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Research article

Gender, rights and responsibilities: The need for a global analysis of the sexual exploitation of boys

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child confirmed child and youth rights globally. Their right to participation is a critical driver for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Youth prioritize the need to end violence against them, charging adults with safeguarding, and identify gender inequality as an underlying cause of child sexual exploitation (CSE). SDG 5 includes targets for ending sexual exploitation of girls; however, it is critical to review whether we are supporting *both* boys and girls adequately. Based on recent research, it is clear that male victims of CSE are prevalent, yet they have been relatively excluded in policy, research, and interventions. The aim is not to minimize the importance of understanding and eliminating CSE of girls, but to acknowledge that vulnerable sub-groups of boys exist in community (street-connected boys, refugees, sexual minorities) and service systems (justice, child welfare, humanitarian aid). Gender-based challenges persist in protection, disclosure, help-seeking, professional recognition, programming and prevention. In this discussion article, we outline responsibilities in human rights law to understand and address boys' CSE and overview key literature on its impact on boys. It is argued that gender-, trauma-, and violence-informed approaches are expanded to address the contribution of harmful gender norms, and to target prevention in the adolescent years for sexually transmitted infections, mental health, and substance abuse and violence problems. This discussion advances a pressing need for a global analysis of CSE among boys.

1. Introduction

Major progress has been seen in achieving children's rights since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; UN [Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989](#)) was developed, and has been almost universally ratified. The UNCRC represents an international treaty, and momentum, for the best interests of the child. The United Nations' Secretary-General Guterres, notes that 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC; further, he personalizes the promise to maltreated children: "I have been haunted by my many encounters with children scarred by unspeakable acts of violence, enduring traumatic experiences of neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation, and often stigmatized by their own communities" ([Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, 2019](#), p. 7).

A childhood free from violence, especially sexual violence, is in the best interests of infants, children and adolescents. Sexual violence victimization of children and adolescent minors is not only sexual and physical exploitation, but also exploitation of their

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environmental instability, dependency status, developing cognition and emotionality, and relational immaturity. The UNCRC has developed a foundational legal framework concerning child sexual exploitation (CSE), which was completed with the [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography \(2000\)](#), ratified by 176 State Parties [United Nations Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General, United Nations, New York \(ST/LEG/SER.E\) \(2019\)](#). Particularly, Article 34 of the UNCRC requires that State Parties protect children from “all forms of sexual exploitation” ([UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989](#)). It explicitly outlines that State Parties must prevent: 1) the coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; 2) the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; and 3) the exploitative use of children in pornography. Similarly, Article 19 provides that State Parties must undertake legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of violence including exploitation and sexual abuse. It adds that they must set up effective procedures to establish social programs ensuring the support, prevention, identification, reporting, investigation, treatment and follow-up of violence against children. Additionally, under Article 39, it provides that State Parties have the duty to enable the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of victims of CSE in an environment fostering their health, self-respect and dignity. Although the UNCRC uses a gender-neutral language, Article 2 stipulates that children should not experience discrimination based on their ‘sex’.

Currently, there is no consistently utilized definition of CSE and some commonly used terminology is problematic. The term “child prostitution” does not centralize the child or adolescent as a victim by failing to capture the child’s incapability to exercise agency in engaging in remunerated sexual activities ([Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016](#)). Similarly, the term “child pornography”, which depicts a recognized form of CSE, is troublesome because “pornography” primarily refers to sexualized materials involving consenting adults which often are disseminated legally. Therefore, use of the term “can be misleading and insinuate that a child could consent to such practices” (OPSC, 2019, p.3). However, these terms are gradually being replaced. “CSE/CSA materials”, are terms that emphasize the exploitative and illegal character of sexualized materials representing children. Recently, the Guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, [child prostitution and child pornography \(2019\)](#) explicitly recommended that states avoid the use of the terms “child prostitution” and “child pornography”.

CSE is carefully defined in the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ([Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016](#)). The sexual exploitation of children is defined in terms of a minor taking part in a sexual activity in exchange for something from a perpetrator or third party (e.g., gain or benefit, the promise of such, or simply the avoidance of harm). For example, youth may be exploited by recruiters or find themselves in exploitative contexts for survival where no or few options exist. It is important to note that CSE occurs even when the victim appears to ‘consent’. However, the link between power in relation to sexual abuse, and consent should be taken into account, in order to understand that a child’s *submission* to sexual exploitation is not an indication of willingness ([Buchhandler-Raphael, 2010](#)). Indeed, consent requires that there are other meaningful choices, the capacity to make a choice, and that the child is not under other influences, or fearful of what might happen if they do not comply. CSE cannot be considered as consensual because the perpetrator takes advantage of existing imbalances of power to prompt the child’s acquiescence to their sexual demands. Thus, if the child is not able to refuse to engage in sexual activities, due to their economic, social or psychological situation, or even simply age difference, this increases the perpetrator’s ability to exploit the child. Abuse of power includes manipulation to accept tangibles (money, mobile phone, food, shelter, substances, treats) and intangibles (protection from other harms to self or others, perceived receipt of attention or affection; [Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016](#)). Child sexual abuse (CSA) is an umbrella term covering the involvement of a child in contact or non-contact sexual activities that he or she has been coerced into, does not fully comprehend and is unable to give consent to ([Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016](#); [World Health Organization, 2006](#)). The distinction between CSA and CSE lies in the underlying notion of *exchange* that is central to CSE but is not present in all forms of CSA. Yet there is a close relationship between the two concepts. For instance, CSA is the most common risk factor for CSE ([Ahrens, Katon, McCarty, Richardson, & Courtney, 2012](#)). For the purposes of this article, we will focus on CSE research, and reference CSA work where boys’ CSE research is lacking, as well as note when the CSA definition has also included CSE.

While the humanistic cost to children is expansive, as a public health crisis, a recent costing study also points to the problem’s sizeable socioeconomic drain. Including CSE in their definition of CSA, [Letourneau, Brown, Fang, Hassan, and Mercy \(2018\)](#) derived costs from lost productivity, violence/crime, suicidality, and service systems, and estimated the U.S. lifetime economic impact at about \$11 billion annually. [Hankivsky and Draker \(2003\)](#) placed the annual cost in Canada at about \$3.7 billion. Beyond Western countries, sexual violence against children contributes significantly to the global health burden, and more keenly so in low- and middle-income countries ([Moynihan et al., 2018](#); [World Health Organization, 2009](#)). This could be playing out in particular ways with boys. For example, with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, global rates of new HIV infection are higher in males ([World Health Organization, 2019](#)). Maltreated males, as compared to their female counterparts, may have greater sexual health risk, as they are younger at first consensual intercourse, younger at first pregnancy involvement, and have a higher number of lifetime sexual partners ([Negriff, Schneiderman, & Trickett, 2015](#)). Adolescent males reporting CSA experiences have been shown to also be more likely to have sex for peer and partner approval, as well as for coping with negative affect, as compared to their maltreated, but non-CSA, male counterparts ([Wekerle, Goldstein, Tanaka, & Tonmyr, 2017](#)). As CSA is predictive of CSE, there may be a cascade in poor sexual health outcomes owing from a variety of factors.

Since the release of the 2006 World Report on Violence Against Children ([Pinheiro, 2006](#)), the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children was launched in 2016 to accelerate progress on the 2030 SDGs for ending violence (16.2), putting a spotlight on institutional responses and responsible adult actors. Also, inter-relatedness of the SDGs (gender inequity, violence, youth participation, education, health and wellbeing) asks us to consider gender equity alongside ending violence, and to be inclusive of diverse

youth voices and systems of service. The 2030 SDGs target 5.2, addressing sexual exploitation, applies a gender lens, but only for females, even though there is a pledge that no child will be left behind (United Nations, 2015).

While international agreements such as the UNCRC, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) have addressed CSE through a gender-neutral perspective, sexual exploitation of girls tends to be the dominant focus (Greenbaum, Crawford-Jakubiak, & Committee on Child Abuse & Neglect, 2015; Ricardo & Barker, 2008). While girls are victimized at higher rates in many contexts (e.g., child marriage), boy victims are also present in these contexts (Gastón, Misunas, & Cappa, 2019). Boys may be as or more vulnerable than girls in some contexts, as a recent study on urban boys has suggested (Boyer et al., 2017). Boys and girls are clearly victimized within communities (homeless, sports, faith-based organizations), service systems (justice, child welfare, alternative care settings), and humanitarian contexts (conflict, refugees). Unfortunately, gender-based violence initiatives with a special focus on the sexual exploitation of boys are rarely advanced, in spite of the limited available evidence suggesting that boys are more widely impacted than previously understood (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, 2019). Despite some signs of growing awareness, the impact on boys continues to be seriously under-researched, unrecognized in relevant legislation and policy and, thereby, potentially undetected and unaddressed (Greenbaum et al., 2015; Moynihan et al., 2018; Wekerle et al., 2017).

The aim of this discussion article is not to minimize the importance of examining the sexual exploitation of girls, but rather, it seeks to complement that work with a specific agenda addressing gaps in our understanding of boys' CSE. The published literature on boy's CSE has been scant given the scope of the issue. This article builds upon Pitcher and colleagues' 2017 systematic review of the peer-reviewed literature on the CSE of boys. Our exploration began by focusing on the following search terms: "sexual exploitation", "sexual violence", "sexual abuse", "transactional sex", "survival sex", "boys", "male", "child", "gender norms" and expanded to utilize a broad research base of systematic reviews, government and organizational reports, literature searches and citation searches, focusing on the CSE of boys through a gendered- and rights-based lens. Thus, this article explores three elements essential in understanding the scope and nature of the CSE of boys. Firstly, it presents emerging research indicating the prevalence of boys' CSE, supporting the assertion that this is far more frequent than commonly recognized. Secondly, it grounds this within dominant gender norms that may be masking the problem, by limiting societal cognizance, contributing to professionals' gaze aversion, and influencing boys' own perceptions of their CSE as a crime and exploitation. Thirdly, we consider the potential gender insensitivity of services and institutions dealing with boys who are vulnerable to CSE. Finally, we consider commonalities in limitations in global literature exploring the CSE of boys, by considering specific contexts of high concern for male victims (child welfare, alternative care, justice and humanitarian settings). Taken together, there is a clear argument in support of conducting a global analysis of boys' CSE that addresses the critical need for research, evidence-based policy and programming.

2. The prevalence of boys' experiences of CSE

CSE is a public health concern and a foundational issue in safeguarding children and youth (Greenbaum, Yun, & Todres, 2018; Pitcher, Ferguson, Moynihan, Mitchell, & Saewyc, 2017; Public Health England, 2019; Spencer-Hughes, Syred, Allison, Holdsworth, & Baraitser, 2017). In surveys, youth prioritize the need to end violence against them. In Latin America, 24 % of youth surveyed placed sexual violence as their top concern and in Nigeria, one in four girls, and one in 10 boys experience sexual violence victimization (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, 2019). However, little data on the prevalence of CSE of boys has been collected so far, which hampers the formulation of evidence-based policy to tackle it (Mitchell et al., 2017; Pitcher et al., 2017). Nonetheless, an emerging corpus of research has started to document the scale and manifestations as well as barriers to data collection such as under-reporting (Violato & Genius, 1993).

2.1. The suspected scale of CSE of boys

Data on the prevalence of CSE comes from crime reporting and specialty agencies. They provide an overview of the widespread and pervasive problem of sexual exploitation and sometimes contain data on boy victims. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, using international data on exploitation, found that more than half of all (adult and child) exploited victims (59 %) are sexually exploited, with more than half (58 %) of these being trafficked domestically (UNODC, 2018). Among all sexually exploited victims, 3 % were boys. This points to likely child rights violations in both home countries, as well as abroad. According to the Canadian Police crime statistics in 2016, there was a 38 % increase in reported sexual violations against children (which includes sexual interference, luring, sexual exploitation) from the prior year (overall 6,917 incidents; Keighley, 2017). From a decade earlier, there was a 233 % increase in child sexual abuse materials incidents. Surveys conducted among school-based samples are another source that provides preliminary data on CSE affecting boys. A systematic review found that, among school-based probability samples, rates of CSE among boys ranged from 1.7 % to 4.8 % (Moynihan et al., 2018). Data from the 2004 National Survey of Adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda; N = 2158) found that 3 % of younger adolescent males (aged 12–17) and 7.5 % of males in early adulthood (aged 18–19) reported transactional sex in the past year (Adjei & Saewyc, 2017). A study of high school students in Quebec, Canada (N = 815) reported similar findings, with 2 % of males indicating that they had sold sexual services (Lavoie, Thibodeau, Gangné, & Hébert, 2010). In Tanzania, a study on the sexual exploitation of high school aged adolescents (N = 1116; 46 % male) found that 14.8 % of boys between 13 and 17 years had at least one experience of sexual exploitation (Miyakado & Li, 2019). A large, nationally representative study of male youth in Haiti, Kenya, and Cambodia (N = 4170) found that the percentage of males who had experienced sexual violence under the age of 18 was 23.1 % in Haiti, 14.8 % in Kenya,

and 5.6 % in Cambodia, with most perpetration being committed by friends/neighbors (64.7 %), romantic partners (37.2 %), and relatives (37.0 %) (Sumner et al., 2016). 2.2. The manifestations and risk factors for the CSE of boys

Several studies that focused on CSE as a means of survival (i.e., survival sex) were consistent in finding that being street-connected or homeless was associated with high risk of being a victim of CSE. Non-probability samples of street-connected and homeless male youth ranged from 16 % to 45 % being victims of CSE (Moynihan et al., 2018). In Pakistan, it was shown that 40.5 % of street-connected boys in Lahore had engaged in sexual activities in exchange for food, shelter, drugs or money (Towe, Hasan, Zafar, & Sherman, 2009). In British Columbia, Canada, 34 % of street-connected boys between the ages of 12 and 18 had engaged in survival sex for shelter or other goods (Saewyc, MacKay, Anderson, & Drozda, 2008). Studies based on smaller, non-representative samples conducted in South-East Asia have shown that boys working in the street had been sexually exploited in exchange for money, food or gifts: 26 % in Cambodia (Davis & Miles, 2014) and 27 % in the Philippines (Davis & Miles, 2017). In Ghana, a survey conducted among a convenience sample of homeless youth living in the streets of Accra (N = 227; 54 % male) indicated that 44 % of boy respondents had exchanged sexual activities for food, money or shelter (Oppong Asante, Meyer-Weitz, & Petersen, 2014). An important finding that emphasizes the exploitative nature of CSE is that, for all genders, 22 % of homeless youth offered money for sex were approached on their first night of experiencing homelessness (Schilling Wolfe, Greeson, Wasch, & Treglia, 2018). While 63 % had child welfare system involvement, a minority (39%) reported that they had child welfare action taken on their behalf. Youth indicated the lack of a supportive parent or family members as a driver of their homelessness, and most (73%) reported dropping out of high school.

Studies on young transgender and gender-diverse victims have demonstrated their high exposure to CSE. From the 2014 Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey, a national on-line survey of transgender youth 14–25 years old, 10 % reported having traded sex (22.7 % of these were under age 18). (Veale et al., 2015). Schilling Wolfe et al. (2018) conducted interviews with 270 homeless youth in three U.S. cities (Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Washington). Of the 17 % of youth who reported CSE victimization, 31 % were male and 13 % identified as transgender. A U.S. study of 3108 sexually active adolescents (age 12–24) recruited from urban community youth centers, found significant linkages between being male or transgender, having a lower education level, having experienced homelessness, and exchanging sex for drugs or money (Boyer et al., 2017). More work is needed to understand the risks to transgender and gender-diverse males and the intersection with child maltreatment histories and other adolescent vulnerabilities.

Research has also converged and demonstrated that child abuse is a predictor of the CSE of boys. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; Felitti et al., 1998) such as child abuse, neglect, parental mental health issues, and/or parental incarceration also put youth at greater risk of engaging in sexual risk-taking and transactional sexual activities (Davis & Miles, 2019; Lalor & McElvaney, 2010; Wekerle et al., 2017). One U.S. study of youth engaged with juvenile justice systems in Florida (N = 913) found that boys who had experienced emotional abuse were 2.55 times more likely to be sexually exploited and boys who had experienced sexual abuse were 8.21 times more likely to be sexually exploited (Reid, Baglivio, Piquero, Greenwald, & Epps, 2017).

Studies were also consistent in documenting that boys with disabilities were more represented among CSE victims than girls with disabilities. As with child maltreatment in general, individuals with disabilities are at higher risk. Interviews with service providers have indicated that more male victims of CSE present as having a disability than females; most commonly, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (McNaughton Nicholls et al., 2014). This theme was echoed in an analysis of Bernardo's service users that found that boys who had experienced CSE were more likely than girls to have a known disability (35 % vs. 13 %); the most common disabilities for boys included behavioral issues, learning disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (Cockbain, Ashby, & Brayley, 2017). There has been no comprehensive consideration of sex and gender, disabilities, and sexual violence victimization experiences to date.

Concerning online CSE, the few studies that have investigated the scope of boys' victimization have shown that boy victims represented in sexual exploitation materials were often very young and highly sexualized. In a randomized sample of 24,550 sexualized images of children extracted from the database of the U.K. Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, it was found that 20.1 % of the children depicted in the images were boys (Quayle & Jones, 2011). In comparison to girls, male children portrayed in the images were more likely to be prepubescent (73 %) than pubescent (25.4 %). Prepubescent boys who possess features that are deemed more feminine may be more desirable to some exploiters and therefore, are more likely to be recruited for victimization than older adolescent males (Ricardo & Barker, 2008). Younger victims, also, are in an impoverished position to disclose verbally and more vulnerable to cognitive manipulations on the meaning of the exploitation. Recently, ECPAT International and INTERPOL (2018) have conducted an analysis of 800 media files of CSE from the INTERPOL International Child Sexual Exploitation database. It was found that when the victim's gender was recorded, 30.5 % of the materials portrayed boys. The sexual exploitation materials of boys were also more likely to be severe or involve paraphilic themes and violence. Similar trends were seen in data from Canada. Based on Cybertips.ca analysis of unique images and videos from 2008 to 2015, about 20 % depicted boys and the inclusion of a boy child in an image or video increased the likelihood of explicit sexual activity or extreme sexual assaults (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2016). There is an overall consensus that online CSE is increasing, and boys' victimization may overlap with violence and injury (e.g., use of restraints, forced victimization of others). Governments should require telecommunication and social media companies to develop procedures that ensure that any CSE materials on their networks is detected, reported and speedily removed. This would require legislative and policy clarity about the industries' obligations, penalties for non-compliance, and the development of guidance, information and resources to aid and assist the industry in compliance (Child Dignity Alliance, 2018).

2.2. Barriers to collecting representative data on the CSE of boys

A dominant theme is the under-detection and under-reporting of CSE of boys due to a range of social and legal implications in

reporting (Moynihan et al., 2018) as well as the perception that boys are more likely to be delinquent than victims. Mandatory reporting laws for CSA are not present in all countries. In just one example of the legal implications, in the U.S., ‘Safe Harbor’ laws exist in many states, allowing youth who have been exploited to be freed of any legal penalty (such as for engaging in prostitution) when reporting to authorities and, in turn, accessing protection by child protection services (Liles, Blacker, Landini, & Urquiza, 2016; Shields & Letourneau, 2015). In many countries, though, “Safe Harbor” laws do not exist; and boys who have been exploited may face legal repercussions for reporting their own CSE.

A U.K. analysis of Barnardo’s CSE case records (2008–2013) found that 33 % of those referred for services were male, although there were fluctuations in the prevalence of male CSE cases year-to-year (24 %–39 %) (Cockbain et al., 2017). Males also had a significantly lower age of referral for services and although disclosure was rare among the total sample, girls were four times more likely to disclose CSE in comparison to boys. This is consistent with the research on CSA disclosure, that shows that males are less likely to disclose their victimization than females and in cases where males do disclose victimization, there tends to be a delay in time between victimization and disclosure (Manay & Collin-Vézina, 2019; Romano, Moorman, Ressel, & Lyons, 2019; Wekerle et al., 2017). Professional training may limit healthcare provision: one study of youth aged 12–21 referred to a large U.S. hospital over the course of approximately two years due to CSE concerns identified 62 female victims and only one male victim (Hornor & Sherfield, 2018). These findings are consistent in showing that male victims are less likely to be identified and referred to health services (Hornor & Sherfield, 2018), and more likely to be identified through their involvement with the juvenile justice system (Cockbain et al., 2017). A large study of youth offenders (N = 1354) found African American male youth offenders to be at an increased risk for CSE (Reid & Piquero, 2014).

In studies of CSE survivors, most males report no involvement of a pimp or middle-person in the negotiation of transactions (Curtis, Terry, Dank, Dombrowski, & Khan, 2008; Edinburgh, Pape-Blabolil, Harpin, & Saewyc, 2015; Hounmenou, 2017). Thus, male victims may be more difficult to identify, as their exploitation may be less likely to be viewed as victimization than that of their female counterparts and more likely to be viewed as delinquency (Curtis et al., 2008) and as such, they are more likely to be perceived as agents of crime, perpetuating societal notions that males cannot be passive victims of CSE (Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004). That same study found that for males, the experience of rape, as well as dependency on drugs or alcohol were linked with early age of CSE onset. Other risk factors for CSE include leaving home (or being kicked out), being of a sexual minority (often due to being estranged from family or peers, or forced to leave the home of origin), introduction to exploitation by peers, and the experience of solicitation by older individuals (most commonly males; Moxley-Goldsmith, 2005). Another prevalence theme is that the risk of male CSE appears to vary by country and income status. A recent global review of the literature on rates of CSE among the general population of youth, found that males in high-income countries were more likely to engage in transactional sex than their female counterparts; whereas in low- and middle-income countries, females were more likely to engage in transactional sex (Krisch, Averdijk, Valdebenito, & Eisner, 2019).

3. Gender norms and the CSE of boys

Socialization processes across lifespan development contribute to categorical expectations of males and females (Jackson, 2006). Scholars have differentiated the concept of biological sex from socially constructed gender norms. Therefore, this section explores the link between the social construction of gender norms and the concealment of male sexual victimization. Thereafter, it explores the impact of socially-constructed masculinity norms on boys’ experience of CSE.

3.1. Gender norms and the concealment of male sexual victimization

The conception of gender as performative reality was developed by Butler (1988) who defined gender as “the cultural significance that the sexed body assume” that is socially reproduced. In that sense, some behavior can be interpreted as expressing a certain gender identity which conform or not with the dominant expected gender identity. Childhood is depicted as a phase of gender role socialization through which boys (and girls) learn how to fit with the normative definition of masculinity often conceptualized through the theoretical framework of “hegemonic masculinity” that sets practice allowing men’s dominance over women and over other men not complying with dominant masculine norms (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). “Masculinities” refer to the dynamic among masculine norms, attitudes, identities, power relationships and behaviors. Masculine norms are rules and expected behaviors associated with males and manhood in a cultural context (Ragonese, Shand, & Barker, 2018). West and Zimmerman (1987) pointed out that social interactions can even result in “social masculinities” (Connell, 2002, p. 35) which artificially create a divide between boys and girls and an application of categories and conformity to individual actions and experiences. Gender can be “performed” in alignment with traditional gendered power relationships (male dominance; female subjugation), which may create a cognitive dissonance within gender identity between the felt sense of gender and the perceived expectations for gender. In its extreme, it may reflect a “military masculinity” (us versus them control, win at all costs; Higate, 2007) that contributes a reconfiguring, from sexual exploitation victim to a person’s expression of agency in securing exchange items. These mental gymnastics are facilitated by inter-sectional factors (e.g., natural adolescent strivings for autonomy; gender politics, socioeconomic context).

Ragonese et al. (2018) identify a “man box” as reflecting seven rigid gender norms: (1) the social expectation for self-sufficiency and emotional control; (2) physical strength and risk-taking; (3) attractiveness (e.g., appearing “cool” to peers; emphasis on musculature); (4) rigid gender roles (i.e., male provider; female nurturer); (5) hierarchy, from hyper-masculine (“holding liquor”; meat-eating) to non-masculine (feminization); (6) hyper-sexuality; (7) dominance. Increased scholarly attention has illustrated how these gender norms can result in deeply rooted and often harmful beliefs, attitudes and behaviors towards girls that enable their sexual

exploitation (Gerassi, 2015; Macias Konstantopoulos et al., 2013; McCleary-Sills, Douglas, Rwehumbiza, Hamisi, & Mabala, 2013; Santhya, Jejeebhoy, & Basu, 2014). However, when applied to boys, gender norms analysis can also yield similar outcomes. Social expectations about hegemonic masculinity can thus further lead to victim-blaming (Alaggia, 2005). Hlavka (2017) pointed out that male sexual victimization contradicts the “dominant script for boys” which portrays them to be “brave, stoic and to deal with problems alone” (p. 486). This disparity between experienced and represented masculinities paradoxically paves the way for a cultural acceptance of sexual violence against men and boys. Additionally, the manipulation of the stigma of homosexuality can lead to boys’ self-blaming and is used by perpetrators to mask boys’ victimization. Perpetrators use gay pornography or romantic discourses to groom boys, as well as silencing boys by manipulating their need for social acceptance or by threatening disclosure of their projected or presumed homosexuality (Hlavka, 2017). Nonetheless, these methods of coercion are often overlooked in studies of child sexual exploitation in prostitution, which rarely include sexually exploited homosexual boys (Dennis, 2008). Given the multiple doses of stigma from self-blame and shame of victimization, and the discomfort of involving sexual body parts, as well as gender norms that emphasize male agency and heteronormativity, discussion of thoughts and emotions surrounding CSE may be extremely taxing, especially for male victims who have been socialized not to discuss their emotions or demonstrate any form of vulnerability (Dennis, 2008; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006). The silence of male victims is then explained by the mismatch of male sexual victimization with both stereotypical gender roles and sexual scripts (Depraetere, Vandeviver, Vander Beken, & Keygnaert, 2018). Societal gender norms around same-sex sexual encounters and notions of males as being feminine or weak if they are unable to protect themselves from violence are also barriers to appropriate safeguarding and care (Ricardo & Barker, 2008).

3.2. The impact of masculinity norms on boys’ experiences of CSE

Preliminary investigation of social perceptions on the sexual exploitation of children have started to provide empirical evidence that gender norms are contributing to a lower recognition of boys’ victimization in comparison to that of girls. In 2009 and 2010, Promundo (2012) conducted qualitative and quantitative research to map men and women’s perceptions regarding the sexual exploitation of children in four Brazilian cities. The qualitative result of this study shows that the sexual exploitation of young girls was perceived through a “victimizing gaze” while boys’ victimhood was mainly overlooked. Respondents were also more likely to blame boy victims for their own exploitation, instead of the government care systems or purchasers of sexual services. Contrary to girls, respondents often perceived that boys had agency to actively engage in their own sexual exploitation through prostitution, an agency rarely ascribed to girls. These findings are in line with widespread societal assumptions that men and boys engaging in sexual activities in exchange for money have more agency, and are less coerced than women and girls (Dennis, 2008).

The reasons cited for boys’ low access to supports seem to be consistent with literature underlining that individuals bound by hegemonic masculinity norms are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward help-seeking (Donne et al., 2018; Hay et al., 2019; Wong, Ho, Wang, & Miller, 2017). The Violence Against Children Surveys conducted in various countries have found that boys’ low self-perceived sexual victimization was the main reason explaining why they did not try and access support services. Indeed, among boys between the ages of 18 and 24 who experienced sexual violence prior to the age of 18, 71.7 % in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, UNICEF, & Collaborating Centre for Operational Research and Evaluation, 2013), 62.1 % in Cambodia (Kingdom of Cambodia Ministry of Women’s Affairs, UNICEF Cambodia, & US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014) and 49.2 % in Honduras (Government of Honduras, 2019) reported that they did not seek assistance because they did not think that their experience of sexual violence was a problem. These results were lower for girl victims, although 31.6 % of girl victims in Zimbabwe, 22.1 % in Cambodia and 11 % in Honduras, also explained that they did not seek support services because they did not see it as a problem. These data illustrate that boys’ perceptions of masculinity may influence their help-seeking behaviors. To address these gender norms constraining boys’ help-seeking attitudes, relevant institutional services are central in adjusting education surrounding masculinities and gender-appropriate interventions (Rice, Purcell, & McGorry, 2017).

Homophobic beliefs tend also to overshadow boys’ victimization (regardless of boys’ actual sexual identity; Promundo, 2012). Contrary to common belief, perpetrators or exploiters of boys are not predominantly homosexual, or bisexual men, as there are many heterosexual men soliciting boys for sexual acts as well (Montgomery-Devlin, 2008; Palmer, 2001). Although, the majority of perpetrators of sexual exploitation are male, female perpetrators are more likely to solicit male victims rather than females (Brayley, Cockbain, & Gibson, 2014). A study from the US Bureau of Justice has shown that in 86.1 % of cases of youth sexual abuses committed by correctional agents in juvenile detention centers, it was reported that the victim was male and the perpetrator was female (Beck, Harisson, & Guerini, 2010). The same study has shown that among all the reported sexual violence against youth inmates committed by juvenile correctional agents, 18 % equate with CSE in exchange for alcohol or drugs, and 11 % with CSE in exchange for protection. Young men abused by female perpetrators often encounter disbelief and indifference from others as the heteronormative framework for males perceives them always as having full control over, and desire for, their sexual activities. In her study of 114 reported cases of sexual abuse of boys committed in custodial setting from 1990 to 2013, Smith (2014) has stressed that dominant gender perceptions factored into a common denying of both boys’ sexual victimization and female sex-offending. However, underage male victims were often perceived as desiring these sexual activities, while female perpetrators were depicted as lover or maternal figures instead of abusive authority figures. In that context, boys tended to reframe their victimization as a non-traumatic sexual experimentation leading them to not report it and not receive appropriate support.

4. The gender (in)sensitivity of services and institutions

Awareness of the role that service providers working with vulnerable children play in identifying and assisting boy victims of

sexual exploitation has started to receive greater attention, with the literature producing a number of developed country examples, particularly from the UK. A 2014 study of 50 frontline professionals working with CSE victims assessed the state of practitioners' knowledge concerning the specific support experiences and needs of boy victims (McNaughton, Harvey, & Paskell, 2014). Practitioners underlined that boys have specific support experiences and needs tied to their sexuality, their gender perception of masculinity, the expressions of their psychological distress and concurrent engagement with the justice system, often through petty crime. However, many vulnerability factors to CSE are also common to both boys and girls (e.g., family instability, substance misuse, poor mental health). Nevertheless, boys' access to support is unquestioningly conditioned by gender norms, constraining their help-seeking behavior and their ability to seek care (time, system navigation etc.; Heise et al., 2019). To assist boy victims adequately, practitioners have recognized that they still lack a coherent evidence-based approach (Cole, 2018; McNaughton et al., 2014).

Boy victims of CSE are not presenting to traditional healthcare, such as pediatric clinics or pediatric emergency departments. In a study by Varma, Gillespie, McCracken and Greenbaum (2015), 100 % of CSE patients and 94.6 % of the comparison CSA patients were female, with CSE patients differentiated by high risk behavior and experiences with law enforcement, child protective services, substance abuse, violence, and running away from home. In Tanzania (UNICEF Tanzania, Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, & Centers for Disease Control, 2011), Kenya (UNICEF Kenya, National U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, & Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2012), Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency et al., 2013), Cambodia (Kingdom of Cambodia Ministry of Women's Affairs et al., 2014), Malawi (Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare of the Republic of Malawi, United Nations Children's Fund, The Center for Social Research, University of Malawi, & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), and Honduras (Government of Honduras, 2019), it was found that boys between the ages of 18 and 24 who reported experiencing sexual violence as children (prior to the age of 18), were less likely than girls to seek support or to be assisted by service providers. Nonetheless, these differences between boys' and girls' help-seeking behaviors should not be exaggerated, as help-seeking and support was consistently low for both male and female victims.

Guidelines to working with CSE victims in healthcare settings (Greenbaum et al., 2015) and for gender-sensitive work with men and boys from a clinical perspective have been recently launched (American Psychological Association, 2018). For example, medical history questions may include: (1) Has anyone ever asked you to have sex in exchange for something you wanted or needed (money; food; shelter or other items)?; (2) Has anyone ever asked you to have sex with another person?; (3) Has anyone ever taken sexual pictures of you or posted such pictures on the Internet? (Greenbaum et al., 2015). In some cases, the way questions are asked are just as important as ensuring they are included at all. Trauma-informed and gender-sensitive clinical approaches that respond to boys' CSE would include particular considerations (Greenbaum, 2018). Minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003) posits that sexual minority populations may experience both externalized and internalized stressors. Externalized stressors (e.g., social isolation; homophobia; sexual orientated-related discrimination), and internalized stressors (e.g., identity concealment; internalized homonegativity) may be amplified by self-stigmatization as a victim of CSA or CSE. An emerging body of research is outlined below that documents examples from 1) alternative care services, 2) juvenile detention centers, 3) humanitarian services directly dealing with cases of sexual exploitation of boys.

4.1. Alternative care services

In the UK and Canada, it has been established that looked-after boys and girls are over-represented among CSE victims (Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre, 2011; Cockbain et al., 2017; Saewyc et al., 2008). In fact, Cockbain et al. (2017) found that as many as 18 % of children supported by specialized support services for underage victims of sexual exploitation were looked-after children. The link between alternative care placements and children's experience of CSE has to be understood taking into account the various risk factors to CSE that are often associated with looked-after children (e.g. being street-connected, prior ACEs). Thus, the same risk factors that differentiate sexually exploited children and non-sexually exploited children (i.e., child maltreatment experience, mental health and behavioral problems, leaving home or street-connection, exposure to substance use) also increase the likelihood that boys will be placed in the care of child protective services during their life (Saewyc et al., 2008).

Research has documented some gaps in the way alternative care workers detect and support boy victims. In their study on child trafficking related to begging and CSE of Roma boys in Hungary, Vidra, Baracsi, and Sebhelyi (2015) conducted fieldwork in residential facilities where several victims were identified. The authors posited that children living in alternative care service (with an open-door policy) are at risk of (peer) recruitment into trafficking for sexual purposes. While noting that girls are also affected, the authors found evidence that older boys recruit younger ones in exchange for items of value such as mobile phones or clothes. Workers were also less likely to detect boy victims than girl victims. Indeed, care workers often assumed that boys were voluntarily engaging in prostitution. These findings align with literature describing that dominant gender norms perpetuate the idea that males have more agency and are un-coerced in contrast with females who are viewed as victims (Dennis, 2008).

4.2. Juvenile detention

The occurrence of sexual exploitation committed both by custodial staff and by other detainees against boys has been well documented (Niyonzima & Bureau International des Droits des Enfants, 2012; Robertson, 2011; Smith, 2014). A study on the sexual exploitation of boys in Burundi exposed that various incarcerated boys were sexually exploited by older male detainees who offered them protection, before transferring them to other detainees in exchange for money. Boys who were sexually exploited by female custodial staff were rarely recognized as victims or offered any assistance (Smith, 2014). Robertson (2011) emphasized that boys sentenced by adult courts and imprisoned in adult prisons were put at risk of being sexually exploited in exchange for protection from

physical beatings, or even sexual assault by other detainees. In prison sub-culture, victim-blaming attitudes and strong gender norms around masculinity prevail. Robertson surmised that boys who had been sexually exploited in prison were likely to be perceived as breaching expected gender norms and labelled 'punk', a term used to designate their lacking manhood.

In Canada, it was found that sexually exploited youth in prisons were seven times more likely to have informed a health professional that they suffer from a mental or emotional disorder (Saewyc et al., 2008). Additionally, one out of three sexually exploited youth in detention were diagnosed with major depression or bipolar disorder. Salisbury, Dabney, and Russell (2015) stressed the need to educate custodial staff in screening youth in juvenile detention. In a study that used a trauma-informed screening process to identify victims of CSE among 535 boys and girls, aged 9–19 years, when entering a juvenile detention facility in Canada, the authors found that not one male victim was identified. Salisbury and colleagues argued that staff bias could have been a reason for the low detection of male victims of CSE entering detention centers. Gender norms around masculinity described already in this paper would also suggest that boys disclosing CSE in custodial settings would be highly unlikely.

4.3. Humanitarian settings

In humanitarian settings, little attention has been paid to male victimization of sexual violence, with perhaps one exception gaining some recent attention – conflict settings. The humanitarian system can be conceived through Borton's (2009) working definition as "a multiplicity of international, national and locally-based organizations deploying financial, material and human resources to provide assistance and protection to those affected by conflict and natural disasters with the objective of saving lives, reducing suffering and aiding recovery." Some have argued that the modern humanitarian system has conceptualized conflict-based gender-based violence in a way that overlooks sexual violence against boys and men (Carpenter, 2006; Dolan, 2016; Gorris, 2015; Sivakumaran, 2010; Touquet & Gorris, 2016). It has been noted that, a narrow definition of gender-based violence as synonymous with violence against women and girls, has led to gaps in the provision of humanitarian assistance to male victims of sexual violence, including boy victims of CSE (Read-Hamilton, 2014). Humanitarian systems would be encouraged to adopt gender-inclusive measures to address sexual violence, which acknowledges the gendered vulnerabilities specific to both boys and girls separately, without falling into the trap of minimizing any gender's specificities.

Over the past decade, a shift has been identified toward the recognition of male victims in international high-level policy documents on sexual violence in conflict settings (Gorris, 2015; Touquet & Gorris, 2016). Sexual violence against (men and) boys has been recognized in the Guidance on Working with Men and Boy Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Forced Displacement (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2012), the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2106 on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (2013) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (2015). In the latter, gender-based violence is now framed in a more gender inclusive way by acknowledging "gendered forms of violence against men and boys – particularly some forms of sexual violence committed with the explicit purpose of reinforcing gender inequitable norms of masculinity and femininity." In the context of CSE, boys have been identified as an at-risk group and it was recognized that "addressing specific forms of violence against boys through a gender lens will often focus on the negative effects for boys of socially determined norms of masculinity" (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015). Despite this fledgling recognition of sexual violence against boys, it is argued that in most policy documents male victimization is still not being treated comprehensively (Dolan, 2016; Gorris, 2015; Touquet & Gorris, 2016). While the 2015 IASC guidelines provide statistics on sexual violence against male victims, Dolan (2016) pointed out that they do not stress the need for documenting the experiences of both female and male victims in order to establish evidence-based programming.

Emerging research in conflict settings has shown that boy victims' access to support services is restricted by scarce resources and low implementation of gender-sensitive approaches to both detect them and offer assistance, within the humanitarian system. In the Central African Republic, a study by All Survivors Project (2018a) has identified cases of humanitarian agencies including male victims of sexual violence into their program design and implementation. Nonetheless, there is no systematic or coordinated approach across the humanitarian system in the country. Furthermore, most of the organizations interviewed for the study did not provide comprehensive training to recognize and support male survivors of sexual violence. In another study of sexual violence against boys and men in Syria and Turkey, researchers from All Survivors Project (2018b) identified barriers related to gender biases in the humanitarian responses. Sexual violence against boys and men was not sufficiently considered in humanitarian planning, which resulted in an absence of services dedicated to boys and prevented boys' access to existing services (targeted at women and girls).

A UN High Commissioner for Refugees report (2017) highlighted that support services were not adapted to identify and protect boy victims, especially boys aged above 12. For example, there were no official shelters for boy victims of sexual violence in Lebanon and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Some boy victims of sexual violence were still admitted to safe shelters for women and girls on a case-by-case basis, but others were sent to juvenile reformatories in KRI. Despite the open-door policy of some sexual and gender-based violence support services, the UNHCR noted that these services focus on addressing women and girls' needs. As they are (justifiably) rarely visible to males, boy victims are often not aware of their existence and do not feel comfortable accessing them. Gender-sensitive referral systems have yet to be sufficiently established in most humanitarian settings which identify boy victims and orient them towards support services sensitive to their needs (Chynoweth, Freccero, & Touquet, 2017). Appropriate services must address boys' physical, psychological and sexual health needs without perpetuating problematic gender norms that increase risks of victim-blaming, or stigmatization.

In the narrower context of the CSE of boys, Freccero, Biswas, Whiting, Alrabe, and Seelinger (2017) have reached similar conclusions when they analyzed the humanitarian assistance provided in Greece to sexually exploited unaccompanied migrant and

refugee boys. Health and protection measures focusing on unaccompanied migrant and refugee boys were not prioritized in humanitarian and gender-based violence programming in Greece. During the crisis, practitioners did develop emergency interventions, but did so without prior evidence-based guidance. Moreover, while the vast majority of unaccompanied migrant and refugee boys were teenagers, Freccero and colleagues pointed out that their specific needs were among the least addressed in the humanitarian programming provided in Greece. In addition to gender-sensitiveness, the age-appropriateness of child protection and prevention interventions is central. Services and programs alleviating the socioeconomic risk-factors to CSE (e.g. shelter, income-generating opportunities and cash transfer programming), must be implemented to prevent boys' engagement in CSE for survival.

5. Discussion

There is undeniable evidence on the long-lasting, reverberating, and widespread costs of violence against children. Its global economic cost is estimated at U.S. \$3.6 trillion (Hoeffler & Fearon, 2014). These may be significant under-estimates, especially given the lack of representation of boy victims in statistics and the lack of understanding of how gender norms affect how boys cope with CSE. Thus, in line with the structure of this article, we will discuss the need to generate more data on the prevalence of CSE of boys, to improve the understanding of gender norm implication in the CSE of boys and to reverse the lack of gender sensitivity of services and institutions working with potential boy victims of CSE.

5.1. Addressing the lack of knowledge on the prevalence of CSE of boys

CSA and CSE are viewed as preventable phenomena (Letourneau et al., 2018), but an investment in prevention requires appropriate data. Prevalence research on male victims of sexual exploitation is severely lacking (Greenbaum et al., 2015) and yet there is some evidence that instances could be more severe (ECPAT International & INTERPOL, 2018). Epidemiological studies are needed on a global scale to improve the accuracy of prevalence estimates of CSE among boys (Mitchell et al., 2017). Front-line responders and health care providers serving youth are well-positioned to recognize and report incidences of CSE of youth to inform prevalence estimates (Diaz, Clayton, & Simon, 2014; Greenbaum et al., 2015; McClain & Garrity, 2011); especially among cases of male victims who are more likely to have their victimization go unrecognized. Gross underestimation in prevalence estimates impacts the understanding of costs and powers the argument for systematic and robust prevention efforts. There is an absence of evidence-based screening tools for suspected CSE and provider training to identify victims (Greenbaum, 2014); especially those considering male gender norms as a barrier to disclosure.

5.2. Understanding the implication of gender norms in CSE of boys

In the context of CSE, gender norms appear to be significant barriers to boys' disclosure and help-seeking. However, the importance of gender considerations in research on male victims of CSE/CSA and their support is becoming increasingly acknowledged. A male-sensitive measure of the effects of CSA on men that considers masculinity has recently been developed (Male Sexual Abuse Effects Scale [MSAES]; O'Leary, Easton, & Gould, 2017). The MSAES consists of three subscales focusing on negative identity, self-directed guilt and blame, and psychological and emotional wellbeing. Trauma and recovery processes of males can be divergent from those of females and should take into account gender-acceptance and the role of restrictive masculinity on victims' perceptions of their sexual exploitation (Graves, Borders, & Ackerman, 2017; Mejia, 2005). The adolescent period is a critical opportunity to be alert to CSE risk-factors, for youth education on the prevention of CSE and for treatment for victims of CSE (Wekerle, Hébert, Daigneault, Fortin-Langelier, & Smith, 2019). We can anticipate more direction from the WePROTECT Global Alliance which has rolled out, at a country level, Model National Response initiatives with supporting partners - UNICEF, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children and Child Helpline International. This approach will involve legislative review, needs assessments, and training for professionals to prevent and respond to online child sexual abuse and exploitation. Strong systems with an intersectional and gender lens will be better positioned to create common and tailored prevention and intervention pathways.

The World Health Organization's INSPIRE strategy to end violence against children includes targeting attitudes and social norms, such as "loosening adherence to restrictive and harmful gender and social norms" (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, 2019, p. 54). Future research must consider the role of social gender norms in the construction of notions of victimization that contribute to delayed identification of male victims of CSE, as well as the role of heteronormativity and internalized sexual stigma in the experience of victimization for males and additionally, the resulting mental health and behavioral implications. Further identification of gender-specific risk factors for males and research on already identified risk factors such as street-connection, out of home placement (in foster care, group homes, or residential care facilities), and child maltreatment impact on male CSE victimization. It is noted that studies looking specifically at boys (as opposed to men) are critical to determine the developmental impacts of victimization on emerging masculinities, social, behavioral, and mental health outcomes. In order for these types of studies to be conducted, there is need for gender- and developmentally- appropriate guidelines, methods and measures to mitigate risk of further harm.

5.3. Closing the gender gap in services and institutions in contact with boy victims of CSE

The recently launched OPSC guidelines (2019) explicitly recognized the lack of support structures for boy victims of sexual exploitation. As an example of comprehensive responses, in the U.S. specialized courts that have emerged for youth who have been

sexually exploited or are at risk thereof, focusing on rapid identification, decriminalization and reducing recidivism, and provision of trauma-informed treatments (Bath et al., 2019). These specialty courts have been shown to assist in identifying mental health needs of youth who have been exploited and refer them to mental health treatment. This may be particularly important for boys who have been shown to be less likely to have their mental health needs documented by social service workers (Fallon, Trocmé, MacLaurin, Sinha, & Helie, 2015; Wekerle et al., 2017) and to receive referral to mental health services following CSA (Daigneault et al., 2017).

Additionally, there is also a need to improve the (gender) sensitivity of support services and institutions to the needs of boy victims of CSE. To provide effective trauma-informed care for boys, there is an urgent need for future research on the psychological and physical consequences of CSE in the immediate, short- and long-term (Nodzanski et al., 2019). Interviews with 51 boy victims of CSE in the Philippines, revealed the stigma and discrimination associated with sex work created substantial feelings of shame for the victims, as well as inner conflict between the ability to provide for one's family and social norms and traditional values (Davis & Miles, 2019). A review of the literature on boy victims of CSE found that victims were more likely to report substance abuse, and mental health and behavioral issues such as anxiety, depression, self-harm and conduct problems (Moynihan et al., 2018). Data from a large, nationally representative U.S. study (N = 14,564) indicates that males who have experienced CSA are at a significantly greater risk for a multitude of mental health disorders, substance abuse, and suicide attempt (Turner, Tallieu, Cheung, & Afifi, 2017). Male victims of sexual abuse have been shown to be more likely to experience issues in terms of emotional expression and safe-relating to others. A systematic review of the literature on CSA impact in comparison to CSE impacts, found that while studies of CSA victimization tend to focus on mental health implications, studies of CSE victimization tend to focus on physical health implications (e.g., sexually transmitted infection; Selvius, Wijkman, Slotboom, & Hendriks, 2018). Additionally, differences in methodology, primarily the length of time elapsed between victimization and interviewing/surveying victims make it difficult to draw comparison across symptoms. The need for establishing rapport, management of roles and expectations, adequate planning and training prior to conducting research, and ongoing consultation among the research team are acknowledged as considerations necessary for research with victims of CSE, as well as the impact of the research process on both victims and the research team (Rothman, Farrell, Bright, & Paruk, 2018; Tsai, 2018). In a qualitative study of 16 male survivors of CSA, establishing safe connections, feelings of community belonging, establishing boundaries, learning to manage anger, and building trust, were seemingly important facilitators of resilience in relational domains (Kia-Keating, Sorsoli, & Grossman, 2010). Focus groups of male survivors of sexual abuse have demonstrated the need for male victims to be educated about the possible impacts on their emotional and sexual health, and how to deal with distress and prevention (Cook, Anderson, Simiola, & Ellis, 2018). While immediate, short- and long-term sequelae are prominent for many victims, professionals are cautioned to listen for the causal presence of violence, acknowledging that severe sexual violence will often include psychological and physical abuse, and neglect, rather than diagnostic "overshadowing" (Stoklosa, MacGibbon, & Stoklosa, 2017).

Three key calls for research to redress the limited knowledge on CSE of boys include the need for:

- (1) *Studying the prevalence of CSE among boys*, through a gender and age appropriate approach, while including diverse sources of disaggregated data, in order to conduct a global analysis;
- (2) *Gender norms research in CSE* victim identification, victim recognition of CSE, including the role of gender biases;
- (3) *Exploring how to make services more (gender) sensitive to boy victims of CSE* by specifying boys' clinical needs post-CSE at key points in development, with a view to build the evidence base to establish support programming to address CSE of boys in various settings (e.g., child welfare, juvenile detention centers, humanitarian services, runaway and street-youth services);

Collectively, we need to work with determination to support child development where children are not sexualized, are not exposed to implicit and explicit sexual violence, are not targeted, lured, groomed, caged, and can live free from sexual exploitation. Part of the solution is gender-sensitive and child-friendly responses to tackle CSE where we fully and unequivocally support girls, boys, and children with different gender identities through evidence-based policies.

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