EXPLORATORY STUDY

When Did I Become a Victim? Exploring Narratives of Male Childhood Sexual Abuse

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Abstract

This report presents narrative data of adult men self-identifying as victims of sexual abuse occurring in childhood or adolescence (CSA). Preliminary data were derived from written public stories posted by men to the Internet ($n = 90$). Many of these accounts indicate same-sex sexual abuse (male victim, male perpetrator). The primary research question: "how have adult male victims of childhood sexual abuse constructed written narratives of victimization?" The men in this study who posted public narratives about their sexual abuse demonstrated evidence in of two (turmoil and taking control) of six life course themes uncovered by Draucker and Martsolf (2010). Two temporally related additional subthemes emerged within the category "taking control": during the abusive event/relationship and after abuse in adulthood. Understanding how male victims organize and make sense of the trajectory of their victim and/or survivor identity may contribute to a more integrated healing for victims. This could also shape programs for outreach and support. The result of the study would aid in the development of diagnostic tools and frameworks for interviewing abuse victims who are not publicly presenting or formally reporting their stories.

Keywords Sexual abuse narrative · Male childhood sexual abuse · Sex abuse

Introduction

Understanding prevalence, incidents and effects of childhood and adolescent sexual abuse (CSA) are important, but it is imperative to explore the context and interactive relationships between the abused and their abuser, as these are situated in dominant social narratives. Research on the narratives and experiences of girls as victims of CSA is abundant. Traditional models developed by researchers to explore female sexual victimization in childhood and adolescence have not been adequately applied to men's narratives of sexual victimization (Alaggia et al. 2019; Foster 2017b; Miles 2016).

It is essential to explore the stories of male victims/survivors of CSA, particularly as these boys, over time, come to "make sense" as of their experience as men within the dominant heteronormative narratives sexual violence (Easton et al. 2015; Foster 2016, 2017a; Foster 2017b; O'Leary et al.

2015; Solomon 2018). The primary purpose of the study is to apply and validate a qualitative model exploring narratives of victimization, using it as a guiding framework within which to explore the following question: *how have adult males self-identifying as victims of CSA constructed narratives of victimization?*

The model in which these narratives are situated and explored was identified in study of adult men and women ($n = 121$) who had experienced a range of sexual victimization (Draucker and Martsolf 2010). While we know much about sexual victimization in general, we are still slow to understand the complexities of one's experience because we only examine this violence as it is typically gendered in its organization. Expectations about men's social roles and the presumption of male heterosexuality notably shapes who we envision as a *victim* and what it means for *men to identify as a victim* (regardless of age at victimization) (Davies 2011; Depraetere et al. 2020; Foster 2017b; Solomon 2018). One important value for understanding narratives centering on a self-defined impactful (or trauma) experience is that we are able to see linkages between childhood and adolescent experiences and those in adulthood, as defined by the individual marking the elements of their experience in narrative form. We are able to explore the ways in which those telling their own story

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interact with auto-biographical facts in the context of societal norms.

While *meaning making by victims* is explored in this study, sociological analysis also requires that, as a researcher, one engages in a process of interpretation, making meaning of the content (written, spoken, enacted). Just as the men in the sampled narratives in this study were engaged in the creation, presentation and interpretation of their own lived truths, so too is a qualitative researcher. Thus, as a researcher, I am called to "assess and re-assess, to interpret and to re-interpret … sociological enterprise….a major challenge: people are endowed with consciousness and they see, interpret, experience and act in the world in terms of a vast range of subjectively and intersubjectively constituted meanings (Coetzee and Rau 2009, p. 2)." In order to remove my added interpersonal and gendered bias in the interactive process of qualitative analysis, the data analyzed are publicly available Internet narratives, and an existing framework, developed using qualitative cross-case analysis, is applied.
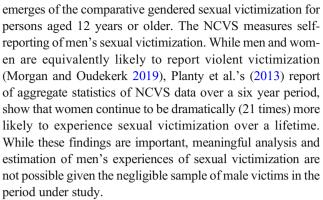
Draucker and Martsolf's analysis yielded a framework inclusive of six life themes as follows: (1) life of turmoil; (2) life of struggles; (3) diminished life; (4) taking control of life; (5) finding peace in life; and (6) getting life back to normal. These themes were applied to shape the analysis of the Internet narratives of men who identified as victims of sex abuse in childhood /adolescence. This model is employed in an effort to both validate the typology while exploring specific meaning for men who are victims of CSA. Two of these themes are identified in the retrospective Internet narratives in the current study of men who experienced CSA. Two additional and secondary subthemes emerged unique to this dataset, and are explore in detail.

Literature

Sexual Abuse in Childhood and Adolescence

Sex abuse researchers examine a range of topics inclusive of predictors and typologies of offending and offenders, effects of victimization, as well as strategies for prevention and intervention. Characteristically, the heteronormative victim-offender dyad for sex crime is evidenced in this research. This has been, in part, the result of the limited definition of sexual violence by the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). As late as 2012, "'[F]orcible rape' had been defined by the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Summary Reporting System (SRS) as "the carnal knowledge of a female, forcibly and against her will" (Carbon 2012, para. 1). Analysis of data under those terms *precluded* an analysis of male victimization, as well as female same –sex victimization.

Using alternative, victim self-reported data from the BJS National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), a truer picture emerges of the comparative gendered sexual victimization for persons aged 12 years or older. The NCVS measures self-reporting of men's sexual victimization. While men and women are equivalently likely to report violent victimization (Morgan and Oudekerk 2019), Planty et al.'s (2013) report of aggregate statistics of NCVS data over a six year period, show that women continue to be dramatically (21 times) more likely to experience sexual victimization over a lifetime. While these findings are important, meaningful analysis and estimation of men's experiences of sexual victimization are not possible given the negligible sample of male victims in the period under study.

The dynamic of childhood sexual abuse presented in much of the literature is still heterosexually constructed, where abuse is meted out to girls at the hands of older men (fathers, brothers, uncles, etc.) (Alaggia et al. 2019; Townsend and Rheingold 2013). A recent and uncommon and institutionally situated, large scale public reporting phenomenon of sexual abuse against a living perpetrator came from newly minted *adult females coming forward in the case against Dr. Larry Nassar*. At least 250 women were sexually victimized by Nassar (British Broadcasting Company News, 2018; Cable News Network 2018).

An alternate wave of media coverage of the sexual abuse of boys and young adolescent males spanning decades by Catholic priests (2002), Pennsylvania State University football coach Jerry Sandusky (2011), and allegations surfacing in 2018 of abuse reports ignored by current Ohio Republican congressman and former Ohio State University (OSU) assistant coach of wrestling Jim Jordan, amplified public awareness of the CSA committed against boys (Foster 2017a). These latter claims by various members of the OSU wrestling team pertain to now deceased (suicided in 2005) Richard Strauss, an OSU Physician employed 1978–1998. Each of these noteworthy cases were institutionally situated, while much of what we know about the abuse of girls is interpersonally related, whether intra or extra familial, contrary to the Nassar scourge.

Although these cases brought attention to a non-traditional victim type, the media reports focused on the egregious (read largely same-sex and repeat offending) nature of the perpetrator's actions, and the betrayal not only of victims but of members of the institutions in which the perpetrators were entrusted with the care of those they victimized. The Nassar epidemic abuse, like that of Jerry Sandusky and that of Catholic priests, was heinous in number and behaviors, but seemingly normalized because we expect to see abuse of girls, as evidenced in the literature, while male victims are under-represented or silenced (Alaggia et al. 2019; Miles 2016; Mitchell et al. 2017).

Much quantitative data on abuse depend on legally mandated reports of incident facts. But this requires that these *fact*s become noticed and interpreted as possible abuse, then

investigated, substantiated *and* reported to U.S. National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) by child protective services agencies of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) produces an annual report, *Child Maltreatment*, from this data. According to the most recent data, most (84.5%) of all substantiated cases of maltreatment in the United States, refers to *one* type of abuse. Interestingly, sexual abuse statistics range widely by U.S. jurisdiction, from 43.8% in Pennsylvania to 0.7% in Puerto Rico. Of the single type of abuse data, the national average is 7% of the cases recorded sexual abuse (2020, p. 41). While this is a small proportion of overall substantiated maltreatment, reported and investigated in real time, data is still lacking on the *trajectory* of victimization.

Much other data are derived from retrospective victimization surveys and estimates of the prevalence of sexual abuse of children and adolescents (largely female), and findings regarding male victimization in childhood vary widely. In fact Smith et al. (2008) found that boys are about half as likely to be victimized in childhood as girls. Townsend and Rheingold (2013), in a meta-analysis of six studies using data derived from victims ages 14–17, found a prevalence rate of 7.5% to 11.7% for direct contact abuse for both boys and girls (p. 20). Four of the studies in the analysis articulated data by gender, estimating the prevalence rate for girls to be two to four times greater than for boys (3.8–4.6%) (p. 20).

In an international study comparing three developing countries using an all-male sample, Sumner et al. (2016) identified divergent male victimization patterns. They used the Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), administering it to males 13 to 24 years old in Haiti ($n = 1459$), Kenya ($n = 1456$), and Cambodia ($n = 1255$). The percentage of young men identifying experiences of any type sexual violence prior to 18 years old ranged from 23.1% in Haiti, to 14.8% in Kenya, and 5.6% in Cambodia (p. 4).

In an updated review of the literature concerning disclosure patterns of CSA, Alaggia et al. (2019) identified thirty-three studies, in which only five focused on male only samples. When males and females were included in a study, the sample size for men ranged 3–60%, with a central tendency of the male sample at about 25–28%. On the whole, accurate assessments of the sexual abuse of children are still relatively unclear.

Many claims and subsequent treatment and policy strategies are derived from the very few studies with solely male samples or directly alongside female victims (Foster 2017a, 2017b; Foster and Hagedorn 2014a, 2014b; Maikovich-Fong and Jaffee 2010). Overall, the literature on sexual victimization still falls short for male victims compared to female (Alaggia et al. 2019; Chan 2014; Maikovich-Fong and Jaffee 2010; Majeed-Ariss et al. 2019; Wilhite 2015). Thus,

while the literature is growing, continued study using a range of methodological approaches will help us more holistically understand male identified victims and their experiences.

While the media cases discussed earlier are public reports of the phenomenon of abuse, there is ample evidence to show that much sexual violation is still not reported or, when disclosed, is revealed after much time has passed (Smith et al. 2008). Studies measuring abuse disclosure often included only female victim populations, or, when males were included, an overwhelming majority of respondents who disclosed (75–80%) were female (Alaggia et al. 2019; Gallo et al. 2018). Until just after the turn of this Century, only one study specifically targeted male victims of child sexual abuse (Paine and Hansen 2002). When boys did report, those who were victimized in adolescence were less likely to come forward. Under-reporting has been the trend among boys. As a result of delayed or non-disclosure (Alaggia et al. 2019; Collin-Vézina et al. 2015; Kia-Keating et al. 2005; Lev-Wiesel and First 2018; Sorsoli et al. 2008), the abuse of boys is still deeply embedded within hidden figures of sexual victimization in general, and particularly within the data describing childhood sexual abuse, as noted earlier.

More recent evidence, using data ($n = 16, 507$) derived from the U.S. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NIPSVS), Black et al. (2011) found that men were more than twice as likely as women to indicate a first act of completed rape experienced under the age of 10 years old (Table 1). Compared to female victims of CSA, men were more likely to have never disclosed their abuse to anyone, (Alaggia et al. 2019; Collin-Vézina et al. 2015; Lev-Wiesel and First 2018). This was clearly evidenced in the many cases that came forward in the crisis of the Catholic Church in 2002. Only 11% of over 10,000 cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church were reported within one year of the alleged abuse, and only 21% were reported within ten years (Smith et al. 2008, p. 579). The church data were unique, in that a majority (81%) was male accusers (John Jay College 2004, p.69). Many men who have lived through sexual assault may question their own gender and sexual identity in relationship to the abuse, in both real time and retrospectively (Chan 2014;

Table 1 Age at first completed rape victimization by gender (N 16,507 adults)

	Male N =7421	Female N =9086
<10 y/o	27.8%	12.3%
11–17 y/o	--%*	29.9%

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Report

*estimates for age at first completed rape for male victims based upon numbers too small to calculate a reliable estimate and therefore are not reported

Easton 2013; Walker et al. 2005). Diamanduros et al. (2012) found that:

> For boys, the experience of sexual abuse challenges their sense of masculinity and, thus, their sense of identity. Many of them feel powerless because they were unable to stop the abuse and are embarrassed that they were unable to protect themselves (pp. 133-134).

Solomon (2018), in an exploration of heteronormative exclusions of male sexual victimization, calls it a cycle of emasculation, the experience and the rhetoric surrounding personal disclosure and in a cultural *heterotopia* (p. 141).

There is a difference between disclosing or *formally* telling, about one's own sexual victimization (to an age-mate, guardian or even teacher) and the process of coming to understand a sexual experience as inappropriate and experience that is legally and socially accepted as victimization. A single act of violation does not always immediately hold interpretive meaning as such for young victims. This begs the question: how do adult males who have been victims of CSA organize, interpret and reveal their narratives of victimization? Drawing on research exploring the processes of identity making," one known trajectory in the story of abuse is identified as "being" or "becoming" (Vollman 2011). It is evident that, when confronted with a traumatic experience, one *comes to understand the event*(s) through a process and in relation to one's master status, an identity that already exists. This identity may be prescribed, proscribed or ascribed, and is certainly present in the childhood stages of development.

When a traumatic event occurs, at least two narratives appear to be at play – the one the person has accepted about himself up to that time in history, and the one imposed upon him by an abuser (Vollman 2011). A male child who has been sexually victimized by another male imposes lenses related to gender, sexuality, and power. The relationship of the offender also informs the process by which a victim may understand the events.

Referring to autoethnographic narratives, Tamas (2008) says that "[O]ur testimonial practices are bound by discursive norms that limit our ability to tell performative stories which produce both knowledge and empathy" (p. 1). While the men in this study were not solicited directly for their narratives, nor are the stories posted as research, I would suggest that telling one's own story *out loud*, uploading written narratives publicly (even if anonymized), is a form of autoethnography, as a victim explores his experience to both inform others (knowledge production) and find an emotional relationship (eliciting empathy) to events beyond his historical control. To this effect, the men who posted these trauma stories, were provided an opportunity for a "subjectivity—a voice or persona…" (p.2). While Draucker and Martsolf's themes applied in this study showed that these men's stories contended for a "dominant narrative … [with] their own characteristics and priorities, and as the plot moved along—each [theme] worked toward greater internal unity" (p.2). In that endeavor, we are able to establish a path through victimization to survivorship.

Through analysis, I clearly saw how those who experience this category of abuse (CSA) have a process by which they *come to understood* the incident(s), as well as the ways in which these incidents informed the "being" a victim (or survivor) of sexual abuse. Experiencing sexual abuse informs a person's master status, as the events often take place in younger developmental years. It is not necessarily the case that these men identified as victims at the time of abuse. In fact, the pattern of all of the narratives in this study demonstrated a *trajectory of becoming* the victim. Although the men in these narratives did not request the role in which they were cast, they have had to confront and include it within their own internal, and external, identity narratives, employing the narrative themes explored in this study. Solomon (2018) suggests:

> Traumatic retellings function as both reclamation of voice and embodied experience. …When the survivor is an adult narrating an adverse childhood experience, the reclamation—wherein the narrative of childhood victimization is juxtaposed with an adult consciousness— can be particularly potent. …This reconnection makes the survivor not a static child victim frozen in his or her past traumatic experience but a dynamic character… (p. 144).

Men who are victims of abuse can move toward an identity formed in ways that are not dependent upon the abuse. In part, these new or redefined identities can be explored within the framework of the Draucker and Martsolf's life-course themes once applied in the process of "becoming" the victim.

Narratives and Life Themes

While quantitative reports of amounts, types and effects of childhood sexual abuse are valuable in establishing patterns of abuse, *personal stories* are vital in the recovery process (Lambie and Johnston 2016; O'Leary and Barber 2008; O'Leary et al. 2015; Solomon 2018; Sorsoli et al. 2008). Narrative structures are one of the tools people use to make sense of who we are in the world – how we come to our master narratives. In an era of captivation with "reality" television, and external presentations of self through blogging, *TiK-ToK*, *Snapchat*, *Instagram*, and other social networking utilities, there is an imperative to recognize the ways in which we identify and recount the *self*. In this study, the narratives of interest related to incidents involving sex, and sex is deeply rooted in one's socio-cultural identity, particularly as it relates gendered expectations of victimhood (Grossman et al. 2006;

O'Leary et al. 2015; Solomon 2018; Sorsoli et al. 2008). Narrative data allows researchers to explore and understand "the meanings that people give to their own violations… Simply, our stories draw on the events, symbols, and phenomenological tensions that matter to us" (Presser 2010, p.431). Our personal stories serve as pathways to understanding culture and identity, themes for making sense of autobiographical history, and analytic narrative truths.

Much of the current research using male only samples measure the effects of CSA in the adults who have experienced abuse. Although retrospective in nature, these most recent studies identify negative health behaviors and effects, both physical and psychological. One focus extends to the negative impact of CSA on adult men who have sex with men (MSM) (Batchelder et al. 2017; Emetu et al. 2020; Khoury et al. 2019; Levine et al. 2018; Tomori et al. 2016). This research centers largely on potential risk prevention as relates to transmission on of HIV (Batchelder et al. 2017; Tomori et al. 2016) and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Other research uncovered "conduct" disorders like hypersexuality and engaging in group sex (Emetu et al. 2020), along with patterns of excessive drug or alcohol use (Levine et al. 2018; Wu 2018). Also explored is further adult victimization as a correlate to CSA, (Khoury et al. 2019), depression, anxiety and self-harm (Batchelder et al. 2017; Easton and Kong 2017; Moynihana et al. 2018), relational (Kia-Keating et al. 2010), as well as an exploration of pathways to offending in adulthood (Nelson 2016).

Further research identified patterns of CSA and sexual exploitation (Adjei and Saewyc 2017; Chynoweth et al. 2017; Miles 2016), grooming (Plummer 2018) and treatment or intervention possibilities (Chynoweth et al. 2017; Kia-Keating et al. 2010; O'Cleirigh et al. 2019; O'Leary et al. 2015) specifically for men who had experienced CSA.

Foster, (Foster 2015; Foster 2016; Foster 2017a; Foster 2017b) along with a co-researcher Hagedorn (Foster and Hagedorn 2014a; Foster and Hagedorn 2014b) have conducted the most recent and prevalent series of qualitative studies focusing on male victims and narratives of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence. Much of that work sampled young respondents' (girls and/or boys) in treatment, who had more recently experienced abuse. These studies are important to the understanding of real (or proximate) time effects and child or adolescent age interpretations of abuse. But access to these child and adolescent populations is protected and limited to those who may already have direct contact as therapists, researchers in facilities with youth, or those able to obtain special permissions. Many adult victims do not have access to or seek treatment for CSA, but rather for other presenting issues.

It is important to note that as grotesque as sexual abuse of a child or adolescent is, the abuse itself and the relationship between the abused and abuser(s) is embedded in a social interaction, albeit unwanted, forced, secret, and illegal. In the current study, I chose to sample narratives about delicate interactions from an available but vital source, the Internet. In this millennia, Holge-Hazelton (2012) has found:

> The Internet has become a non-physical space where many people interact across … borders, social class and gender, regarding many different issues… it is possible to deal with issues of everyday life as well as matters of great delicacy…. to engage in issues and share one's off-line identity, to stay anonymous and just "lurk", or to develop a completely different identity to act upon (p. 3).

This non-physical, unbounded and often anonymized space is a useful starting place to gather stories of physical, intimate, sexual abuse. The relationship between victim and perpetrator are presented in publicly posted written narratives of those for whom the disclosure was voluntary, but not necessarily made through formal channels. These openly available accounts provide coverage of a potentially underserved and under examined part of the population of male victims of childhood sexual abuse. The narratives were already posted, and there was no additional risk of harm to the unit of analysis, the men abused as children, while they explored their own identities. Given that the data are social artifacts, and returning to the subject for more detail or clarification is impossible, I chose to sift through the material of lived experiences using the life-course typology uncovered by Draucker and Martsolf.

Process oriented sociology contends that identity is formed as a part of the iterative processes of social interaction. The realities of our "selves" as individuals are subjective and interactive (Plummer 1975), and that we develop a personal identity which allows for a unique identification for each individual (Goffman 1963). Throughout the phases of life, humans come to our personal identities by means of the narratives of our individual lives, our autobiographical experiences. We come to know multiple social identities as a part of interactions within our referent groups (Giddens 1991). A person's identity is understood through a process of internal between-individual experience and understanding of the social expectation of others (Morris 1962). If identities are situated, and behavioral choices are made within the contexts of *available* scripts, then the themes identified in Draucker and Martsolf's life course typology offers new scripts for understanding the ways CSA victims may manage a negative self-identity activated by feelings of guilt and shame once bad acts are "discovered." The written narrative form (as Internet postings in this study) is one technique to manage ones identity and to make meaning for the self.

Narrative structures of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence are inclusive of characters, trajectories and life themes. These are common elements of storytelling, in both

fiction and nonfiction. The veracity of these stories is not at issue. Of importance are the content of and feelings about these impactful events, as well as the belief that the narrative *becomes* the truth of the storyteller's experience. Based on findings identified from clinical narratives of girls (Foster and Hagedorn 2014a, 2014b), Foster (2017b), in her research using clinical narratives of boys (under 18 years old), found that these boys, provided the similar narratives recounting details of abuse, their experience reporting and healing. Furthermore, Foster found that boys present a specific meta-theme identified as "fear and safety" (Foster 2017b, p.855). Yet, even with these data, much research indicates that disclosure of sexual abuse is still not common, particularly for males (Alaggia et al. 2019; Collin-Vézina et al. 2015; Lev-Wiesel and First 2018; Solomon 2018; Weiss 2010; Wilhite 2015).

While great strides have been made regarding acceptance of gay, lesbian and bisexual identities and expansion of legal rights, "coming out" as an abuse survivor still socially belongs to female victims, and these events are typically heteronormative. We still largely assume that perpetrators are not female, and victims are not male. Males as *victims,* particularly those who are sexually victimized, are socially aligned with the feminine. And, while homo-sex abuse is not part and parcel of being gay, for male victims with same sex abuse events, identity and sexual orientation may be questioned (Diamanduros et al. 2012; Gallo et al. 2018; King 2000; Schraufnagel et al. 2010; Walker et al. 2005). It is certainly positioned in the victim (and abuser's) cultural milieu, which is still often homophobic (Depraetere et al. 2020; Jeong and Cha 2019; Solomon 2018; Sorsoli et al. 2008; Tang et al. 2007).

Andersen (2008) specifically explored how men who were sexually abused in their youth were able to shift their identity away from that of victim. These data showed that storytelling, at least for male victims, allowed them 'to manage' points of importance and claim an identity. This occurs both with and without professional intervention, and is experienced through narrative processes.

Rather than simply represent counts of experiences, events and conceptual variables that occur in the literature, I utilized a traditional framework for narrative analysis – applying an outline of themes used to develop and interpret characters and trajectories within stories. I opted to go beyond the three major, and one meta-theme identified in the stories of boys in Foster's (2017b) work, to explore adult narratives by applying framework that had emerged from Draucker and Martsolf's (2010) qualitative analysis of victim narratives presented in a sample of adults. In their research, they deployed two qualitative methodologies to cultivate a life-course typology of individuals who had been exposed to sexual violence. The data were interview accounts of 121 adult women and men who participated in qualitative study of women's and men's responses to sexual violence. This work exemplified a promising strategy for identifying subgroups of

violence-exposed individuals within a heterogeneous adult sample. It served as a useful model for analysis in the current study, as the themes are more nuanced, reflective of adult capacity to stylistically, intellectually and emotionally note distinctions and details of ones experiences. The typology of life themes for victims exposed to sexual violence identified in includes: a life of turmoil; a life of struggles; a diminished life; taking control of life; finding peace in life; and getting life back to normal.

Methods

Sampling and Ethics

The population to which the findings from this study are applied does not lend itself to a random sampling. "Using probability sampling methods in the investigation of hidden populations is extremely limited" (Barratt et al. 2015, p.3). Due to the traumatic and stigmatizing nature of sexual abuse, researching victims of this type of trauma requires accessing said hidden, and protected, populations. Male victims of sexual abuse (often same-sex abuse) have gone unheard. This has been evidenced by the previously discussed scandals in the Catholic Church, the Penn State Football Program, and with the Ohio State Wrestling Program.

An important ethical concern in social research is that of informed and voluntary consent, particularly with special populations like victims of traumatic events. This may be obtained by delineating to potential participants the risk of harm and the available means of amelioration of that harm provided by the research procedures. No consent was sought, as each available narrative was posted to public, English speaking websites. For the current study, it may be true that those who were willing to openly, and sometimes not anonymously, post their experiences of sexual abuse on the Internet might also have volunteered to participate I this study. I would not have been able to conduct the study without full and formal Institutional Review for Human Subjects Research, had I requested narratives from individuals on the sites from which I collected the already available data, or sought out narratives using message boards or other outreach efforts to actual human participants. Even if I were able to obtain informed, and voluntary participation, lack of funding did not permit me to map out a data collection strategy that would support measures often implemented (referrals or services) to help in recovery, should participation in the study cause emotional, social, or psychological harm. This is a key challenge for all research involving human subjects who have experienced trauma.

Given the delicate nature of the research topic, and no access to funding, I would not have been able to ethically collect data from human subjects directly. To best to collect and broadcast absent voices, I opted to use social artifacts (posted internet narratives) as the unit of observation to

explore themes in the stories of these men. The use of written narratives is an unobtrusive method of examining storytelling and themes related to sexual abuse for those who posted their stories. The current study itself does not impose or introduce harm to the those who post these stories, as they are available in public fora. Thus, while I identified the study and methods to the Director of Research at my college, it was indicated that an exploration of social artifacts does not require external review. I was given expedited permission to proceed with the research.

It is important to note that there are limitations to the use of social artifacts, in that I am limited to the available content. Ultimately, I chose a non-random technique to acquire a purposive convenience sample. While generalizability is an important characteristic of research, purposive sampling allowed me to explore a phenomenon for which there is no easy way to randomize sample selection. Given the fact that I had no funding, an Internet sample was easy to access.

Through previous research efforts, I became aware of two organizations dedicated to publicizing sexual abuse by priests and providing resources to victims for recovery (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and MaleSurvivor). It is important to note that, while the accounts were culled from websites focused on supporting victims, there is no evidence in the narratives that a "community" existed. These sites are merely a place to link to news stories or legal and mental health references, or identify as a victim, if one chooses to post a narrative. There were no specific events or social networking allowing for outreach to a "community" of victims, and no evidence of this in the narratives of communal interaction or connection through these storyboard repositories. The onus for wellness and community was on the individual.

This is a trigger warning; the stories were and are difficult and uncomfortable to read. Traditional ethical concerns necessitate consideration of harm to the subjects of research, not necessarily the researchers themselves. In this study, I did not use research assistants, so I did not have to consider harm to them. The data collection and analysis were solely my responsibility. It is incumbent upon any researcher analyzing grotesquely detailed and sensitive content to take necessary personal precautions for self-care. This involves noting and attending to any adverse impact that reading, re-reading, theorizing and intellectualizing about these types of stories may have on the researcher. This may also be important for anyone who chooses to willingly read this paper, and others like it.

Data Collection

Each narrative included in this study was posted to public, English speaking websites. These written and electronically available narratives were collected May through September of 2018. Data were derived from both the websites noted earlier.

Additionally, I searched the Internet in for sexual abuse advocacy organizations, blogs or publications which include victim first person accounts, summaries or "re-tellings." Key search terms used to discover pools of narratives were in English and were variations on a combination of gender and sexual abuse event type terms (Table 2).

I retrieved each story by the highlighting the available text, using the, copy function and pasting the stories in Microsoft Word documents. A unique document was created for each victim narrative. The following information, when available, was recorded in each victim file: name of the organization from which the story was retrieved; name of victim; gender of abuser; gender of victim, and a unique case identification number. As I collected data, I reviewed the narratives for manifest content or markers of these variables for the victim as well as the perpetrator (Table 3). Where no indicator was present, I coded the data as "missing" for that variable.

Data Analysis

Using content analysis and a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, ATLAS.ti (Archive for Technology, Lifeworld and Everyday Language.text interpretation), to explore latent content within sexual abuse narratives, I was able to apply a conceptual storytelling framework consistent of "characters," "trajectories," and "themes." Most often, the victims told stories of their experiences of abuse, as well as life after abuse, and not much was presented on the actual perpetrator(s). When data were available, I classified race, ethnicity, age at abuse (perpetration) and relationship to victim, along with sex of perpetrator in order to identify any consistencies or anomalies in perpetrator data compared to that from the general literature on these types of offenders. There were no evident irregularities.

Sexual identity was coded using manifest and latent content identifiers. While many consider sexual orientation or identity to be self-disclosed, it was important to capture categories of sexual orientation that included real behavior, not just self-disclosure. Gates (2011) estimates "3.5% of adults …identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual… those who report any lifetime same-sex sexual behavior and any same-sex

Table 2 Data search parameters

	Gender parameters	Victimization parameters
Search terms	• boys, • Male child(ren) • men, • male-male, • same sex • masculinity	• childhood sexual abuse (CSA), • sexual abuse, sexually abused • sexual victimization; • sexual aggression • Sexual assault • Extra-familial abuse • Intra-familial abuse • Inter-generational abuse

Table 3 Variable construction

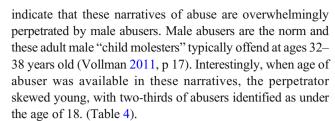|	Victim	Perpetrator
Categories	• Sexual Orientation • Race • Ethnicity • Age at abuse • Age at public narrative • Prostitution • Substance Abuse • Suicidal Attempt	• Sex • Race • Ethnicity • Age at abuse • Relationship to Victim

sexual attraction are substantially higher than estimates of those who identify as LGB [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual]" (p.1). The relationships among, identity, behavior and what these "mean" are part and parcel to the study. To that end, for victim sexual orientation variables, homo-, bi- or hetero- was based on non-abusive facts about sexual encounters included in the narrative. Some men clearly and openly identified as gay, bisexual or straight. Others wrote about non-coercive sexual events indicating at least one type of sexual encounter. Sexual orientation was then categorized based on gender of partner.

Patterns were identified using a cross case content analysis. I chose to replicate the methodology utilized by Draucker and Martsolf, in an effort, in part, to broaden the validity of that typology, and in expansion of the limited narrative themes found in Foster's (2017b) recounting by boys. Each case was examined for any markers or elements of the six themes of the typology, then coded and quotations were marked for reference. I then matched themed patterns across cases, determining that only two of these themes were strongly evident: *turmoil* and *taking control*. While analyzing patterns within cases, I also coded the ways in which victims identified consistent elements of the story of abuse. A cross case analysis determined that each story required, and regularly included and described two character roles, the accuser and the accused, to organize the arc of the narratives. Again, within cases I observed and marked any new themes divergent from the guiding framework. As these emerged, I again compared across cases for configurations of new themes. Two additional sub-themes emerged in the cases whose narrative arc illustrated taking control. These subthemes were *temporally* related to the abuse. Control emerged *during* abusive events and relationships, or *after* the abuse, inclusive of immediately after or in adulthood.

Results

Sample Distribution

While specific categorical data for the sample could not be gleaned from all narratives, I present the distribution on key demographic variables here. Univariate statistics (Table 4)

indicate that these narratives of abuse are overwhelmingly perpetrated by male abusers. Male abusers are the norm and these adult male "child molesters" typically offend at ages 32–38 years old (Vollman 2011, p 17). Interestingly, when age of abuser was available in these narratives, the perpetrator skewed young, with two-thirds of abusers identified as under the age of 18. (Table 4).

Upon further analysis (Table 5) of age data, the following were identified: victims were younger pre-pubescence but school age children (8–9 years old), and nearly 90% were pre-teens when sexually abused. Differentials between age of victim and age of abuser at the time of the abuse event show the average age difference is about 11 years, although the median and modal tendency skews 4–6 years closer in age between the individuals. About three-fourths of this sample for which there are data on these two variables indicated that the age differential between the perpetrator and victim ranges 1 to 12 years. Perpetrator age was more frequently articulated when the offender was closer in age to the victim. It is possible that age-mate abuse may be correlated with the decision to publicly post the narrative. Given the assumed or known nearness of age between these victims and their offenders in this study, when the age of the perpetrator is not clearly identified in the narrative, the victim drew upon the "dirty old man" offender sex abuse theme.

Of those for whom sexual orientation was identifiable, this sample is skewed towards the cultural minority, those who either identify as homosexual/bisexual or have had same-sex or bisexual experiences or attractions. (Table 5) Using the Kinsey distribution of sexual orientation in the United States, Gates (2011) again indicates that "19 million Americans (8.2%) report that they have engaged in same-sex sexual behavior and nearly 25.6 million Americans (11%) acknowledge at least some same-sex sexual attraction" (p.1). While sexual orientation data was only discernible for two-thirds of the sample, half of the victims could be identified as having had experiences with men only (homosexual), or both men and women (bisexual). Homo and bi-sexual attraction is assumed as part of consensual sexual behavior, whether or not one identifies as homo or bi-sexual. Some of the narratives clearly articulated the preferred sexual orientation of the individual telling the story.

Themes

Characters and Trajectory

In preliminary analysis, it became clear that there are two required players or characters in each narrative: the *accuser* (victim/survivor/narrator) and the *accused* (abuser, uncle, cousin, teacher, etc.). Because these stories were public and often found on discussion boards and blogs dedicated to victimization, it was evident that the narrators (accusers/victims)

Table 4 Perpetrator variable distribution

Sex N=90	Age at Event in years N=32	Race N=7	Ethnicity N=2
male 88%	≤ 17 y/o 66% 18–32 y/o 28% 19 y/o average 15y/o median 14 y/o modal **** 66 y/o Oldest	white 86% Coded only as black or white.	1 Hispanic 1 non-Hispanic

had come to *some* understanding that their own experiences that could be acknowledged, categorized, and, subsequently shared. For each of the narratives considered in this study, the contributor had a much delayed autobiographical identification as victim. One such example was Charles, who had been sexually abused by his father in prepubescence. He writes,

For the longest time in my life I had never thought that I had been sexually abused as a child. I just knew that I had some serious anxiety issues and thought that there was something wrong with me. I basically did not remember anything about my childhood other than I was usually nervous and alone. It was not until i went to a therapist for my ongoing anxiety problems that issues began to arise.

Not *knowing* that one is a victim does not interrupt the traumatic experience of abuse. It may complicate, intensify and delay the effects as the events are interpreted through a myriad of other life events.

In order to be in the position to make an accusation, a target object of the claim of abuse - the *accused* -must be identifiable. Both archetypal characters were present in these stories, although not expressed in these terms in the written narratives. The distribution of the accused's relationship to the accuser is found in Table 6. All accusers in this study identified the type of relationship that brought the victim and the abuser in contact, although sometimes the relationship was revealed much later in the published narrative.

Nineteen (19) of the victims used the term "abuser" in the narrative. The remainder simply identified the individual by relationship or role in their lives, and/or by pronouns, initials and sometimes names. The use of the term "abuser" implies a claim that, when reflected on the claimant, identifies the specific and primary relationship between the accused and the accuser for the purposes of the healing narrative, without the need for emotionality, or validation of any other socially accepted relationship (i.e., cousin, uncle, teacher, etc.). What can be said of the clear use of pronouns, initials and names? It seems to be part of a process of moving through emotionality in a public, anonymous and historically distant way, again further removing the socially accepted role of the abuser (cousin, uncle, teacher…) and shifting the focus on a unique individual abuser. Identifying the sex/gender of the abuser through gendered pronouns requires a subjective understanding of what that means to have been victimized by a male or female perpetrator in the context of sex and sexual identity. Use of initials approached a precipice of letting go of fear in naming that which could not be named, and identification of actual names seemed indicative of both anger and reclamation of self. The abuse belonged to the named abuser. This is consistent with Andersen's (2008) assertion that men who were sexually abused in their youth are able to shift their own identity.

Table 5 Victim variables distribution

Sexual Orientation N=64	Race N=16	Ethnicity N=4	Age at Event N=91	Age at Narrative N=47	Age differential Perpetrator-Victim N=32
50% hetero-sexual	100% White	100% Hispanic	8–9 y/o	39–40 y/o	Mean=11 Median=7 Mode=5
31% bisexual			Youngest 3 y/o Oldest 17 y/o	Youngest 19 y/o Oldest 58 y/o	Min=−1 yr Max=58
19% homosexual	Coded only as black or white.		87% ≤ pre-teen	15% ≤ 25 y/o	35% ≤ 5 yr 75% ≤ 10 yr

Table 6 Abuser relationship to victim distribution

	(N =92)
Family Friend	20.7%
Stranger	15.2%
<u>Non-family</u>: Childcare giver; Friend's parent; Religious leader; School teacher/other school personnel; Healthcare worker	19.7%
Biological parent	15.2%
Cousin	12.0%
Aunt /Uncle	6.2%
<u>Other family</u>: Grandparent; Aunt/Uncle; Step parent/ sibling	12.0%

Themes and Sexual Abuse The typology of themes identified by Draucker and Martsolf's (2010) exploring narratives of individuals who have been sexually victimized in adulthood are evident in the data of this study for men who experienced sexual abuse in childhood and/or adolescence. These themes are overlapping within and apparent across narratives. I opted not to examine life course trajectories of these themes, as the specific narratives in this study were available data and not based on standardized life-course interviews. The accounts were one time postings. Thus, it was appropriate to look within and across the written narratives for evidence of the typology. The narratives were analyzed for language and turning points indicative of these themes: turmoil, struggle, diminishment, taking control, finding peace and getting back to normal. The current sample yielded only data representative of temporal markers of turmoil and taking control, of which two distinct categories were revealed unique to this study. I include a brief discussion of the remaining unrepresented categories (diminished life, struggles; finding peace; getting back to normal) in the typology later in the paper.

Turmoil Turmoil is indicative of a experiencing some sort of disturbance, conflict, irregularity or confusion, in the moment of abuse as well as in the trajectory of life in and around the childhood and adolescent sexual abuse. Draucker and Martsolf (2010) called it "chaos that was central to their narratives" (p. 1163). Key indicators of turmoil derived from this analysis are: ongoing abuse in childhood and adulthood; dysfunctional family of origin/chaotic early life; problem saturated lives as adults; no examples of agency; and no social supports are presented in the following selected examples.

As a reminder, for this particular analysis, the sample is all male identified, had experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence, and posted their personal narratives to publicly accessible websites. The distribution of categorical typological themes in this sample is presented in Table 7. As these groupings were overlapping within the sample, exemplars of theme "type" are described using direct quotations, and archetypes are referred to by aliases.

In the victim narrative written by Geoff, elements of the turmoil are exemplified by continued sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in childhood and adulthood and dysfunctional family of origin/chaotic early life.

> I was corrected violently by my father, and my mother didn't protect us. My father beat us with belts, object, and whatever he could get his hand on. He beat me all the way up into adulthood. He withheld affection and emotionally abused us as well. Mom also emotionally abused us. I had my face rubbed into dog excrement; I was beaten while in the shower, I was corrected by my father while he was in various states of undress

The abuse was experienced in a web of tumultuous, inappropriate modelling that is experienced as the world moves on around them. Secrets behind closed doors in abusive family systems are impediments to disclosing abuse, and non-reporting is a barrier to healing.

Regularity and the entanglement of incestuous abuse reify this turmoil, as seen in Charles' experience.

> My brother and I were still having sex, up until I was 18. He ended it one day in our freshman dorm room by exposing himself after a shower and when I tried to initiate our standard sex he slapped me. I was so ashamed. I still feel the scorn today more than 26 years later. He made me a 8 year old prostitute and finished by saying no with violence.

This is direct evidence of family of origin turmoil that greatly impacts the life of the victim, and informs the narrative turns that limit the narrator's ability to identify as victim in a way that also allows him to ask for help or disclose his abuse.

Subtler forms of turmoil, identified as non-agency and/or no social supports are also evident in these narratives. Robert writes,

Table 7 Distribution of tropes for sexual abuse in childhood/adolescence

Trope		% (N =93)
Turmoil		68.8 (N=64)
Taking Control		55.9 (N =52)
Taking Control subgroups	*During abusive events/relationships*	*48.1 (N= 25)*
	After abuse or in adulthood	*59.6 (N= 31)*

My mother would ridicule me for being shy and sensitive (I cried a lot). I had difficulty with sleeping, stomach ulcers, panic attack, and irritable bowel all before i was even 10 yrs old.

Not only was he proactively antagonized by his mother for his own reaction to his abuse, this further contributed to, and complicated, the web of interactive factors magnifying the effects of turmoil on delayed disclosure of abuse. Robert is chastised by his mother for the sexual abuse acted upon him by his father.

The term "chaos" seems more intense than is depicted by *some* of the narratives explored in this study. In this sense, we see that the victims experience *uncomfortable emotions that are inconsistent with events taking place.* Expectations and reality are not aligning for the victim, but the reason is not always clear to the narrator, at least at the time of the abuse. The turmoil is being negotiated or clarified through the telling of the sexual abuse narrative. Nathan says, "*When I was growing up I used to start crying hysterically when I was alone and hiding from everyone.*" This is an irregularity for a young boy.

Thomas is intellectually clear about the turmoil he experienced as a young boy, "*I knew we were doing something wrong. I knew sex was for adults and not children. But I enjoyed the attention because he was being nice to me.*" While his narrative demonstrates a contemporary understanding of the turmoil, he had not disclosed his experience prior to the Internet posting. His emotional turmoil informed his understanding of the abuse.

Geoff illustrates a similar conflict of emotion as he recounts

one day he [his abuser] *showed me some dirty magazines. They were XXX rated pornography called "Blue Boy". They showed pictures of men undressed with erect penises. Some of the pictures showed actual sexual acts being performed. (I was both embarrassed & aroused).*

The conflict in this narrative existed between physical pleasure and the emotional incongruence of the experience.

In addition to identifying moments of externally induced turmoil, victim narratives showed mounting progress towards unveiling inner turmoil. This was the case as illustrated by Patrick.

I still feel like it was all my fault and I sought it out because I was dirty or gay...even though I know [now] *it wasn't my fault and it was rape. I still wonder if I will ever be 'normal.' I still question if it was wrong because we were the same age*

Draucker and Martsolf (2010) found that participants identified turmoil as making no progress toward healing or recovery from their abuse history. "They did not expect their life courses to change. Participants expressed a lack of hope." (p. 1170) In order to minimize the discomfort of the emotional conflict his experience brought forth, Patrick rationalized his feelings through self-blame. Rationalizations for deviance have been theorized by sociologists Sykes and Matza (1957) as *techniques of neutralization,* which was a study of the techniques as these related to juvenile delinquencies. Scully and Marolla (1984) applied this framework to narratives of rapists and found that individuals have access to ways of neutralizing shame and guilt once a deviant label has been applied. While that study focused on convicted sex offenders, the identified vocabularies of motive are situated in the cultural context in which the men like those is the current study have lived and experienced sexual abuse. It is not an unfamiliar practice to make sense of ones experience through processes of stigma management, although the purposes of such rationales took on different meanings for the abused as they moved towards self-actualizing and accepting motives.

Taking Control I identified one additional category of the typology evident in the narratives in this sample - *taking control.* Mirroring the applied framework, the men in this study displaying elements of taking control had lives that were inundated with turmoil, as articulated in the previous section. This theme was identified as a definitive historical marker "associated with a meaningful event or experience after which he… made significant progress in healing and began to enjoy a sense of well-being" (Draucker and Martsolf 2010, p. 1173). Furthermore, unique to this study were two temporally situated frameworks of taking control, which served the victims in various aspects of recovery, survival and healing.

During Abusive Events/Relationships The first manner of taking control an abuse narrative was doing so during the actual abusive incidents or entanglements with one's abuser. Sometimes these entanglements were also identified as "relationships", be they romantic, familial, or utilitarian based on child/adult needs. While some of the narratives included only one incidence of abuse, many victims experienced multiple incidents, sometimes during an acute period, while others had multiple encounters over time. These multiple encounters were considered to be akin to relationships because the abuser and the abused had regular interactions as a result of their social roles in relation to each other (See Table 6). In the case of Stanley,

> I began to tell lies to try to make it worse than it was so that someone would admit it was really wrong. My Mother asked me one day if I was in love with John (the organist) I told her yes and off to the first shrink.

His disclosure of romantic interest in a male may have prompted his therapy, but Stanley's honest response to his mother's query was to *take control*. A moment externally drawn out prompted a distinct shift in the relationship between the abused and abuser.

Another case indicative of turmoil served as example of taking control even in more egregious forms of abuse. Jackson writes,

> In the last months of the abuse my father introduced me and one time as well my sister to friends. They made pictures and forced us to do all kinds of things. As far as I can recall not with each other, but they used us. The last time I was abused I got so angry, because that was the time my sister was also there and I bit in one of my fathers balls. He ended up in the hospital, loosing one of his testicals for good. He never [sexually] abused me again after that, though the beatings kept on going. This ended 1,5 years later when I stood up and decided I wanted to kill him. We fought very heavy and he cutted me with a knive in the face (still facing that scar everyday) and I smashed him with a tennis racket. I really would have killed him if my mother didn't knock me out with a pan.

Turmoil filled experiences, which appeared in Jackson's narrative as the norm, inform his understanding of the abuse as something to be expected. But the cumulative effects of the abuse and exposure to a new pattern of abuse (being shared with his father's friends) drew forth a reaction that allowed Jackson to *take control* during the abusive relationship.

A subtler form of taking control was selective amnesia. Matthew told us that, as "*an adolescent I would pretend it*

happened with a neighbor boy and not my cousin. I'd brag about being so sexually experienced. Then I blocked it out for about 10 years." He convinced himself of alternate facts to manage the trauma, and then set aside the memory for a decade until he was able to effectively manage the experience. One could argue that this example reflects both the taking control during abusive periods, while also in adulthood. The latter is discussed below.

After Abuse or in Adulthood The following victims experienced *taking control in adulthood, after* the abuse. George lamented over having been burdened with recovery from the trauma of his childhood sexual abuse. His reclamation of self was, as he said, done by going *through* recovery, taking control of the life that is his in real time.

> I know today that none of them [abusers] ever paid one penny. I, however, have spent thousands of dollars on consequences and therapy. I know now that I may never get to stop doing therapy. I know that the way out of this situation is THROUGH, not BACK.

Taking control came in the form of acceptance of living with the historical facts and owning the therapeutic recovery as, in part, required to surmount the control of the abuser.

This sample quote is quite literal in terms of taking control. Martin proactively excludes the abuser from his life.

> Last year I ended all contact with him. This week I was overwhelmed by the need for a healthy platonic relationship with another man... and the need for a man to hold me and help me feel safe in the way I couldn't as a child. That's when I found this board. [malesurvisoversnetwork.org]. I've found it very helpful.

This was evidence that the victim not only severed ties, but also reached out for assenting, non-sexual interactions with other men. This was akin to rewriting the narrative of unwanted physical contact, as he sought to replace historical fact with contemporary experiences congruent with adult intimate interactions.

As illustrated earlier with Matthew's selective amnesia as a means of taking control during the abusive period, Melvin had a similar reaction to his abuse.

> Finally, after months of trying it resulted 2 months ago in that I more or less got memories about that period and this is the period where I was abused by also the friends of my father. Those 2 friends are still alive and I am preparing myself now to go to the police. Unfortunately we have a system here in the Netherlands where crimes can expire and this crime

expired already, however I want to press charges in case they are still active.

When he reclaimed memories, he immediately began to consider active solutions to take control of his historical experience. One active step was to recount his experience online in the written narrative posted to one of the websites included in data collection for this study.

Discussion

While Draucker and Martsolf (2010) identified four additional categories in their narrative typology (diminished life, struggles; finding peace; getting back to normal), no strong evidence was available in the current sample to validate the categories as useful themes in understanding men's narratives of childhood sexual abuse. Of the four categories for which there was no clear indication in the current sample, I argue that *finding peace*, expressed by victims as a belief "that they were enabled to make changes because they were blessed," was present as a behavior (p. 1173). It is quite possible that the very act of posting the stories of victimization to the Internet served to open the possibility of finding peace. It is also conceivable that, while not specifically supported in each narrative, *taking control in adulthood*, as presented earlier, was a variant of or even a segue to the narrative of finding peace.

The notion that these victims were *getting back to normal* presupposes that there was a normal before the abuse. This sample did not yield support for this specific category in the typology. It is quite possible, however, that, rather than getting back to normal, I could identify moments of *creating* a new normal through the action of public posting stories of victimization. If it is true that there is strength in numbers, and finding others with similar experiences generates a context in which narratives normalize the facts of abuse, then the abused create a new standard as they find peace and take control through the use of public narratives.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, CSA among boys has been associated with a variety of subsequent maladaptive behaviors, inclusive of addiction, risky sexual behaviors and increased rates of STDs. Because I did not examine the *trajectory* of the lives of the abused, nor was I able to ask questions to draw out the occurrence of maladaptive behaviors, I could not specifically say that these men revealed stories of diminished lives, those of struggle, or getting back to normal as outlined by Draucker and Martsolf. When "bad" behaviors were evident in the narratives, I considered these the "working out" of a victim's experience over time, culminating in self-identification as victim. Or, it may be a means of claiming the stigmatized "bad" label, by engaging in concrete maladaptive actions. It is also possible that maladaptation is a reaction to victimhood, a means of fighting for autonomy

from the bonds of childhood sexual victimization by owning "bad" actions and mores. Social identity is said to locate a person in social space longer than the given interaction in which others validate the social identity. Situated identities allow us to know how we are related to others and provide roles within which to operate. Personal and social identities are developed and routinely reiterated not only in the positive sense, but also in relation to stigma. Each of these trajectories in the sex abuse narratives is an interaction of one's childhood experience with potential and actual stigma associated with sex, abuse and same sex sexuality, al la Goffman's spoiled identity and stigma management (Goffman 1963). Identity and meaning choices are made within the contexts or scripts available to the individual. All of this said, none of the categories proposed by Draucker and Martsolf lend themselves to exploring the possibility that stigma management played a role in how these men constructed, interpreted and revealed their own experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

Upon review of the publicly posted written narratives of childhood sexual abuse, it was clear that common narrative structures are employed. Each structure was interwoven and informed the actual telling of the story, and the meaning of the events in the story, along with the meaning that one's own identity took on, as victim, survivor or even co-participant. Abused individuals included in this sample presented multiple narratives within a master narrative, which was clear in the *turmoil* and *taking control* typologies. The multiple narratives intimated of the possibility of other themes uncovered by Draucker and Martsolf (finding peace, a life of struggle and a life of diminishment), but data were limited as a result of the situational telling. These stories were typewritten and posted in public websites and were not orally presented or derived from face-to-face interviews or clinical contexts. This may have impacted both the events that are discussed as well as the meaning implied by the author of the story. Written contexts allowed for extended pauses in writing out the events, as well as time for revisions and edits that may have been integral to how the victim understood the final version of the story. A written narrative may have been more honest or thorough, because the stories were brought to light at the pace and privacy of the author. It could be that the public posting of the narrative is the moment at which the abused transitioned to a new identity or understanding of his experience, which was not captured in the web narrative, as this meaning making occurs post hoc.

Additionally, all the narratives were retrospective in nature, which also shaped the structure of the retelling. Here I was not looking for truth or lies, but rather facts as they were believed to have occurred and subsequently experienced by those writing the narratives. This is where the trauma, as well as recovery, lay. No one revealed abuse that had been ongoing at the time the narrative was posted. Looking backward in time is not about validating the facts. For narrative explorations, I was

most interested in the ability of the narrator to make meaning of traumatic events. Coming forth willingly making a consensual decision to post at the request of a therapist or other person is an act of agency that can only happen in retrospect to the childhood abuse. As demonstrated in the narratives data, child victims of sexual abuse did not definitively know they were victims until much later in life, even if they intuited that something was not quite right about the events that took place with their abuser.

This study did yield evidence of themes reflecting the known effects of childhood sexual abuse (maladaptive behaviors of victims, delayed reporting and reclaiming self), and certainly Draucker and Martsolf's sexual violence life-course typology. They employed two qualitative methodologies to develop life course typologies of men and women who had experienced *any form* of sexual violence. The life course method employed required active interviewing, providing a targeted opportunity to draw out meaning making, often as it was occurring. This meaning making is also possible in the therapeutic context. Although not everyone seeks out therapy themselves, or arrives at opportunity to disclose in a one-one interview process. It is also not just about disclosure, but about finding meaning and understanding the effect of events, along with evaluations of those events on one's well-being.

While the current study was a cross-sectional analysis of publicly posted stories, it was helpful to explore the written narrative data for patterns related to the Draucker and Martsolf s six groups, or narrative themes, for the men in the sample for this study. The life of turmoil theme links this data to prior research suggesting that coming to identify as a victim or survivor is tied to stigma management. What others think of an individual (victim or not) is woven in to the fabric of understanding one's own experience. Thus, management of feelings around uncomfortable life events in childhood shapes the trajectory of recovery from the effects of sexual abuse in childhood. In the literature on sex offending, researchers provided strong evidence showing that offenders, regardless of victim gender, age, race, etc., also engage in techniques of neutralization to manage the overt and covert stigma of their actions.

Like those who manage stigma of their unacceptable sex offender identity, the victims of childhood sexual abuse in this study appear to similarly employ vocabularies readily available to them, as victims and offenders exist and individuals in the same social and cultural spaces. Specifically, when the victims in this analysis wrote about elements of self-blame in their own narratives, turmoil management appears, which drew upon the "blame the victim" vocabularies [i.e. Patrick] found in Scully and Marolla's work (Scully and Marolla 1984). Blaming one's self aligned with dominant discourse at the same time one was negotiating individual experiences and struggling to manage overt and covert stigma attached to negatively viewed events, actions, behaviors.

Conclusions and Future Directions

For the victims in this study, the argument can be made that linking experiences and interpretations of abuse with their own life of turmoil also provided an opportunity to reclaim one's life in the theme *taking control* [i.e. Thomas]. This work exemplifies a promising strategy for identifying subgroups of violence-exposed individuals. Elements of the typology could aid development of treatment approaches that consider both substance and structure of an individual's life course, rather than target one specific type of violence. A limitation of this study is the cross sectional nature of the data and the non-interactional process for data collection. It would be helpful, going forward, to interview victims in order to explore the process of meaning making around various events, interactions and relationships for those who are victimized in childhood but only publicly reveal many years later.

As well, nineteen of the victims in this study used the term "abuser" in their narrative. The remainder simply identified the individual by relationship or role in their lives, and by pronouns, initials and sometimes names. It is still unclear what this means in relation to how the victim sees himself in relation to the offender. If he does not explicitly state that there was an abuser at any time in his narrative, was he simply interpreting the events that happened to him as the one being abused? Was he managing the stigma and shame of his experience by calling the abuser by name or initials, compared to the anonymous term "abuser"? These are questions that could be better explored with real time interviews, and would add insight to the employment of various themes uncovered in the narratives.

Importantly, evidence of the themes found in the current study supports the task of developing new models for understanding the experiences and perceptions of sexual abuse for victims those who experience these events and, may delay reporting, as is the case for those who posted public narratives in the current sample. In addition to new models, there is always the need for dedicated resources for identifying, engaging and healing victims of childhood sexual abuse by as many means as possible. In future studies, first person interviews would allow for clear self-identification, deeper exploration of key variables and respondents' interpretive meaning, and should include a history of the gender of partners, relationship between abuser and abused, configuration of abusive acts, as well as culturally relevant vocabularies informing the victim's experience. This is beyond the scope of the current author's argument but fodder for future work.

It is imperative that we understand facts, perceptions and experiences of the victims of sexual abuse. Future comparisons of the reporting and narrative trend data must happen cross culturally, by gender and sexual orientation of abused and abuser; relationship of victim and offender; as well as across perpetrator gender, age, and other identifiable characteristics. The relationships among meaning, identity and

behavior are part and parcel to future analyses. We have seen that criminal justice problems of this nature are also issues of public health. Those who are victimized as young people often have higher rates of mental health problems in adulthood. These may be magnified by the effects of delayed disclosure. One notable barrier to disclosure is the relationship of the abuser to the victim at the time of abuse (Terry et al. 2011).

Finding communal space and exploring ones negatively viewed identity in a public forum, as was the case for the narratives included in this study, convenes a shared history. It also allows for the potential to create an affirmatively valued identity and establish community connections. While the websites included in this study did not offer meetings or scheduled communal events, they do offer a starting point for stepping away from isolation, as those who post stories can opt to make their email available for anyone to contact them. Thus, one's stigmatized identity becomes situated in the context of others, and agency rests with the victims as they may opt to reach out, whether or not they choose to post an account of their own abuse in childhood or adolescence. Equally important, is that clinicians, therapists and support workers help male victims distinguish between one's experience of sexual abuse and one's understanding of sexual orientation Whether one's abuser is male or female, sexuality is fraught with gendered perceptions and practices, and abuse does impact male victims differently Creating space for the experiences of men abused in childhood opens the door to integration and healing. Consider that there are victims who do not interact with trained interviewers or therapists directly seeking help for their sexual abuse? What can we do for them? By developing and validating typologies of meaning and identity, it becomes possible to construct diagnostic tools to help us understand narratives which, on their face are not indicative of childhood sexual abuse.

In fact, these findings are relevant for providing all services to those who identify as victims of childhood sexual abuse, and these narratives allow survivors to dispel the myths that are intertwined with their own stories. The ever growing recognition of **male** sexual abuse and its potentially incapacitating effects underscores the need to develop effective interventions. Methods of absolute prevention of sexual abuse are still unclear. Thus, using a typology to explore sexual abuse narratives would assist in the development of treatment approaches that consider both the substance and the structure of an individual's identity and experience, rather than center on the abuse event.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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