute effect sizes (Fisher's z) of Assink et al. (2019) were transformed to *OR*: 1.54, 1.88, and 2.74, and Hedge's g: 0.24, 0.35, and 0.56, for small, moderate, and large effect sizes, respectively.

3.3.5.1 Relative and Absolute Heterogeneity. I^2 is reported as a measure of relative heterogeneity. The I^2 statistic indicates what proportion of the observed variability in the effect sizes reflects differences between studies relative to the total variation. I^2 is a proportion and does not necessarily indicate how much the effect size varies, except when I^2 = 0% (Borenstein, 2023b). As a heuristic, 25%, 50%, and 75% are interpreted as that a small,

moderate, and large proportion of the variation in observed effects is due to variation in the true effects (Borenstein et al., 2017).

The prediction interval was also included as a measure of absolute heterogeneity. The prediction interval describes the interval within which 95% of studies comparable to those included in the analyses are expected to fall and is derived from the standard deviation of the effects' τ. In contrast, confidence intervals describe how precise the estimate of the average effect is and is based on the standard error of the mean (Borenstein, 2023b). Important for interpretation is that when an effect has a small number of studies, the prediction interval can become very wide because of uncertainty – not because the estimate of the effect actually varies that widely (Borenstein, 2023a).

3.3.5.2 Cook's Distance (D_i). To assess whether studies had an outsized influence on the effect sizes, Cook's distance (D_i) was used. Cook's distance measures how much the fitted values in a model change when the i^{th} data point is deleted. When D_i is large, it indicates it has a strong influence on the parameter estimates. D_i is not a test statistic: influential cases might reflect an anomaly (i.e., outlier with high leverage), or the most important case (Cook, 2011). The used rule of thumb was that any study with $D_i > 0.5$ was considered a large influence. Results are reported in tables with and without influential cases; in-text interpretation and figures focus on results without influential cases.

3.3.5.3 Moderator Analysis. The nonsexual abuse variables were assessed for moderation by year of publication, published versus unpublished status, and quality (high quality versus not-high quality) using meta-regression to ensure theoretically extraneous variables did not influence the results. A statistically significant finding means that a moderator explains a significant portion of variability of the samples: for example, we might find that unpublished studies report lower amounts of nonsexual abuse than published studies due to a publication bias towards higher co-occurrence rates.

3.3.5.4 Analysis of Bias. Publication bias is expected when there is potential motivation to filter for significant results in publications. Pressure to publish significant results can lead authors (*p*-hacking) or journals (file drawer issue) to filter results. There was no expectation of substantial publication bias as the key outcome variables of this meta-analysis were not the main study objectives of most included studies. Nonetheless, assessing the possibility of indirect selection is important. Correcting for bias in meta-analyses is not straightforward (Carter et al., 2019), especially when heterogeneity is large (Harrer et al., 2022) and *k* is small (*k* <10; Sterne et al., 2011). So, relying on a single method is not recommended. Bias was assessed for the comparative analyses of the nonsexual abuse variables and used three methods: Peters' (2006) regression test, Duval and Tweedie's (2000) trim and fill method, and *p*-curve analysis and effect size estimation (Simonsohn et al., 2014).

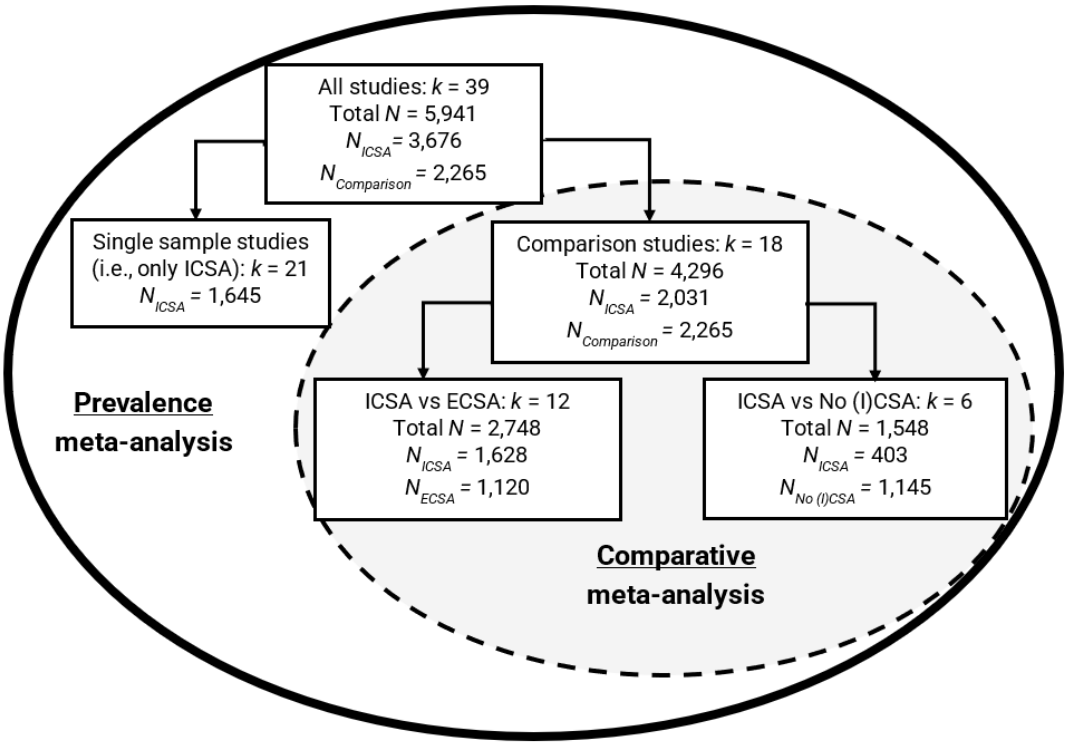
3.4 Results

3.4.1 Sample Description

The literature search resulted in a total of 39 included studies. Eighteen studies were comparison studies (12 comparing families in which intrafamilial versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred, and 6 comparing families in which intrafamilial versus no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse had occurred), and 21 were single sample studies (i.e., included only families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred). The comparative meta-analysis includes the 18 comparison studies, and the prevalence meta-analysis includes all 39 studies; see Figure 3. Descriptive information of the studies can be found in Table 1 and victim information in Table 2; reference list in Appendix 2. The median year of publication was 1997 (range 1979-2022). Most publications came from the USA (*k* = 29/39; 74.4%), followed by two each (5.1%) from Canada, Netherlands, and Turkey, and one each (2.6%) from Australia, Denmark, Germany, and Spain. The sources of victimisation

reports varied, but most came from retrospective nonclinical and clinical adult self-report (both *k* = 8; 20.5%) and child protective services (CPS) or social work reports (*k* = 6; 15.4%).

Figure 3. ***Graphical Representation of the Study Structure***



Note. ICSA = Intrafamilial child sexual abuse. ECSA = Extrafamilial child sexual abuse. No (I)CSA = No (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse.

Table 1. ***Descriptive Study Information of Meta-Analysis Studies***

ID	Authors	Year	Sample type	Country	Data source	*N* ICSA	*N* Comparison
1	Alink et al. [+]	2013	ICSA and ECSA	NLD	Retrospective nonclinical minor self-report	42	63
2	Alter-Reid	1989	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	35	20
3	Bess & Jansen	1982	ICSA and no (I)CSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	10	22
4	Bowen	2000	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Forensic evaluation centre	317	85
5	Deblinger et al.	1993	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Child Protective Services or social work	66	33
6	Draijer	1988	ICSA and no (I)CSA	NLD	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	164	890
7	Finkelhor & Turner 1 [+]	2014	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical minor self-report	58	118
8	Finkelhor & Turner 2 [+]	2016	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical minor self-report	45	131
9	Finkelhor & Turner 3 [+]	2016	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical minor self-report	23	103
10	Herman & Hirschman	1984	ICSA and no (I)CSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	40	20
11	Hulme & Agrawal	2004	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	32	12
12	Langevin et al. [+]	2021	ICSA and ECSA	CAN	Child Protective Services or social work	724	260
13	Loinaz & Bigas	2019	ICSA and ECSA	ESP	Police or judicial reports	99	122
14	Mason et al. [+]	2022	ICSA and ECSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	94	94
15	Schaefer et al. [+]	2012	ICSA and ECSA	DEU	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	93	79
16	Tamraz	1996	ICSA and no (I)CSA	USA	Mothers reporting on their children	30	60
17	Williams & Finkelhor	1992	ICSA and no (I)CSA	USA	Offending sample	118	116
18	Winterstein	1983	ICSA and no (I)CSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	41	37
ID	**Authors**	**Year**	**Sample type**	**Country**	**Data source**	***N* ICSA**	
19	Alexander & Schaeffer	1994	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	81	
20	Barber	1998	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	64	
21	Bieber	1997	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	166	
22	Burton	2020	100% ICSA	AUS	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	26	
23	Celbis et al.	2020	100% ICSA	TUR	Medical reports	40	
24	Drummond	1996	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	53	
25	Julian & Mohr	1979	100% ICSA	USA	Child Protective Services or social work	102	
26	Koçtürk & Yüksel	2019	100% ICSA	TUR	Child Protective Services or social work	216	
27	Kristensen & Lau	2011	100% ICSA	DNK	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	158	

Table 1 continues on next page

Table 1 (continued)

ID	Authors	Year	Sample type	Country	Data source	*N* ICSA	*N* Comparison
28	Sela-Amit	2003	100% ICSA	USA	Mothers reporting on their children	62	
29	Server & Janzen	1982	100% ICSA	USA	Family treatment centre	48	
30	Sirles & Lofberg	1989	100% ICSA	USA	Family treatment centre	128	
31	Smith	1999	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective nonclinical adult self-report	86	
32	Stermac et al,	1995	100% ICSA	CAN	Offending sample	38	
33	Tomas-Tolentino	2010	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective clinical adult self-report	49	
34	Trickett et al.	2001	100% ICSA	USA	Child Protective Services or social work	78	
35	Truesdell et al.	1986	100% ICSA	USA	Mothers reporting on their children	30	
36	Vander Mey	1986	100% ICSA	USA	Child Protective Services or social work	163	
37	Vander Mey & Neff	1984	100% ICSA	USA	Police or judicial reports	26	
38	Weinrott & Saylor	1991	100% ICSA	USA	Offending sample	21	
39	Westen et al.	1990	100% ICSA	USA	Retrospective clinical minor self-report	10	

Note. [+] Indicates data or output was provided. ID = Study ID number. ICSA = Intrafamilial child sexual abuse. ECSA = Extrafamilial child sexual abuse. No (I)CSA = No (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse victimisation. AUS = Australia. CAN = Canada. DEU = Germany. DNK = Denmark. ESP = Spain. NLD = The Netherlands. TUR = Turkey. USA = United States of America.

Table 2. ***Descriptive Victim Information of Meta-Analysis Studies***

Comparison samples 1-18										
						ICSA perpetrated by:				
ID	Authors	ICSA Age	Comparison Age	ICSA Gender	Comparison Gender	Father	Mother	Brother/ sibling	Extended family	ICSA poly-victimisation
1	Alink et al.[+]	Not reported	Not reported	33% girls, 67% boys	59% girls, 41% boys	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	67% ECSA
2	Alter-Reid	7.97 (4.99)	10.55 (4.13)	100% girls	100% girls	69% (49% biological, 20% sociolegal)	3% biological	9% biological	20%	31% poly-ICSA, 23% ECSA
3	Bess & Jansen	8.90 (3.07)	N/A	50% girls, 50% boys	59% girls, 61% boys	20% (10% biological, 10% sociolegal)	-	70% (30% biological, 40% sociolegal)	10%	Not reported
4	Bowen	Not reported	Not reported	Overall: 82% girls, 18% boys	Overall: 82% girls, 18% boys	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
5	Deblinger et al.	Not reported	N/A	Overall: 80% girls, 20% boys	Overall: 80% girls, 20% boys	55%	-	-	45%	Not reported
6	Draijer	11.40 (*SD* unknown)	N/A	100% girls	100% girls	19% (13% biological, 6% sociolegal)	1% biological	25%	50%	9% poly-ICSA, 39% ECSA
7	Finkelhor & Turner 1[+]	6.16 (3.86)	9.43 (4.93)	76% girls, 24% boys	71% girls, 29% boys	24%	3%	17%	55%	Yes, unknown proportions
8	Finkelhor & Turner 2[+]	7.18 (3.08)	10.86 (4.35)	73% girls, 27% boys	68% girls, 32% boys	33%	4%	22%	40%	Yes, unknown proportions
9	Finkelhor & Turner 3[+]	7.86 (4.29)	12.49 (3.74)	78% girls, 12% boys	76% girls, 24% boys	26%	4%	39%	30%	Yes, unknown proportions
10	Herman & Hirschman	9.40 (*SD* unknown)	N/A	100% girls	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	18% poly-victimisation
11	Hulme & Agrawal	Not reported	Not reported	100% girls	100% girls	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported

Table 2 continues on next page

Table 2 (continued)

ID	Authors	ICSA Age	Comparison Age	ICSA Gender	Comparison Gender	ICSA perpetrated by: Father	Mother	Brother/ sibling	Extended family	ICSA poly-victimisation
10	Herman & Hirschman	9.40 (*SD* unknown)	N/A	100% girls	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	18% poly-victimisation
11	Hulme & Agrawal	Not reported	Not reported	100% girls	100% girls	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
12	Langevin et al.[+]	Not reported	Not reported	80% girls, 20% boys	77% girls, 23% boys	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
13	Loinaz & Bigas	77% prepubescent, 19% pubescent, 4% postpubescent	52% prepubescent, 32% pubescent, 16% postpubescent	80% girls, 20% boys	71% girls, 29% boys	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
14	Mason et al.[+]	Not reported	Not reported	Overall: 73% girls, 27% boys	Overall: 73% girls, 27% boys	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	46% ECSA
15	Schaefer et al.[+]	36% prepubescent, 63% pubescent, 1% postpubescent	27% prepubescent, 70% pubescent, 4% postpubescent	73% girls, 27% boys	66% girls, 34% boys	26%	8%	10%	42%	4% poly-ICSA, 18% ECSA, 11% poly-victimisation
16	Tamraz	Not reported	N/A	100% girls	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	Not reported
17	Williams & Finkelhor	89% prepubescent, 11% pubescent	N/A	100% girls	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	Not reported
18	Winterstein	8.40 (3.20)	N/A	95% girls, 5% boys	81% girls, 19% boys	71% (54% biological, 17% sociolegal)	4% (2% biological, 2% sociolegal)	24%	34%	34% poly-ICSA, 22% ECSA

Single sample studies 19-39

ID	Authors	ICSA Age	ICSA Gender	ICSA perpetrated by: Father	Mother	Brother/ sibling	Extended family	ICSA poly-victimisation
19	Alexander & Schaeffer	7.11 (3.31)	100% girls	74% (48% biological, 26% sociolegal)	1%	15%	2%	10% poly-victimisation
20	Barber	6.39 (3.56)	100% girls	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	69% ECSA

Table 2 continues on next page

Table 2 (continued)

ID	Authors	ICSA Age	ICSA Gender	ICSA perpetrated by: Father	Mother	Brother/ sibling	Extended family	ICSA poly-victimisation
21	Bieber	4.98 (3.83)	100% girls	66% (58% biological, 8% sociolegal)	-	9% (8% biological, 1% sociolegal)	25%	59% poly-ICSA, 64% ECSA
22	Burton	7.00 (3.10)	58% girls, 42% boys	58% (46% biological, 12% sociolegal)	13%	23%	19%	14% poly-victimisation
23	Celbis et al.	45% prepubescent, 55% postpubescent	90% girls, 10% boys	18%	-	20%	80%	18% poly-ICSA
24	Drummond	6.90 (4.20)	100% girls	87% (68% biological, 19% sociolegal)	6%	-	13%	24% poly-ICSA, 9% ECSA
25	Julian & Mohr	20% prepubescent, 64% pubescent, 15% postpubescent	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	Not reported
26	Koçtürk & Yüksel	28% prepubescent, 37% pubescent, 36% postpubescent	Not reported	76% (50% biological, 26% sociolegal)	5%	18% (14% biological, 4% sociolegal)	-	7% poly-ICSA, 5% ECSA
27	Kristensen & Lau	6.30 (3.50)	100% girls	72% (47% biological, 25% sociolegal)	5% (4% biological, 1% sociolegal)	16%	29%	29% ECSA, 39% poly-victimisation
28	Sela-Amit	9.00 (4.50)	89% girls, 11% boys	73%	-	16%	11%	13% poly-ICSA, 8% ECSA
29	Server & Janzen	Not reported	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	23% poly-victimisation
30	Sirles & Lofberg	49% prepubescent, 51% postpubescent	83% girls, 17% boys	100%	-	-	-	Not reported
31	Smith	87% prepubescent, 13% pubescent	100% girls	59% (42% biological, 17% sociolegal)	16% biological	24% biological	42%	70% poly-victimisation

Table 2 continues on next page

Table 2 (continued)

ID	Authors	ICSA Age	ICSA Gender	ICSA perpetrated by: Father	Mother	Brother/ sibling	Extended family	ICSA poly-victimisation
32	Stermac et al.	Not reported	82% girls, 5% boys, 10% mixed	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
33	Tomas-Tolentino	8.04 (2.30)	100% girls	49%	2% sociolegal	12%	35%	Not reported
34	Trickett et al.	7.85 (*SD* unknown)	100% girls	59%	-	-	41%	42% poly-victimisation
35	Truesdell et al.	Not reported	79% girls, 6% boys, 15% mixed	87% (37% biological, 50% sociolegal)	-	-	13%	Not reported
36	Vander Mey	24% prepubescent, 25% pubescent, 51% postpubescent	83% girls, 17% boys	99% (74% biological, 25% sociolegal)	9% biological	-	4%	33% poly-ICSA, 22% ECSA
37	Vander Mey & Neff	31% prepubescent, 35% pubescent, 35% postpubescent	100% girls	96% (65% biological, 31% sociolegal)	4% biological	-	-	Not reported
38	Weinrott & Saylor	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
39	Westen et al.	100% prepubescent	100% girls	100%	-	-	-	70% poly-victimisation

Note. [+] Indicates data or output were provided. ICSA = intrafamilial child sexual abuse. ECSA = extrafamilial child sexual abuse. Prepubescent refers to children who have not developed secondary sex characteristics, with age indication 11 or younger. Pubescent refers to children who are developing secondary sex characteristics, with age indication 12 to 15. Postpubescent refers to children who have developed secondary sex characteristics, age indication 16 or older, but younger than 18. Poly-victimisation indicates sexual victimisation by more than one individual: Poly-ICSA indicates sexual victimisation by more than one family member; ECSA indicates sexual victimisation by both a family member(s) and an individual(s) who is not a family member; poly-victimisation (unspecified) refers to sexual victimisation by more than one individual, of whom at least one a family member.

3.4.1.1 Description of Samples with Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse. The samples including intrafamilial child sexual abuse ranged from 10 to 724, *Mdn* = 58, *M* = 94.4, *SD* = 121.3, *k* = 39, total *N* = 3,676. Gender was reported in 34 out of 39 studies (87.2%), with the majority of participants in these 34 studies being girls (88.3%), but also a substantial percentage being boys (23.1%). Twenty-one out of 39 studies (53.9%) reported ethnicity, with 30.9% of the participants in the 21 samples reporting being ethnic minorities The majority of studies (*k* = 30/39; 76.9%) reported the familial relationship between the victim and the individual who had perpetrated the intrafamilial child sexual abuse. In these 30 studies, fathers had perpetrated 67.2% of intrafamilial child sexual abuse, mothers 5.3%, brothers (and siblings) 21.5%, and extended family (i.a., uncles, grandfathers, cousins) 29.2%. [6]

Poly-victimisation was less systematically and uniformly reported, but the relevant studies found that around a third of victims reported poly-victimisation. Ten studies (25.6%) reported on poly-intrafamilial victimisation, with 24.3% of victims reporting intrafamilial child sexual abuse by multiple family members; thirteen studies (33.3%) reported intrafamilial *and* extrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation, with 32.3% of victims reporting dual victimisation; nine studies (23.1%) reported undefined poly-victimisation, with 32.9% of victims reporting poly-victimisation. Table 2 for study level information. [7]

3.4.1.2 Description of Comparison Samples. Group size of the comparison samples ranged from 12 to 890, *Mdn* = 82, *M* = 125.8, *SD* = 199.8, *k* = 18, total *N* = 2,265. Gender was reported in 16 out of 18 studies (88.9%), with the majority of the participants in these 16 studies being girls (81.9%) and around a third being boys (30.3%). [8] Eight out of 18 studies

[6] The percentages in this section do not sum to 100%, as studies reported victimisation in different ways.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

(44.4%) reported ethnicity, with 32.3% of the participants in these eight studies reporting to be ethnic minorities. See Table 2 for study level information.

The comparison studies consisted of samples with extrafamilial child sexual abuse (k = 12, N = 1,120) or samples without (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse (k = 6; N = 1,145). Of the latter, none of the comparison participants reported intrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation. Four comparison studies reported no childhood sexual victimisation at all. Two studies reported that a proportion of their comparison participants had experienced extrafamilial childhood sexual abuse: Draijer (1988) included 21.8% women who had been victims of extrafamilial child sexual abuse in their comparison group, and Winterstein (1983) included 11% women who had been victims of extrafamilial sexual abuse in adolescence in their comparison group.

3.4.2 Comparative Meta-Analysis of Familial Dysfunction

The results for the comparative analysis of familial dysfunction are presented in Table 3 and the forest plot in Figure 4. The forest plot presents the results for the superordinate categories for readability (except for nonsexual abuse), with odds ratios transformed to Hedge's g, and influential cases (i.e., studies with $D_i > 0.5$) removed. All effect sizes were in the direction of more familial dysfunction in families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse versus the comparison families. The range of effect sizes was 1.10 (lower education) to 5.06 (parental alcohol abuse), and the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles were *OR* 1.69, 1.91, and 2.27 (with Hedge's g transformed to *OR*).

3.4.2.1 Sociodemographic Stressors. Overall, families where intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred presented with more sociodemographic stressors, such as socio-economic status, higher frequency of ever having been unemployed, lower education, and homelessness. Effect sizes for socio-economic status (g = 0.36) and ever having been homeless (*OR* = 2.30) were significant. There was varying heterogeneity across this domain,

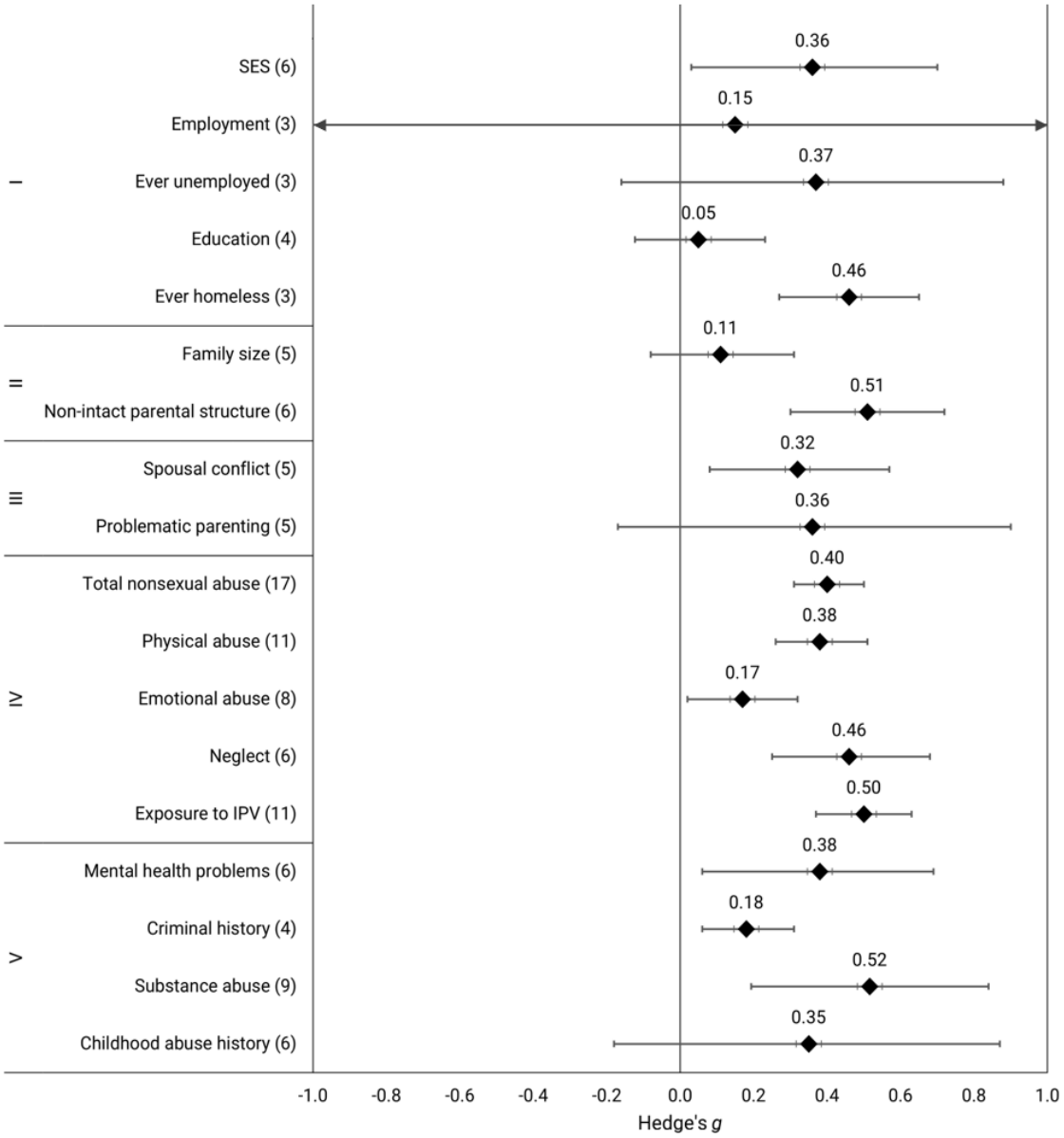
and most prediction intervals were wide, indicating more uncertainty about the effect sizes as *k* was mostly small ($k < 4$).

3.4.2.2 Disorganised Family Structure. Families where intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred were more disorganised: there was significantly more often a non-intact parental structure, which includes any situation wherein genetic parents no longer parent together, i.e., being separated, stepfamilies, or death of a parent; $OR = 2.53$. The families wherein intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred were also larger, $g = 0.11$, but this comparison was not statistically significant.

3.4.2.3 Dysfunctional Relationships. There was significantly greater reported spousal relationship dysfunction in families where intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred ($g = 0.32$). Parents in these families were also reported to display more problematic parenting behaviours with a similar magnitude effect size ($g = 0.36$; wide prediction interval), but this effect was not statistically significant.

3.4.2.4 Nonsexual Abuse. The results show that families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred were at consistent higher risk of nonsexual abuse than families with extrafamilial or no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse. These odds ratios of nonsexual abuse were 2.08 for any nonsexual abuse, 2.01 for physical abuse, 1.36 for emotional abuse, 2.31 for neglect, and 2.48 for exposure to intimate partner violence, in comparison to the other families. In other words, children who had been intrafamilially sexually abused had over twice the odds of other nonsexual abuse compared to children in other families, with the smallest difference for emotional abuse and the largest for exposure to intimate partner violence. Heterogeneity ranged from none to low-moderate, and prediction intervals were quite close to the effect sizes, especially after removal of influential cases.

Figure 4. Forest Plot of Comparative Meta-Analysis of Familial Dysfunction



Note. Forest plot representing effect sizes and 95% CI for superordinate (and subordinate nonsexual abuse) categories of familial dysfunction domains. Positive Hedge's *g* values indicate more dysfunction in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred. Results are presented with influential cases ($D_i > 0.5$) removed. Numbers between brackets represent number of samples (*k*). I = Sociodemographic stressors. II = Disorganised family structures. III = Dysfunctional relationships. IV = Nonsexual abuse. V = Vulnerabilities in parents.

Table 3. ***Comparative Meta-Analysis of Familial Dysfunction***

Sociodemographic stressors	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Socio-economic status	0.36	[0.03; 0.70]	63.3%	[-0.40; 1.13]	1,472 (6)	1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16
	OR	**95% CI**				
Employment [a]	1.33	[0.07; 25.19]	90.8%	[<0.01; >100]	1,231 (3)	5, 6, 16
Ever unemployed [a]	1.91	[0.75; 4.89]	4.4%	[0.10; 35.87]	475 (3)	7, 8, 9
Education [a]	1.10	[0.80; 1.52]	0.0%	[0.69; 1.76]	2,182 (4)	5, 6, 12, 16
Ever homeless	2.30	[1.62; 3.27]	0.0%	[0.03; >100]	476 (3)	7, 8, 9
Disorganised family structure	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Family size	0.20	[0.02; 0.38]	2.9%	[-0.12; 0.52]	1,692 (6)	1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Influential cases removed	0.11	[-0.08; 0.31]	0.0%	[-0.18; 0.41]	643 (5)	1, 7, 8, 9, 10
	OR	**95% CI**				
Non-intact parental structure [b]	2.26	[1.64; 3.13]	0.0%	[1.54; 3.32]	966 (7)	5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 18
Influential cases removed	2.53	[1.73; 3.68]	0.0%	[1.54; 4.13]	745 (6)	5, 7, 8, 9, 16, 18
Dysfunctional relationships	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Spousal conflict	0.32	[0.08; 0.57]	34.9%	[-0.17; 0.86]	1,766 (5)	6, 7, 8, 9, 17
Problematic parenting	0.36	[-0.17; 0.90]	73.3%	[-0.73; 1.46]	1,470 (5)	6, 7, 10, 15, 17
Nonsexual abuse	***OR***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Total nonsexual abuse	1.89	[1.58; 2.25]	13.2%	[1.42; 2.50]	4,203 (18)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
Influential cases removed	2.08	[1.75; 2.46]	0.0%	[1.42; 2.40]	3,226 (17)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
Physical abuse	2.27	[1.69; 3.05]	30.3%	[1.23; 4.21]	2,463 (12)	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18
Influential cases removed	2.01	[1.59; 2.54]	0.0%	[1.59; 2.56]	2,229 (11)	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18
Emotional abuse	1.36	[1.04; 1.78]	0.0%	[0.96; 1.92]	1,220 (8)	1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17
Neglect	2.74	[1.98; 3.80]	4.5%	[1.85; 4.05]	1,874 (7)	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15
Influential cases removed	2.31	[1.56; 3.44]	0.0%	[1.43; 3.75]	870 (6)	3, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15
Exposure to intimate partner violence	2.23	[1.70; 2.94]	44.0%	[1.24; 4.03]	3,668 (12)	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18
Influential cases removed	2.48	[1.94; 3.16]	0.0%	[1.90; 3.23]	2,691 (11)	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18

Table 3 continues on next page

Table 3 (continued)

Vulnerabilities in parents	Hedge's *g*	95% CI	I^2	95% PI	*N* (k)	Samples
Mental health problems	0.29	[-0.01; 0.59]	74.2%	[-0.40; 0.98]	2,794 (7)	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13
Influential cases removed	0.38	[0.06; 0.69]	45.0%	[-0.17; 0.93]	1,813 (6)	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13
	OR	**95% CI**				
Criminal history	1.70	[0.95; 3.05]	31.9%	[0.58; 4.98]	932 (5)	7, 8, 9, 13, 17
Influential cases removed	1.39	[1.11; 1.74]	0.0%	[0.64; 3.04]	711 (4)	7, 8, 9, 17
Substance abuse	2.55	[1.42; 4.59]	65.4%	[0.53; 12.14]	2,196 (9)	3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 17, 18
Influential cases removed	1.99	[1.25; 3.19]	33.1%	[0.73; 5.43]	1,142 (8)	3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 17, 18
Alcohol abuse [a]	5.06	[1.13; 22.61]	89.3%	[0.09; >100]	1,398 (4)	3, 6, 17, 18
Drug abuse [a]	3.44	[0.50; 23.47]	79.1%	[<0.01; >100]	1,374 (3)	5, 6, 13
Childhood abuse history	1.87	[0.72; 4.84]	87.4%	[0.15; 23.55]	1,953 (6)	4, 5, 12, 13, 16, 17
Childhood sexual abuse history	1.79	[0.61; 5.29]	90.3%	[0.10; 33.57]	2,030 (6)	4, 5, 12, 13, 16, 17
Childhood physical abuse history [a]	1.77	[0.29; 11.72]	84.1%	[<0.01; >100]	735 (3)	4, 5, 17

Note. [a] These variables had influential studies (i.e., $D_i > 0.5$), but removing these would lead to $k < 3$, i.e., too few studies to meta-analyse. [b] Refers to any situation in which the genetic parents no longer parent together, e.g., includes separation, stepfamilies, and death of a parent. Positive Hedge's *g* values > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate more risk or vulnerability for families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred than the comparison groups. Bolded values mean the findings were significant, i.e., did not cross 0.00 (*g*) or 1.00 (*OR*). Influential cases removed means that studies with a Cook's Distance $D_i > 0.5$ were removed. 95% CI = 95% Confidence interval. 95% PI = 95% Prediction interval.

3.4.2.5 Vulnerabilities in Parents. In families with intrafamilial sexual abuse, parents were more vulnerable. However, heterogeneity and prediction intervals were moderate to high across many variables. Parents from families where intrafamilial child sexual abuse had more extensive criminal histories (*OR* = 1.39), experienced more mental health problems, *g* = 0.38, and substance abuse problems, *OR* = 1.99 (5.06 for alcohol abuse and 3.44 (nonsignificant) for drug abuse). They also (non-significantly) had experienced more childhood abuse in their own distal families-of-origin, with odds ratios for general childhood abuse histories 1.87, sexual abuse histories 1.79, and physical abuse histories 1.77.

3.4.2.6 Intrafamilial Versus Extrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse. The effect sizes comparing families in which intrafamilial versus extrafamilial sexual abuse had taken place indicated overall more risk for families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse than extrafamilial child sexual abuse, with effect sizes in the same direction and same magnitude as the results presented hereunder. The comparisons for ever having been homeless, all forms of nonsexual abuse, and substance abuse were statistically significant (Table 4).

Table 4. ***Comparative Meta-Analysis of Familial Dysfunction for Intra- versus Extrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse***

Sociodemographic stressors	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Socio-economic status	0.30	[-0.02; 0.62]	60.7%	[-0.41; 1.00]	1,481 (6)	1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12
Influential cases removed	0.21	[-0.06; 0.48]	37.1%	[-0.33; 0.76]	1,355 (5)	1, 5, 7, 8, 12
	OR	**95% CI**				
Ever unemployed [a]	1.91	[0.75; 4.89]	4.4%	[0.10; 35.87]	475 (3)	7, 8, 9
Ever homeless	2.30	[1.62; 3.27]	0.0%	[0.03; >100]	476 (3)	7, 8, 9
Disorganised family structure	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Family size	0.10	[-0.08; 0.29]	0.0%	[-0.30; 0.50]	583 (4)	1, 7, 8, 9
	OR	**95% CI**				
Non-intact parental structure [b]	1.64	[0.77; 3.48]	55.8%	[0.27; 9.35]	798 (5)	5, 7, 8, 9, 13
Dysfunctional relationships	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Spousal conflict	0.16	[-0.22; 0.54]	0.0%	[-1.32; 1.64]	478 (3)	7, 8, 9
Nonsexual abuse	***OR***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Total nonsexual abuse	1.64	[1.36; 1.99]	0.0%	[1.34; 2.01]	2,677 (12)	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
Influential cases removed	1.88	[1.52; 2.32]	0.0%	[1.44; 2.44]	1,700 (11)	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15
Physical abuse	2.00	[1.52; 2.65]	0.0%	[1.42; 2.84]	1,042 (8)	1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15
Emotional abuse	1.31	[0.82; 1.80]	0.0%	[0.88; 1.95]	986 (7)	1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15
Neglect	2.39	[1.66; 3.44]	0.0%	[1.37; 4.18]	838 (5)	7, 8, 9, 14, 15
Exposure to intimate partner violence	1.89	[1.40; 2.55]	32.3%	[1.14; 3.12]	2,217 (8)	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13
Influential cases removed	2.22	[1.69; 2.93]	0.0%	[1.55; 3.19]	1,240 (7)	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13
Vulnerabilities in parents	**Hedge's *g***	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**95% PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
Parental mental health problems [a]	0.13	[-0.14; 0.39]	33.3%	[-0.40; 0.66]	1,680 (5)	7, 8, 9, 12, 13
Influential cases removed	0.22	[-0.13; 0.58]	0.0%	[-0.31; 0.75]	789 (4)	7, 8, 9, 13
Criminal history	1.93	[0.84; 4.45]	32.2%	[0.36; 10.42]	477 (3)	7, 39, 9
	OR	**95% CI**				
Substance abuse	1.63	[1.12; 2.37]	0.0%	[0.95; 2.78]	789 (5)	5, 7, 8, 9, 13
Influential cases removed	1.86	[1.31; 2.65]	0.0%	[0.80; 4.35]	622 (4)	5, 8, 9, 13
Childhood abuse history	1.16	[0.52; 2.58]	58.5%	[0.15; 8.94]	1,629 (4)	4, 5, 12, 13
Influential cases removed	0.91	[0.59; 1.41]	0.0%	[0.19; 4.46]	1,408 (3)	4, 5, 12

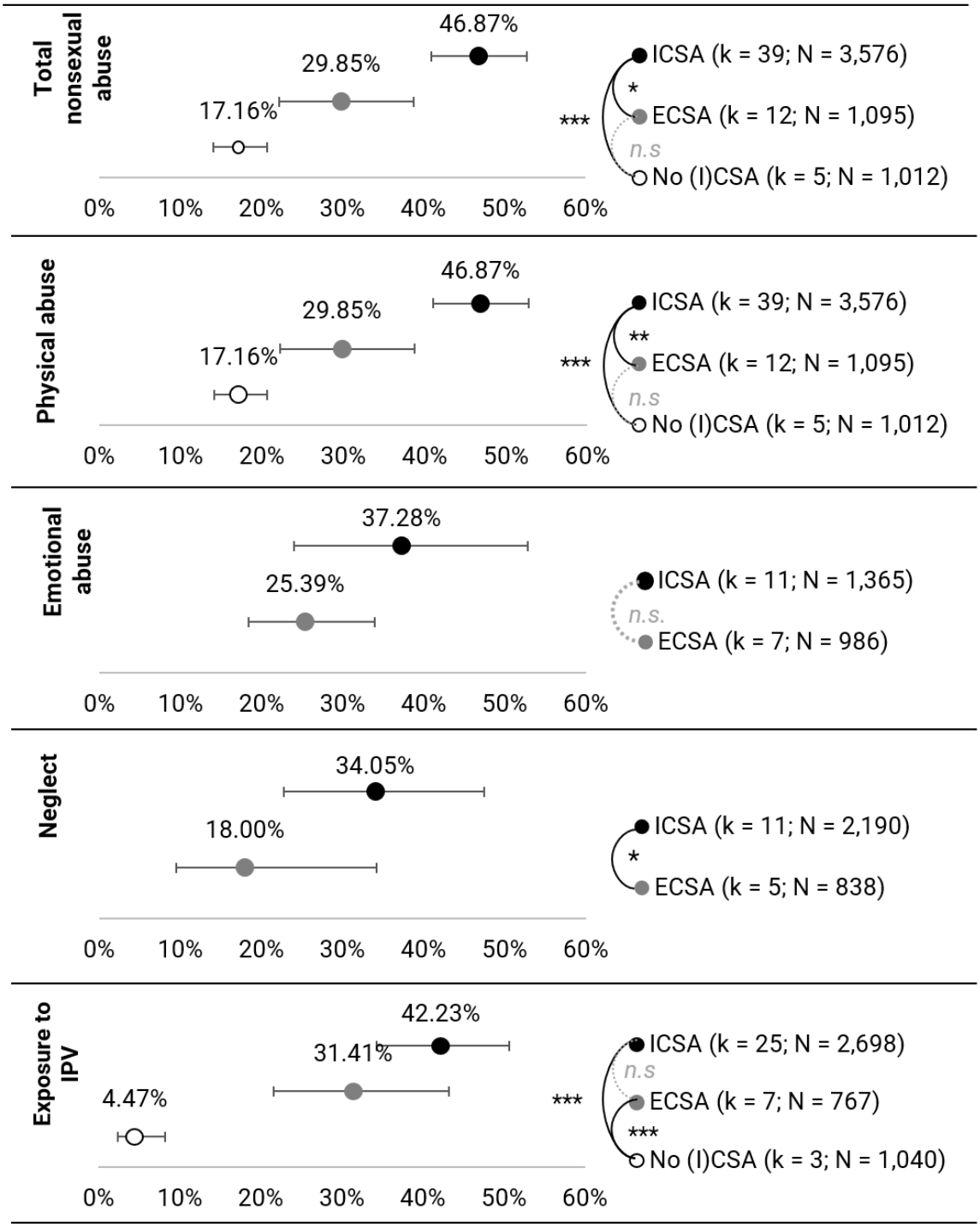
Note. [a] These variables had influential studies (i.e., $D_i > 0.5$), but removing these would lead to $k < 3$, i.e., too few studies to meta-analyse. [b] Refers to any situation in which the genetic parents no longer parent together, e.g., includes separation, stepfamilies, and death of a parent. Positive Hedge's *g* values > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate more risk or vulnerability for families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred than the comparison groups. Bolded values mean the findings were significant, i.e., did not cross 0.00 (*g*) or 1.00 (*OR*). Influential cases removed means that studies with a Cook's Distance $D_i > 0.5$ were removed. 95% CI = 95% Confidence interval. 95% PI = 95% Prediction interval.

3.4.3 Prevalence Meta-Analysis of Nonsexual Abuse

Additionally, one of the main goals of this meta-analysis was to assess the prevalence of nonsexual abuse in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred beyond the comparison studies. Figure 5 and Table 5 present the prevalence meta-analysis results of all 39 studies (i.e., 18 comparison studies and 21 single sample studies, total N = 5,799; influential studies removed from Figure 5). All studies were included as there were no significant differences in nonsexual abuse prevalences for the intrafamilial child sexual abuse single sample versus comparison group studies (see Table 6).

The prevalence meta-analysis finds higher prevalences of nonsexual abuse in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse has taken place than in other families, as can be seen in Figure 5. Overall, many families had experienced nonsexual abuse as well. However, families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse took place had the highest prevalence of nonsexual abuse: 47% experienced physical abuse, 37% emotional abuse, 34% neglect, and 41% exposure to intimate partner violence, totalling 46% of families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred experiencing additional nonsexual abuse. These prevalences were significantly higher in the intrafamilial child sexual abuse families than in the extrafamilial child sexual abuse families or the families without a history of (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse, except in the former for emotional abuse and exposure to intimate partner violence. There were no significant differences between the extrafamilial and no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse families, except that the former had a higher prevalence of exposure to intimate partner violence; see Table 7.

Figure 5. Prevalence Plot of Meta-Analysis of Nonsexual Abuse



Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$. *n.s.* = not significant. The figure presents prevalence and 95% CI for nonsexual abuse. Influential cases (i.e., studies with $D_i > 0.5$) are removed. ICSA = Intrafamilial child sexual abuse. ECSA = Extrafamilial child sexual abuse. No (I)CSA = No (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse victimisation. IPV = Intimate partner violence.

Table 5. ***Prevalence Meta-Analysis of Nonsexual Abuse***

Total nonsexual abuse	**Proportion**	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
ICSA	46.87	41.03 - 52.80	87.5%	18.26 - 77.69	3,576 (39)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39
ECSA	29.85	22.23 - 38.79	82.5%	10.44 - 60.85	1,095 (12)	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
No (I)CSA	20.29	12.93 - 30.40	75.9%	7.19 - 45.57	1,128 (6)	3, 6, 10, 16, 17, 18
Influential cases removed	17.16	14.12 - 20.71	42.4%	7.55 - 49.42	1,012 (5)	3, 6, 10, 16, 18
Physical abuse	**Proportion**	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
ICSA	47.22	38.98 - 55.62	89.7%	13.60 - 83.57	2,218 (29)	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39
Influential cases removed	47.53	38.97 - 56.24	90.0%	13.30 - 84.26	2,197 (28)	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38, 39
ECSA	27.77	20.19 - 36.88	69.9%	11.71 - 52.70	620 (8)	1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15
No (I)CSA a	19.76	9.20 - 37.43	83.1%	2.60 - 69.45	1,061 (4)	6, 10, 17, 18
Emotional abuse	**Proportion**	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
ICSA	44.32	25.23 - 65.25	92.0%	3.71 - 94.27	713 (12)	1, 2, 4, 14, 22, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36, 38
Influential cases removed	37.28	23.99 - 52.82	90.8%	6.80 - 82.89	668 (11)	1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 32
ECSA	27.12	18.95 - 37.18	74.2%	10.32 - 54.59	600 (7)	1, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15
Neglect	**Proportion**	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
ICSA	34.05	22.80 - 47.44	83.3%	7.95 - 75.53	794 (11)	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 19, 28, 36, 39
ECSA [a]	21.50	10.77 - 38.32	87.5%	3.09 - 70.16	525 (5)	7, 8, 9, 14, 15
Influential cases removed	18.00	9.48 - 34.22	81.7%	2.07 - 69.46	422 (4)	7, 8, 14, 15
Exposure to intimate partner violence	**Proportion**	**95% CI**	**I^2**	**PI**	***N* (k)**	**Samples**
ICSA	42.23	34.27 - 50.63	91.7%	12.61 - 78.75	2,698 (25)	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38
ECSA	27.94	17.99 - 40.67	87.1%	6.92 - 66.93	889 (8)	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13
Influential cases removed	31.41	21.56 - 43.27	80.7%	10.39 - 64.40	767 (7)	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12
No (I)CSA	7.52	1.57 - 29.27	93.2%	0.09 - 88.24	1,100 (4)	6, 16, 17, 18
Influential cases removed	4.47	2.40 - 8.19	0.0%	0.69 - 23.95	1,040 (3)	6, 17, 18

Note. [a] These variables had influential studies (i.e., $D_i > 0.5$), but removing these would lead to $k < 3$, i.e., too few studies to meta-analyse. Influential cases removed means that studies with a Cook's Distance $D_i > 0.5$ were removed. ICSA = Intrafamilial child sexual abuse. ECSA = Extrafamilial child sexual abuse. No (I)CSA = No (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse victimisation. 95% CI = 95% Confidence Interval. 95% PI = 95% Prediction interval.

Table 6. ***Differences Between Single Versus Comparison Sample Studies***

Type of abuse	Single sample	Comparison samples	X^2	*p*
Total nonsexual abuse	49.92	43.97	0.492	0.483
Physical abuse	49.56	45.15	0.233	0.629
Emotional abuse	53.80	40.53	3.021	0.082
Neglect	33.41	35.40	0.022	0.883
Exposure to intimate partner violence	45.24	39.10	0.542	0.462

Table 7. ***Comparisons of Proportions of Nonsexual Abuse***

Type of abuse	Referent	Proportion	Comparison	Proportion	X^2	*p*
Total nonsexual abuse	ICSA	46.87	ECSA	29.85	5.427	**.020**
	ICSA	46.17	No (I)CSA	17.16	18.935	**<.001**
	ECSA	29.85	No (I)CSA	17.16	3.800	.051
Physical abuse	ICSA	47.22	ECSA	27.77	7.2623	**.007**
	ICSA	47.22	No (I)CSA	19.76	15.716	**<.001**
	ECSA	27.77	No (I)CSA	19.76	1.356	.244
Emotional abuse	ICSA	37.28	ECSA	27.12	1.922	.166
Neglect	ICSA	34.05	ECSA	18.00	5.883	**.015**
Exposure to intimate partner violence	ICSA	42.23	ECSA	31.41	2.073	.150
	ICSA	42.23	No (I)CSA	4.47	37.750	**<.001**
	ECSA	31.41	No (I)CSA	4.47	22.854	**<.001**

Note. Bolded values mean the differences between groups were significant. ICSA = Intrafamilial child sexual abuse. ECSA = Extrafamilial child sexual abuse. No (I)CSA = No (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse victimisation.

3.4.3.1 Nonsexual Abuse Perpetration by Fathers and Mothers. Who had perpetrated the nonsexual abuse was often implied (fathers), but seldom explicitly reported in studies. Next are the short descriptive results of studies that explicitly reported on both paternal and maternal perpetration of nonsexual abuse in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurred. Because of the way abuse perpetration was reported, these rates could not be compared. Fathers committed 62.0% of physical abuse, mothers 38.0% (k = 5). Fathers committed 60.3% of emotional abuse, mothers 39.7% (k = 4). Fathers committed 41.3% of neglect, mothers 58.7% (k = 3). Fathers committed 78.9% of intimate partner violence, mothers 21.1% (k = 5).

3.4.4 Quality Assessment

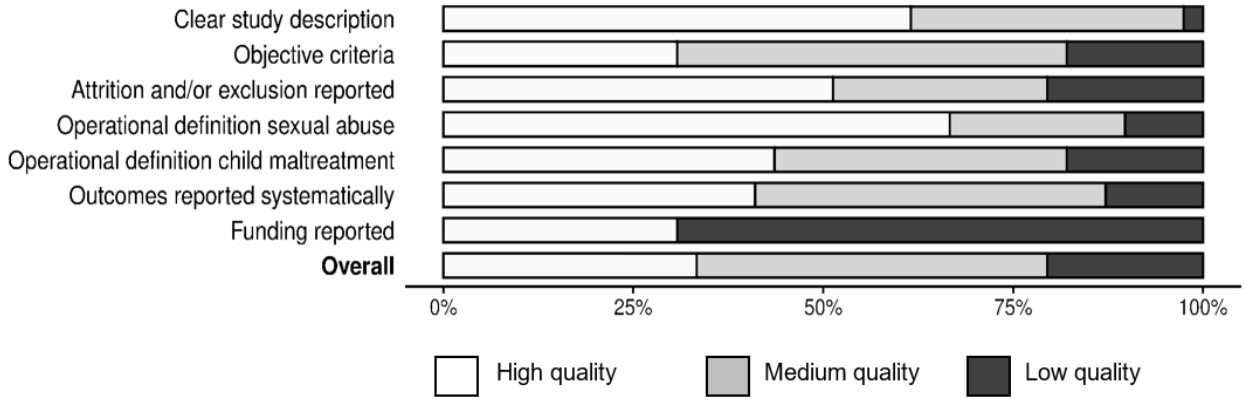
Seven markers of quality were assessed for each study (rated as high – medium – low) with the follow seven criteria:

1. Did the authors clearly describe the study? E.g., participants' characteristics, study setting, years of data collection, and study objectives?
2. The use of objective criteria: Did the authors use objective criteria? E.g., validated measures, clear description of measures, reporting psychometric properties of measures?
3. Did the authors report attrition and/or exclusion criteria? E.g., how many participants were excluded, how many dropped out?
4. How did authors operationalise child sexual abuse? E.g., did they describe what specific acts or by who, or did they use measures that ask about sexual abuse?
5. How did authors operationalise nonsexual abuse? E.g., did they describe what specific acts or by who, or did they use measures that ask about child maltreatment and nonsexual abuse?

6. Were the outcomes reported systematically? E.g., were all intended outcomes from the introduction reported, were appropriate statistics used?
7. Did the authors report their sources of funding (or no funding)?

To reiterate, the agreement on the subcategories of the quality assessment was good (κ = 0.801), and excellent for the overall appraisal (κ = 1.000). Studies were assessed as high quality when they had at most two medium ratings (includes no funding reported), and no low-quality ratings. Studies were assessed as low quality when they had at most one high quality rating. As shown in Figure 6, fewer than half of the studies were of high quality, but only a small proportion to be of low quality. Most studies did report the objectives of the study and operationalised child sexual abuse. However, studies lacked the use of objective criteria (i.e., using validated instruments), often did not operationalise nonsexual abuse, and most did not report their outcomes very systematically, nor reported funding. This means that we need to interpret the findings of this meta-analysis with some caution considering the varying study quality. Quality is included as a moderator variable in the next analyses to check whether quality influenced results.

Figure 6. ***Graphical Representation of Quality Assessment***



3.4.4.1 Moderator Analyses. Three moderator analyses assessed whether these moderators influenced the comparative nonsexual abuse effect sizes: publication year, quality assessment (dichotomised as "high quality" versus "not high quality"), and whether the studies were published or unpublished (i.e., the studies for which authors provided us with output or data). None of these moderators significantly influenced results; see Table 8.

3.4.4.2 Publication Bias. Publication bias for the comparative nonsexual abuse results was assessed using three methods: Peters' regression test (Peters, 2006), Duval and Tweedie's trim and fill method (Duval & Tweedie, 2000), and *p*-curve analysis and effect size estimation (Simonsohn et al., 2014); see Tables 9, 10, and 11. Heterogeneity, i.e., when results do not reflect the true effect, has been identified as a problem across methods and estimates (Peters, 2006; Simonsohn et al., 2014; van Aert et al., 2016). So, the publication bias analyses were performed with the influential cases ($D_i > 0.5$) removed, as this substantially reduced heterogeneity when present across nonsexual abuse results.

Peters' regression test did not indicate publication bias except marginally for exposure to intimate partner violence, $t(9) = 2.27$, $p = .0497$. Using Duval and Tweedie's trim-and-fill, effect sizes became slightly smaller for total nonsexual abuse, physical abuse, and exposure to intimate partner violence, and slightly larger for emotional abuse and neglect. And last, the *p*-curve analysis (which was not possible for emotional abuse and neglect due to too few significant effect sizes) indicated evidential value (i.e., a true non-zero effect) for total nonsexual abuse ($OR = 1.76$) and physical abuse (attenuated $OR = 1.70$), but inconclusive results for exposure to intimate partner violence (attenuated $OR = 1.56$).

Table 8. ***Moderator Analyses***

Variable	Moderator	RI^2	*T*	PHE	Estimate	*t*	*p*
Total nonsexual abuse	Publication year	0.2%	0.0003	97.3%	-0.012	-1.87	0.080
	Quality assessment	12.1%	0.016	0.0%	0.040	0.24	0.815
	Published or unpublished	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	-0.302	-1.99	0.064
Physical abuse	Publication year	29.4%	0.253	0.0%	-0.008	-0.86	0.386
	Quality assessment	29.9%	0.242	0.40%	0.327	1.01	0.338
	Published or unpublished	31.6%	0.265	0.0%	-0.184	-0.66	0.522
Emotional abuse	Publication year	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	-0.010	-0.853	0.426
	Quality assessment	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	0.106	0.360	0.731
	Published or unpublished	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	-0.106	0.360	0.731
Neglect	Publication year	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	-0.011	-1.22	0.279
	Quality assessment	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	-1.732	-1.58	0.175
	Published or unpublished	0.0%	0.000	0.0%	-0.314	-1.25	0.267
Exposure to intimate partner violence	Publication year	26.6%	0.045	17.8%	-0.015	-1.33	0.213
	Quality assessment	36.1%	0.069	0.0%	0.053	0.19	0.855
	Published or unpublished	26.8%	0.048	12.3%	-0.302	-1.23	0.246

Note. RI^2 = Residual heterogeneity; PHE = Proportion of heterogeneity explained.

Table 9. ***Peter's Regression Test***

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*
Total nonsexual abuse	1.37	15	.190
Physical abuse	1.19	9	.263
Emotional abuse	-0.66	6	.531
Neglect	-1.89	4	.132
Exposure to intimate partner violence	2.27	9	.0497

Table 10. ***Duval and Tweedie's Trim and Fill***

Variable	*OR*	95% CI	I^2	PI	*k*	Added *k*	Filled *N*
Total nonsexual abuse	1.66	[1.33; 2.07]	35.4%	[0.85; 3.23]	22	5	4,738
Physical abuse	1.97	[1.47; 2.63]	17.4%	[1.13; 3.45]	12	1	2,302
Emotional abuse	1.59	[1.19; 2.11]	3.8%	[1.13; 2.24]	11	3	1,566
Neglect	2.39	[1.59; 3.60]	0.0%	[1.54; 3.72]	7	1	902
Exposure to intimate partner violence	2.26	[1.77; 2.87]	5.8%	[1.59; 3.21]	15	4	3,187

Table 11. ***P-Curve Analysis***

			p-	*z*-	*p*-	*z*-	*p*-	Evidential value		Estimated	
	Included *k*	Test	binomial	full	full	half	half	present	absent	*d*	*OR*
Total nonsexual abuse	*k* = 8 with *p* < .050	Right skewness test	0.062	-3.116	0.001	-2.266	0.012	Yes	No	0.31	1.76
	k = 7 with *p* < .025	Flatness test	0.905	1.168	0.879	2.989	0.999				
Physical abuse	*k* = 7 with *p* < .050	Right skewness test	0.500	-3.186	0.001	-4.287	0.000	Yes	No	0.29	1.70
	k = 4 with *p* < .025	Flatness test	0.321	1.259	0.896	3.815	1.000				
Exposure to intimate	*k* = 9 with *p* < .050	Right skewness test	0.020	-2.655	0.004	-1.264	0.103	No	No	0.25	1.57
partner violence	*k* = 8 with *p* < .025	Flatness test	0.952	0.552	0.710	2.631	0.996				

3.5 Discussion

This systematic review and meta-analyses show that familial dysfunction is clearly implicated in intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred experienced systematically more familial dysfunction - sociodemographic stressors, disorganised family structures, dysfunctional relationships, nonsexual abuse, and vulnerabilities in parents - than families with children who had experienced extrafamilial child sexual abuse or families without (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse. These effect sizes were particularly large for nonsexual abuse, parental alcohol abuse, and non-intact family structures. Notably, almost half of the intrafamilial child sexual abuse families had experienced other forms of nonsexual abuse: physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence.

3.5.1 Familial Dysfunction as Context for Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

The most important finding of this meta-analysis is how prominent familial dysfunction is in the proximal families (i.e., the family unit in which the intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurred, in contrast to distal families, i.e., the family-of-origin of the individual who has perpetrated the intrafamilial child sexual abuse), compared to families where children had been extrafamilially sexually abused or not (intrafamilially) sexually abused. The most severe manifestation of said dysfunction, nonsexual forms of abuse, was strikingly prevalent: families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had over twice the odds of nonsexual abuse compared to the other families, with the smallest difference for emotional abuse and the largest for exposure to intimate partner violence. While the endeavour was to only include nonsexual abuse by parents or caregivers in the proximal family (e.g., not “lifetime history of violence”), in some studies the definitions of abuse were unclear, and in many studies who had perpetrated the abuse was not defined. While it was apparent that a lot of the nonsexual abuse was perpetrated by parents, it is still possible that some of this nonsexual abuse was perpetrated by other family members, might have been mostly situated around the sexual abuse perpetration, and in a minority of cases, might have been perpetrated by a non-family member.

The prevalence of nonsexual abuse in the proximal families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse was systematically high, with more than 40% reporting physical abuse and exposure to intimate partner violence, and more than a third reporting emotional abuse and neglect. This was significantly higher, in both odds and prevalence, than the comparison families, with narrow prediction intervals. Neither quality, publication year, nor publication status moderated these results. It is unlikely these findings are a result of publication bias, as there was little evidence of such bias, except in exposure to intimate partner violence – however, the estimated attenuation in this effect size was minimal. This was consistent with the expectation that publication bias would be indirect and modest in impact because of the absence of direct selection on the key variables of interest in the original studies.

The high co-occurrence of child sexual abuse and other forms of abuse is well established (e.g., Bidarra et al., 2016; K. L. Chan et al., 2021; Finkelhor et al., 2007), but this current work shows that the magnitude of this co-occurrence is dependent on whether children are sexually abused by someone inside or outside of the family. To my knowledge, the important crossovers between intrafamilial child sexual abuse, nonsexual abuse, and intimate partner violence has until now not been systematically established. They indicate we should include patterns of proximal intrafamilial dysfunction and abuse into our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. Future research is needed to understand what percentage of children being non sexually abused also experience intrafamilial child sexual abuse, or what percentage of the children of adult victims of intimate partner violence are intrafamilially sexually abused.

Findings further indicated that families wherein intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred reported more serious familial dysfunction across all other domains than the comparison families. These effect sizes were all in the same direction, and moderate to large in size when benchmarked to the findings of Assink et al. (2019), though not all statistically significant. There were significant and large effect sizes indicating that families wherein intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurred, compared to the other families, reported lower socio-economic status, had more often

experienced homelessness, and had more non-intact parental structures. There was more spousal conflict, and they consistently experienced more nonsexual abuse (physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence). Finally, parents from these families were more vulnerable, with more extensive criminal histories, greater mental health issues, and more substance abuse problems (particularly alcohol abuse). While in the same direction, effect sizes were smaller and non-significant for lower education, more unemployment, larger families, more problematic parenting practices, and parents' distal childhood abuse histories. These findings are all correlational and cannot establish temporal precedence or causality. Some familial dysfunction might precede the intrafamilial child sexual abuse and could potentially be of etiological significance, while other dysfunction might coincide or even be a consequence of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. For example, spousal conflict is discussed as a cause of father-daughter incest in the clinical and theoretical literatures (Herman, 1981; Russell, 1983), but it is also easy to imagine that spousal conflict flares up during intrafamilial child sexual abuse (because the mother is suspicious, for instance), or after the intrafamilial child sexual abuse is discovered, if the family does not dissolve immediately as a result of the discovery.

There was a greater (albeit non-significant) prevalence of childhood abuse histories in the distal families-of-origin of families where intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred compared to the other families – similar to Seto et al. (2015)'s findings of more childhood abuse in the distal families-of-origin of men who had committed intrafamilial versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. The congruence in this and Seto and colleagues' work highlights the intergenerational interwovenness of risks for perpetration and vulnerabilities for victimisation, and highlights its risks for future generations, too. It also strengthens the idea of intergenerational transmission of abuse, where abused children may grow up and be abusive themselves, sexually or nonsexually, or end up in relationships where they or their children are abused. But, as Seto and colleagues (2015) posited, we should explore other factors that are likely important to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, such as other familial dysfunction – as done within the present meta-analyses.

3.5.2 Risks Inside and Outside the Home

It is important to remember that a comparative meta-analysis provides only a *comparison* – not an absolute appraisal of the magnitude of a risk factor. For example: this meta-analysis finds there is a higher risk of physical abuse in families with intrafamilial compared to extrafamilial child sexual abuse – however, this does not mean that there is no physical abuse present in in the latter, or that physical abuse is not a risk factor for extrafamilial child sexual abuse, or that we know how these experiences of physical abuse compare to the general population. Indeed, there was a substantial prevalence of nonsexual abuse in both comparison groups: around a third in families in which extrafamilial child sexual abuse took place, and even around a fifth in families without (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse. More studies including general population comparison samples, especially non-convicted or non-offending samples, would be critical in understanding how to benchmark these findings on risk factors in relation to the general population.

The potential influence of consanguinity and degree of relatedness has long been of interest to research on intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Theoretically, sociolegal fathers who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are expected to be more atypical sexually and more antisocial than biological fathers, because they are genetically unrelated and therefore more like men who commit extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. But research has found mostly marginal differences between sociolegal and biological fathers on these sexuality and antisociality factors (Pullman et al., 2017). However, research also finds that the presence of a non-biological parent increases the risk of sexual and nonsexual abuse of children, the so-called "Cinderella effect" (e.g., Archer, 2013; Block & Kaplan, 2022). Similarly, families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse had higher odds of having non-intact parental structures than other families, which included all situations wherein the biological parents were not parenting their child together, e.g., separation, single parents, stepfamilies, or death of a parent. Emphatically, non-intact family structures are not dysfunctional by definition. However, they do indicate that there was a period of dysfunction or instability, at least at some point in time, such as

high conflict or housing and economic instability (Finkelhor, 2008; Malvaso et al., 2015) – factors found in this meta-analysis, too. Alternatively, selection effects might underlie the overrepresentation of stepfamilies in childhood abuse research: barriers to reporting a (short-term) boyfriend or stepfather might be lower than reporting a (life-long) biological father. Regardless, we should keep in mind that children might be at higher risk of intrafamilial child sexual abuse when their parenting structures break down.

While we know that there are differences between men convicted of intrafamilial versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (Seto et al., 2015), less is known about men who commit sexual offences against both related and unrelated victims (Stephens et al., 2018). Some research indicates that a substantial number of men convicted of an intrafamilial child sexual abuse offence in practice also commit sexual offences against other intrafamilial and extrafamilial victims (Seto et al., 1999; Studer et al., 2000). In intimate partner violence research, there are known differences in personality and psychopathology between men who are violent towards their partner "only", and those who are also violent toward people outside the home (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). There may likewise be meaningful differences between men who commit abuse towards related children exclusively or towards other children as well. There may also be important differences between men who commit sexual abuse exclusively or who commit both sexual and nonsexual abuse; men who offend against a single child in their family compared to multiple children; and those who victimise their partner as well as children in the family.

3.5.3 The Family System and Abuse

The scientific understanding of the role of familial dysfunction and mothers (or, in more recent terms, non-offending partners) in child victimisation – and intrafamilial child sexual victimisation specifically – is a point of high controversy, with a painful history. Mothers were (and are) blamed for the abuse of their children, failing their motherly and wifely duties, disbelieving their daughters, or

even facilitating the abuse (Azzopardi, 2022; McIntyre, 1981). Nonetheless, from a family systems lens, mothers are included in this system, and some mothers do indeed perpetrate or facilitate abuse.

Mothers committed a substantial, albeit minority, proportion of nonsexual abuse, and a small proportion of sexual abuse, with the caveat that very few studies reported on this information. When intimate partner violence occurred, the direction of intimate partner violence perpetration was more often from fathers to mothers, than vice versa. Studies with both men and women have found intimate partner violence victimisation can create many barriers to leaving a relationship or protecting children (O. W. Barnett, 2001; Bates, 2019), which might partially explain the high co-occurrence of intrafamilial child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence in this study. While intrafamilial child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence seem to be often interpreted as parallel processes (Bidarra et al., 2016), they can take on complex forms, for instance fathers who reported that they sexually abused their children to punish their partner (Hartley, 2001). Interestingly, non-feminist research with non-offending partners of people convicted of child sexual abuse rarely mentions intimate partner violence or other abuse; more often, the narrative is that families seemed functional, and partners were unaware of the sexual abuse (Bux et al., 2016; Duncan et al., 2022). We do need to consider that studies with partners of people convicted of (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse likely suffer from strong selection biases, as partners who were complicit in, knew of, disbelieved, or ignored the sexual abuse, regardless of intimate partner violence experiences, are probably not willing to participate in these studies – or report the intrafamilial child sexual abuse in the first place.

Importantly, abuse can have spillover effects, wherein one form of family violence can increase the risk of other forms of family violence (Pu & Rodriguez, 2021). Given the importance of parental functioning that spanned both mothers and fathers, and the findings that mothers perpetrated a substantial amount of nonsexual abuse, a renewed and nuanced study of the complexities of the family systems around men who commit sexual abuse offences against related children would be a worthwhile and important endeavour.

3.6 Limitations and Future Directions

While meta-analyses like these can provide cumulative evidence of broad relations, because the contributing primary studies were correlational and retrospective in nature, they do not prove causality. As such, we need to be cautious with our interpretations. For instance, did familial dysfunction precede or succeed the sexual abuse? Are recollections of family functioning coloured by sexual abuse? Additionally, the timing of the perpetration of sexual and nonsexual abuse were not always clear: some forms of abuse might have happened across various times and family constellations, such as a mother reporting on her experiences of intimate partner violence with a different partner than the partner who sexually abused her child. Or someone may have been sexually victimised by their father, who is unemployed, and physically victimised by their mother, who has a substance use problem. These are all relevant factors when thinking about familial dysfunction, and it would be a mistake to assume we only need to pay attention to fathers.

Due to not enough studies reporting on these variables, theoretically important third variables such as the role of sexuality, expressions of antisociality, or other factors such as parent-child relationships or infidelity, could not be accounted for. Nor were studies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs identified that could rule out third variable explanations. While parent training (Gubbels et al., 2019) and family systems treatment (Carr, 2019) have been shown to modestly decrease child maltreatment recurrence, these interventions are mostly focused on physical abuse. Their effect on sexual abuse is unclear, for example, studies showing that family interventions that reduce dysfunction can reduce intrafamilial child sexual abuse onset or recidivism would support the idea that familial dysfunction can play a causal role.

As with all meta-analyses, it is possible not all relevant studies were included. There is especially a large number of samples that potentially contained relevant information, but that could not be included due to data sharing restrictions or because we were unable to reach authors. Studies of varying sources were included, such as official and self-report, justice, clinical, and nonclinical

samples, with varying definitions of sexual abuse and nonsexual abuse. For definitions, most people would define "one time penetration by father" squarely as "sexual abuse", but "one time being cursed out by father" will (justifiably or not) invoke more debate about whether that constitutes "emotional abuse". The findings should also be interpreted with some caution in light of the studies' broader quality limitations, such as lack of standardised measures and lack of systematic reporting, even though quality did not moderate the results.

We should also acknowledge that definitions of intrafamilial child sexual abuse throughout studies are in some ways too broad, and in other ways too narrow. Much previous intrafamilial child sexual abuse research has focused on fathers (e.g., Williams & Finkelhor, 1995), some on the difference between biological and stepfathers (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2005), and a blossoming research area focuses on sibling sexual abuse (e.g., Yates & Allardyce, 2021). Still, for this meta-analysis, only include three offending studies could be included, and most studies used a mix of familial relationships. A substantial portion of intrafamilial child sexual abuse is also committed by uncles, grandfathers, cousins, and female relatives – groups mentioned parenthetically, but even more under-researched. Motivations and characteristics for these groups may yet again be different, for instance in terms of sexual motivation (Blanchard et al., 2006; Seto et al., 1999). Even more complicated, this also means that dysfunction might not necessarily be present in the victim's nuclear family (indeed, not all victims of intrafamilial child sexual abuse report other family dysfunction), but in their uncle's or grandfather's family. However, this study also found that a substantial portion of victims was poly-victimised by multiple family members, which points to multi-faceted dysfunction across inter- and intra-familial relationships. Additionally, a substantial proportion was also victimised by someone outside of the family. The results should therefore be interpreted as an examination of risk factors for offending and vulnerabilities for victimisation related to *any* reported intrafamilial child sexual abuse.

Last, while this meta-analysis included broad family level variables, there are many theoretically important mechanisms left unexplored. Most notably, future studies should assess parent-

child relationships, attachment, infidelity, parenting practices (hostile, absent, patriarchal), sexual and romantic partner satisfaction, and the production of child sexual exploitation material. Examining these mechanisms could be essential in advancing our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

4. A Quantitative Analysis of Three Theoretical Explanations of Father-Child Incest

Overview

The current study examined three theoretical explanations of father-child incest in 118 fathers and non-fathers convicted of sexual and nonsexual offences: *kinship recognition mechanisms*, *individual dispositions* (atypical sexuality and antisociality), and *familial dysfunction*. There was little to no support for most evolutionary kinship recognition mechanisms, with marginal or contra-hypothesised results for phenotypic similarity and physical proximity, and mostly no support for the mediating associations of arousal and disgust. There was some support for the partner fidelity mechanism, but mostly compared to sociolegal fathers, which complicates its interpretation. Individual dispositions neither explained why someone would choose to sexually offend against a related child over an unrelated child – however, the findings indicate that atypical sexuality has a nuanced role in incest offending. Familial dysfunction was the best-supported explanation for father-child incest, with fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own children reporting more partner and parent-child dysfunction than the comparison groups, although less cheating and intimate partner violence perpetration than fathers convicted of nonsexual offences. The findings indicate that future research should focus on comparisons with non-offending populations to more solidly situate the aetiological and risk profile of incest offending, and that prevention and intervention efforts might be best directed to families-at-risk.

4.1 Introduction

Incest is a puzzle, as living arrangements with nuclear family provide plenty opportunity to engage in sexual behaviour with close relatives, but this is not done universally. As discussed in section 2.2, this is assumed to be due to incest avoidance (biologically driven indifference or aversion to the idea of incest) and incest taboo (social and moral rules about the prohibition of incest). Incest is, at the same time, also a serious and frequent problem, with general population estimates of victimisation from 1 to 10% (e.g., Andersson et al., 2020; L. Radford et al., 2013), and a third of sexual convictions being intrafamilial (e.g., Office for National Statistics, 2020; Snyder, 2000). Why incest occurs, however, is poorly understood. A testable hypothesis is that incest happens when constraints (i.e., incest avoidance and taboos) fail. Hence we would expect differences in relation to these constraints between individuals who commit incest and those who do not. The current study examines three theoretical explanations of father-child incest: 1) kinship recognition mechanisms, 2) individual dispositions, and 3) familial dysfunction. An extensive detailing of these mechanisms can be found in the literature review in Chapter 2, but a summary is provided below.

4.1.1 Explanations of Kinship Recognition Mechanisms

Kinship recognition mechanisms function to recognise kin, in order to prevent inbreeding depression and to direct resources to biological offspring (Buss & Schmitt, 2019). Specific to this study, kinship recognition mechanisms inform fathers' paternity certainty. Theoretically, then, men who are less certain of their paternity, should have a higher propensity (or less aversion) to engage in sex with their (putative) offspring. The three most prominent distal paternal-child kinship recognition cues are phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity, and physical proximity in childhood.

4.1.1.1 Phenotypic Similarity. Phenotypic similarity is the extent to which relatives share the same expression of genetic traits, for instance through physical resemblance. If phenotypic similarity is a kinship recognition cue, resemblance should invoke sexual aversion. So far, Billingsley and

colleagues (2018), Babchishin and colleagues (2024), and McAskill and colleagues (2024) have found a negative relationship between physical resemblance and daughter-directed incest propensity.

4.1.1.2 Partner Fidelity. Paternity certainty is affected by partner fidelity, i.e., the belief if a partner has been faithful, particularly around the time of conception. This can be influenced by e.g., sexual activity or spousal conflict. All recent general population studies so far have found evidence that greater biological relatedness certainty was significantly related to increased sexual arousal or decreased sexual disgust (Billingsley et al., 2018; Kresanov et al., 2018), or, inversely, suspicions of partner infidelity were related to increased incest propensity (Babchishin et al., 2024; McAskill et al., 2024).

4.1.1.3 Physical Proximity in Childhood (The Westermarck Hypothesis). The Westermarck hypothesis (1894) posits that close physical proximity during early childhood promotes sexual indifference or aversion (A. P. Wolf, 2015a). Support for this mechanism has been found in siblings (e.g., Antfolk et al., 2018; Bevc & Silverman, 2000). But as children are obviously not present during *their father's* Westermarckian window of indifference, the application of this mechanisms to father-child incest aversion is not obvious. Hypothetically, this avoidance mechanisms might also be activated *a posteriori* through high exposure between father and child in the child's infant years (Pullman et al., 2019). An initial study found that fathers who sexually abused their daughters were less present and involved with their daughters than non-offending fathers (Parker & Parker, 1986), but no other studies since then have found the expected associations between caretaking or co-residence and incest (Babchishin et al., 2024; Kresanov et al., 2018; McAskill et al., 2024; Pullman et al., 2019; Williams & Finkelhor, 1995).

4.1.1.4 Incest Taboo, Arousal, and Disgust. Incest taboos are near-universal, and plausibly interact with kinship recognition mechanisms through disgust. Arousal and disgust are not kin recognition mechanisms in themselves, but they mediate the expected association between kin recognition and incest propensity and aversion; if a father recognises his daughter as kin, he is not

aroused, and he is or disgusted by the idea of having sex with her, and vice versa. Billingsley and colleagues (2018) found a positive relation between increased partner fidelity and disgust, and Pullman and colleagues (2019) found that daughter-directed incest disgust was negatively related to incest propensity.

4.1.1.5 Consanguinity. Consanguinity is an important consideration in evolutionary explanations of incest. Evolutionary psychologists ascribe the "Cinderella effect" (i.e., the increased risk of child abuse by the presence of a stepparent, Archer, 2013; Sedlak et al., 2010) to stepparents not wanting to "squander" their resources on non-biological children (Daly & Wilson, 1980, 1987). Theoretically, consanguinity is strongly determinant of incest avoidance: stepfathers do not run the risk of inbreeding depressed offspring when impregnating a female stepchild and do not have kinship cues to them in terms of phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity, and, in many cases, early physical proximity and caretaking. Curiously, however, stepfathers do not differ from biological fathers on their arousal and disgust responses to incest vignettes in any known study thus far (Albrecht, 2019; Kresanov et al., 2018; Pezzoli et al., 2022; Pullman et al., 2019). Additionally, having a stepdaughter was not related to incest propensity in Babchishin et al. (2024). So, while there is some research evidence for evolutionary kinship recognition mechanisms in the general population, the findings are inconsistent, especially considering their role in offending and how consanguinity influences father-child incest avoidance mechanisms.

4.1.2 Explanations of Individual Dispositions

What other factors could theoretically overcome constraints to incestuous offending? A reasonable hypothesis is that individual psychological dispositions related to sexual (re-)offending propensity might also facilitate incest offending. Prime candidates are the two risk factors that most strongly predict sexual recidivism: atypical sexual interest, and antisociality (R. K. Hanson & Bussière, 1998; R. K. Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann et al., 2010; Seto et al., 2023). Theoretically, men who commit incest offences should be higher on these factors driving sexual offending to overcome

barriers to incest. Puzzlingly, the contrary is found. In Seto and colleagues' (2015) meta-analysis, there was less evidence of both atypical sexuality and antisociality among men who had committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. In a second meta-analysis, sociolegal versus biological fathers who had committed incest offences showed only marginal differences on atypical sexuality and antisociality factors – also contrary to expectations, as sociolegal fathers are genetically unrelated and should theoretically be more like men who commit extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (Pullman et al., 2017). While this does not mean that atypical sexuality and antisociality are not at all important in father-child incest offending, it does mean that they do not adequately explain why some men choose to sexually offend against a related over an unrelated child.

4.1.3 Explanations of Familial Dysfunction

Child sexual abuse victimisation is primarily related to familial dysfunction (Assink et al., 2019); however, research has thus far not specified these risks for intra- versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation. However, it seems logical that incestuous offending is related to the family. Referring back to the Cinderella-effect, family-oriented psychologists also posit that it is not "step-parenting" that is risky, but that non-intact family structures are a proxy for familial dysfunction, which is the actual risk factor for child abuse (Finkelhor, 2008; Malvaso et al., 2015).

There are several potential familial dysfunction mechanisms that could relate to incest. For example, the cycle of maltreatment mechanism hypothesises that abused children are at risk to be revictimized or perpetrate maltreatment in their own families of procreation, through social learning or insecure attachments (Madigan et al., 2019). Other mechanisms might include men in dysfunctional and sexually dissatisfied partner relationships using their children as partner surrogates (Cohen, 1983); distant and contentious parent-child relationships increasing and perpetuating the risk of abuse of children (Milner et al., 2022); or patriarchal attitudes manifesting in feelings of entitlement to sex (R. K. Hanson et al., 1994). There is a solid literature detailing familial dysfunction and abuse in the families-of-origin of men who commit incest offences (e.g., Seto et al., 2015; Williams & Finkelhor,

1992). However, we know concerningly little about family functioning in the families of procreation of men who commit incest offences. The sparse (and dated) research on proximal family functioning indicates relational and sexual dissatisfaction (Lang et al., 1990; Leclerc et al., 2014), low parent-child involvement (Parker & Parker, 1986; Williams & Finkelhor, 1995), patriarchal attitudes and sexual entitlement (R. K. Hanson et al., 1994; Iffland & Thomas, 2024; Pemberton & Wakeling, 2009), and a high prevalence of nonsexual child and intimate partner abuse perpetration (Stermac et al., 1995; Weinrott & Saylor, 1991; Williams & Finkelhor, 1995). While the results of Chapter 3 clearly indicate that there is a high level of familial dysfunction in families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse takes place, there has been little other research that situates research in comparison to other families or men with other types of offences. As such, this study includes comparisons with both fathers and non-fathers (to control for fatherhood), biological and sociolegal fathers (to control for consanguinity), as well as sexual and non-sexual offence convictions (to control for both atypical sexuality as well as general antisociality).

4.2 Current Study

The current study seeks to examine three theoretical explanations of father-child incest offending: kinship recognition mechanisms, individual dispositions, and familial dysfunction. Past studies on incest offending have found incongruent results and have included theoretically limited or no comparison groups. As such, this study seeks to compare fathers who are convicted of sexual offences against their own (biological or sociolegal) children to fathers and non-fathers who are convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children, and fathers who are convicted of nonsexual violent offences against adults. These comparisons allow us to isolate factors associated with intrafamilial versus extrafamilial offending or offending more generally. Based on the previous literature and theorising, the following is expected:

1. Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children will show fewer kinship recognition cues to their children (phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity, and physical

proximity in childhood) as well as proximate kinship mediating mechanisms (arousal and disgust) than biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences. Further, biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children will show greater partner fidelity, physical proximity in childhood, less arousal, and more disgust than sociolegal fathers convicted of incestuous and non-incestuous offences.

2. Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children will have fewer indicators of atypical sexuality than fathers and non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences, but more than fathers convicted of nonsexual violent offences. Also, fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children will have fewer indicators of antisociality than fathers and non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences, or fathers convicted of nonsexual violent offences
3. Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children will have more dysfunctional families than fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences or fathers convicted of nonsexual violent offences.

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Measures

The study included measures for background, kinship recognition mechanisms, individual dispositions, and familial dysfunction. Measures were participant-specific, for example, questions about children were administered only to participants who indicated they had children, and questions about relationships were only administered to participants who indicated they had been in significant relationships. If a participant had children, he was asked to fill in the questionnaire about victimised over non-victimised children, and following the sequence of 1) biological daughters, 2) sociolegal daughters, 3) biological sons, and 4) sociolegal sons. Questionnaires assessing interactions with others (e.g., relationships with partners, parent-child relationships) were rated retrospectively (i.e., prior to the

(alleged) sexual offence against the related child), or for comparison groups, prior to the (alleged) index offence they were convicted of.

4.3.1.1 Background Measures. The relevant background measures can be found in Online Appendix B5.

4.3.1.1.1 File Review. Participants' files were reviewed for information to supplement the self-report measures, including offence history and index offence information, mental health (including paraphilic) diagnoses, risk assessments, and psychological evaluations.

4.3.1.1.2 Background Questionnaire. A background questionnaire was created to inquire about demographic data, juvenile delinquent behaviour, sexual history, and experiences of childhood abuse (physical abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence, and sexual abuse).

4.3.1.2 Kinship Recognition Measures. The relevant kinship recognition measures can be found in Online Appendix B6.

4.3.1.2.1 Child Questionnaire. A created questionnaire was administered to all participants with children. The questionnaire included questions about child resemblance (e.g., "How closely does your child resemble you in appearance?"), infidelity (e.g., "Did the mother of this child ever cheat on you during your relationship that you know of?"), relationship to the mother (e.g., "Were you ever separated or lived apart from the mother of child?"), and absence from the home (e.g., "During the first 6 years of this child's life, how often did you spend time with this child, on average?").

4.3.1.2.2 Caretaking. This measure was included in the child questionnaire to measure caretaking of children 6 or younger. It is based on the items of the caregiving subscale of father involvement in Cabrera et al. (2004), for instance "How often did you assist child with eating or give child a bottle?". It consisted of eight items on a rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*at least every day*).

4.3.1.2.3 Incest Vignettes. These vignettes included four scenarios, describing incestuous sexual contact between fathers or stepfathers with their daughters. Participants were asked to rate how

arousing and how disgusting they found each story on a scale from 0 (*not at all arousing* or *not at all disgusting*) to 10 (*very arousing* or *very disgusting*).

4.3.1.3 Atypical Sexuality Measures. The relevant atypical sexuality measures can be found in Online Appendix B7.

4.3.1.3.1 Viewing Time Measure and Rating. This viewing time measure includes the presentation of 40 computer generated pictures of female and male individuals in bathing suits representing the five Tanner stages (Babchishin et al., 2015; Pezzoli et al., 2022). The time spent on each picture was unobtrusively recorded while participants simultaneously rated the attractiveness of the depicted individuals on a scale ranging from 1 (*very unattractive*) to 7 (*very attractive*). The outcomes included both the relative viewing time as well as the rating of the individuals.

4.3.1.3.2 Greenberg's Sexual Preference Visual Analogue Scale. This rating measure (Greenberg, 1991) asked participants to rate their self-reported interest in young girls, young boys, adult women, and adult men on a 10-point preference scale, for instance, a preference for young boys (1) versus for young girls (10), and a preference for young girls (1) versus adult men (10).

4.3.1.3.3 Sexual Compulsivity Scale (SCS). The SCS asked participants on a ten item rating scale ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 4 (*very much like me*) the extent to which participants agree with statements related to sexually compulsive behaviour and preoccupation, for instance "I sometimes get so horny I could lose control" (Kalichman & Rompa, 1995).

4.3.1.4 Family Dysfunction Measures. The relevant family dysfunction measures can be found in Online Appendix B8.

4.3.1.4.1 Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS). The KMS is a widely used short measure of marital satisfaction (Graham et al., 2011), and comprised three items, ranging from 1 (*extremely dissatisfied*) to 7 (*extremely satisfied*), for instance "How satisfied were you with your relationship with your partner/spouse?".

4.3.1.4.2 Shortened Version of the Index of Sexual Satisfaction (S-ISS). The S-ISS (Hudson, 1998) consisted of 12 statements describing the quality of sexual relations with a partner, with ratings ranging from 1 (*none of the time*) to 7 (*all of the time*), for instance "My partner was very sensitive to my sexual needs and desires".

4.3.1.4.3 Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS). The CPRS was part of the child questionnaire. It comprised 15 items from 1 (*definitely does not apply*) to 5 (*definitely applies*) that measured parents' perception of closeness (7 items) and conflict (8 items) with their children (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011), for instance "If upset, my child will seek comfort from me".

4.3.1.4.4 Hanson Sex Attitude Questionnaire – Entitlement Subscale. This subscale (R. K. Hanson et al., 1994) measured sexual entitlement on a nine item scale, with 1 *(completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*), for instance "Women should oblige men's sexual needs".

4.3.1.4.5 Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). The AWS (Spence & Hahn, 1997) measured beliefs about traditionally gendered responsibilities and behaviours on 15 Likert scale items, ranging from 1 (*agree strongly*) to 4 (*disagree strongly*), for instance "In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children".

4.3.2 Procedure

This section describes the data collection procedures. For clarification: the data were collected prior to this dissertation's commencement (data collection from 2016 to 2021), and this dissertation will analyse previously collected data. The study included Canadian and UK correctional data collection involving self-administered questionnaires including a viewing time task, via a secure laptop that was disabled from the internet. Participants were recruited through flyers at locations, and by referral of treatment providers and staff. Participants were assigned a study identification number, and identifying information was kept in a secure location and deleted as soon as possible. Research assistants obtained informed consent for the study at the in-person meeting. The research assistant explained the study to the participant in detail, after which the participants initialled a consent form.

The participant then completed the survey battery using a secure laptop and received a debrief. The research assistant coded their file review after. Participants were not compensated for their participation, as this is not permitted under Canadian and UK guidelines for prison-based research. Recruitment was halted owing to COVID-19 restrictions limiting access to both Canadian and UK sites, resulting in fewer participants than planned. Ethical approval was received for the studies from the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group Research Ethics Group, reference 2015016, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, reference REB# 011-2016, Nottingham Trent University, reference 2017_130, and the National Research Committee of HM Prison and Probation Service, reference 2017-224. Funding for this study was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services of Canada.

4.3.3 Analyses

Given the limited sample size, it was decided to focus on descriptive statistics and a focused analysis using planned contrasts and reporting effect sizes. Hedge's *g* was reported for continuous data, and Odds Ratios (*OR*) for binomial data. For all measures, positive Hedge's *g*s and *OR*s larger than 1.00 mean that the referent group (e.g., fathers who are convicted of sexual offences against their own children) had higher or more indicators of the theoretical risk factor than the comparison group, and negative *g*s and *OR*s below 1.00 indicate that the referent group had lower or fewer indicators of this risk factor. SPSS version 28 and RStudio (version 06.0.421) package *effectsize* (Ben-Shachar et al., 2020) were used for the analyses, and Python packages *seaborn* (Waskom, 2021) and *matplotlib* (Hunter, 2007) for the figures.

4.3.4 Participants

In total, 136 men from four locations participated in this study. Eighteen men were excluded from the final analysis: four were not fathers and had also not committed a sexual offence against an extrafamilial child; one participant did not report nor had file information on the age of his victim(s); one participant was a sociolegal father whose sociolegal victim was older than 15 when the

abuse started[9]; and one participant had no completed file review and no completed the test battery. After consultation, an additional 11 participants who were convicted of sexual offences against adults only were deleted from analyses, as this group was too small to produce meaningful comparisons. Of the 118 final included participants, 78 (66.1%) came from three medium to high secure sexual offence treatment and assessment institutions in Canada, and 40 (33.9%) came from a medium secure sexual offence prison establishment in the United Kingdom.

For the analyses, the 118 participants were divided into four theoretically relevant groups. The typing of the groups went according to the following hierarchy: I) fathers, II) non-fathers; and then a) anyone with a sexual offence against biological children, b) anyone with a sexual offence against sociolegal children, c) anyone with a sexual offence against extrafamilial children, d) anyone with a sexual offence against unrelated adults, e) anyone with a nonsexual, violent offence against an adult. This was a nested hierarchy: for example, a participant in the group "convicted of sexual offences against biological children" can also have reported extrafamilial child victims, but someone in the group "convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children" cannot have reported biological child victims. Consequently, the groups were: 1) Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own (biological or sociolegal) children (n = 34; 28.8%); 2) Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (n = 37; 31.4%); 3) Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (n = 22; 18.6%); and 4) Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (n = 25; 21.2%).

Available demographic data is presented in Table 12 and 13. The age at time of index offence (n = 92) was 36.5 (SD = 11.7) years, range 18 to 69. Study participation date was not recorded in every

[9] In this study and in line with Chapters 3 and 5, the aim is to investigate sexual offences against prepubescent and pubescent children, i.e., children who have not yet developed secondary characteristics (proxy age 11 or younger) or children who are developing secondary sex characteristics (proxy age 12 to 15).

file, so compared to the median date of assessment (April 13, 2019), the age of participants (*n* = 111) at assessment was 43.8 (*SD* = 13.95) years (range: 18 to 76). The majority of participants were White (*n* = 88/101; 87.1%). Most participants had been in a significant (i.e., cohabiting 2 years or longer, or marriage) romantic relationship in their lifetime (*n* = 84/116; 72.4%), although the majority was not married at the time of the index offence (*n* = 68/114; 59.6%). The average self-reported (*n* = 72) number of children was 3.40 (*SD* = 2.41; range 0 to 12), the average file-reported (*n* = 106) number of children was 1.63 (*SD* = 1.74; range 0 to 9). Half of participants did not obtain higher education beyond high school (*n* = 57/114), and most participants had a low income, i.e., $30,000 a year or less (*n* = 74/113; 65.5%). When recorded (*n* = 78), almost half of the participants were diagnosed with one or multiple personality disorder diagnoses (*n* = 36; 46.2%). Over half (*n* = 64/112; 57.1%) had one or more other recorded mental health diagnosis.

Participants (*n* = 93) had on average 2.30 (*SD* = 1.56) victims, range 1-9 (maximum recorded). The majority (*n* = 60/96; 62.5%) had monomorphic victim relationships, i.e., only biological children, or only extrafamilial children, while the rest had polymorphic victim relationships. Of fathers with incest convictions, 38.2% (*n* =13) had offended against biological children, 52.9% (*n* = 18) against sociolegal children, and 8.8% (*n* = 3) against both. The gendered relationship between 22 fathers and 31 sexually victimised children was known (i.e., some fathers abused multiple of their children): eleven fathers had offended against biological daughters (50%) and sociolegal daughters (50.0%), five against biological sons (22.7%), and four against sociolegal sons (18.2%). Second-degree related children such as nephews and nieces were coded as “extrafamilial”, and 16 out of 96 men (16.7%) had sexually offended against a related child. Most participants’ youngest victim was 11 or younger (*n* = 54/91; 59.3%), and the majority had female victims only (*n* = 62/96; 64.6%).

Table 12. ***Group and Relational Information of Participants***

Comparison groups (*n* = 118)		***n* (%)**	**Victim relationship type**	***n* (%)**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children		34 (28.8%)	Biological children	5 (14.7%)
			Sociolegal children	7 (20.6%)
	Relationship to child (*n* = 22)	n (%)	Biological and sociolegal children	1 (2.9%)
	Biological daughter	11 (50.0%)	Biological and extrafamilial children	4 (11.8%)
	Biological son	5 (22.7%)	Biological, sociolegal, and extrafamilial children	1 (2.9%)
	Sociolegal daughter	11 (50.0%)	Biological children and unrelated adults	2 (5.9%)
	Sociolegal son	4 (18.2%)	Biological and extrafamilial children, and unrelated adults	2 (5.9%)
			Biological, sociolegal, and extrafamilial children, and unrelated adults	1 (2.9%)
			Sociolegal and extrafamilial children	9 (26.5%)
			Sociolegal and extrafamilial children, and unrelated adults	2 (5.9%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children		37 (31.4%)	Extrafamilial children	28 (75.7%)
			Extrafamilial children and unrelated adults	9 (24.3%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults		22 (18.6%)		
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children		25 (21.2%)	Extrafamilial children	20 (80.0%)
			Extrafamilial children and unrelated adults	5 (20.0%)

Kinship recognition comparison groups (*n* = 68)	***n* (%)**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against a biological child	15 (22.1%)
Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against a sociolegal child	9 (13.2%)
Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences	39 (57.4%)
Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences	5 (7.4%)

Table 13. ***Demographic and Victim Information of Participants***

Age at time of index offence	***M* (SD)**
Total sample (*n* = 93)	36.48 (11.75)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 24)	42.13 (9.81)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 27)	35.78 (14.41)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 18)	38.56 (8.31)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	29.78 (9.24)
Age at time of study [a]	***M* (SD)**
Total sample (*n* = 111)	43.84 (13.95)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 31)	49.58 (10.62)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	44.73 (15.29)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 18)	40.56 (8.42)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	37.76 (16.09)
Ethnicity (White) [b]	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 101)	88 (87.1%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 26)	23 (88.5%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	33 (91.7%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 16)	14 (87.5%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	18 (78.3%)
Has ever had a significant relationship [c]	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 116)	84 (72.4%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	30 (88.2%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	28 (75.7%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	18 (90.0%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	8 (32.0%)
In (marital) relationship at the time of the index offence	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 114)	46 (40.4%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	24 (70.6%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	14 (37.8%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 18)	4 (22.2%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	4 (16.0%)
Number of self-reported children [d]	***M* (SD)**
Total sample (*n* = 72)	3.40 (2.41)
Father with sexual convictions against his own (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 30)	4.50 (2.64)
Father with sexual convictions against extrafamilial children (*n* = 21)	2.48 (1.89)
Father with nonsexual, violent convictions against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	2.76 (1.97)
File reported number of children at index offence [d]	***M* (SD)**
Total sample (*n* = 106)	1.63 (1.74)
Father with sexual convictions against his own (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 27)	2.33 (1.73)
Father with sexual convictions against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	2.08 (1.90)
Father with nonsexual, violent convictions against unrelated adults (*n* = 18)	1.94 (1.16)
Income $30,000 a year or less	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 110)	72 (65.5%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 32)	14 (43.8%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	23 (67.6%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	14 (66.7%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	21 (91.3%)

Table 13 continues on next page

Table 13 (continued)

Education (high school or less)	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 112)	56 (50.0%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 32)	15 (46.9%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	14 (14.2%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	13 (59.1%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	14 (58.3%)
Diagnosed with one or multiple personality disorders [e]	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 76)	34 (44.7%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 19)	7 (36.8%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 18)	6 (33.3%)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 18)	12 (66.7%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 21)	9 (42.9%)
Total count of mental health disorder diagnoses (apart from personality disorders) [f]	***M* (SD)**
Total sample (*n* = 109)	1.48 (1.52)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 30)	1.13 (1.33)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	0.83 (1.25)
Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 18)	2.94 (1.16)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	1.76 (1.59)
Victim count (includes index and prior convictions)	***M* (SD)**
Total sample (*n* = 93)	2.30 (1.56)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 31)	2.58 (1.89)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	2.30 (1.39)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	1.96 (1.31)
Convictions against related, but not own biological/sociolegal children	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 96)	16 (16.7%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	4 (11.8%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	10 (27.0%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	2 (8.0%)
Youngest victim is 11 or younger	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 91)	54 (59.3%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 30)	23 (76.7%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	21 (58.3%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	10 (40.0%)
Female victims only	***n* (%)**
Total sample (*n* = 93)	62 (64.6%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	24 (70.6%)
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	23 (62.2%)
Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	15 (60.0%)

Note. [a] Age at time of study was calculated by subtracting the date of birth from the median date of assessment. [b] Non-white ethnicities included Asian, Inuit, North American Indian, Metis, and Black. [c] Significant romantic relationship defined as having lived together with someone for 2 years or more or having been married. [d] Three participants had a discrepancy of 10 or more between self-reported and file-reported number of children and were omitted from analyses. [e] Includes paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal, narcissistic, borderline, antisocial, histrionic, avoidant, obsessive-compulsive, dependent, and mixed personality disorder. [f] Includes anxiety disorder (26.0%), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (24.6%), substance use disorder (23.8%), post-traumatic stress disorder (20.0%), depressive disorder (13.1%), social anxiety disorder (9.2%), bipolar disorder (8.5%), adjustment disorder (5.4%), schizoaffective disorder (4.6%), schizophrenia (4.6%), drug induced psychosis (3.8%), foetal alcohol syndrome (3.8%), intellectual disability (3.8%), and obsessive-compulsive disorder (2.3%).

4.4 Results

Due to small sample sizes, the confidence intervals of the effect sizes were wide and often statistically non-significant as a result. As such, the results focus on general trends and magnitudes of the findings. To contextualise the magnitude of the findings (similar to the benchmarking in Chapter 3, see p. 52), several benchmarks were considered. Importantly, because of the small sample sizes and consequent low power, we should consider that significant effects are likely noisier and could be overestimated (i.e., Type I error; Card et al., 2020). One option was to use the same benchmarks as in Chapter 3, based on Assink et al. (2019), but as this was a victimisation meta-analysis, this was deemed not suitable. Nor was the recommendation from Mann et al. (2010) of a Cohen's *d* of 0.15 as minimally meaningful, as this was a recidivism analysis, this was also deemed not suitable. The third option was to use the meta-analysis of Seto et al. (2015), but as this meta-analysis included all types of intrafamilial relationships and a high number of participants, this option was neither the most suitable. The decision was made to use the Williams and Finkelhor (1995) study, as this included fathers, similar measures, and a relatively comparable sample size. Consequently, the benchmarks used were the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile effect size of Williams and Finkelhor (1995), and are as such for this analysis g = 0.32 and OR = 1.79 / OR = 0.56 for small effects, g = 0.45 and OR = 2.26 / OR = 0.44 for medium effects, and g = 0.73 and OR = 3.77 / OR = 0.27 for large effects.

4.4.1 Kinship Recognition Mechanisms

For the analyses of kinship recognition mechanisms, the theoretical basis for the analyses is consanguinity, rather than fatherhood status and type of conviction. So, the 68 participants who filled in the child questionnaire were divided in four theoretically relevant groups, nesting hierarchically: I) biological fathers, II) sociolegal fathers, III) sexual offences against biological

children, IV) sexual offences against sociolegal children, and V) non-incestuous offences. That resulted in the following four groups: 1) biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 15; 22.1%); 2) sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 9; 13.2%); 3) all other biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 39; 57.4%); and 4) all other sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 5; 7.4%).

Overall, there were mixed results for the failure of kinship recognition mechanisms to explain father-child incest; see Figure 7 and Table 14. There were no meaningful differences on the phenotypic similarity mechanisms, and support for the Westermarck hypothesis was marginal or in the contra-hypothesised direction. Nor were most findings of the kinship recognition mediating mechanisms of arousal and disgust in their hypothesised directions. There were, however, some indications of support for the partner fidelity mechanism, but only in comparison to sociolegal fathers.

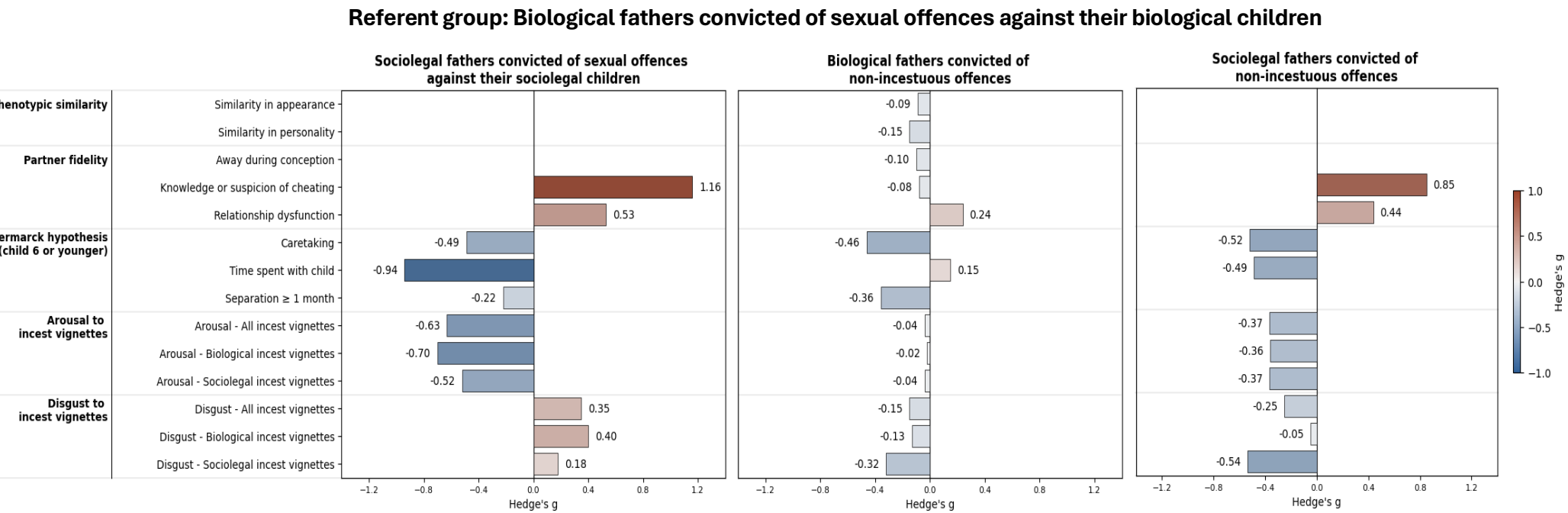
4.4.1.1 Phenotypic Similarity. Biological fathers with sexual convictions against their biological child reported only marginal differences in terms of similarity in appearance and personality to their children compared to biological fathers with non-incestuous convictions.

4.4.1.2 Partner Fidelity. Biological fathers with sexual convictions against their biological child reported much more often that they suspected or knew the mother of their child had ever cheated on them and higher relationship dysfunction than sociolegal fathers with sexual convictions against their sociolegal child (*OR* = 8.17 and *g* = 0.53) and non-incestuous convictions (*OR* = 4.67 and *g* = 0.44). The differences with biological fathers with non-incestuous convictions on cheating, relationship dysfunction, and being away during conception were marginal.

4.4.1.3 Physical Proximity (The Westermarck Hypothesis). Overall, biological fathers who had been convicted of sexual offences against their biological child were more involved with caretaking than all other groups (medium *g*s between -0.46 and -0.52), spent much more time with their child than sociolegal fathers convicted of incestuous (g = -0.94) and non-incestuous (g = -0.49) offences, and had been less often separated for more than a month from their child when they were 6 or younger than sociolegal fathers with incestuous convictions (*OR* = 0.67) and biological fathers with non-incestuous convictions (*OR* = 0.52).

4.4.1.4 Arousal and Disgust. Biological fathers who had been convicted of sexual offences against their biological child showed less arousal to all incest vignettes than the sociolegal fathers convicted of incestuous and non-incestuous offences (g between -0.37 and -0.70), and only marginal differences with the biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences. They also reported more disgust than biological and sociolegal fathers with non-incest convictions, with small to medium effect sizes (g = -0.05 to -0.54), but less disgust to the vignettes than sociolegal fathers with incestuous convictions (g between 0.18 and 0.40).

Figure 7. ***Effect Size Comparisons for Kinship Recognition Mechanisms***



Note. Effect sizes are all in comparison to biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children, i.e., the referent group. Odds Ratios have been transformed to Hedge's *g*. Positive values (i.e., in red) indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict father-child incest offending for the referent group, and negative values (i.e., in blue) indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict father-child incest offending for the comparison group. More saturated colours indicate larger effects in either direction. When no bar chart is presented, the comparison group had no analysable information on this variable.

Table 14. Effect Size Comparisons of Kinship Recognition Mechanisms

Phenotypic similarity					
Similarity to child in appearance	***M* (SD)**		**M (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 15)	5.60 (1.88)	Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 38)	5.45 (1.66)	-0.09	[-0.68; 0.50]
Similarity to child in personality	M (SD)		***M* (SD)**	***g***	95%CI
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 15)	5.33 (1.99)	Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 38)	5.08 (1.62)	-0.15	[-0.73; 0.45]
Partner fidelity					
Away at time of conception	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 15)	2.20 (2.21)	Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 39)	2.41 (2.04)	-0.10	[-0.69; 0.49]
Knows or suspects mother of child cheated	***n* (%)**		**n (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 13)	7 (53.8%)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 8)	1 (12.5%)	8.17	[0.77; 86.67]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 33)	19 (57.6%)	0.86	[0.24; 3.16]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 5)	1 (20.0%)	4.67	[0.40; 3.95]
Relationship dysfunction mother of child	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 12)	2.92 (2.11)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 9)	2.00 (0.71)	0.53	[-0.33; 1.37]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 30)	2.47 (1.72)	0.24	[-0.42; 0.90]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 5)	2.00 (1.58)	0.44	[-0.57; 1.43]
Physical proximity (child 6 or younger)					
Caretaking	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	41.50 (15.41)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 3)	33.67 (12.50)	-0.49	[-1.68; 0.71]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 33)	35.09 (12.88)	-0.46	[-1.08; 0.16]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 3)	33.00 (15.59)	-0.52	[-1.71; 0.85]

Table 14 continues on next page

Table 14 (continued)

Time spent with child	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 15)	3.60 (1.70)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 5)	2.00 (1.22)	-0.94	[-1.95; 0.09]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 34)	3.85 (1.58)	0.15	[-0.45; 0.75]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 3)	2.67 (2.31)	-0.49	[-1.68; 0.71]
Separation of ≥1 month	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 12)	3 (25.0%)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 6)	2 (33.3%)	0.67	[0.08; 5.68]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 36)	14 (38.9%)	0.52	[0.12; 2.28]
Arousal to incest vignettes					
Total arousal	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	4.32 (5.94)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 16)	11.00 (13.63)	-0.63	[-1.36; 0.11]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 47)	4.51 (8.50)	-0.04	[-0.63; 0.55]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 8)	8.00 (14.66)	-0.37	[-1.21; 0.48]
Arousal to biological incest vignettes	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	2.00 (3.04)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 16)	5.94 (6.93)	-0.70	[-1.41; 0.03]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 47)	2.06 (4.23)	-0.02	[-0.61; 0.58]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 8)	3.88 (7.38)	-0.36	[-1.20; 0.49]
Arousal to sociolegal incest vignettes	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	2.21 (2.97)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 16)	5.06 (6.82)	-0.52	[-1.22; 0.20]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 47)	2.40 (4.46)	-0.04	[-0.63; 0.55]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 8)	4.16 (7.73)	-0.37	[-1.21; 0.48]

Table 14 continues on the next page

Table 14 (continued)

Disgust to incest vignettes					
Total disgust	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	10.79 (11.32)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 16)	15.13 (12.49)	0.35	[-0.36; 1.07]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 48)	9.17 (10.78)	-0.15	[-0.74; 0.44]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 8)	8.13 (8.63)	-0.25	[-1.08; 0.60]
Disgust to biological incest vignettes	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	5.14 (5.64)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 16)	7.81 (7.06)	0.40	[-0.31; 1.11]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 48)	4.38 (5.76)	-0.13	[-0.72; 0.46]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 8)	4.88 (5.33)	-0.05	[-0.88; 0.79]
Disgust to sociolegal incest vignettes	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children (*n* = 14)	5.64 (5.75)	Sociolegal fathers convicted of sexual offences against their sociolegal children (*n* = 15)	6.80 (6.54)	0.18	[-0.54; 0.92]
		Biological fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 48)	4.79 (5.32)	-0.32	[-0.89; 0.26]
		Sociolegal fathers convicted of non-incestuous offences (*n* = 8)	3.25 (4.40)	-0.54	[-1.44; 0.39]

Note. Positive Hedge's *g* > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict incest offending for biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children, compared to the other groups.

4.4.2 Individual Dispositions

Overall, the outcomes of both the atypical sexuality and antisociality measures were in the expected directions (see Figure 8 and Table 15): fathers with sexual convictions against their own children were less or more sexually atypical depending on the comparison group, and less antisocial than all comparison groups.

4.4.2.1 Atypical Sexuality. Fathers with sexual convictions against their own children had more indicators of atypical sexuality than fathers with nonsexual convictions. They reported more attraction to children measured by viewing time (g = 0.68), the viewing time measure rating (g = 0.51), and the Greenberg rating (g = 0.98). They also reported more sexual compulsivity (g = 0.91) and a higher likelihood to molest a child (g = 0.48).

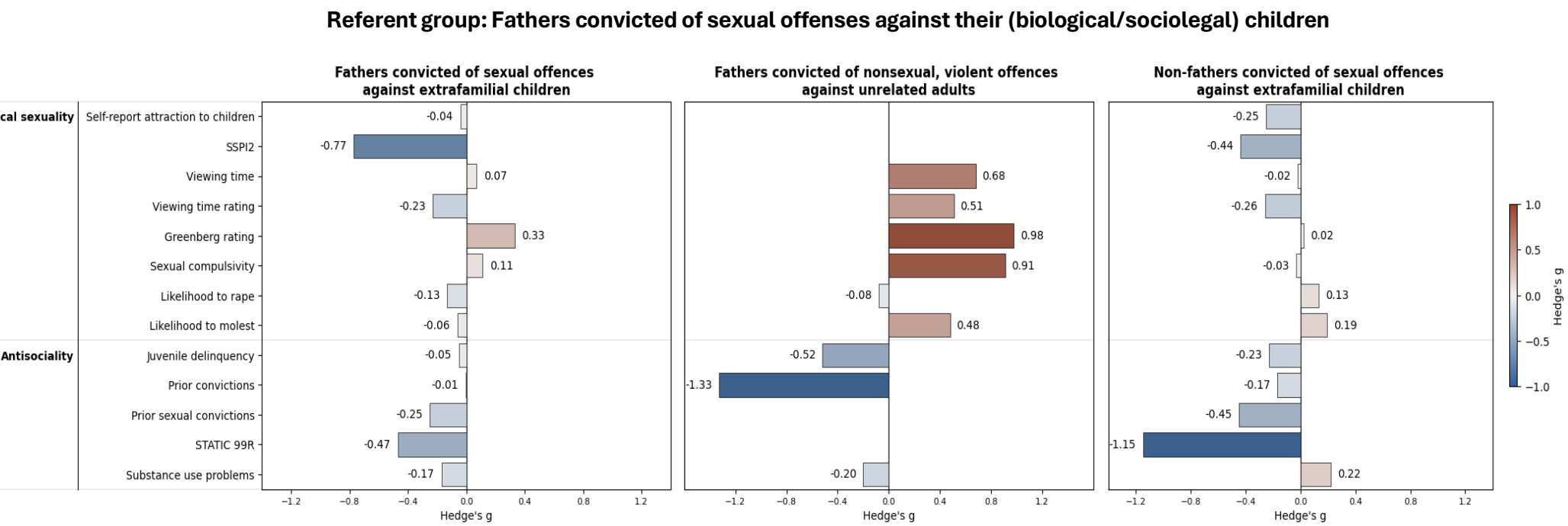
The picture of atypical sexuality when compared to fathers and non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences was more complex. They had lower scores on the SSPI-2 than both comparison groups (g = -0.77 and -0.44), and self-reported less attraction to children than non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sex offences (45% versus 57%; *OR* = 0.63). However, their self-reported attraction showed only marginal differences from the fathers with extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (47%; *OR* = 0.97). There were also only marginal differences between the groups on actual viewing time, the viewing time rating measures, sexual compulsivity, and likelihood to rape and molest (g = -0.26 to 0.19).

4.4.2.1.1 Attenuating Effects of Polymorphic Victim Relationship. In order to account for the possible attenuating effect of polymorphic versus monomorphic victim relationship type, fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological and/or sociolegal) children *only* were also compared with fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological and/or sociolegal) children *and* other victim types (extrafamilial children and/or unrelated adults), and the other comparison groups (see Tables 16 and 17).

Compared to the other sexual offense comparison groups, fathers with *only* incest convictions presented as less atypical sexually (except on the Greenberg rating) with mostly large effects (g = -2.10 to -0.22) than the other sexual offense comparison groups. Fathers with both incest offences and other victims, however, presented as more atypical sexually than the fathers and non-fathers with extrafamilial child convictions on the viewing time measure and sexual compulsivity, and compared to fathers with extrafamilial child sexual convictions on self-reported attraction and the Greenberg rating. Compared to non-fathers, their results were more equivalent. Fathers with *only* incest offences and incest offences and other offences also continued to present as more atypically sexual than fathers with nonsexual convictions (g = 0.17 to 1.14).

4.4.2.2 Antisociality. Overall, fathers with sexual convictions against their own children were systematically less antisocial than the comparison groups, although the magnitude of the effect sizes depended on the measured domain (see Table 14). Fathers with sexual convictions against their own children had less indications of juvenile delinquency than the fathers convicted of nonsexual violent offences (g = -0.52). In terms of prior conviction history, fathers with incest convictions had fewer general prior convictions than the fathers with nonsexual convictions (OR = 0.09). They also had fewer sexual prior convictions and lower STATIC 99R scores than the fathers (OR = 0.63 and g = -0.47) and non-fathers (OR = 0.44 and g = 1.15) with extrafamilial child sexual convictions.

Figure 8. ***Effect Size Comparisons for Individual Dispositions***



Note. Effect sizes are all in comparison to fathers convicted of sexual offenses against their (biological/sociolegal) children, i.e., the referent group. Odds Ratios have been transformed to Hedge's *g*. Positive values (i.e., in red) indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict father-child incest offending for the referent group, and negative values (i.e., in blue) indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict father-child incest offending for the comparison group. More saturated colours indicate larger effects in either direction. When no bar chart is presented, the comparison group had no analysable information on this variable.

Table 15. ***Effect Size Comparisons of Individual Dispositions***

Atypical sexuality					
Self-reported attraction to children	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 29)	13 (44.8%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 30)	14 (46.7%)	0.93	[0.33; 2.56]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	13 (56.5%)	0.63	[0.21; 1.88]
SSPI2 score	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 29)	2.28 (1.19)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 31)	3.19 (1.17)	-0.77	[-1.28; -0.25]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 17)	2.88 (1.58)	-0.44	[-1.04; 0.16]
Viewing Time children/adults [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 26)	134.80 (701.44)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 30)	91.14 (488.94)	0.07	[-0.45; 0.59]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 15)	-317.98 (551.21)	0.68	[0.03; 1.31]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	146.29 (341.10)	-0.02	[-0.57; 0.53]
Rating children/adults (VT measure) [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	-2.28 (2.04)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	-1.77 (2.32)	-0.23	[-0.69; 0.24]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	-3.30 (1.83)	0.51	[-0.05; 1.06]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	-1.71 (2.37)	-0.26	[-0.77; 0.26]
Rating children/adults (Greenberg) [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	-1.62 (2.28)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	-2.43 (2.65)	0.33	[-0.14; 0.79]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	-3.82 (2.13)	0.98	[0.41; 1.53]
		Non-father with sexual convictions against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	-1.68 (2.90)	0.02	[-0.49; 0.53]

Table 15 continues on next page

Table 15 (continued)

Sexual compulsivity	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 28)	21.29 (8.16)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	20.38 (7.91)	0.11	[-0.38; 0.61]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	14.35 (6.36)	0.91	[0.32; 1.50]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 19)	21.53 (10.17)	-0.03	[-0.60; 0.55]
Self-reported likelihood to rape an adult if assured of not getting caught or punished	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	1.21 (0.73)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	1.31 (0.93)	-0.13	[-0.60; 0.34]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	1.27 (0.94)	-0.08	[-0.61; 0.24]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	1.13 (0.45)	0.13	[-0.39; 0.64]
Self-reported likelihood to molest a child if assured of not getting caught or punished	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	1.53 (1.11)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	1.60 (1.19)	-0.06	[-0.53; 0.41]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	1.09 (0.43)	0.48	[-0.06; 1.01]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	1.33 (0.92)	0.19	[-0.33; 0.70]
Antisociality					
Juvenile delinquency	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	2.82 (2.95)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	2.66 (4.55)	0.04	[-0.42; 0.51]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 232	5.00 (5.49)	-0.52	[-1.60; 0.02]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	3.92 (4.79)	-0.23	[-0.75; 0.30]

Table 15 continues on the next page

Table 15 (continued)

Prior convictions [b]	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	10 (29.4%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	11 (29.7%)	0.99	[0.36; 2.73]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	18 (81.8%)	0.09	[0.03; 0.34]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	9 (36.0%)	0.74	[0.25; 2.23]
Prior sexual convictions [b]	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 37)	5 (14.7%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	8 (21.6%)	0.63	[0.18; 2.14]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	7 (28.0%)	0.44	[0.12; 1.61]
STATIC 99R	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 31)	2.19 (2.89)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	3.57 (2.88)	-0.47	[-0.95; 0.02]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	5.20 (2.10)	-1.15	[-1.71; -0.59]
Substance use problems [c]	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	14 (41.2%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	18 (48.6%)	0.74	[0.29; 1.89]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	11 (50.0%)	0.70	[0.24; 2.06]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	8 (32.0%)	1.49	[0.50; 4.39]

Note. Positive Hedge's *g* > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict incest for fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children, compared to the other groups. [a] Calculated by subtracting the maximum score for children (boys or girls) by the maximum score for adults (men or women). Positive scores indicate more attraction to children, negative scores indicate more attraction to adults. [b] Only 8 men had an explicit note in their file about "no conviction history", so it was decided to code absence of conviction history as "no conviction history" to allow for the statistical comparison. [c] Includes diagnoses of substance use disorder, file records of problematic alcohol and drug use, and clinically significant scores (i.e., ≥ 6) on the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (MAST) or the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST). Only 8 men had an explicit note in their file history about "no substance use problems", so it was decided to code absence of recorded substance use problems as "no substance use problems" to allow for the statistical comparison. SSPI2 = Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests–2.

Table 16. ***Atypical Sexuality Specified to Fathers Convicted of Sexual Offences Against Their (Biological or Sociolegal) Children Only***

Self-reported attraction to children	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only (*n* = 10)	2 (20.0%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal children) and other victims (*n* = 19)	11 (57.9%)	0.18	[0.03; 1.10]
		Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 30)	14 (46.7%)	0.29	[0.05; 1.58]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	13 (56.5%)	0.19	[0.03; 1.11]
SSPI2	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only (*n* = 10)	1.10 (0.74)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal children) and other victims (*n* = 19)	2.89 (0.88)	-2.10	[-3.01; -1.16]
		Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 31)	3.19 (1.17)	-1.90	[-2.70; -1.07]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 17)	2.88 (1.58)	-1.29	[-2.12; -0.45]
Viewing Time children/adults [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only (*n* = 9)	-230.22 (349.34)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal children) and other victims (*n* = 17)	328.04 (770.14)	-0.82	[-1.63; 0.01]
		Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 30)	91.14 (488.94)	-0.68	[-1.42; 0.07]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 15)	-317.98 (551.21)	0.17	[-0.63; 0.97]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	146.29 (341.10)	-1.07	[-1.86; -0.26]
Rating children/adults (VT measure) [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only (*n* = 13)	-2.88 (1.51)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal children) and other victims (*n* = 21)	-1.90 (2.27)	-0.47	[-1.16; 0.22]
		Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	-1.77 (2.32)	-0.51	[-1.14; 0.12]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	-3.30 (1.83)	0.24	[-0.45; 0.92]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	-1.71 (2.37)	-0.54	[-1.21; 0.13]

Table 16 continues on next page

Table 16 (continued)

Rating children/adults (Greenberg) [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only (*n* = 13)	-1.23 (2.35)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal children) and other victims (*n* = 21)	-1.86 (2.26)	0.27	[-0.41; 0.94]
		Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	-2.43 (2.65)	0.46	[-0.17; 1.09]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	-3.82 (2.13)	1.14	[0.41; 1.86]
		Non-father with sexual convictions against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	-1.68 (2.90)	0.16	[-0.50; 0.82]
Sexual compulsivity	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only (*n* = 12)	18.67 (7.49)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal children) and other victims (*n* = 16)	23.25 (8.31)	-0.56	[-1.30; 0.19]
		Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	20.38 (7.91)	-0.22	[-0.86; 0.43]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	14.35 (6.36)	0.62	[-0.10; 1.33]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 19)	21.53 (10.17)	-0.30	[-1.01; 0.41]

Note. Positive Hedge's *g* > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict incest for fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only, compared to the other groups. [a] Calculated by subtracting the maximum score for children (boys or girls) by the maximum score for adults (men or women). Positive scores indicate more attraction to children, negative scores indicate more attraction to adults. SSPI2 = Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests–2.

Table 17. ***Atypical Sexuality Specified to Fathers Convicted of Sexual Offences Against (Biological or Sociolegal) Children and Other Victims***

Self-reported attraction to children	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children and other victims (*n* = 19)	11 (57.9%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 30)	14 (46.7%)	1.57	[0.49; 5.01]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	13 (56.5%)	1.06	[0.31; 3.61]
SSPI2	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children and other victims (*n* = 19)	2.89 (0.88)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 31)	3.19 (1.17)	-0.28	[-0.84; 0.29]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 17)	2.88 (1.58)	0.01	[-0.63; 0.65]
Viewing Time children/adults [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children and other victims (*n* = 17)	328.04 (770.14)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 30)	91.14 (488.94)	0.39	[-0.21; 0.97]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 15)	-317.98 (551.21)	0.92	[0.20; 1.63]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	146.29 (341.10)	0.32	[-0.30; 0.93]
Rating children/adults (VT measure) [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children and other victims (*n* = 21)	-1.90 (2.27)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 36)	-1.77 (2.32)	-0.06	[-0.59; 0.47]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	-3.30 (1.83)	0.66	[0.04; 1.28]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	-1.71 (2.37)	-0.08	[-0.66; 0.50]

Table 17 continues on next page

Table 17 (continued)

Rating children/adults (Greenberg) [a]	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children and other victims (*n* = 21)	-1.86 (2.26)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 37)	-2.43 (2.65)	0.23	[-0.31; 0.76]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	-3.82 (2.13)	0.88	[0.26; 1.49]
		Non-father with sexual convictions against extrafamilial children (*n* = 25)	-1.68 (2.90)	-0.07	[-0.64; 0.51]
Sexual compulsivity	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children and other victims (*n* = 16)	23.25 (8.31)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	20.38 (7.91)	0.35	[-0.24; 0.94]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	14.35 (6.36)	1.20	[0.49; 1.89]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 19)	21.53 (10.17)	0.18	[-0.47; 0.83]

Note. Positive Hedge's *g* > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict incest for fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children only, compared to the other groups. a Calculated by subtracting the maximum score for children (boys or girls) by the maximum score for adults (men or women). Positive scores indicate more attraction to children, negative scores indicate more attraction to adults. SSPI2 = Screening Scale for Pedophilic Interests–2.

4.4.3 Familial Dysfunction

The results for familial dysfunction variables are reported in Figure 9 and Table 18. All included participant groups reported a high prevalence of experiences of childhood abuse in their own families-of-origin (between 23% and 81%), and intergenerationality was starkly present in the histories of childhood incestuous abuse for fathers with sexual convictions against their own children. Additionally, fathers with sexual convictions against their own children reported more dysfunctional partner and parent-child relationships than the comparison groups on most measures, although fathers with nonsexual violent convictions reported more intimate partner violence perpetration, infidelity, and sexual entitlement (see Figure 9 and Table 18).

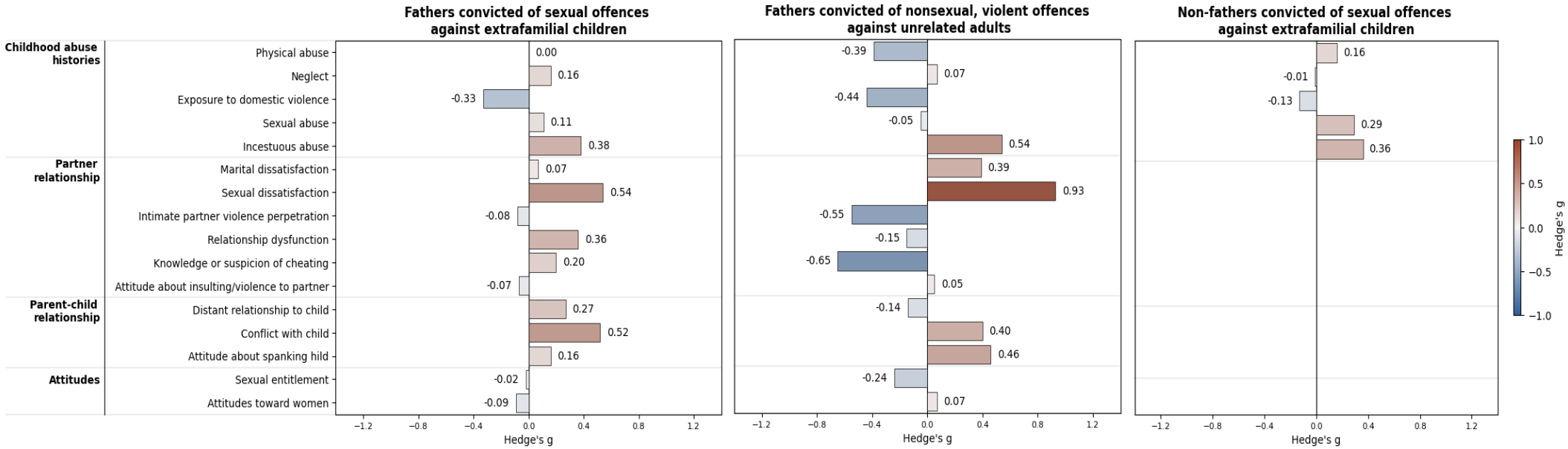
4.4.3.1 Experiences of Childhood Abuse in Family-of-Origin. Fathers with sexual convictions against their own children experienced less physical abuse (*OR* = 0.49) and exposure to domestic violence (*OR* = 0.45) than fathers with nonsexual convictions, as well as less exposure to domestic violence than fathers with extrafamilial child sexual convictions (*OR* = 0.55). However, they systematically reported a higher prevalence of childhood incestuous sexual abuse histories than the comparison groups (*OR* between 1.92 and 2.68).

4.4.3.2 Partner Relationships. Compared to fathers with extrafamilial child sexual convictions, fathers with incestuous sexual convictions reported more sexual dissatisfaction (*g* = 0.54), indicators of relationship dysfunction (*g* = 0.36), and infidelity of the mother of their child (*OR* = 1.43). Compared to fathers with nonsexual violent convictions, fathers with incestuous convictions reported more marital (*g* = 0.39) and sexual (*g* = 0.93) dissatisfaction, but also less intimate partner violence perpetration (*OR* = 0.37) and infidelity of the mother of their child (*OR* = 0.31).

4.4.3.3 Parent-Child Relationships. Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own children reported more conflict with their child than both father groups (g = 0.52 and 0.40). They also reported more distance to their child than the fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (g = 0.27), and a more positive attitude about spanking than non-fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (g = 0.46).

4.4.3.4 Patriarchal Attitudes. There were only marginal differences on patriarchal attitudes between groups.

Figure 9. ***Effect Size Comparisons for Family Dysfunction***



Note. Effect sizes are all in comparison to fathers convicted of sexual offenses against their (biological/sociolegal) children, i.e., the referent group. Odds Ratios have been transformed to Hedge's *g*. Positive values (i.e., in red) indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict father-child incest offending for the referent group, and negative values (i.e., in blue) indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict father-child incest offending for the comparison group. More saturated colours indicate larger effects in either direction. When no bar chart is presented, the comparison group had no analysable information on this variable.

Table 18. ***Effect Size Comparisons of Familial Dysfunction***

Childhood abuse histories (family-of-origin)					
Experiences of childhood physical abuse	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	23 (67.6%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	23 (67.6%)	1.00	[0.36; 2.76]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	17 (81.0%)	0.49	[0.13; 2.82]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	14 (60.9%)	1.34	[0.45; 4.05]
Experiences of childhood neglect	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	14 (41.2%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	12 (34.3%)	1.34	[0.51; 3.56]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	8 (38.1%)	1.14	[0.37; 3.47]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	10 (41.7%)	0.98	[0.34; 2.83]
Experiences of childhood exposure to DV	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	15 (44.1%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	20 (58.8%)	0.55	[0.21; 1.45]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	14 (60.9%)	0.45	[0.15; 1.36]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	12 (50.0%)	0.79	[0.28; 2.25]
Experiences of sexual abuse	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	22 (64.7%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	21 (60.0%)	1.22	[0.46; 3.24]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	14 (66.7%)	0.92	[0.29; 2.89]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	12 (52.2%)	1.68	[0.57; 4.94]
Experiences of incestuous sexual abuse	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	15 (44.1%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	10 (28.6%)	1.97	[0.73; 5.36]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 22)	5 (22.7%)	2.68	[0.80; 8.96]
		Non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 24)	7 (29.2%)	1.92	[0.63; 5.82]

Table 18 continues on next page

Table 18 (continued)

Partner relationship					
Marital dissatisfaction	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 25)	10.88 (5.23)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 13)	10.54 (4.58)	0.07	[-0.59; 0.72]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 8)	8.75 (5.50)	0.39	[-0.39; 1.17]
Sexual dissatisfaction	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 24)	35.67 (12.63)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 13)	28.69 (12.65)	0.54	[-0.14; 1.21]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 8)	23.63 (12.92)	0.93	[0.10; 1.73]
File report of IPV perpetration	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 28)	9 (32.1%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	12 (35.3%)	0.87	[0.30; 2.51]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 16)	9 (56.3%)	0.37	[0.10; 1.31]
Relationship dysfunction mother of child	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 21)	2.52 (1.69)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 16)	1.94 (1.48)	0.36	[-0.29; 1.00]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 19)	2.79 (1.78)	-0.15	[-0.76; 0.46]
Knows or suspects mother of child cheated	***n* (%)**		***n* (%)**	***OR***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 24)	10 (41.7%)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 18)	6 (33.3%)	1.43	[0.40; 5.10]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 19)	14 (70.0%)	0.31	[0.09; 1.07]
Attitude toward insulting and violent behaviour against partner	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	3.03 (1.57)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 34)	3.15 (1.89)	-0.07	[-0.54; 0.40]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	2.95 (1.61)	0.05	[-0.50; 0.59]

Table 18 continues on next page

Table 18 (continued)

Parent-child relationship					
Distant relationship to child	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 27)	17.22 (8.87)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	15.00 (7.25)	0.27	[-0.28; 0.82]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	18.57 (10.75)	-0.14	[-0.70; 0.43]
Conflict with child	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 29)	17.37 (7.00)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	13.96 (5.91)	0.52	[-0.04; 1.06]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	14.62 (6.56)	0.40	[-0.16; 0.96]
Attitude toward spanking children	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Father with sexual convictions against his own (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 32)	4.25 (2.24)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 23)	3.91 (1.83)	0.16	[-0.37; 0.69]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	3.33 (1.49)	0.46	[-0.10; 1.00]
Patriarchal attitudes					
Sexual entitlement	***M* (SD)**		***M* (SD)**	***g***	**95%CI**
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 34)	18.91 (5.48)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	19.00 (6.48)	-0.02	[-0.48; 0.45]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 21)	20.43 (7.60)	-0.24	[-0.77; 0.30]
Attitudes toward women	*M* (SD)		*M* (SD)	*g*	95%CI
Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children (*n* = 32)	50.19 (6.26)	Fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children (*n* = 35)	50.77 (6.02)	-0.09	[-0.57; 0.38]
		Fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences against unrelated adults (*n* = 20)	49.75 (5.80)	0.07	[-0.48; 0.62]

Note. Positive Hedge's *g* > 0.00 and Odds Ratios > 1.00 indicate higher or more indicators theorised to predict incest for fathers convicted of sexual offences against their (biological or sociolegal) children, compared to the other groups.

4.5 Discussion

The current study examined three theoretical explanations of father-child incest in 118 fathers and non-fathers convicted of sexual and nonsexual offences: kinship recognition mechanisms, individual dispositions (atypical sexuality and antisociality), and familial dysfunction. The findings indicated little support for most kinship recognition mechanisms, with marginal or contra-expected results for phenotypic similarity, physical proximity, and the mediating mechanisms of arousal and disgust to incest to explain father-child incest. However, there was some support for the partner fidelity mechanism, but only in comparison to sociolegal fathers. As expected, individual dispositions did not explain why someone would choose to sexually offend against a related over an unrelated child – however, the results also indicated that the role of sexuality in incest offending should not be overlooked. There was most support for familial dysfunction to explain father-child incest, with fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own children reporting more partner and parent-child dysfunction than the comparison groups. The findings should be interpreted with caution, given the limited sample size and power of this study – but also indicate potential important avenues for future research about incest offending, especially considering the familial context.

4.5.1 Kinship Recognition Mechanisms Are Not Promising Mechanisms to Explain Father-Child Incest

Theoretically, the failure of kinship recognition mechanisms should increase the propensity for incest offending – as evidenced by sexually abusing one's own child. In this section, biological fathers with biological incest offences were compared to sociolegal fathers with sociolegal incest offences and biological and sociolegal fathers with non-incestuous offences. Contrary to expectations, the findings indicated mostly marginal differences on most

kinship recognition mechanisms (except partner fidelity), and some findings perpendicular to the hypotheses.

Contrary to previous findings partially supporting the phenotypic similarity hypothesis (Babchishin et al., 2024; Billingsley et al., 2018; McAskill et al., 2024), there was little evidence supporting this hypothesis here. Phenotypic similarity as a kinship recognition cue is confusing and could be a worthwhile avenue to explore further – especially considering that, ancestrally, physical resemblance was hard to establish in the absence of mirrors. There was also little support for the mechanisms of physical proximity (i.e., the Westermarck hypothesis) – on the contrary, the findings indicated that biological fathers with biological incest convictions did *more* caretaking and spent *more* time with their young children than the comparison groups. While perhaps a reasonable expectation with sociolegal fathers (i.e., less involvement as not-genetic parent), the findings also indicated more caretaking and less separation than biological fathers with non-incestuous offences – the opposite of the Westermarckian hypothesis of sexual indifference through exposure. There could be spurious reasons for the findings: for instance, more antisocial fathers might be less interested in child rearing (Parker & Parker, 1986), or biological fathers with incest convictions spent more time with their children to groom them and create opportunities for sexual abuse (Williams & Finkelhor, 1995). The most parsimonious and theoretically sound explanation, however, is that evidence tilts towards the Westermark hypothesis being a useful explanation in sibling incest, but not for father-child incest, consistent with previous studies (Babchishin et al., 2024; Kresanov et al., 2018; Pullman et al., 2019; Williams & Finkelhor, 1995).

Findings for arousal and disgust responses to incest vignettes were neither congruent with evolutionary hypotheses (i.e., biological fathers with incest offences did not report more arousal

and less disgust). This is a logical outcome when there was little indication that a failure of kinship recognition mechanisms explained father-daughter incest. Interestingly, sociolegal fathers with sociolegal incest convictions were more aroused and also more disgusted than biological fathers with biological incest convictions, which is – in both directions – incongruent with general population studies that have found no differences (Albrecht, 2019; Kresanov et al., 2018; Pezzoli et al., 2022; Pullman et al., 2019). This could point to a different consanguineous arousal/disgust response to incest when it comes to actual perpetration – for instance, both experiencing a moral disgust response (Tybur et al., 2009), but also an arousal response to the taboo of incest (Smid & Wever, 2019). Still, the comparison groups of sociolegal fathers were very small and more research is needed to situate these findings more solidly.

One could opine reductively that anything in our psychology is subject to Darwinian selection – and so, relationship dysfunction both indicates that a father is not certain of his paternity, and relationship dysfunction happens *because* a father is not certain of his paternity. Biological fathers convicted of biological incest offences reported more partner infidelity and more relationship dysfunction compared to sociolegal fathers with and without incestuous offences, but only marginally compared to biological fathers convicted of non-incest offences. However, the understanding of partner infidelity and relationship dysfunction as markers of *paternity uncertainty* only works when compared to other biological fathers (with whom there were few differences), as sociolegal fathers are absolutely certain they are not the father of their sociolegal children. This was further complicated as, unfortunately, the questions about infidelity and relationship dysfunction were formulated to inquire about these behaviours *ever* occurring, and not specifically about the period around conception (which is also a methodological limitation of other studies, e.g., Babchishin et al., 2024 and Billingsley et al.,

2018). These findings, especially compared to sociolegal fathers, might therefore better be understood as a comparison of familial dysfunction (in which case they were surprising, as sociolegal parenting is generally regarded to be related to higher risk for familial dysfunction; Daly & Wilson, 1987). There might be selection effects in reporting demographics: it might require less relationship dysfunction to report a (short-term) sociolegal father, than a (lifelong) biological father, which could explain the disproportionate amount (62%) of participants with sociolegal victims. But, given the only marginal differences on partner fidelity between biological fathers with incestuous versus non-incestuous convictions, there is likewise no solid indication for the failure of the partner fidelity mechanism in this study. So, in conclusion, these first, tentative findings of kinship recognition mechanisms in this prison-based sample indicate that the theorised failures of kinship recognition mechanisms – phenotypic similarity, partner fidelity, the Westermarck hypothesis, and arousal/disgust sensitivity – are not promising factors to explain father-child incest.

4.5.2 Individual Dispositions Do Not Explain Father-Child Incest – But the Role of Sexuality Is Complex

The findings regarding individual dispositions were largely in line with expectations: atypical sexuality and antisociality do not explain why someone would choose to offend against a related over an unrelated victim. However, a nuanced picture emerged for atypical sexuality. As a group, fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own children presented as less atypically sexual on some measures (SSPI-2, viewing time rating), but on other measures quite similar (self-reported attraction, viewing time, sexual compulsivity), comparable to fathers and non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children. This was surprising, as men convicted of incest offences are consistently found to be less atypical sexually than men

convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (Seto et al., 2015). It turned out, however, that these findings were strongly attenuated when the atypical sexuality analyses were split for fathers with victim relationship monomorphic (i.e., only incestuous victims) versus polymorphic (i.e., incestuous and non-incestuous victims) offences: fathers convicted of incest offences "only" were less atypical sexually than fathers convicted of incest offences *and* extrafamilial child offences, who were in turn broadly the most atypical sexually of all groups (although close to non-fathers with extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences).

The overall prevalence of victim relationship polymorphism was markedly high in the sample at 37%, which is almost twice higher than a meta-analysed average of 19% (Scurich & Gongola, 2021). Unexpectedly, fathers with sexual convictions against their own children were particularly polymorphic, with the highest victim count overall, and 62% who had also offended against extrafamilial children and/or adults. This is contra the characterisation that intrafamilial sexual offending is sexually specialised (Eher & Ross, 2006). However, and unfortunately, men with victim relationship polymorphic offences have generally been classified as extrafamilial, and their intrafamilial victims are consequently not centred in the understanding of their atypical sexuality but are considered to be "in addition to" extrafamilial victims (e.g., Bartosh et al., 2003; Nicholaichuk et al., 2014). As such, our understanding of how incest offending and reoffending fits in the context of broader sexual interest is unfortunately very limited.

This is an important lacuna, as so far research has mostly contextualised incest offending *as compared to* other forms of sexual offending without understanding how they compare to, for instance, men who commit nonsexual offences, or men who do not commit offences. This study shows that fathers with incest convictions, regardless of that being a mono- or polymorphic victim choice, presented as more atypically sexual than men convicted of nonsexual violent

offences, and on many measures equally atypical as men with only extrafamilial victims. While atypical sexuality at group level might theoretically not explain the choice for a related over an unrelated victim (at least in adults: youth who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are more sexually atypical at group level than youth who commit extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences; Martijn et al., 2020), this does not mean that incest offending does not involve sexual elements or motivations at all (Frude, 1982). This might be especially pertinent when there is polymorphic relational offending. While incest is generally not regarded to be characteristic of paedophilia, it would be interesting to investigate in what ways attraction to an intrafamilial versus an extrafamilial child differs when both victim types are present.

"Typical" (i.e., paedophilic or compulsive) atypical sexuality might play a less prominent role in father-child incest, but narrowly focused sexual attraction and arousal to their own, specific child could be important in father-child incest. Undoubtedly, the long-term, frequent, and intrusive character of incest seems to signify that sexuality plays a very prominent role in incest. Incest offending might be more relationally motivated (i.e., forming a surrogate relationship with the child; R. J. Wilson, 1999), or perhaps simply be more opportunistic (i.e., by having access to children; Smallbone & Cale, 2016). It seems nevertheless unwise to sanitise incest offending from its sexual components, just because it is not predictive of sexual recidivism – we see, for instance, in the familial dysfunction comparisons that fathers convicted of incest offences report much higher sexual dissatisfaction. Additionally, there is the large discrepancy between known and undisclosed victims (e.g., Hindman & Peters, 2001), and the actuality that many men have perpetrated sexual offences against more and diverse victims than they are convicted of. Consequently, it is important to pay attention to both atypical and general sexuality

and the potentially differentiating roles they play when considering treatment and post-conviction access to potential victims when men have been convicted of incestuous offences.

Atypical sexuality can motivate an offence, but antisociality facilitates the actual execution (Seto, 2019). Fatherhood might be a proxy for protective and prosocial factors: for example, fathers are men who have been in a relationship that produced children (i.e., possess at least some heterosocial skills, on average), have something prosocial to do (raise their children), and have more expectations and pressures to be employed. Previous studies have not controlled "fatherhood" status, i.e., they compared groups that included both fathers and non-fathers (e.g., Eher & Ross, 2006). The current results, however, indicate that fatherhood itself does not explain the relatively low levels of antisociality found in men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences (Seto et al., 2015), as fathers with sexual non-incestuous offence convictions were still more antisocial than fathers with incestuous offence convictions.

Fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own children were less antisocial than the comparison groups, which is in accordance with findings that people who sexually offend against a related victim "only" are at a very low risk of detected sexual reoffending (R. K. Hanson, 2002). A simple explanation for the lower recidivism rates might be that reporting and criminal justice system involvement is more likely when offences are perpetrated by unrelated or unknown people (Hessick, 2007). But, we should also consider that there might be important personality characteristics that facilitated the aetiology and continuance of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, that are different from the characteristics that increase the risk of someone committing a new and detected sexual offence. If we assume this, we should consider how we construe antisociality: antisociality is largely defined by a willingness to transgress against unrelated people and is conflated with overt impulsivity and violence. This external and

overt locus of antisociality, that is easily seen and reported, is empirically linked to detected recidivism, and these forms were also reflected in the included measures (prior convictions, juvenile delinquency, risk assessment). This current construal of antisociality considers an impulsive, physically violent altercation with a stranger to be more antisocial than the covert intentionality needed to "keep things in the family": planning abuse when other caregivers are absent, manipulation to keep victims quiet, and long term, frequent, and intrusive sexual abuse of children one is supposed to care for – which, quite surely, could be considered highly antisocial by general moral standards. As such, it is not surprising that fathers convicted of sexually abusing their children scored low on measures of antisociality, when these measures measure overt forms of antisociality. Different construals of antisociality, perhaps more covert, interpersonal, and intentional rather than impulsive, might show different results.

Both atypical sexuality and antisociality might be more appropriately understood as on a spectrum, ranging from more typical to more atypical sexuality, or from more covert to more overt forms of antisociality. And, these individual dispositions may come about differently depending on the situational context. According to Smallbone and Cale's (2016) disposition-facilitation model, some individuals' offending occurs as a reaction to a particular set of circumstances, rather than that they themselves seek out opportunities to offend. Family living situations make for easy access to victims and might not require a great amount of antisociality to facilitate offending when there is some motivation (i.e., some sexual interest) present. As such, we should situate these findings also in relation to nonoffending populations: of the fathers convicted for incest offences, 30% had prior convictions, 45% self-reported sexual attraction to children, and 41% had substance abuse problems. This is in high contrast to the estimated yearly 1.8% prevalence of people who are convicted in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2024b),

the estimated 1-3% prevalence of attraction to children (Seto, 2018), and the estimated 2.3% prevalence of people who frequently use substances in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2024a). Accordingly, the "low risk" characterisation of men who commit incest offences might only hold in comparison to other offending groups rather than a true characterisation, and might be mostly contingent, and changeable, on their access to victims.

4.5.3 Familial Dysfunction Might Best Explain Father-Child Incest

Family dysfunction plausibly plays an important role in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, but offence-specific research is lacking, and victimisation-specific research thus far had not delineated between risk factors for intra- versus extrafamilial child sexual abuse victimisation (Assink et al., 2019). The current findings indicate that fathers convicted of sexual offences against their own children indeed broadly had more dysfunctional families than fathers convicted of extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences and nonsexual offences in several ways: more marital and sexual dissatisfaction, relationship dysfunction, distance in the relationships to their child, and conflict with their child. Relationship dysfunction mechanisms might be related to incestuous sexual offending in several ways: for instance, through learned behaviour from family-of-origin experiences of abuse (Madigan et al., 2019); using a child as a sexual surrogate when the adult relationship breaks down (Cohen, 1983); sexually abusing the child to punish the mother (Hartley, 2001); or sexual abuse in a wider pattern of transgression and familial abuse (Finkelhor, 2008). These mechanisms could theoretically precede incest offending (and could therefore play a potentially aetiological role) or be a consequence of incest offending: for example, a distant relationship to a child could mean that men care less about abusing their child, or, children could become increasingly distant because of the abuse – and this cycle can perpetuate itself. We should also consider, however, that there could be selection effects at play:

perhaps dysfunctional relationships with partners and children increase the likelihood that a father who commits incest offences gets reported. While participants were asked to report on these measures based on the period before the offending began, given much of incestuous offending goes on for years, and some participants had been in prison for many years, the accuracy of those recollections is questionable. Or, fathers with incest convictions retrospectively might judge their relationships as more dysfunctional than they were, to feel they can excuse that they sexually abused their children. However, family dysfunction was also related to incest propensity in two general population studies (Babchishin et al., 2024; McAskill et al., 2024). If, indeed, there are cascading sequences from some forms of family dysfunction to intrafamilial child sexual abuse, early detection and intervention when families present with markers of dysfunction (e.g., conflict, instability, parenting difficulties) could potentially prevent the culmination to intrafamilial child sexual (and nonsexual) abuse.

There was little support for the role of patriarchal attitudes in incest offending. A major critique of both the entitlement (R. K. Hanson et al., 1994) and attitudes (Spence & Hahn, 1997) scales is that their intended goal is very obvious: e.g., “Women should oblige men’s sexual needs” (Entitlement Scale) and “Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers” (Attitudes Towards Women Scale). While these types of opinions at the time of these measures’ creation in the 1990s might have been more widely espoused, these opinions in current times are no longer deemed politically correct, and might as such not reflect actual biases (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). We could, however, see proxies for entitlement to sex and patriarchal attitudes in other findings, for example, in high reports of sexual dissatisfaction (perhaps reflecting feelings of entitlement) or the discrepancy between attitudes approving of intimate partner violence (low) and actual reports of intimate partner

violence perpetration (around a third in fathers with incest convictions). This will become important in Chapter 5. Intimate partner violence perpetration in particular might be importantly related to incest offending: it might reflect a tendency for violent and impulsive antisocial behaviour, be used for manipulation and control, and might be an expression of patriarchal attitudes. This study, however, could not provide a full picture of the dynamics of nonsexual abuse, as neither intimate partner violence victimisation nor nonsexual child abuse were systematically assessed. However, the high co-occurrence of child sexual abuse and other forms of child abuse and intimate partner violence is well established (e.g., Bidarra et al., 2016; K. L. Chan et al., 2021; Finkelhor et al., 2007), and perpetration and victimisation are often co-existent and intergenerational – which was also starkly clear from the high prevalence of childhood intrafamilial child sexual abuse histories in fathers with incest convictions.

If incest, nonsexual abuse, and intimate partner violence are intertwined and intergenerational processes, with potential spillover effects (Pu & Rodriguez, 2021), we could make important prevention and intervention developments when we target their common underlying factors – the factors which future studies should determine more solidly. If so, we might also have to consider construing recidivism risk prediction differently: if we interpret intrafamilial child sexual abuse as a form of intrafamilial abuse, recidivism could also include, for instance, intimate partner violence reoffending. Another interesting avenue for research is the intersection of family dysfunction, violence, and sexuality, for instance the differences and similarities in intimate partner sexual violence and intrafamilial child sexual abuse. In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight that father-child incest happens within the context of family dysfunction. Future studies on incest offending should include systemic, familial, parental, and relational domains to advance our understanding of incest offending.

4.6 Limitations

The main limitation of this study was its sample size. While the proposed study aimed for almost 500 participants, COVID-19 constraints resulted in a usable sample size of 118 men. This is still a sizable group, especially as primary data collection with justice involved samples is not straightforward. However, due to the planned contrasts and multiple included groups, the analyses and conclusions are tentative. This can also be seen in the large confidence intervals of most of the variables in this study, and consequently few significant results. The results do, however, point towards general trends and patterns.

Another limitation was that it was not always clear if the child questionnaire was filled in about the sexually victimised child: while participants were instructed to do so, many left the question "have you sexually offended against this child?" blank. There were further methodological limitations, such as the lack of standardised measures for some of the hypotheses: for instance, no measures exist to test the Westermarck hypothesis. Some questions lacked specificity, such as asking about infidelity in general instead of around conception, and some were worded in the present tense, while others were worded in the past tense.

As this research was about incest, the core grouping variable was incest convictions, regardless of other types of convictions. This has made situating some of the results more difficult, as most other studies group men with intra- and extrafamilial child sexual abuse offences as "extrafamilial". However, this was attenuate by doing further subgroup analyses on the atypical sexuality variables. It is also important to remark that non-offspring, but related victims (nephews, nieces) were coded as "extrafamilial", even though these victims are genetically related, which is both important for evolutionary reasons, and as the familial context of victimisation will be more complex than with unrelated children.

The survey was cross-sectional and retrospective, and so is not able to inform causal inferences. Participants were asked to report on spousal relationships and parent-child relationships before the timing of their offences, but participants might have not been able to accurately remember or report this, given the sometimes-long time lags and recall bias.

Participants might have answered in socially desirable ways, for example, when answering how arousing a vignette describing sex with a daughter is. Some participants also denied their offences and might have answered to be consistent with their denial. There might have also been a bias in the timing of relationships: sociolegal relationships might have been shorter and newer, with less time and reason for instability and dysfunction to develop.

Last, the groups were determined based on detected offences, which likely does not reflect the actuality of number and types of victims. Nonetheless, the results of this study are important to guide future research efforts, especially considering the dearth of modern research and our lack of theoretical understanding of incest offending.

5. A Qualitative Exploration of the Intimate Relationships of Fathers Convicted of Incestuously Abusing Their Child

Overview

While family dysfunction plausibly plays a crucial role in understanding intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, we know concerningly little about the family dynamics of men who have committed intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. This study phenomenologically analysed the intimate relationships of six men convicted of incestuously abusing their child. At the core of the participants' narratives was a deep yearning for intimacy, a sense of entitlement to that intimacy, and ultimately, being rejected of that intimacy, resulting in the two superordinate themes, *Complex construals of care* and *Intimately rejected.* The five subordinate themes supporting this superordinate themes were (1.1) *Intergenerational complexity,* which was characterised by the participants' adverse upbringings, and the complexity of integrating both abuse and care in their understanding thereof; (1.2) *Utilitarian fatherhood,* which detailed the utilitarian and self-serving experience and execution of fatherhood by the participants; (1.3) *Fragmented fatherhood,* which analysed the experienced fragmentation of father identity by the participants after their conviction; (2.1) *Masculine inadequacy,* which was characterised by the participants' feelings of inadequacy of themselves as men and their masculinities; and (2.2) *Thwarted,* which explored the participants' feelings of entitlement to, and the rejection of, intimacy by their partners. This study indicates that experiences of entitlement and rejection are central to incestuous abuse, and encourages future studies to explore intimate dynamics as an explanatory mechanism of incest.

5.1 Introduction

There is scant research on the intimate relationships of men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences, or more specific to this chapter, fathers who incestuously abuse their children. Previous quantitative research has pointed towards dysfunction across multiple family relationships: relationships to parents, children, and partners. Dysfunctional families-of-origin are noted in several studies, reporting dysfunctional, rejecting, and abusive parenting by their distal caregivers (i.a., Bogaerts et al., 2005; Goodman-Delahunty, 2014; Williams & Finkelhor, 1992). The sparse previous research on proximal family dynamics of fathers convicted for incest offences against their children finds uninvolved child rearing (Parker & Parker, 1986; Williams & Finkelhor, 1995), and marital discord and dissatisfaction (Lang et al., 1990; Williams & Finkelhor, 1995). The findings in Chapter 3 and 4 provide further substantiation of these findings, evidencing wide-ranging familial dysfunction related to intrafamilial child sexual abuse: childhood abuse experiences in the families-of-origin, dysfunctional partner relationships, and dysfunctional parent-child relationships.

While quantitative research can provide insight into broad relations, these results tell us little about the substance or content of these relations. Qualitative research can provide an enriched understanding of complex phenomena, and avenues to explore experiences previously unexpected. There are a limited number of qualitative studies about the intimate relationships of fathers convicted of incestuously abusing their children – which are all, again, at least 20 years old. While relational dysfunction was not the main subject of the qualitative studies by Hartley (1998, 2001) and Phelan (1995), factors related to interpersonal and relational inadequacy and dysfunction were important components their findings. Relational dysfunction was a recurrent theme, including patriarchal notions of entitlement, using sexual abuse as an expression of love

and anger, dissatisfaction in marital lives, and minimising harm. Baumann (1985)'s dissertation was a phenomenological study of father's subjective experience of being "an incest perpetrator", which they characterised by experiences of difficulties expressing emotions, feelings of inadequacy, and searching for affirmation. Wash's (1989) dissertation of the perspectives of interpersonal relationships of fathers who had incestuously abused their daughters is most relevant to this dissertation. Wash (1989) describes the following patterns of interpersonal relating: men who grew up in affectionless or abusive families and who perceived themselves as dominant and as the provider in their families-of-procreation; men who could not express their feelings, used sex to fill their intimacy needs, and used anger to control their family members; and men who perpetrated incest offences either to regain power after a loss that impacted their perception of self-worth and dominance, or as a way to satisfy their intimacy needs. Summarising, the overarching themes of the qualitative studies centre around experiences of power and powerlessness, difficulties with expressing emotions, and strained relationships to partners – which can provide important context to the quantitative findings of general dysfunctional relationships.

In conclusion, the available research and the results from Chapter 3 and 4 suggest there is multi-faceted relational dysfunction in men (and mostly, fathers) who commit incest offences, most notably in the relationship to their partners, with the relationships to their children relatively unattended to. Given how familial dysfunction emerged as pathognomonic to intrafamilial child sexual abuse in the results of the previous two quantitative chapters and given how relatively little we understand of the role of said familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, it seemed pertinent to correspondingly explore family relationships in more depth.

5.2 Method

5.2.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Study Development

Qualitative analysis does not lend itself to generalisations, statements of representativeness, or assumptions about the data; instead, the methodology lends itself for the in-depth understanding and exploration of ranges of experiences, focusing on questions of "how" and "why". In contrast to quantitative research that asserts reality can be objectively measured and understood, qualitative research asserts reality is multiple and subjective, and that knowledge is constructed subjectively, rather than discovered objectively (B. Smith, 2018). Qualitative phenomenological analysis lends itself particularly well to research with the goal to understand the meaning of experiences that matter to people; which in this study, are the experiences of intimate relationships of men who are convicted of incestuously abusing their child.

The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is an inductive qualitative approach, with the goal to explore, examine, and make sense of the idiosyncratic and idiographic sense-making of participants, grounding any generalization in the particular (Eatough & Smith, 2017). IPA assumes participants are experts in their own lives, and uses a double hermeneutic: the researcher tries to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their experiences (J. A. Smith et al., 2022). IPA does not consider what participants say as "the truth", but rather how they make sense of their experiences, and analyses data descriptively, conceptually, and linguistically (J. A. Smith, 2004). IPA also crucially leaves room for the subtleties of what has not been said, to understand the process and valence needed to arrive at the content of words, and to elicit meaning from how the researcher makes sense of the stories that are told and untold (Skrapec, 2001).

As such, a semi-structured interview schedule, focused on the experiences of the participants in their intimate relationships with their own parents, partners, children, and themselves was developed. The semi-structured interview schedule was used as a guide and prompt, to allow both freedom in the interview for participants to elaborate on personally meaningful areas, as well as provide some structure to the interview (J. A. Smith et al., 2022). The interview schedule focused on three main areas of experiences: experiences of being a father, experiences of partner relationships, and experiences of father-child relationships (interview proposal in Appendix 3).

5.2.2 Participants

The inclusion criterion for participation was being a father who was convicted of a sexual offence against his biological or sociolegal child. In total, eight men participated in the interviews, but two interviews got corrupted during the dictaphone-to-computer file transfer and were irrecoverable, and their interviews could thus not be included in the data-analysis. The final sample comprised six men (see Table 19), three of whom admitted their allegations, and three of whom denied their allegations. The participants were convicted of sexually abusing their daughters, sons, stepdaughters, and stepsons. All participants also had convictions or serious allegations concerning sexual offences against other victims, such as their ex-wives, granddaughters, sisters, or unrelated children and adults.

Table 19. ***Study Participant Information***

Ben	Admits	Convicted of sexual assault and rape of his daughter, son, and granddaughter. Previous conviction for driving with excess alcohol
Owen	Admits	Convicted of sexual assault and rape of his daughter. Previous convictions for driving with excess alcohol, sexual assault of a minor, and sexual assault of an adult woman.
David	Admits	Convicted of sexual assault and rape of his stepdaughter, incitement of a minor, and sexual assault of an adult woman. Previous convictions for fraud, employee theft, and wilful assault and child cruelty.
John	Denies	Convicted of sexual assault of his stepson and sister. Allegations of sexual abuse of his daughter, and sexual abuse of vulnerable women.
Matthew	Denies	Convicted of sexual assault of his son and rape of his ex-wife. Allegations of sexual assault of his foster daughter.
Mark	Denies	Convicted of sexual assault and taking sexual photographs of his stepdaughter, voyeurism, and paying for sex with a minor. Allegations of rape of his ex-wife.

5.2.3 Study Procedure

Five participants were recruited from an all-male sexual-offence specific prison and one participant through the Safer Living Foundation (a rehabilitative charity) in the East Midlands region of the United Kingdom. Participants in prison were recruited using convenience sampling via posters on the wings and referral by their treatment facilitators; the participant from the Safer Living Foundation through referral. Participation was voluntary and there was no incentive to take part. Recruitment lasted from September 2023 to March 2024. This study was approved by Nottingham Trent University, reference 1563350; and the National Research Committee of HM Prison and Probation Service, reference 2022-246.

Participants could express their interest in participating by leaving a note to the researcher at the psychology department of the prison. When the participant was deemed eligible, a face-to-face interview was planned in the interview rooms of the prison. Prior to commencing the interview, the study information was discussed (Online Appendix C9), the consent form was

discussed and initialled by both the participant and researcher (Online Appendix C10), and after the interview, the participant received a debrief (Online Appendix C11). Interviews lasted between one-and-a-half and three hours and were recorded on an encrypted dictaphone.

5.2.4 Data Analytical Procedure

The methodological framework used for analysis is outlined in J. A. Smith et al. (2022). First, the interviews were listened and relistened several times. Two interviews were transcribed fully by hand as an initial practice and to get acquainted with the procedure. Then, the interviews were transcribed using the voice-to-text language model Whisper-large-v3 (A. Radford et al., 2022). The model was run on a locally owned personal computer, with no network communication. The transcripts were then listened to again from start to finish and checked for completeness and mistakes and corrected by hand where necessary. Transcripts were read and reread multiple times to become immersed and familiarised with the data. Then, each transcript was explored twice on a semantic and language level, noting anything of interest, using both overt and conceptual annotations. The notes from the transcripts were analysed to determine experiential statements, and to search for connections between them. The clustering of these statements resulted in the individual participant's emergent experiential themes. This process was repeated for all participants. The analysis' last step consisted of the determination of patterns of convergence and divergence across participants' experiences, resulting in the superordinate and subordinate themes described in the result section.

5.2.5 Reflections

Given the intimacy of the interview subjects, maintaining appropriate closeness and distance with participants was at times challenging, which might also be inherent to the transgressive nature of sexual offending. For instance, there were times during one interview

when a participant displayed deeply felt remorse, but there were also times when I wondered whether he tried to intentionally unsettle me, for instance by suddenly showing me his severe self-harm scars, or repeatedly bringing up how he would strangle and resuscitate animals, as well as his son. Some level of perceived inappropriateness was also present in other interviews, when some participants assigned the tightness of their foreskins to have some explanatory role in their denial, but the necessity of telling me these specific details were not always clear to me.

This difficult dance of closeness and distance was further compounded by how gender, age, and power influences research: me, a young woman in an all-male prison asking middle-aged men to talk about their experiences with sexuality and romantic relationships, after which I can leave and go home, while they go back to being locked in (as an aside, an experience that is widely shared but largely ignored in the broader realm of sexual offending treatment and research). Sometimes I felt the participants behaved to me in ways that bordered on boastfulness or flirtation. There were times I felt I had to be feminine, pleasing, and soft; and times I felt I, as a woman, had to prove my intelligence or toughness. Nonetheless, it was with some hesitation that I interpreted some of their experiences through a gendered lens: feminist theory quickly becomes reductive, as *everything is patriarchy*. However, as I as a researcher make sense of the participants' experiences from the perception of a woman, the gendered lens of some of the subordinate themes in my interpretation was unescapable.

The fragmentation in the narratives of participants at times evoked feelings of alienation and distance in myself. These feelings of alienation were most prominent when participants denied their allegations, and sometimes lead to feelings of scepticism and antipathy; for instance, one participant frequently repeated he did not understand "at all" why he was convicted, even when there was photographic evidence supporting the allegations against him. Discrepancies

between interviews and file information frustrated and complicated interpretation, as experiences narrated by the participants in the interviews sometimes did not align with the context or information of their files. For instance, many participants overtly expressed love for their children, their partners, and their experience of being a father. However, these overt expressions did not converge with how I perceived the actuality of the participants' described behaviours. Consequently, there was considerable incongruence between the participants' sense-making of their experiences, and my sense-making of the participants' experiences. As such, I have spent a lot of time carefully considering whether the analyses in this study indeed reflected the interviews, or whether my biases and post-hoc information coloured too much of its interpretation. I hope this has resulted in a nuanced analysis of the participants' experiences of their intimate relationships.

5.3 Findings and Discussion

The superordinate and subordinate themes of this study are presented in Table 20. The salient overarching finding of this study was how participants constructed narratives about family and relationship dynamics that were complex, inconsistent, and dysfunctional. Within participants' relationship construals were complex contradictions of humiliation, abuse, affection, jealousy, retaliation, love, entitlement, loneliness, and rejection. At the core of the participants' narratives was a deep yearning for intimacy, a sense of entitlement to that intimacy, and ultimately, being rejected of that intimacy.

Table 20. ***Superordinate and Subordinate Themes***

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
1. Complex construals of care	1. Intergenerational complexity
	2. Utilitarian fatherhood
	3. Fragmented fatherhood
2. Intimately rejected	4. Masculine inadequacy
	5. Thwarted

5.3.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Complex Construals of Care

This superordinate theme. *Complex construals of care,* reflects the complexity of the participants' in their construals of their own received parental care, and their execution of parenting and fatherhood. (1.1) *Intergenerational complexity,* reflects the participants' own complex upbringings and their sense-making of those complexities. (1.2) *Utilitarian Fatherhood* constructs the utilitarian, superficial, and self-serving experience and execution of the participants' fathering. And (1.3) *Fragmented fatherhood* details the fragmentation of the participants' identities as fathers as a result of their convictions.

5.3.1.1 Subordinate Theme 1.1: Intergenerational Complexity. The subordinate theme *Intergenerational complexity* was characterised by the participants' struggle to integrate the complex parallel experiences of care and hurt in their upbringing. The participants in this study described formative years coloured by adverse experiences, ranging across poverty, absent parents, alcoholism, humiliation, abandonment, familial mental health problems, familial dysfunction, neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and exposure to domestic violence. This is exemplified by the extracts of John and Owen:

> "To have an illegitimate child, was a very bad smear on your character, your reputation, and your potential progression. So I was hidden. [...] I was always the bottom of the pile. I was the unwanted one" (John)

> "My dad, my dad could change from being nice... and say, someone who was teaching me how to play chess, to someone that was really violent around the house. Someone that used to, ehm, beat me on times. I was, I was being naughty so I, so I, so I probably deserved to be hit by the buckle end of a belt. [...] There was good and bad, but I think that's what made it worse. Yeah. Because you could have good things with my father, but then the bad would be really bad. So so so you didn't know what to expect. Yeah. And I think that made it worse" (Owen)

John's childhood was characterised by derision, humiliation, and lack of affection by his parents. He, a child born out of wedlock, was hidden from his community of birth to protect his father's reputation. He described himself in a painful analogy as a *smear*, the bottom of the pile, the unwanted one – cutting words to describe the rejection of his parents he deeply felt and internalised. Owen, on the other hand, described a childhood that was coloured by volatility, powerlessness, and violence, which was made "worse" by its unpredictability. Experiences of abuse and dysfunction in the family-of-origin of men convicted of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences are exceedingly common (Goodman-Delahunty, 2014; Seto et al., 2015). The experience of emotional harm by parents can be particularly impactful as it targets a child's sense of self-worth and safety (Iwaniec et al., 2007). This impact is also principally present in these extracts, as John defined himself as "the unwanted one", and Owen had internalised he deserved his abuse as he was "naughty".

Hermeneutically, the participants described abusive, inconsistent, and rejecting parenting practices. Abusive, inconsistent, and rejecting parenting in turn are related to preoccupied and fearful adult attachment. Preoccupied and fearful attachment are both characterised by a deep fear of rejection and abandonment in close relationships, difficulties with self-soothing, and either (preoccupied) approval seeking behaviour to validate feelings of unworthiness or (fearful) hypersensitivity to rejection and cyclical withdraw and approach behaviours (Dutton et al., 1994). These attachment behaviours preclude the formation of emotionally intimate relationships, which sets the stage for coercive and entitled interpersonal relationships, emotional loneliness, reduced empathy, and difficulties in emotion regulation (Craissati, 2009; Marshall, 1993), which will return as the undercurrent of the next subordinate themes.

The men struggled with how to make sense of the love they feel for their parents with a reckoning of the mistreatment they experienced in parallel. Matthew recounted:

> "I had a lovely childhood with two lovely parents who were of that time… so life was different, values were different…
>
> *What do you mean with that?*
>
> Ehm… my father was very domineering, but so was, so were most fathers of that time you know… My, my mother had her role within the family… which… I take a dim view of now, but you have to say… seventy years has changed history. […] He {i.e., his father} was who he was, and you love your parents despite… Anybody who thinks that their parents are perfect is wrong and I am not perfect either" (Matthew)

Matthew opened his interview by emphasising that his parents were lovely, even when his further accounts of his parents were constructed as coercive and stifling. Matthew justified his parents' seemingly troubled relationship dynamic by establishing it to be a normative dynamic of their time. Ostensibly, Matthew construed a story in which he spoke highly of his parents, but he intermittently interwove signposts of contradictions throughout his narrative (e.g., "parents who were of that time…"). It felt at times he intentionally arranged his narrative to invite further questions, to absolve himself from the responsibility to volunteer his parents' wrongdoings. For other participants in this study, too, was felt tension between a filial loyalty to uphold idealised notions of their childhood, while simultaneously attempting to give a coherent account of their upbringing. Mistreated children's integration of the love and adversity from their parents is often very complicated and multi-faceted (Katz & Barnetz, 2014; S. Wilson et al., 2012), and the integration of incoherence in self-narratives can be crucial for sense-making of one's identity (Blagden et al., 2023). Although participants acknowledged that there were adverse experiences in their childhoods, many participants minimised or offered justifications for them, emitting a sense that they had experienced their upbringing as normal, too – which also seemed to be a way to cope and rationalise the reality of their upbringing (K. M. Y. Chan et al., 2023; Ravi & Casolaro, 2018).

5.3.1.2 Subordinate Theme 1.2: Utilitarian Fatherhood. The blueprint of this second subordinate theme, *Utilitarian fatherhood*, is provided by the first subordinate theme, *Intergenerational complexity*. When parents are abusive, children are locked into forming attachments to caregivers who are also sources of pain – and, children come to expect attachments fraught with fear and pain (Dutton, 2007). The last extract by Matthew merits repetition, as it exemplified an important sentiment broadly shared among participants.

> "You love your parents despite… Anybody who thinks that their parents are perfect is wrong and I am not perfect either" (Matthew)

Matthew here distinctly drew a parallel from his parents to himself: he loved his not-perfect parents, and he is also a not-perfect parent. The subsequent conclusion, then, is that he should be loved, too. The underlying sentiment is that children are obligated, or destined, to love their parents, pretty much regardless of their parents' behaviour; ergo, the participants' children also had an obligation to love them. This simplistic feeling of being entitled to their children's love resulted in an interpretation and execution of fatherhood that was utilitarian, superficial, and self-serving.

Some participants expressed openly that they had children for self-centred purposes. Important context for the following extracts is that David and John at this point in their stories had already told me of the several children they had fathered who were taken into care (David) or who they had ceased contact with (John). Answering why they decided to have more children, David and John offered the following:

> "{Referring to his fifth child} is just something we {i.e., he and partner[10]} wanted to build a relationship back up on. But it did nothing. We just thought it would make everything better. […]

[10] Throughout the extracts, the people the participants mention are referred to *as they were at that time*. As illustration: Participant "Bert" was in a relationship with "Amanda", but Amanda broke off the relationship when she discovered Bert abused his stepdaughter "Charlotte", who is Amanda's daughter. When Bert in an extract refers to a time when Bert and Amanda were still in a relationship, the extract will refer to Amanda as "his partner". If Bert in an extract refers to a time after Bert and Amanda's relationship dissolution, the extract will refer to Amanda as "his ex-partner". When Bert in an extract refers to Charlotte, the extract will refer to Charlotte with their historic relationship, i.e., "his stepdaughter", even when Bert no longer had contact with, or parental or legal ties to Charlotte.

Why do you think you kept on having sex with {partner}?

I think because I loved her still. Yeah. I think, I think that's why, I just wanted to please her. Because ehm, I, I felt bad myself, with all the kids gone, ehm, I thought, yeah, we have another child, might, might, might things be different" (David)

"I think it's fair to say from… ehm… probably this relationship onwards, certainly that relationship, and that relationship, I didn't feel as though I wanted children, but my respective partners did want children, so I felt obligated. So I'm, and, that is not a nice thing to say about your children, but, I've felt obligated to have children in order to maintain the relationship, because I was, I was… ehm… I think I was fearful of being lonely" (John)

In both David's and John's accounts was an alienating nonchalance and passivity to how they described their decision to have children. David refers to fathering his fifth child as "*something* to build our relationship back on" and "*it* did nothing", as a dehumanised and ultimately disappointing tool he utilised to try and please his abusive partner and fix their relationship. Both David and John articulated they had children to please their partners, indirectly instrumentalising children to alleviate their fear of loneliness and rejection, as they thought this would ensure the continuation of their romantic relationships – a pattern John continued throughout his other relationships, even after the already three failed relationships he pointed out.

The utilitarian interpretation of fathering was further exemplified in the way participants experienced parenting expectations and obligations. Many men described basic parenting duties, such as clothing, bathing, and feeding their children as *going above and beyond*; doing, per

Mark, “everything”. Given the insecure templates of dependency on their own parents, it was not illogical they conflated being reliable and dependable with being good fathers. In the participants’ perception, their indispensability made them loved. This utilitarian, transactional perception of love was most pointedly conveyed in how John thought his stepchildren and daughter saw him:

> “They thought I was the best thing since sliced bread. They relied on me for everything” (John)

John herein linked his children’s love and appreciation for him to their reliance on him. He interestingly compared himself to “sliced bread” – a daily necessity. John could have chosen many more colourful and loving descriptions of himself as a parent, but instead, chose to define himself by his utility to his children, emphasising their relationship of dependency and utility to him. Shared more broadly, participants expressed few words of softness, warmth, or sensitivity in regard to their children, and seemingly felt little duty to care for and protect them (Eekelaar, 1991). Pregnancies were unplanned and hasty, and there were few notions of love and intentional “family making” (Langdridge et al., 2005). This also manifested in the intergenerational continuation of maltreatment in the participants’ families (Langevin, Marshall, et al., 2021), as the participants’ children were exposed to both maternal and paternal abandonment, neglect, relational conflicts, parental substance abuse and mental health problems, and intimate partner violence, congruent with the findings of the studies in Chapter 3 and 4.

However, there was a manifest absence in most all men’s accounts of accountability and reflection on their own roles and responsibilities in the dysfunction they exposed their children to. Instead, participants seemed to feel a sense of entitlement over their children, which logically

complemented their feelings of entitlement to their love. David's next extract is his account of what happened during the hearing wherein his children were placed in foster care, where also their social workers were present.

> "They're {i.e., the social workers} showing their legs at him {i.e., the judge}, everything. And what the hell are we meant to do? I got up, when-when they were going to get adopted, when he said they're going to adopt you. I said, you're a disgusting judge. He goes, I beg your pardon? I said, you're disgusting. I bet you've slept with all these women here. He was like, I beg your pardon? I said look, they're just sitting on your desk. That's not normal. And, ehm, unfortunately nothing could have happened. But I had my say in the end. But he said, he said, give me one reason why they shouldn't go into care. Because they're my kids and I love them. I've got every right to have 'em. He says you've got no rights. Because you, those rights have been given away" (David)

It was somewhat difficult to comprehend David's emotional state of mind in his account of this court hearing. The sense of righteousness ("I had my say") he conveyed by the sexist insulting of the judge and the social workers seemed completely misplaced in the emotionally charged situation of his children being taken into care. This righteousness felt even more misplaced as the children's home life was unstable and unsafe, with emotional and physical neglect, intimate partner violence, and the parentification of his seven-year-old stepdaughter (to not even mention his sexual abuse of her, although this was not known to authorities at the time). Regardless, David strongly proclaimed that he felt he had every right to "have" his children – these feelings of dominance and ownership are also described in other qualitative studies with men who have incestuously abused their children (Hartley, 1998; Phelan, 1995). A different

interpretation might be that the highly charged court situation emotionally dysregulated David, and that insulting the judge was an attempt to "take back power" in an otherwise helpless and despondent situation. However, David demonstrated an absence of genuine-feeling care, sadness, or remorsefulness, which was coupled with a pronounced lack of self-reflection on his own role in the sexual abuse of his stepdaughter, as further demonstrated in the next extract. As context, David's stepdaughter was about six years old at the time of this extract:

> "I saw {stepdaughter} in a totally different way, even though she was young. Ehm, she was always doing things for the kids, she was like a mother to them. That's all I saw her, and that's when I think my my my, what's it, rose tinted glasses came on. And we were perfect, we were pushing the kids on the swing, going out bowling, cinema, everything there… Ehm, but the time was, when she came and sat with me, and said I love you, that was it, because I had no one else to love me. There's no one there. And {stepdaughter} sort of activated it, and I sort of clenched onto, I thought, I'm not letting this go. She loves me. But it's a time when, I mean, we started kissing… ehm… and I started hugging her, and I did start touching her. But it's when she came back from school one day, saying we've been learning about sex in this book. And when there's two people I've been told they go have sex. And she said, I want to have sex with you. And I said no. So I just lost it, and I ehm… walked out of the house. […] I came back and {stepdaughter} was sitting on the sofa with Mum, and she started looking at me and she said, Mum, what would happen if someone's had sex with someone underage? And she {i.e., his partner} goes, don't be stupid, why are you asking me these silly questions? And just looked at her and thought, you *fucking* bitch, even though she was young, I knew what she was getting at" (David)

Within this extract, we see how David constructed his six-year-old stepdaughter in a multitude of conflicting and highly age-inappropriate ways: a grown-up woman, a mother, a partner, a rescuer, a lover, a succubus, a manipulator, a *fucking bitch*. The sudden harshness of David's final construal of his stepdaughter, *fucking bitch*, was disquieting when cascaded out of his previous accounts of how he loved her and saw her as a partner. When we further take apart the construals of David of his stepdaughter, it becomes clear he solely defined her through what she meant for him, with no mention of care for her, consideration for how she must have felt, or any mention of how he saw her as a child.

It stood out that many participants demonstrated empathy deficits for their children, particularly in terms of a lack of interest and care for them, and inadequate capacities to appropriately understand the perspectives of their children and victims (G. Barnett & Mann, 2013). This lack of interest and limited perspective taking resulted in self-serving interpretations of behaviours, and was exemplified by Ben when I asked him to describe his children:

> {Daughter}.... It's hard to say about {daughter}.
>
> *Why?*
>
> Well, for some unknown reason, the two lads never wanted to know... I used to go to the pubs, I would play pub games, you know, pool, snooker, darts, whatever. {Daughter} always wanted to come with me. The lads didn't want to know. Yeah, they didn't want to know. {Daughter} did. I don't know why. Even after the abuse, she still wanted to go with her dad to the pub. Why?
>
> *Why do you think?*
>
> Whether it was love, what's it, or you know, just enjoy going out with her dad. You know.

Particularly painful is that prior to the above extract, Ben could describe his two sons – who rarely spent time with him – as individuals (a brainy and a mechanical one), but he was unable to recall anything his daughter (who he sexually abused) was interested in or liked to do herself. Ben's only understanding of her was in relation to himself, i.e., that she spent a lot of time around him in the pub. In the above extract, he seems to also imply that, maybe, given his daughter still wanted to spend time with him, the abuse could have not been that bad; she must surely have loved him or enjoyed his company. An important consideration is that many sexually abused children behave in ways that, superficially, seem to indicate no harm from abuse, or might even display sexualised behaviours that seem to instigate sexual abuse (Hornor, 2004). Such behaviours can function as an adaptative response to traumatic experiences, as a strategy to try to minimise and prevent (future) harm (Attrash Najjar et al., 2022; Summit, 1983).

Finally, the love the participants had overtly expressed towards their (step-)children was difficult to square with the swiftness and absoluteness contact with those same children was relinquished.

> "So… I want to be a dad. I want to resume the role. And I know that no matter what happens, that's not going to happen because my ex-partner will make it her mission to prevent me from having the contacts that I should have" (Mark)

> "I suppose the way I dealt with it in the end was by saying, I, you know, I can't do this anymore, and my door will always be open, and moving on and trying to get on with life" (Matthew)

The extract by Mark exemplified both his assertion of entitlement to his children ("the contacts that I *should* have"), as well as his pre-emptive assertion that his ex-partner would make it her mission to prevent him from his deserved contact, notwithstanding that he was banned to contact his children as part of his sentence. Matthew, in this extract, refers to what he said to his sons when they eventually refused to visit him. While his quote radiated the desperate conclusion of a father who has tried everything, the context he provided to this extract complicated its heaviness: the timing of this decision was one-year post divorce, after only six months of problematic contact; Matthew had, post-divorce, immediately moved more than 100 miles away and remarried; and his sons were only young teens, who he apparently ascribed a lot of responsibility of the contact to. One interpretation is that these men respected authorities' or their children's decisions to not have contact with them. While hurt, the participants might have tried to regain a sense of agency over that decision by pre-empting future possible rejection by cutting contact themselves. A different interpretation is that when their children were no longer "useful", they absolved themselves from the responsibility to have contact with them, situating this responsibility outside of themselves. A more cynical reading, however, is that the dissolution of contact coincided with the timing of the alleged incest offences, which makes it also seem likely that diminished contact were a consequence of shame, guilt, and fear.

5.3.1.3 Subordinate Theme 1.3: Fragmented Fatherhood. Regardless of whether participants admitted or denied the sexual offences they were accused of, their consequent convictions had an enormous impact on their identities as fathers. Their prison convictions, and more far-reaching, the contact bans with their children, meant they lost all direct roles associated with fatherhood (Ihinger-Tallman et al., 1993). The construal of their father identities amidst

navigating the (alleged) incest offences was difficult and fragmented. For some participants this was expressed in the categorical denial of the allegations:

> "I suppose the truth is that for so long I've been a father only in name. Ehm… So I'm not sure this, from my side, has changed the way I see meself… I suppose that… it takes a decision of my will to continue to love {son who has accused him of sexual abuse} … And to, as it were, emotionally ignore the accusations that he's made. […] I'm disturbed at what brought it about. And I wonder… how damaged he is psychologically to have done that" (Matthew)

> "Well, is it her {i.e., ex-partner} that's actually, you know, started it all off? You know, put the idea in my stepdaughter's head, because it just doesn't make sense at all. I just cannot get my head around it. […] See, that's the thing, because it didn't happen. I feel like I failed as a father towards {stepdaughter} for her to actually accuse me of this in the first place. That's the thing that, you know, that really gets me, is that I cannot understand why she's done it.

Both Mark and Matthew categorically denied the allegations of sexual abuse of their children (and, in their cases, also their ex-partners). Their explanations for why they were accused of sexually abusing their children came across rehearsed, insubstantial, and superficial. They both could not conceive of any reason their children would accuse them of sexual abuse, but implied the children might have been damaged psychologically. They hinted or made explicit that they thought their jealous ex-partners had set the children up to provide false allegations. In light of the previous positive construals of their identities of devoted fathers and partners, the accusations felt like a screeching halt (a "wreckage") in the narratives of Mark and Matthew.

In Burke's (1991) identity theory, identity interruption occurs when individuals are not able to enact behaviours that are meaningful to their identity – for instance, being in prison with contact prohibitions precludes participants to engage in their father identity. To resolve this discrepancy, individuals may decrease the centrality of that identity (Dyer et al., 2012) – as seen for instance, in Matthew's extract, where he states he is only "a father in name". However, in some cases, the identity interruption is so severe that it may lead to a complete abandonment of the identity (Cast & Burke, 2002), as articulated by Owen:

> "I don't regard myself as a father. A father is someone… Anyone can be a dad. You're, you're a dad by biology. But being a father… Has certain requirements of you. And I didn't live up to that. So, I wasn't a father. I wasn't a good father. So, I don't regard myself as a father because I wasn't a very good one" (Owen)

Owen did not regard himself as a father anymore. He did not live up to his requirements of what being a father entailed, and so he denied his fatherhood. In some ways, there are parallels to the denial of fatherhood by Owen to the denial of offences by Mark and Matthew, as none of the men had been able to fit the incest convictions into an integrated, coherent narrative of themselves as fathers. Subsequently, they rejected those parts of their narratives that did not fit their construal of self.

Narrative psychology proposes that individuals construct narratives about their identities through experiences of self, morality, and relationships with others. Damaging (i.e., traumatising, distressing) experiences disrupt the coherent construction of a narrative identity (Crossley, 2000). Incest offences and incest offence allegations are arguably highly damaging experiences,

implicating the self, morality, and relationships with others. The narratives of Mark and Matthew were accordingly fragmented and incoherent, wherein the incest offences did not make sense within their construals of self. Denial is a complex construct, which is a common but potentially frustrating and difficult experience when working with men who are convicted of sexual offences (Blagden et al., 2013; Levenson, 2011). Denial is interpreted to serve as a protection for the self from shame, keep the self-concept intact, and keep a sense of autonomy (Blagden et al., 2014). Family support for men who are convicted is often contingent on the shared denial of abuse (Blagden et al., 2011). Relating back to identity formation, denial is also necessary for the maintenance of the family identity. The stigma and shame that permeate sexual offending also permeates to the family members' identities in the case of incest: they, too, have failed to protect the children of their family. Thus, denial and the maintenance of denial might be especially salient for men accused of incest offences.

5.3.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Intimately Rejected

This second superordinate theme, *Intimately rejected,* reflects entitlement and rejection participants experienced in themselves and their romantic relationships. (2.1) *Masculine inadequacy* is characterised by the participants' feelings of inadequacy about themselves as men and their masculinity. (2.2) *Thwarted* reflects the participants' feelings of entitlement to, and the rejection of, intimacy.

5.3.2.1 Subordinate Theme 2.1: Masculine Inadequacy. This subordinate theme was characterised by the feelings of inadequacy the participants experienced in their self-construals as men, and the humiliation they experienced from that inadequacy. Their feelings of inadequacy were most clearly expressed in three intertwined conceptualisations of men and masculinities: provider, protector, and lover:

> “I was trying to work and get as much money. And I started to feel like a failure. You know, because I couldn't provide the way that I wanted to for them {i.e., refers to his partner and children}. And she {i.e., his partner} was there, obviously. I helped her to get a job. I wrote her CV, covering letters and everything. I did all of them for her. And she ended up getting the job, getting promoted, getting further and further, and a better paid job” (Mark)

> “We'd just gone our own ways and literally fallen apart from each other. From all the violence that was going on. I wasn't happy. She {i.e., his partner} wasn't happy but I had nowhere else to go. And she knew that. She knew that she had the power over me to say, ha-ha, you've got nowhere to go now. Even though the council house we were living in, she signed it over to me, to be the main occupant. And she'd go underneath. But she knew that she could easily just say, I want you out and I had to go. So she had that control over me, and it has become very coercive” (David)

> “I think she {i.e., his partner} would describe me at that time as a good dad. Because I was doing the dad and the mum job, which was allowing her, her freedom to carrying on all these sexual relationships and an affair at the same time” (John)

In all three extracts, the participants experienced failure and inadequacy as men and about their construal of masculinities. Mark did not live up to the masculine ideal of the man as the provider for the family – instead, his partner surpassed him in her career and was the breadwinner. David did not live up to the masculine ideal of the man as protector – instead, his partner abused and controlled him, and he feared her. John did not live up to the masculine ideal

of the man as competent lover – instead, his partner sought her sexual satisfaction elsewhere, leaving him cuckolded.

Some feminist theory has postulated that the sexual abuse of women and children is an expression of patriarchal power (Dobash & Dobash, 1983). But how, then, can we explain the powerlessness experienced by the participants in these extracts? Kimmel (2007) contemplated that it is not the experience of power that underlies gendered violence – rather, it is the experience of *entitlement* to power. This seems to be a more adequate conceptualisation of masculinity in these extracts. The participants conceptualised how they felt men and masculinity should be, what they were deserving of – powerful, providers, dominant. Conflicting with this was how they perceived themselves as men, and their masculinities: powerless, dependent, cuckolded. Ergo, they were not receiving what they, as men, were entitled to.

The discrepancy of idealised and actualised masculinity underlies many explanations of gendered violence, such as intimate partner violence and sexual violence, in feminist theory frameworks (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Murnen et al., 2002; O'Neil, 2013). But, these frameworks are not limited to feminist theory: closely related concepts such as hostile masculinity and sexualised aggression are also important in several theorised models of sexual offending (Malamuth et al., 2014; T. N. Ray & Parkhill, 2023). Noticeably, most of this theorising has been specific to sexual violence against women, but Cossins (2000, 2016) has argued that the frameworks of power and powerlessness, and resulting feelings of entitlement, are also essential to understand the sexual abuse of children. Developmentally, exaggerated entitlement is theorised to be the result of deprived childhoods, resulting in feelings of being wronged. Consequently, feelings of entitlement are developed to function as a defence against painful feelings and to resist feelings of powerlessness (Tolmacz, 2011). These feelings of

powerlessness are further compounded by experiences of humiliation, rejection, and failure – as constructed in the experiences of masculine failures of provider, protector, and lover of the participants – which in turn increase perceptions of unfairness and entitlement (Cossins, 2000; Ranger, 2015), which is clearly seen in the last subordinate theme.

5.3.2.2 Subordinate Theme 2.2: Thwarted. The pervasive sense that the participants most of all deeply yearned for intimacy – to be seen, needed, loved by women (or, a woman) – was strongly sensed throughout all interviews. This yearning was articulated as follows by Matthew and Mark:

> "I do like being loved. I do like the fact that in both cases they idolised me and I could tell that. […] And it, it felt good to be wanted. And… and to feel warm. And to be needed" (Matthew)

> "As I said, I did, I worshipped the ground that she walked on. I'd have done anything for her" (Mark)

Matthew in the extract above drew the parallels he saw between the woman he had an extramarital affair with and his foster daughter he was accused of emotionally and sexually abusing – he loved being loved and idolised. Mark explained he basically prostrated himself for the love of his ex-wife – he worshipped the ground she walked on. Both extracts are indicative of the lengths the men went to in order to be loved – risking their marriages, the boundaries of children under their care, and their self worth. However, when love was not received or reciprocated to their liking, resentment and entitlement were close to the surface:

> "Why would you do that to somebody that's actually taken you on, with two kids that you already had from a previous relationship?" (Mark)

Mark hereabove and throughout his interview implied multiple times his ex-wife – coming with the "baggage" of children fathered by a different man – should have been *grateful* he took her on; and that her and her daughter's accusations of sexual abuse were a betrayal of his deserved gratefulness, as Mark denied his convictions. Another interpretation is that he implied that his gracefulness should have worked as preventative to his ex-wife and stepdaughter reporting their abuse to the authorities. Nonetheless, in both forms of interpretation Mark felt that this was not what he was *entitled to.* Similar expressions of entitlement, bitterness, grievance, and resentment related to intimacy were very central to all narratives of the participants. It is there, in that experience of thwarted entitlement, that the men in this study most chiefly made associations to sexuality and intimacy.

It was inescapably paradoxical that five out of six participants mentioned extramarital affairs and/or visiting sex workers while supposedly monogamously partnered – however wounding they had previously described the infidelities of some of their own partners to be, and however devoted they had described themselves as partners. Participants hinted at sexual motivations for these extramarital wanderings, but most of them most plainly expressed that they were looking to fulfil the gap of the lacking intimacy they were not getting at home. They experienced deep negative emotions by the lack of romantic and sexual intimacy, as per David:

> "Sex to me back then wasn't… having sex, it was having someone to talk to, someone to be close to. Because that is all I wanted, the closeness. […] It wasn't just to get someone to have sex with

> me, it was literally having to do with being close to a female. Because I wasn't getting that home. I just felt so numb" (David)

David in the above extract uses heavily loaded words: his homelife was so barren from intimacy and closeness, he was feeling " numb" – being close to someone would assuage his loneliness. At the same time, his quest for intimacy seemed rather undirected and superficial, as he was looking to be close to "*someone*", "*a female*". It was, however, clear throughout all interviews that the intimacy the participants sought was a specific sexualised intimacy provided by women: none of the men described, for instance, longing for intimacy and closeness with male friends or family. Other participants also experienced this sexualised intimacy as essential to their mood regulation and coping with negative feelings such as loneliness, depressive moods, and anger – using sex to cope with negative feelings is also pervasively found among men convicted of sexual offences (Cortoni & Marshall, 2001). Importantly, however, was that this sexualised coping also reflected their sense of entitlement: if their partners did not provide consensual sex, participants became dysregulated. They felt they had a right to get what they perceived to be rightfully theirs elsewhere (with sex workers, extramarital affairs, or the children they abused). Or, such as Owen, they would demand it, violently and at the cost of their family's wellbeing:

> "I can, I can, I can have massive blow-ups, and I explode… with my temper. And on those occasions, I've had her {i.e., ex-wife} by the neck, until she's almost blacked out… Ehm… which I'm not proud of. Ehm… I've… ehm… been violent to animals in the house, just to get her attention. I've strangled the family dog in front of my children and my wife. […] {Son} would come over to play

> and I'd push him. Because I was angry with {ex-wife} for not sleeping with me and ignoring me. And… I knew that that got to her" (Owen)

Within this extract, there is the powerful intertwining of intimate partner violence, child abuse, and sexual violence. Owen described in his interview a relationship permeated by his extremely violent volatility, wherein he – physically, emotionally, and sexually – abused his wife, their pets, his children; and himself by self-harm. Owen described a great sensitivity to rejection, jealousy, neediness, and entitlement, which strongly resembles other analyses of men who have committed intimate partner violence (Dutton, 2007; Mackay, 2020) and men who have stalked (Flowers et al., 2022; R. Wheatley et al., 2021).

It stood out that Owen experienced his volatility as both a loss of control and explosive ("I can have massive blowups, and I explode"), as well as also instrumental and retaliatory (hurting animals and his son to get his wife's attention). Retaliation was an important thread throughout how the participants experienced the cascade to their incest offence commissions. The three men who admitted their offences all very explicitly centred the intimate and sexual rejection of their partners as a core factor in the onset of the incestuous abuse of their (step-) daughters, and in the case of Ben, also his granddaughter:

> "I thought well now I'm a grown up. Now we've got time for ourselves. And {ex-wife} didn't want to know that. She just wanted {granddaughter} there. And like I said I felt like I was getting pushed out again. And I suppose that's what… kicked me off to try and turn the tables. Sort of thing. That I would get in close. With {granddaughter}. And try and push {ex-wife} out of the way. But eh… like I said one thing led to another. And we ended up back where we was again" (Ben)

> “It's literally isolation. Having no one there. […] I said it's like being on an island. You've had like a shipwreck, the plane's crashed. It's you and your stepdaughter. You're the only ones together. She's seven. I'm forty-odd. One day, something's going to happen between them because they want company, and they are going to have sex one day. It's going to happen” (David)

> “But it was all, everything was all based around ‘My wife is not sleeping with me, she should be sleeping with me, that’s her job, that’s her role, why isn’t she doing that, why isn’t living up to what she’s supposed to do? Okay, I’ll do this, and it's her fault, not mine’. And that’s the way I looked at it all. That's the way I still struggle with it sometimes. To, well, if my wife had been sleeping with me, probably things would be fine between me and her and none of this would have happened” (Owen)

The narratives of the men show great convergence in how they experienced the emotional landscape leading up to why they sexually abused their children: loneliness, rejection, jealousy, entitlement, and grievance. In these extracts, the three forms of grievance as described by Higgs and colleagues (2023) are present: 1) Ben was jealous of the attention his wife bestowed their granddaughter – his extract reflects the (actual or perceived) wrongdoing or unfairness that leads to feeling aggrieved. 2) David felt it was him and his stepdaughter against the world – and most notably against her mother, who he deemed the cause of his loneliness – his extract reflects the psychological state of being aggrieved. 3) Owen solved the entitlement he felt to sex, but was denied by his wife, by sexually abusing their daughter – his extract reflects the violent retaliation to a grievance.

Higgs et al. (2023) have suggested that grievance is present in most all sexual offending against women, but deemed it unlikely that grievance is a major driving force in the majority of sexual offending against children. However, qualitative research with men who have committed sexual offences against intrafamilial and extrafamilial children finds consistent evidence for constructs that, at the least, overlap with grievance, such as the implicit theories of "entitlement" and "dangerous world" (Bennett, 2011), feelings of entitlement, power, and control (Sullivan & Sheehan, 2016), and rejection and retaliation (Hartley, 2001; Wash, 1989). The centrality of grievance and grievance-adjacent (resentment, entitlement) emotions in the interviews was surprising, considering the child sexual abuse literature has minimally considered these theoretically, and has mostly focused on sexual attraction to children. However, in the context of incest, grievance might play a unique role, intertwining relational grievances with incestuous offending.

5.4 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to phenomenologically interpret the intimate relationships of men convicted of incest offences against their children. The analyses of the participants' experiences showed relationship construals that were complex and dysfunctional, underlaid by a yearning and entitlement to intimacy, and experiences of loneliness, humiliation, and rejection. This resulted in the two superordinate themes, *Complex construals of care* and *Intimately rejected.* The findings of this study provide a more complex and nuanced analysis of the findings in Chapter 3 and 4, that showed the relation of family dysfunction and intrafamilial child sexual abuse, but can not elucidate the underlying processes or intricacies. Subordinate theme 1.1, *Intergenerational complexity,* showed the complexities of integrating the experiences of childhood abuse, rejection, and care, and how pervasive the influence of childhood abuse is in

the blueprint of adult relational functioning. Subordinate theme 1.2, *Utilitarian fatherhood*, analysed how father-child relationships were not necessarily very conflictuous, but were rather characterised by a distant and utilitarian view of fatherhood. Subordinate theme 1.3, *Fragmented fatherhood*, detailed the ways in which the incest convictions led to a rejection of the identity as father. Subordinate themes 2.1 and 2.2 both dealt with intimate rejection. Subordinate theme 2.1, *Masculine inadequacy*, detailed how the participants regarded themselves inadequate as men and in their masculinities. The last subordinate theme 2.2, *Thwarted*, was characterised by the participants' yearning and their sense of entitlement for intimacy, and the retaliation of its rejection thereof, which chiefly focused on their partners.

When trying to make sense of the experiences of the participants, the cascading sequences that result in the incest offences can be sketched out. Narratively, the participants were born into impoverished and working-class backgrounds, wherein traditional gender roles of masculinity were prominent; they grew up in childhoods fraught with abuse and rejection, rendering them without agency to resolve their parental abandonment, resulting in an exaggerated sense of entitlement; they displayed insecure adult attachment patterns, both craving and fearing intimacy, difficulties with self-soothing, and hyper-sensitivity to rejection – which were activated by their relationships with rejecting and humiliating partners; culminating in the aggrieved response to their unmet entitlements.

Importantly, this analysis indicated that, at least in the experience and construction of the participants, familial, and especially relational, dysfunction preceded the incest offences. It became clear that feelings of entitlement were fundamental to the participants' experiences: entitlement to their children's love, entitlement to their wives' and children's attention, and entitlement to sex and intimacy. Notably, central to the participants' sense-making of their incest

offences was the experience of rejection. Entitlement, grievance, and rejection have only been marginally discussed in research on child sexual abuse offending, let alone incest. However, this analysis indicates that these feelings might be essential to further our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

5.5 Limitations

Some limitations of this research have already been reflected on in section 5.2.5. Other limitations are obvious, such as the limits of time and geography, as well as the limitations of generalisability and transferability of qualitative research (B. Smith, 2018). While the final sample was sufficient in number, the loss of two interviews has meant the loss of idiographic accounts of two participants and further enrichment of the analysis. The split of denial and admittance in the participants both provided a breadth to the stories, but also meant a loss of some depth to explore, for instance, motivations underlying the abuse or pre- and post-offence relationships. As the goal of this study was not to find truth or discuss denial, but how participants made sense of their experiences of their intimate relationships, the conscious decision was made to do the triangulation of file-data and interview-data after the interviews, to minimise pre-interview biases and preconceptions. This meant that discrepancies during triangulation were not checked with participants and remained unresolved as additional information, some of which might have influenced the post-hoc interpretation of the interviews. Multiple iterations of moving back and forth between analysis and text were executed to ensure rigour and to ensure the analyses reflected the data.

Limitations were also present to how to situate the findings of this research, as research on incest is very limited. More broadly too, research about abusive fathers is biased in two important ways: quantitative research in this realm is often based on official data and broad

factors, which lacks depth. For instance, a file report of 'physical abuse' does not capture the complex landscape of relationships and interactions that led to that data point. While qualitative research is more apt to explore complex relationships and meanings, its research in turn suffers from a strong participation bias: very few parents who actively harmed, neglected, or abused their child are willing to participate in research, let alone discuss their abusive behaviours. Qualitative research is as a result biased to present positive accounts of fathering – and, for that matter, mothers, who are absent from this research, but of whom especially research of the last decades is biased positively. As such, it was at times difficult to situate the findings of these interviews into the context of a broader literature, as existing quantitative research did not do the complex data justice, and the qualitative literature did not address the experiences of abusive parenting. Hopefully this research will add to a growing literature that addresses complex experiences of parenting.

6. General Discussion

6.1 Research Question and Goals

This dissertation's overarching research question was: "*What is the role of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending?"* . To address this question, this dissertation sought:

- To determine the risk of and prevalence of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse.
- To examine the three main theoretical explanations of father-child incest (kinship recognition mechanisms, individual dispositions, and familial dysfunction).
- To explore the intimate relationships of men convicted of incest offences.

The main aims of this dissertation were explored in three empirical chapters. The key findings of these chapters are discussed in the next sections. After, the findings of these chapters and this dissertation will be integrated and discussed. Then, the limitations and reflections of the research of this dissertation will be considered. Last, implications and future recommendations will be given.

6.1.1 Key Findings of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 consisted of a systematic review, comparative (k = 18), and prevalence (k = 39) meta-analysis to compare families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred with families in which extrafamilial and families in which no (intrafamilial) child sexual abuse had occurred on familial dysfunction. Families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse experienced more familial dysfunction across all domains, with small to very large effect sizes: socio-economic stressors (e.g., homelessness), disorganised family structures (e.g., non-intact parental structures), dysfunctional relationships (e.g., spousal conflict), nonsexual abuse (e.g., exposure to intimate partner violence), and parental vulnerabilities (e.g., mental health and substance abuse problems). They also experienced the highest prevalence of

nonsexual abuse, with more than 40% reporting one or more forms of nonsexual abuse (physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence).

6.1.2 Key Findings of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 examined three theoretical explanations of father-child incest in 118 fathers and non-fathers convicted of sexual and nonsexual offences using primary data. Due to the small sample size, findings are tentative and should be interpreted cautiously. The findings indicated no support for most evolutionary kinship recognition mechanisms (phenotypic similarity, physical proximity, arousal/disgust). The findings of low partner fidelity might be better understood as a measure of familial dysfunction, given they were in comparison to sociolegal fathers. There was also no support that individual dispositions explained choosing a related over an unrelated victim, but findings for atypical sexuality were complex and indicated that sexuality might be an important component of incest offending. The study found most support for familial dysfunction to explain father-child incest, finding a high prevalence of dysfunctional partner and parent-child relationships.

6.1.3 Key Findings of Chapter 5

Chapter 5 explored the intimate relationships of six men who were convicted of incestuously abusing their children using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Relationships between participants and their parents, children, and partners were experienced as deeply complex and dysfunctional. Central to the experiences of the participants were feelings of entitlement and rejection. The data resulted in two superordinate themes: *Complex construals of care* and *Intimately rejected*, and five subordinate themes: *Intergenerational complexity, Utilitarian fatherhood, Fragmented fatherhood, Masculine inadequacy,* and *Thwarted.*

6.2 Integration of Findings

The findings of this dissertation conclude that familial dysfunction is pathognomonic to intrafamilial child sexual abuse, and that we consequently should situate our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending and victimisation in the context of familial dysfunction. Familial dysfunction might be most relevant to theorising about the aetiology and perpetuation of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, and less relevant to considerations of recidivism. Based on the findings, the following four domains seem pertinent to advance our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending: 1) The intergenerational continuity of adversity, 2) Contextualised individual dispositions, 3) Dysfunctional partner relationships, and 4) Dysfunctional parent-child relationships.

6.2.1 The Intergenerational Continuity of Adversity

Adverse childhood experiences are a common finding in most all research concerning convicted sexual offending populations (Levenson et al., 2016). Adverse childhood experiences as such seem therefore not a differentiating or predictive factor for sexual offending, but might be best understood as a baseline experience to the development of delinquent and offending behaviour. Adverse childhood experience histories were common in all three studies, finding non-significantly more prevalent family-of-origin childhood abuse histories in families with intrafamilial child sexual abuse in the meta-analysis in Chapter 3, and a much higher prevalence of incestuous childhood abuse in the histories of fathers with incest convictions in Chapter 4. Adverse childhood experiences, particularly of abusive, inconsistent, and rejecting parenting, were also present in the histories of the fathers in Chapter 5. There was, accordingly, also evidence of the continuance of adversity in the families-of-procreation beyond intrafamilial child sexual abuse: families wherein intrafamilial child sexual abuse occurred reported a high occurrence of nonsexual abuse in Chapter 3, fathers with incest convictions reported a substantial prevalence of intimate

partner violence perpetration in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5, many fathers reported intimate partner violence victimisation, as well as emotionally and physically neglectful parenting by both parents. The interplay with mothers and partners in the continuation of these cycles might also be of crucial importance, as both victim-to-perpetration as well as victim-to-victimisation cycles were present and interwoven in both Chapter 3 and 5.

Adverse childhood experiences might have modelling effects beyond abuse continuation, repeating dysfunctional behaviour from one's own parents, or not recognising or not knowing how to develop positive parenting behaviours. We saw this in the prevalence of problematic parenting practices in Chapter 3, distant parent-child relationships and parent-child conflict in Chapter 4, and distant and utilitarian parenting in Chapter 5. Also notable were the indications of preoccupied and fearful attachment styles in the relational narratives of the participants in Chapter 5, which were characterised by volatility, high sensitivity to rejection, and fear of abandonment. Even more than in, for instance, extrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, the intergenerational continuity of adversity is distinctly important to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, as the potential continuance of adversity to the next generation is inherent to the familial relationship to the abused victim. Intervention at origin, with fathers and mothers, could therefore have cascading effects spanning several generations.

6.2.2 Contextualised Individual Dispositions

As expected based on the extant literature (Seto et al., 2015), atypical sexuality and antisociality did not explain father-child incest incrementally compared to other forms of sexual offending. In the relative absence of what are considered "typical" expressions of atypical sexuality (such as paedophilia) and antisociality (such as significant issues with impulsivity), Seto (2019, p. 14) asked "*So what then motivates their sexual offenses against related victims?*" However, the empirical findings to answer this question are based on sexual

recidivism where incest is situated in comparison to other forms of sexual offending – not incest as situated in comparison to non-offending, or aetiological considerations rather than recidivism considerations.

This dissertation's findings suggest that atypical sexuality and antisociality might be more appropriately understood as intersecting spectra, spanning more atypical to more typical sexuality, and more overt to more covert antisociality. We should also consider that the locus of *intra*familial abuse is not external or distant to the self: it is not strangers or unrelated children who are abused, but it is the intimate partners and children someone cares for who are abused. The insularity and perceived secrecy and privacy the familial situation context provides might precipitate incest offence-related motivations and facilitations that otherwise might have remained latent and unknown. Strangely, while the situational context seems so very pertinent to incest offending, the research that focuses on situational contexts has largely ignored this form of offending.

Indications of a more spectral interpretation of atypical sexuality and antisociality were found in the quantitative and qualitative studies of Chapter 4 and 5. Fathers convicted of incest offences were more atypical sexually than fathers convicted of nonsexual, violent offences, and in many aspects equally atypical to fathers and non-fathers convicted of sexual offences against extrafamilial children – additionally, they were much more sexually dissatisfied than these comparison groups (Chapter 4). In the interviews with fathers in Chapter 5, sexuality, intimacy entitlement, and sexual rejection were important shared experiences, and were offered by participants as explanations for their offences. Additionally, a nontrivial amount of the fathers in both chapters had prior convictions, and the fathers in the interviews presented personality characteristics most people would consider antisocial: a certain coldness towards their children, entitlement and grievance, and hostile masculinity. While this all indicates some amount of atypical sexuality and antisociality, they were not

front and centre in the findings. The focus on what most strongly predicts (arguably low numbers overall of) sexual recidivism might have skewed our intuition for how prominent these risk-related individual dispositions are aetiologically in all sorts of sexual offending. This dissertation does suggest that sexuality and antisociality likely play some role in the initiation and perpetuation of incest offending. However, their role might be less overtly recognisable after conviction, and intimately rather than externally relationally focused.

6.3.3 Dysfunctional Partner Relationships

The presence of dysfunctional partner relationships was clearly found in all three studies. While the capacity of having intimate relationships is generally considered a protective factor, this dissertation shows that those exact intimate relationships can also be risky in the context of incest offences. In the meta-analysis in Chapter 3, families in which intrafamilial child sexual abuse had occurred presented with significantly more spousal relationship dysfunction and intimate partner violence than the comparison families; in Chapter 4, fathers convicted of incest offences reported more sexual dissatisfaction and relationship dysfunction or marital dissatisfaction than other father comparison groups; and in Chapter 5, relational dysfunction and rejection by partners were a core experience for all participants.

In the interviews in Chapter 5, the participants constructed that their yearning for intimacy, feelings of entitlement thereto, and the rejection thereof by their partners were central precipitating factors to the incest offences. Especially pertinent were feelings of inadequacy, humiliation, and powerlessness in relationships, which were often exemplified by their partners cheating on them (even though most participants also cheated on their partners). Infidelity by partners was also reported by almost half of the fathers in the quantitative study of Chapter 4. While patriarchal attitudes did not meaningfully differentiate father groups in Chapter 4, proxies for patriarchal attitudes could be seen throughout the

studies, for instance in the high prevalence of intimate partner violence in Chapter 3 as well as 4, the feelings of sexual dissatisfaction in Chapter 4 and 5, and strong feelings of entitlement and masculine inadequacy in Chapter 5. Concludingly, incest offending in all three studies was situated in patterns of broad relational transgressions, partnerships that were fragile and volatile, and chaotic and disorganised households. The presence of relationship dysfunction, especially when recalled retrospectively, can of course be the result, rather than precede the start, of offending. However, it is also plausible that relationship dysfunction can have both an aetiological and perpetuating role in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

The other half of those adult partner relationships – mothers, partners, wives — are distinctly absent from this dissertation, and from the wider offending literature in general. The interpretation of responsibility and accountability of partners of men convicted of sexual offences is very contentious. Research and intervention with mothers or caregivers of children who are incestuously abused is especially complex: caregivers who were unaware of the abuse might feel they need to defend themselves against disbelief or accusations of collusion; and caregivers who, to a lesser or greater degree, were participatory in the abuse are likely less willing to participate. However, this dissertation strongly emphasises the importance of relational dysfunction in incest offending, and as such, research with "the other half" of relationships with men who have committed (or are at risk of committing) incest offences seems crucial to further understand and prevent intrafamilial child sexual abuse.

6.2.4 Dysfunctional Parent-Child Relationships

While the research on partner relationships and incest offending has been minor, research on the parent-child relationships and incest offending has been even more neglected. But, there were clear indications of fraught parent-child relationships across all studies in this dissertation, with high risk and prevalence of nonsexual child abuse (physical and emotional abuse, and neglect) and problematic parenting practices in Chapter 3, conflictuous and distant

parent-child relationships in Chapter 4, and utilitarian and self-serving parenting in Chapter 5. While parents and children influence each other bidirectionally, there is hesitancy in sexual offending research to talk about children's vulnerabilities to victimisation, as this might be misconstrued as victim blaming. However, parent-child relationships could also play an aetiological role in incest offending: negative father-child relationships might predispose a father to care less about hurting his child. They could also play a perpetuating role: as the abuse continues, the relationship between parent and child grows more distant, which in turn perpetuates future abuse. Or, if there is also a negative relationship between mother and child, this might hinder recognising and reporting the abuse. More importantly, however, this might also mean that there are important avenues for prevention: positive parent-child relationships might play an important protective role to abuse.

6.3 Limitations and Reflections

6.3.1 Selection Effects

Complex selection effects and disposition-facilitation interactions influence who gets reported, convicted, and re-convicted – and thus inform our understanding of risk and perpetration (Smallbone & Cale, 2016). For instance, it is plausible that a stranger-perpetrated sexual offence is more readily reported than a family-perpetrated sexual offence (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 1999); or that victims more readily report their stepfather or their mother's boyfriend who has been in the household for a relatively brief time than their biological father who has been their lifelong caregiver. This might also be reflected in the disproportionately high percentage of sociolegal victims in the quantitative study of Chapter 4. The additional complex within-family consequences of reporting can also be a strong deterrent, more so than when sexual abuse is perpetrated by a non-family member.

Sexual abuse is often categorised as the most severe form of child abuse, foregoing the "necessity' to investigate or prosecute the occurrence of other forms of abuse (Debowska

et al., 2017). This might putatively also contribute to the lack of information about intrafamilial nonsexual abuse in sexual offending research – sexual abuse is considered the most severe, and consequently other forms of nonsexual child abuse are minimally or not at all registered and considered. This was clear when the results of the meta-analyses in Chapter 3 are considered, wherein the prevalence of nonsexual abuse and intrafamilial child sexual abuse was very high, even when the extant offending literature thus far has not reported on this. This also became apparent in the interviews with the participants in Chapter 5, wherein there were extensive histories (in their family-of-origin as well as proximal families) of nonsexual abuse – however, this was only parenthetically mentioned in the participants' files, and they were not convicted for, for instance, intimate partner violence offences.

6.3.2 Study Completeness

Most of the research on sexual offending comes from Western countries – as did this dissertation, with data collection based in the United Kingdom and Canada. The same as most other studies, this one, too, focused on men, who, for the most part, were White and middle-aged. Forensic research is almost always retrospective in nature, introducing recollection bias and limiting its predictive power. As with all research, information is limited to what is reported, and the quality of those reports. A clear limitation of the literature discussed in this dissertation is its obvious datedness, especially in the offending realm. While age does not necessarily determine quality, age periods do reflect then-prevailing theories, opinions, research, policy, and law. Coupled with the glaring absence of research on the family context of intrafamilial child sexual abuse, it was at times difficult to situate the findings of this dissertation in current empirical and theoretical understandings of sexual offending.

Criminal justice research is further limited by institutional and participatory data access. Initial study proposals included a new quantitative data study, and the analysis of a national dataset of men convicted of sexual offences against children. Due to unforeseen and

insurmountable barriers to data access, these proposals had to be abandoned. It is by the kindness of Michael C. Seto and Kelly M. Babchishin, who shared the data from their incest project, that this dissertation could be finished. It was fortunate (although theoretically logical) that their data fit this dissertation well.

Participant recruitment in prison for the interviews was also difficult, with multiple administrative barriers, low interest, and an intensive requirement for facilitator assistance. Recruitment also needed to be circumspect, as incest offences in the prison environment are deemed to be "bottom of the hierarchy", and most men convicted of these types of offences keep this a secret. Additionally, and to my great misery, two interviews got corrupted during their transfer from the dictaphone to the computer. This was manageable in broad strokes, as from memory I could recall that two lost interview's themes were congruent with other six interviews, but on a fine-grained (and emotional) level, the absence of detailed data and subsequent interpretation was a major loss.

6.3.3 Definitions of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse

One of the major methodological obstacles to studying intrafamilial child sexual abuse is the literature's inconsistent inclusion of what they consider "intrafamilial". Studies may include any or all types of relatedness: biologically related victims, sociolegally (step, foster, or adopted) victims, first-, second-, or third-degree relatives, and minor and adult (e.g., siblings) aged victims. When individuals have intra- *and* extrafamilial victims, these individuals are most often categorised as extrafamilial (e.g., Nicholaichuk et al., 2014), which has likely obfuscated large amounts of information about intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

These are important considerations, as there are, for instance, crucial evolutionary differences of inbreeding depression risk between biological and sociolegal children, and as stepparenting is an important risk marker for childhood abuse perpetration. Timing and age of

the victim may also play an important role: it is hardly conceivable there are no critical differences (e.g., in paternal caretaking, sexual maturity markers, relationship quality) between the sexual abuse of a 5-year-old who has been raised by their biological father from birth and the sexual abuse of a 15-year-old who has only been known to their stepfather for a year. This dissertation aimed to address this by including a multitude of intrafamilial definitions: moving from *any* intrafamilial relation (including third-degree relatives), to more narrowly defined intrafamilial relations, such as biological fathers convicted of sexual offences against their biological children.

6.4 Implications and Future Recommendations

While this dissertation's finding that familial dysfunction is important to understand intrafamilial child sexual abuse might be intuitive, being able to substantiate this intuition empirically is important for theory building, research, intervention, and policy. This thesis has addressed this lacuna in our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending. The integration of intrafamilial child sexual abuse research within the context of familial dysfunction can have meaningful implications for both child sexual abuse offending and victimisation research. Explanations that are situated in evolutionary psychology mechanisms, or narrowly within sexual reoffending frameworks, continue to not adequately explain intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending, nor do justice to the complex family situations of men who commit intrafamilial child sexual abuse offences. This dissertation indicates that there is a plausible aetiological role of familial dysfunction in intrafamilial child sexual abuse, that is currently unaccounted for within the risk-centred frameworks of sexual reoffending research. As such, based on the findings of this dissertation, future research efforts to advance our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse should focus on a further exploration of familial dysfunction.

The findings stress that intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending does not happen in an individualised vacuum, but happens in a complex interplay of individual, relational, familial, and systemic factors. These findings can have meaningful practical and clinical impact, beyond traditional forensic psychology conceptualisations, for those who work with families, social workers, but also teachers and other community workers. The high co-occurrence of intrafamilial child sexual abuse, nonsexual abuse, and intimate partner violence suggests there might be important common factors underlying these forms of offending. If there are indeed cascading sequences of familial dysfunction to sexual and nonsexual abuse, early recognition and intervention could potentially have preventative effects.

The reality that a significant proportion of sexual abuse happens at the hands of beloved partners and trusted family members in our own homes results in high emotional and practical barriers to recognise, acknowledge, and report intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Additionally, the narrow focus of the sexual offending field on individual dispositions in relation to sexual recidivism has prevented us from exploring promising avenues for an even more important goal: prevention. For sexual offending research, prevention, and intervention to move forward, the field should move beyond the narrow focus on individual dispositions, and develop a systemic and integrated understanding of sexual offending. The findings of this dissertation have provided clear empirical substantiation for the logical intuition that family dysfunction plays an important role in intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending – even, that *intrafamilial* child sexual abuse offending might only be understood situated within the context of familial dysfunction. The next steps to further our understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse should therefore be a deeper exploration of the mechanisms and possible causal explanations of family dysfunction to intrafamilial child sexual abuse offending.

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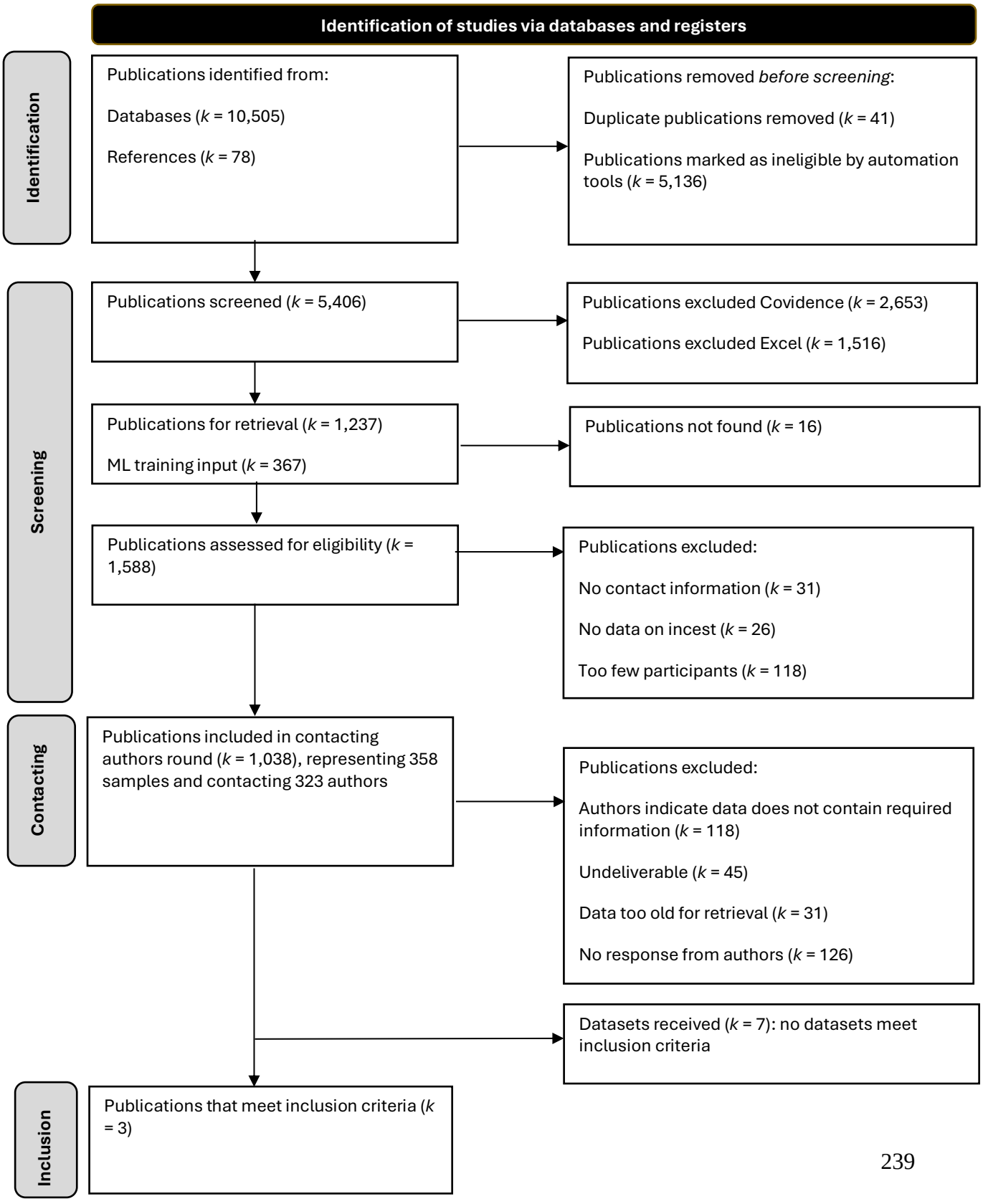
Appendices

Appendix 2. *PRISMA 2020 Search Strategy of Offending Meta-Analysis (Chapter 3)*



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Appendix 5. *Semi-Structured Interview Proposal (Chapter 5)*

Background

- Tell me a little bit about yourself (details that you are comfortable sharing), how would you describe yourself?
- Would you please tell me about your parental/family situation?
    - Prompts: How many children or stepchildren do you have? How old are they?

Being a father

- How did it feel to become a father?
- How do you think becoming a father has impacted/changed you?
- In what ways was becoming a father like you expected, and in what ways were they unexpected?
- What were the things you enjoyed most about being a father? What were the things you enjoyed least about being a father?
- What, in your eyes, makes a "good dad"? Have your views of that changed?

Relationships with partners/others

- How was/is your partner as a mother to the children? What makes you say that…
- How do you think he/she would describe you as a partner? And as a father?
    - Prompts to explore: did you feel connected and/or happy/ did you feel satisfied in the relationship – in what ways/ Were their many arguments/familial disturbance – how often – can you give examples?

Relationships with children

- How would you describe the relationship to your children?
- What type of parent were you?
- How do you think they would describe their relationship to you? Why do you think that?
- What were the difficulties in your relationship with them, and what were the positives? How were arguments resolved (encouragement? Punishment?)
- (if there were children who were no convictions against) How was your relationship with your other children? What were the differences/similarities?
- (if admitting) Did your relationship with your children change during/post the period of sexual offending? In what ways?
    - Prompts: did activities change, intimacy, how they responded?

Close

- How has the sexual conviction impacted how you see yourself as a father?