

2021

## Impact of Gender of the Offender on Perceptions and Criminal Sentencing of Child Sexual Abuse Cases in Puerto Rico

Sigrid Enid Vázquez-Tirado  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sigrid Vázquez-Tirado

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## Review Committee

Dr. Robert Meyer, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Bethany Walters, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Jessica Hart, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Impact of Gender of the Offender on Perceptions and Criminal Sentencing of Child  
Sexual Abuse Cases in Puerto Rico

by

Sigrid Vázquez-Tirado

MA, Marymount University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Psychology

Walden University

May 2021

## Abstract

The gender of the adult offender may influence perceptions and criminal sentencing of child sexual abuse (CSA) cases in Puerto Rico. Extralegal factors such as culture and stereotypes may impact how CSA crimes are perceived and handled. The traumagenic dynamic model and the focal concerns theory of sentencing provided the theoretical frameworks for the study. Data were gathered by convenience sampling. To measure perceptions and sentencing decisions, 525 participants were asked to read a hypothetical case of CSA by a teacher with a minor student. Point-biserial correlational analyses were used to assess the influence of the independent variable (sex of the offender) on the dependent variable (perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA in teacher sex offense cases). Gender of the offender was evaluated as a moderator variable to determine if it interacted with the other variables. Results indicated that the gender of the offender has an effect on perceptions and criminal sentencing in CSA cases in Puerto Rico. Female offenders were judged less harshly for the exact same offense, and male offenders were identified by participants as more harmful and responsible for the offense. Other unexpected findings were related to views of victim responsibility and harm. Findings of this study could have a positive social change impact on how mental health professionals, law enforcement, and the courts intervene in CSA cases.

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## Dedication

This project is dedicated to my mother Ingrid, who showed me how learning can be a gratifying, lifelong endeavor. You are the best role model in my life, and I am eternally grateful for your love and support. It is also dedicated to my wonderful husband Roberto; thank you for your love, patience, and encouragement. To my daughter Claudia Raquel, for being a ray of sunshine and hope.

To my father Ignacio, who passed away while I was working on my dissertation, I wish you were here to see how far I have come. I love you and hope I make you proud every day. To my mother-in-law Magali for her collaboration, affection, and reassurance. To my brother, sisters, nephews, nieces, close family members, and closest friends, because they conveyed happiness and inspiration. Thank you for believing in the professional I want to become and fostering my creativity. I am so blessed to have all of you in my life. Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

To my large Hispanic family, whose struggles I recognize in my work, for inspiring me to look further into matters I was culturally taught not to question. Thank you for the motivation, the strength to break stereotypes, and for encouraging my curiosity. I hope this investigation has a positive impact towards social change and recognition of a serious crime that is often overlooked in Puerto Rico. We can be better as a society and actively work towards prevention of child sexual abuse if we understand the problem and address it objectively.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Robert Meyer and Dr. Bethany Walters. Their guidance and support were key to my advancement. I was fortunate to have your insightfulness, expertise, and feedback. Dr. Meyer and Dr. Walters were the right committee members for me and my investigation. It has been a privilege to work with you.

Special thanks to Dr. Griseila Cruz for her unwavering support, assistance and patience. Thanks to Dr. Olga Colón, Dr. Jessica Hart, and Dr. Anne Marie O' Donnell for their collaboration and attention to details. I would also like to thank all the professors and social scientists who inspired me. I hope to do the same for my students and peers. Lastly, thank you to all the men and women who advocate gender equity in all its manifestations and recognize how important it is in our society.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a callous form of child maltreatment (O'Leary et al., 2017). CSA is a public health crisis, and victims are at high risk for developing physical and mental health problems (Alzoubi et al., 2018; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Meyer et al., 2017; Sabella, 2016; Voogt & Klettke, 2017). One common example of CSA occurs between teachers and students. Sexual misconduct by teachers against students is a recurring crime in schooling systems (Milley, 2017; Spakowski & Crespi, 2017). Signs of sexual abuse in children and adolescents are not always clear, and incidents of CSA are often underreported (Lemaigre et al., 2017). Cases of sexual abuse are often judged differently in the legal system (Klettke et al., 2016). Factors such as gender of the offender or victim can play a role in how juries perceive the severity of the offense (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016). Female sexual offenders are often treated with leniency in the legal system when compared to males (Steffensmeier et al., 2016).

There is sufficient evidence of sexual victimization perpetrated by females (Stemple et al., 2017), and female-perpetrated CSA (Weinsheimer et al., 2017). However, women remain underrepresented in the criminal justice system, and scholars have not extensively discussed the reasons for the disparity (Gobeil et al., 2016; Schulze, 2016). Female-perpetrated sexual offending may be underestimated due to prejudice and low reporting rates (Cortoni et al., 2017; de Vogel & Nicholls, 2016). The minimum presence of women in crime statistics has influenced the lack of studies focusing on their criminal

behavior (Soldino & Romero-Martínez, 2016). Female contact with the criminal justice system is usually as victims, and not as offenders (Weinsheimer et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, CSA reporting by male victims has recently increased in some countries, and there is an improved sensitivity to their experience by professionals in the mental health field (Mathews et al., 2017). CSA has surfaced as a grave problem in most societies (Alzoubi et al., 2018; Pereda et al., 2016).

Experts have estimated that there are five unreported cases for each reported CSA case, and over 5,000 children are sexually abused yearly in Puerto Rico (Escape, 2017). Low reporting rates for sexual abuse are common in Latin American children, especially for male victims (Ruiz, 2016). Cultural characteristics of Latin American children might explain why Latino children are at a higher risk for sexual abuse, and why reporting rates are low (Ruiz, 2016). Rape myths, gender stereotypes, and traditional sex roles can lead to victim blaming (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). The length of childhood in the Caribbean is believed to end earlier than in Western societies, which may affect how sexuality is perceived (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). The response towards management and reporting of abuse in the Caribbean is predominantly silence (Jeremiah et al., 2017). The attributes of Latin American children and their cultural constructs of gender could also be partly responsible for low CSA reporting rates, especially when the offender is female (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Ruiz, 2016).

Information regarding CSA, perceptions of gender, and criminal judgment are provided in the remainder of Chapter 1. A quantitative research method was used to assess the relationship between the variables of gender of the offender and perceptions

and criminal sentencing of CSA in teacher sex offense cases. The objective was to provide empirical data on adults' perceptions of CSA in Puerto Rico and examine if the gender of the offender influences their judgment. The results obtained in this investigation have the potential to motivate investigators to continue to study CSA in different ways and with different populations. Perception studies are ideal for compelling a society to evaluate their prejudice to incite positive social change. Raising awareness on this social issue to find ways to prevent CSA and improve treatment resources for victims is essential.

### **Background**

CSA by teachers is a concern with overwhelming consequences. Approximately 10% of minor students have reported unsolicited sexual contact by teachers in the United States (Spakowski & Crespi, 2017). Many researchers have explored CSA by focusing on areas such as mental and physical health consequences for the victim, or the offenders' motives (Zagrodney & Cummings, 2016). Researchers have also considered the perpetration and revictimization risk for CSA victims (Krahé & Berger, 2017; Papalia et al., 2017). Investigators focusing on knowledge of CSA by the public have discussed the importance of prevention, and how biased perceptions of CSA can negatively influence reporting (Alzoubi et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2016). Reports including CSA statistics in Puerto Rico do not include detailed information on the offenders or the circumstances of the offense, and they are not updated regularly (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). There are currently no studies on perceptions of gender of the offender and criminal judgment of CSA with a Puerto Rican population.



Knowledge is lacking in the community concerning CSA; it is important to educate the community about the signs of abuse and how to detect potential offenders (Alzoubi et al., 2018; Lemaigre et al., 2017). Stereotypes related to the victims or offenders are common and can influence the way CSA is perceived. Men who have experienced CSA may have difficulty labeling their experience as rape and researchers in the social sciences often overlook male victims (Foster, 2017). More research on male CSA victims is necessary to eradicate cultural masculinity myths related to CSA (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Ruiz, 2016). Perceptions and statistics of child abuse can be gender-biased, and they tend to favor female perpetrators (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016). Moreover, gender is a risk factor for criminal recidivism, and males are responsible for most crimes (Scurich & Monahan, 2016).

Harsher sentences are typically given to men while women usually receive lighter sentences (Steffensmeier et al., 2016). However, there is a limited amount of empirical research on female criminality because male offenders represent the majority of offenders within the criminal justice system (Van Gundy, 2016). Gender discrimination is present in the courts because men tend to receive little leniency when compared to women for most crimes (Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). There is a renewed interest in female sex offenders similarly to how juvenile sex offenders are becoming a more noticeable group. Juvenile sex offending was often justified as a behavior caused by childish antics, but the perception seems to be changing due to an increase in offenders (Campregher & Jeglic, 2016; Prentky et al., 2016).

The study of sexual victimization has been strongly influenced by centuries of male sexual aggression toward women being tolerated and ignored (Stemple et al., 2017). Feminist theorists have argued that male perpetrated sexual victimization is a result of male privilege in society, and sexual aggression is a tool to subordinate women (Van Gundy, 2016). In comparison, little is known about female-perpetrated sexual victimization and why it occurs. The current paradigm through which sexual victimization is understood and addressed is predominantly a male-on-female concept (Stemple et al., 2017). Women are capable of equal or worse behaviors than men, and the differences are in their motivations for the behavior (Soldino & Romero-Martínez, 2016). Understanding how opinions on gender can influence perceptions and criminal judgment of CSA is key to establishing ways to prevent inadequate sentencing for these cases and improving public awareness of this type of abuse.

CSA has been related to depression, somatic indicators, anger, and hostility in male victims (Easton & Kong, 2017; Foster, 2017). Public opinions have supported the idea that male victims of CSA are less vulnerable to negative effects than female victims (Zack et al., 2018). However, current research findings have suggested otherwise (Easton & Kong, 2017; Foster, 2017; Mathews et al., 2017). Female-to-male sexual violence has not received sufficient consideration and is rarely included in scientific discussions of sexual violence (Turchik et al., 2016). Female offenders represent a minor fraction of all reported sexual transgressions (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). Reporting rates can also be influenced by the way police or the courts treat sexual assault victims, and how sexually motivated crimes are handled differently than other violent crimes (Romain, 2016).

There are few studies on female CSA offenders or people's perception of them, especially in samples using non-White populations (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Turchik et al., 2016). Cultural norms can affect reporting by victims (Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Cultural expectations can also help to silence victims from ethnic minorities and may worsen mental health symptoms (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). In addition, gender biases can influence how victims and perpetrators of CSA are treated (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016; Zack et al., 2018). The Latino population living in the United States has greatly increased, reaching 58 million in 2017 (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Hispanics are the second largest and fastest-growing ethnic group after Whites, and the largest ethnic or racial minority (Flores, 2017; United States Census Bureau, 2018). Their presence in scientific studies should increase to address their particular characteristics and needs.

### **Problem Statement**

CSA is not a victimless crime. CSA victims are at a higher risk for delinquency, developmental problems, and psychiatric issues (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Sabella, 2016). However, CSA cases often do not receive equal consideration in the community. Factors such as gender of the offender or victim can affect the perceptions of CSA cases (Klettke et al., 2016). Female sexual offenders are not a new phenomenon, and research in the area has increased in the last 30 years (Miccio-Fonseca, 2016). A person's gender can affect the way people perceive an individual (Steffensmeier et al., 2016). Signs of female-perpetrated CSA are often overlooked, and some populations do not believe women can sexually victimize a child (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016).

When measuring attitudes towards imprisonment, female sexual offenders have been judged less harshly than male sexual offenders in cases of an adult teacher with a minor student (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). Participants in this study felt that male offenders should receive higher bail, more time in jail, and be required to register as a sex offender (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017).

Jury members do not know a defendant personally, and the defendant's gender may serve as a guide to the jury's subsequent judgments. Sex crimes by females may be considered as less detrimental to the victim (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). Women are given shorter sentences for most crimes (Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). Moreover, stereotypes on gender can affect a jury's judgment and lead to gender disparity in sentencing (Lindholm & Cederborg, 2016). When CSA offenses are not judged equally due to the offender's gender, the community is given an incorrect message, which may put children in danger. Popular belief of women being less of a threat could influence children and adults to trust women more than men based on gender stereotypes. It could also lead a child to assume that sexual interactions with women are not harmful. There is evidence of sexual relationships between female teachers and male students being romanticized, and the idea that this example of CSA is not as detrimental has endured (Zack et al., 2018).

Gender roles and stereotypes can be influenced by cultural norms (O'Leary et al., 2017; Ruiz, 2016). The culture in Puerto Rico is patriarchal, and traditional gender roles are the norm (Colón, 2017; Salcedo-Chirinos, 2016). Additionally, there is a high prevalence of child maltreatment in Puerto Rico, with higher victimization rates and low

reporting rates when compared to some states in the United States (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). The underreporting problem points attention to the importance of training professionals to identify possible CSA victims (Escape, 2017). Children from ethnic minorities are at a higher risk for CSA; they suffer more severe trauma symptoms and longer-lasting effects when compared to White children (Ruiz, 2016). CSA victims from ethnic minorities are also at a higher risk for suicide (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

Latin American children are particularly vulnerable to CSA due in part to machismo or sexism (Pereda et al., 2016; Ruiz, 2016). The concept of machismo is complex and there are varying definitions. In general, *machismo* refers to a traditional gender role often present in Latino communities expressed as dominant behavior by males, heterosexuality, and specific roles with which males must comply in relation to their family and spouse (Miville et al., 2017). It has also been related to having sexist attitudes, being emotionally restrained, and having hypermasculinity (Nuñez et al., 2016).

Male CSA victims can have as many negative consequences as female victims of CSA; however, these may be expressed differently. For example, male victims of CSA may experience problems relating to male shame, difficulty with gender identity, and severe trauma (Graves et al., 2017; O'Leary et al., 2017). Male children are often afraid of reporting CSA victimization, and males are underrepresented in CSA studies (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). A gender-limited idea on what constitutes sexual violence by adults in charge allows perpetrators to hide their crimes and victims to avoid reporting (Turchik et al., 2016). The criminal justice system, mental health experts, and society in

general must be able to identify sexual offenders of children, regardless of their gender. Presently, no studies have been completed with the Puerto Rican population regarding the public's perceptions and judgment of sexual offenders of children.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to provide empirical data on perceptions of CSA offenders in Puerto Rico and explore how gender influences their opinions on responsibility, harm and sentencing. A quantitative approach was used to examine the relationship between the gender of the offender and perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA in teacher sex offense cases in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico. The independent variable was the gender of the offender, and the dependent variables were the perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA in teacher sex offense cases. The research design was cross-sectional and correlational with an emphasis in performing a moderation analysis to evaluate interaction.

The teacher sexual offender and student victim dyad was used in this study to measure participants' opinions of CSA, which has been used by other researchers to measure perceptions of CSA (Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The effects of individuals' perceptions in legal outcomes are well documented. When a jury is sympathetic to a defendant due to their own stereotypes, shorter sentences may be recommended because the jury may think that the defendant will not reoffend (van Wingerden et al., 2016). The goal of the study was to determine if the gender of the offender influences perceptions and judgment of the crime. The public's judgment is often subjective, and society would benefit from understanding more about how

perceptions on sexual offenders can influence legal policies (Campregher & Jeglic, 2016).

No investigations have been conducted to examine gender of the offender in relation to CSA offenses in Puerto Rico. There is a research gap on CSA and gender with non-White populations (Ruiz, 2016). Even though the Hispanic population in the United States continues to rise (United States Census Bureau, 2017, 2018), it is not included in many empirical studies. If the dependent variables were found to be associated with the independent variable, the data will be useful to improve awareness on the dangers of gender bias in relation to CSA and teacher sex offenses. If no association was discovered between the variables, it can motivate researchers to continue to study CSA and perceptions with other variables and diverse populations. This investigation may also ignite an interest in other related topics such as female-perpetrated CSA, culture, gender roles, and influences on sentencing for sexual offenders.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The following research question (RQ) was addressed using the traumagenic dynamics model and the focal concerns theory as the framework. Also presented are the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ), and alternative hypotheses ( $H_a$ ) addressed in the study.

RQ1: Does the gender of the offender have an effect on perceptions of responsibility, harm, general attitudes, and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico?

$H_{01}$ : Gender of the offender does not have an effect on perceptions of responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>01</sub>*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the perceptions of responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a1</sub>*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on perceptions of responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>02</sub>*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on perceptions of harm for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>02</sub>*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the perceptions of harm for CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a2</sub>*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on perceptions of harm for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>03</sub>*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on general attitudes of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>03</sub>*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the general attitudes of CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a3</sub>*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on general attitudes of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on criminal sentencing of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the criminal sentencing of CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a4</sub>*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on criminal sentencing of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.



H<sub>0</sub>5: The gender of the offender will not statistically significantly moderate the relationship between the general perceptions and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses.

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

CSA alters a child's cognition and emotional stability by creating trauma and distortion of the child's capacity, their view of themselves, and their view of the world (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). To understand the impact of CSA and harm caused to victims, the traumagenic dynamics model was used as a framework for the study. The four main factors in the traumagenic dynamics model in relation to CSA victims are traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). The combination of the factors makes sexual abuse distinctive from other types of trauma in childhood. The model serves to understand the profound effects of sexual abuse and consider its long-term consequences. The model was ideal for this study because it delineates how the experience of CSA has severe psychological effects and supports the importance of considering the factors related to underreporting and lack of awareness. Other researchers have also supported this model and its impact in the study of CSA (Senn et al., 2017).

The focal concerns theory of sentencing evolved when examining extralegal factors and how they influenced sentencing decisions (Steffensmeier, 1980). The version of the theory used in this investigation proposes that there are three main factors influencing sentencing decisions for judges and juries: blameworthiness, protection of the community, and practical constraints and consequences (Steffensmeier et al., 1998).

Extralegal factors such as age, sex, race, and education can influence a judge or jury due to stereotypes of criminal behavior (Franklin, 2017). Many factors influence the judge or jury's perception of guilt of the accused and the severity of the sentence imposed.

Making decisions regarding an individual's freedom based on perceptions of the offender and attribution of criminal characteristics is dangerous, even when unintentional.

Investigators in a study considering gender disparity, judicial sentencing, and probation officer recommendations determined that females were treated more mercifully and Black males received longer sentences than White males (Leiber et al., 2018).

Other investigators have focused on factors influencing sentencing in school shooting cases and determined that the public is influenced by characteristics of the offender and their history of peer victimization (McKenzie, & Crosby, 2017). In a study related to education level and sentencing, the researcher determined that defendants with a high school degree were less likely to receive incarceration than offenders who had dropped out of high school (Franklin, 2017). The theory is directly related to the goal of this study by focusing on the influence that extralegal factors have on perceptions of CSA. The theory has been elaborated upon by a variety of researchers and is highly respected in the field (Leiber et al., 2018; van Wingerden et al., 2016).

A CSA case in teacher-student dyads was used for measuring perceptions and criminal punishment in this study. Teacher sex offenses were chosen because teachers are a trusted group of authority figures who interact with children on a daily basis. For this study, applying the four factors of the traumagenic dynamics model assists in comprehending the importance of the subject, and the long-term implications of CSA for

treatment and prevention. Specifically, the powerlessness and stigmatization factors of the model are relevant when considering the gender of the offender and participants' perceptions regarding the responsibility and harm to the teacher and student. CSA victims may not seek help for the abuse due to male-controlled interpretations implying that female-perpetrated abuse of boys is a good experience and believing that some children are capable of consent (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Lahtinen et al., 2018; Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

In the teacher-student hypothetical case of CSA used in this study, the four factors of the traumagenic dynamics model were present. They related to perceptions of harm, responsibility, and general attitudes of CSA and were included in the study's instrument. The focal concerns theory was included in the study because it considers how perceptions and the gender of the offender may influence judgment. Extralegal factors such as people's perceptions on a subject can alter legal outcomes. These theories were used to address the research question and interpret the results. A more detailed explanation of the frameworks is included in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of this study was a quantitative research design. A quantitative methodology can be used to test objective theories by examining the relationship between the variables, and the data are analyzed through a statistical procedure (Fielding et al., 2017). For this study, the independent variable was the gender of the offender. The dependent variables were perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA in teacher sex offense cases. These variables were ideal for exploring the issue of gender bias, which

was a key component of the study. Most convicted sexual offenders are males, and female sexual offenders are a minority in the criminal justice system (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). This disparity has led the public to believe female sexual offenders are atypical, rare, and not a significant problem.

A hypothetical case of teacher-student sexual abuse, and a set of five scales related to perceptions and questions related to criminal sentencing were used to measure the population's views on CSA. Participants were also asked about demographic information such as heritage, age, level of education, location, and religion. The questions served as a filter to ensure their eligibility for participation in the study. Perceptions of both male and female participants were documented. Cases of heterosexual relationships between adult teachers and minor students were included. Previous scholars who have studied CSA and people's judgment of the offense have used vignettes (Ernberg, & Landström, 2016), some have used mock juries (Anderson et al., 2018), while others have used scenarios (Fromuth et al., 2016). Similar approaches are prevalent in studies related to length of sentence and bail amount for the offender (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017).

Participants in the study were randomly given a vignette to read, which provided details on a hypothetical teacher-student CSA case. The vignette described a case in which a teacher began a physical relationship with a minor, which included having sexual intercourse. The instrument was previously validated; it was developed for and previously used in a similar study (see Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). There were two vignettes that were identical except for the gender of the offender and victim. Participants

were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a variety of statements after reading the vignette using a Likert-type scale. The statements were designed to measure perceptions related to the responsibility, harm, and general attitudes in response to the teacher-student dyad in a CSA case. Participants also answered questions related to the sentence, incarceration length, bail, and sex offender registry for the offender.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions are necessary to clarify and limit the scope of interpretation for the study:

*Child sexual abuse (CSA)*: CSA is defined as an adult engaging in a sexual relationship with a minor who is unable to consent due to their age (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2016). The legal definition on sexual abuse of minors in Puerto Rico is adequate for this study, and it states,

Engaging in sexual conduct in the presence of a minor and / or that is used a minor, voluntarily or involuntarily, to engage in sexual conduct aimed at satisfying the lewdness or any act that, if prosecuted by criminal means, would constitute any of the following crimes: sexual assault, lewd acts, trade in persons for sexual acts, obscene exposures, obscene proposition, production of child pornography, possession and distribution of child pornography, use of a minor for child pornography; Shipping, transportation, sale, distribution, publication, display or possession of obscene material and obscene shows as defined in the Puerto Rico Penal Code (Oficina de Administración de los Tribunales, 2015, p. 2).

*Cultural competency:* Cultural competency refers to recognizing personal attitudes or bias, acquiring relevant knowledge, and developing new skills to work with others from a different culture (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). In the psychological treatment of children, cultural competency is important because cultural differences can influence what parents perceive to be a mental health problem, which may lead to a misinterpretation of the child's needs or symptoms (Liang et al., 2016).

*Gender of the offender:* The term is used to address gender roles or expectations of gender ascribed to each biological sex. For the study, gender of the offender is considered as male or female based solely on the biological sex assigned at birth. Gender roles on biological sex have been blamed for gender-based violence and influencing what society considers appropriate behavior for each sex (Cain & Anderson, 2016; Fakunmoju et al., 2016). Society is commonly unable to separate biological sex from gender, which leads to incorrect assumptions of men and women based on stereotypes about gender (Schulze, 2016). The use of this term for the study does not refer to gender identity.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions were considered when performing the data collection for the investigation. The first assumption was that participants would answer the questions based on their first instinct and would not be influenced by the purpose of this study. To ensure their honest involvement, participants were not informed about the specifics of the study. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous. Another assumption was that the participants who chose to participate would represent the population in Puerto Rico. Considering the population selected for the study was any legal resident of Puerto Rico

who is 18 years or older with no criminal record, were physically and mentally able, and who could read and write in Spanish, diversity was encouraged. All participants had to corroborate that they met eligibility criteria before obtaining access to the instrument. The last section in which demographic information was requested confirmed participants' eligibility for the study.

Another assumption was that the instrument could be adapted for the chosen population. A survey instrument measuring perceptions and criminal sentencing developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) was used. To guarantee that the instrument was adequate for the population, it was translated into the Spanish language used in Puerto Rico and was evaluated by local experts in language and translation. The translated version was also reviewed by two legal consultants and a mental health expert. Lastly, objectivity from the participants and the investigator is crucial. The study addressed a sensitive topic, which could skew the participants' objectivity. When interpreting results, it is important to be wary of the possibility that the study has been influenced by other variables, which cannot be controlled by the investigator (Fielding et al., 2017). Objectivity is required to guarantee that the results were not contaminated in any way. Assumptions were necessary for accurate results and aided in increasing reliability and validity. Any of the mentioned assumptions could have altered the course of the study and contaminated the results.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of the investigation included any legal resident of Puerto Rico who was 18 years or older and is eligible for jury duty. Puerto Ricans are the second-largest

Hispanic group in the United States, with an approximate population of 5.9 million living in the continental United States and 3.8 million living in the island of Puerto Rico (Flores, 2017; United States Census Bureau, 2018). This population was chosen for its unique culture and because it is infrequently included in psychological studies. Both male and female participants were equally encouraged to participate. The goal was to make the results generalizable to add validity to the study (see Fielding et al., 2017).

Delimitations are important for keeping control of the study. Participants were invited to participate through convenience sampling. Random invitations prevent a selection threat to internal validity (Bryman, 2016). The data were collected online to ensure anonymity. Selection bias and sample validity are a concern related to online research and the recruitment of participants. Selection bias is a threat to external validity and can occur when participants are selected based on convenience, but the risk is often mitigated by using random assignment (Frey, 2018). The sample may not sufficiently represent the population, but the goal was to attract a large number of participants for generalizability purposes. The scope of the study was limited, and more variables could have been added. This is a concern, but also an area of opportunity for future study. Future research on the topic of abuse and perceptions should be considered with other populations, different felonies, and other influencing variables.

### **Limitations**

As is common in studies related to psychology, the results of this study are not able to establish a causal relationship. This can be considered a threat to internal validity because the study did not use an experimental design (see Bryman, 2016). The objective



was to establish a correlation to spark interest for further research on the topic and awareness for the public. The results of the study can provide some guidance for improving interventions with victims and offenders. Other limitations considered were related to the participants' use of instinct to answer the questions and their honesty. The aim was for participants to know little about the relationship under study to avoid influencing their answers. There was a possibility of participants answering based on a personal experience with sexual abuse, which could influence the results. Ideally, the participants were not victims of CSA; however, this would have had little impact on study's results because a victim's perceptions are also important.

Measures were taken to ensure that bias did not influence the results. One measure used to avoid bias is to conduct the survey online to eliminate direct contact with the participants. Another measure is to make sure that the instrument is reliable and valid. The scales used to measure perceptions and criminal sentencing have been previously used and validated with a similar study. The limitations were not an obstruction for the study but are a way to recognize the care and planning needed. Some ways of addressing the limitations are maintaining anonymity and having the work supervised by an objective party (Bryman, 2016).

### **Significance**

The commonwealth of Puerto Rico reported 11,601 cases of child maltreatment in 2014; 201 (3%) of the cases were classified as maltreatment due to sexual abuse and 3,886 (51%) were classified as psychological maltreatment (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). In 2015, 5,634 first-time victims of child maltreatment were

identified in Puerto Rico, and there were 154 reported cases of CSA (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). In 2016, Puerto Rico did not report in time to be included in the report (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018), which is indicative of a possible lack of resources to manage CSA. In 2017, there were 5,729 reported victims of maltreatment and 143 of those reports were of sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). In 2018, reports indicated that there were 4,381 total unique victims of child maltreatment, 1,632 victims of multiple maltreatment types, and 31 victims of sexual abuse only (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). The most recent report was for 2019, which revealed 4,738 total reported cases of child maltreatment in Puerto Rico, of which 115 were of sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021). Local experts on the island working with victims have estimated CSA is vastly underreported and have argued that there may be approximately 5,000 child victims of sexual abuse every year in Puerto Rico (Escape, 2017).

Some of the long-term effects of CSA are emotional distress and interpersonal problems, which may lead to the development of mental disorders in victims of both genders (Sabella, 2016). Puerto Rican youth who experienced sexual abuse as a form of child maltreatment had an escalation in depressive symptoms when compared to participants who were not victims of sexual abuse (Jaschek et al., 2016). Sexual relationships between adults and minors are a crime regardless of the biological gender of the adult or child. There is more research on male sexual offenders and male pedophiles than females, and there is little focus on the role of gender in relation to the offense

(O'Leary et al., 2017). Attitudes in society are important because researchers have found that gender bias and age of the victim are factors with the potential to influence people's opinions on CSA (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Fromuth et al., 2016). Adults who are unable to perceive dangerous behavior in CSA cases due to stereotypes on gender may put children at a higher risk of being targeted by a predator (Turchik et al., 2016).

Sexual scripts in the culture could influence the lack of reporting by CSA male victims of female offenders. Sexual activity may be considered a part of the male victim's sexual development, and the abuse is modulated as a positive experience (Lahtinen et al., 2018; Ruiz, 2016). In a patriarchal society, family is an important symbol of the culture. Family comes first and is highly regarded (Ruiz, 2016). The sexual corruption of children and actions against the moral values of the culture are crimes society generally condemns. Failing to consider the possible threat of a female sexual offender may put children at risk. The culture in schools needs to change to provide a safe environment for children in which professional boundaries are maintained (Spakowski & Crespi, 2017).

### **Summary**

There are many studies on CSA, its consequences, prevalence, and other related variables (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Sabella, 2016). The issue of sexual transgression in schools by adults and the duty to report abuse of a minor should be considered a priority (Milley, 2017). However, few scholars have looked at gender-specific factors related to perceptions for sexual abuse cases. Statistics for 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2019 in Puerto Rico indicated that most perpetrators of child maltreatment are female (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016, 2017,

2019, 2021). Official statistics for CSA in Puerto Rico are not well defined or updated yearly, and local organizations working with victims have estimated that they are much higher than informed (Escape, 2017). The cultural considerations of the population may influence underreporting (Ruiz, 2016).

Many believe CSA offenders are male, but there is evidence of female sexual offenders of children (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021). The possibility of men's victimization and women's criminality are often justified with chauvinist and inconsistent theories, which makes it difficult to have an evidence-based discussion on the subject (Mathews et al., 2017; Turchik et al., 2016). Similarities in the age of the victims have been found among different cultures. The mean age of sexual victimization in Puerto Rico is between the age of 12 and 14 (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). In Spain, the mean age is 13 for both male and female victims (Pereda et al., 2016). Most experts in Puerto Rico have agreed that reporting rates are low, and there are many more victims who do not report their experience (Escape, 2017).

CSA victims are more likely to suffer from other types of maltreatment such as physical abuse, neglect, and intimate partner violence (Bidarra et al., 2016). Both male and female victims of CSA have an increased risk of being victimized again (Krahé & Berger, 2017). Due to cultural differences and gender stereotypes, some populations are particularly vulnerable to CSA. Ethnic minorities are particularly at risk due to an attitude of silence regarding sexual topics (Jeremiah et al., 2017; Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). A key strategy for preventing CSA is education on the subject for the adults in

charge of keeping children safe (Alzoubi et al., 2018). Stereotypes and myths about rape and sexual assault influence people's perceptions about what rape is and which sexual behaviors are acceptable (Romain, 2016). Female teachers who are sex offenders are romanticized in the media, male victimization is often trivialized, and the public often sees female perpetrated sexual crimes as less harmful (Zack et al., 2018).

The importance of the topic investigated, and the results related to the influence of perceptions of gender in CSA cases, could ignite social change in Puerto Rico. The investigation revealed an uncommon area of research related to CSA and female offenders, which needs to be further investigated. It may also highlight the clinical practice needs of the victims, because researchers have suggested that male victims of female perpetrated sexual violence have less access to care, public understanding, and treatment options (Turchik et al., 2016). Particularly, research with ethnic minorities is strongly encouraged because researchers know little about the differences in CSA due to cultural differentiations (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). In the following chapter, a review on previous research will clarify the variables of the study and the chosen framework. The associations with past studies, relevant results, and gaps in the literature are identified and examined. Information needed to guide and build the present study is provided in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

CSA has the potential of causing long-term harm to the physical and mental health of the victims, which can vary due to the gravity, length, and form of the abuse (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Sabella, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2017). CSA symptoms have been shown to vary by gender and ethnic differences in victims (Ruiz, 2016). CSA statistics are diverse due in part to the variety of definitions in the research, but they are usually in a legal or subjective category (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2016). Legal definitions rely on the age of consent while subjective or perception-based interpretations focus on the victim and how they describe the experience. The research on CSA is vast, and investigators have agreed that it is an experience with the potential to cause enduring trauma to victims (Sabella, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2017).

Using the teacher-student context is ideal for perception studies on CSA and gender, and has been previously used (Anderson et al., 2018; Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). Sexual misconduct by teachers is enabled when negligent administrators fail to efficiently supervise teachers, report the abuse, or manage the accusation responsibly (Milley, 2017). Perceptions of the abuse by victims and others may also be influenced by cultural characteristics and gender stereotypes (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016; Ruiz, 2016). Furthermore, cultural stereotypes on gender may be responsible for sentencing disparities in cases of CSA. Reporting rates for male victims of CSA are low, especially for Latin American males (Ruiz, 2016). Many researchers have agreed that the female sexual offender often goes

undetected or is justified in some way by society (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). The slight interest in investigating female perpetrators of CSA is associated with cultural scripts that portray men as powerful and capable of sexually motivated crimes, while women are often seen as unwilling accomplices when involved in such crimes (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). However, there is evidence of female perpetrators of CSA being the mother of the child or other family members (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Mathews et al., 2017).

Child maltreatment statistics in Puerto Rico have shown mothers to be the primary perpetrators of most types of abuse related to neglect and physical abuse (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021). CSA is a severe problem in Caribbean countries, and the population in Puerto Rico is vastly underrepresented in scientific studies. The prevalence of CSA in ethnic minorities is worrisome (Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). The percentage of Latino/Latina children in the United States reported for suspicion of CSA is higher than for White and Black children (Graham et al., 2016). The reports are generally coming from teachers and other personnel at the schools because reports of abuse for this population are less likely to come from family members, neighbors, or friends (Graham et al., 2016). Cultural factors are at play in CSA because societal norms have an impact on the behavior of the victim and the probability of reporting victimization (Ruiz, 2016).

Topics related to sexual activity are still considered taboo in the Puerto Rican culture and the Caribbean (Colón, 2017; Fontanet Maldonado et al., 2018; Ruiz, 2016). CSA is a crime that many people in Puerto Rico ignore or assume will never affect their

family members. Cultural reasons make it more difficult for Latin American children to report CSA due to an interest in conserving their family's reputation and unity (Graham et al., 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). The abuse can go undetected by way of threats, shame, buying silence, and intimidation (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Ruiz, 2016). Cultural aspects can also contribute to a victim's decision to report (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Believing they will be shamed or hurt by speaking out might be related to the gender paradigms and expectations in their culture (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Gender constructs may also help to explain gender disparities in sentencing for such cases (Leiber et al., 2018; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). Other cultural aspects such as machismo and strict ideas regarding masculinity may explain why male victims of CSA do not report the abuse (Ruiz, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to determine if perceptions of gender of the offender for cases of CSA in Puerto Rico influence criminal sentencing and perceptions of CSA. The teacher-student dyad for a hypothetical case was used to measure the participants' opinions. Chapter 2 includes a comprehensive review of the current research on CSA's consequences and statistics, the particularities of Latin-American culture and how it relates to CSA, female sexual offenders, teacher sexual misconduct, and the relationship between gender stereotypes and judgment inequality. A comprehensive review of how CSA is defined and studied is presented, as well as a discussion on gender stereotypes and their influence on perceptions of CSA and gender. The discussion addresses identifying factors contributing to an established tendency, which has revealed that female offenders are more likely to receive mercy in judicial settings when compared



to male offenders (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016). Studies related to CSA, gender stereotypes, teacher sex offenses, female sexual offenders, and the Hispanic culture are reviewed.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Searches were conducted on databases such as EBSCOhost, ERIC, MEDLINE, ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycINFO, SAGE Journals, SAGE Research Methods Online, and SocINDEX. Other search engines were also used, such as Google Scholar. Walden University's library provided access to more resources when using multi database search engines, such as Academic Search Complete and Thoreau. Because there are no official databases for psychology or the social sciences in Puerto Rico, additional searches were conducted in the *Puerto Rico Health Science Journal*, government and professional organization websites, and graduate school libraries for related dissertations, articles, books, and other resources. Physical searches were also conducted in accessible libraries. The books included in the references were obtained in online and local bookstores. Local resources were obtained through communication with local universities, participation in conferences, and in-person library research.

Due to the scarcity of relevant information published in Puerto Rico related to the topic, the majority of the research was obtained through online databases. The initial keywords and terms were *child sexual abuse, childhood sexual abuse, gender, sentencing, and Puerto Rico*. After an extensive first review that yielded ideas to improve the search, the keywords and phrases used were more specific, such as *CSA, Hispanic AND Latino, Latino AND Latin American, mock juries, gender disparity, sentencing*

*decisions, male victims AND CSA, teacher-student sex, teacher sexual misconduct, female sexual offenders, female pedophile, and female perpetrated child sexual abuse.* To gather information related to gender stereotypes, phrases such as *Caribbean sexuality, Caribbean study, machismo, Latino gender constructs, Latin American AND CSA, and male OR female impunity AND CSA* were used. Date restriction filters were used to obtain articles from 2016 to present. Date filters were amplified for obtaining information related to the theoretical framework and general information on the main topics of this study.

For the theoretical framework, keywords and phrases used were *sentencing models or theories* and *CSA models or frameworks*. Once the theories or models were selected, the search was specific to *traumagenic dynamics model, four factors of trauma* and *focal concerns theory or perspective*. *Child sexual abuse AND CSA* were the keywords with the most results because it has been studied in different areas, and in relation to many variables. Further searches were conducted in brick-and-mortar libraries in local universities. Participation in local conferences generated contact with mental health professionals and statisticians in Puerto Rico who were able to provide more resources. For selecting an appropriate instrument to measure perceptions, the search included keywords related to *mock juries OR vignettes, perceptions AND CSA, and teacher-student sexual misconduct*. A meeting with a local researcher who is currently working on an investigation related to gender stereotypes in the Puerto Rican culture generated more local resources.

Other independent variables such as age, race, occupation, and socio-demographic factors were also investigated. As part of the search, reference lists were reviewed from main articles to locate other useful resources such as government reports, court cases, and CSA statistics. Searches were conducted for academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals and books. Except for research included related to the Puerto Rican population specifically, or to establish a theoretical framework or seminal works, all other resources used for the present study were current, peer-reviewed works published between 2016 and 2021. Some specific statistics or government reports published in 2016 and 2017 provided information from 2014 and 2015; they were included due to a lack of updated information related to CSA. In instances where there was a scarcity of resources on a particular topic, the scope of the search was widened to include other resources.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical frameworks from existing academic research were integrated into the framework for the main topic and research question of this study. Two primary seminal frameworks were chosen from the field of social sciences. The frameworks are the traumagenic dynamics model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985) and the focal concerns theory of sentencing (Steffensmeier, 1980; Steffensmeier et al., 1998).

#### ***Traumagenic Dynamics Model***

The traumagenic dynamics model recommends investigating sexual abuse in terms of four trauma-causing factors: traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). The model assisted in explaining the

psychological outcome of CSA and how the experience can damage the child's cognitive and sexual development.

Traumatic sexualization is the way the child's sexual development becomes affected negatively by the CSA, and it is linked with causing misunderstanding on sexual rules for the child, which may alter their development (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). Betrayal refers to when the child realizes that someone to which they were attached is causing them pain and realizing how they were manipulated by the relationship (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). This experience may also occur when the child discloses and an adult fails to provide help or protection. *Powerlessness* is the dynamic of taking away the power from the child by invading their space and their body. Stigmatization focuses on the negative implications associated with the experience and becomes part of the child's self-image, such as guilt and shame (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985).

To understand trauma related to CSA, it is important to consider the child's capabilities before and after the abuse because effects will vary depending on the child's previous experiences (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). CSA has been associated with the development of mental and physical health problems and behavior difficulties (Jaschek et al., 2016; Sabella, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2017). One factor to consider when determining the level of impact is related to the developmental stage in which the abuse occurred (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). The traumagenic dynamics model considers the impact of the family's reaction and society's response to the revelation of CSA by the victim. This stage is directly related to the stigmatization factor, and the long-term harm it may cause.

The way the revelation is handled will be crucial to reduce trauma after the abuse has occurred (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985).

Underreporting is common in the Hispanic population (Ruiz, 2016), and the traumagenic dynamics model may be useful in understanding why it happens. Some examples of psychological outcomes for CSA according to the model are depression (due to betrayal factor), negative coping skills (due to powerlessness factor), low self-esteem (due to stigmatization factor), and promiscuity (due to traumatic sexualization factor) as explained by Finkelhor & Browne (1985). The four factors align with the results of studies related to CSA and psychological consequences (Jaschek et al., 2016; Sabella, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2017). The traumagenics dynamics model may clarify how the experience of CSA can lead to high-risk sexual behavior in adulthood (Senn et al., 2017).

Taking into consideration the four factors of the traumagenic dynamics model, I used the teacher-student dyad to measure perceptions for this study. This is an ideal scenario because school-age children spend the majority of their time with teachers on a daily basis, who are considered important authority figures both parents and children trust. The four factors of the traumagenic dynamics model can be applied to the teacher-student relationship. The teacher who engages in sexual misconduct with a student betrays their trust, takes away their power, stigmatizes their self-image, and disrupts their sexual development.

The traumagenic dynamics model is relevant to this study because CSA victims may have long-term effects in their overall mental and physical health. The four factors focus on harm caused to the child, perceptions of CSA by others, and the responsibility of

the adult who betrays their trust. These variables were measured in this study. The experience of abuse can alter their perceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate in sexual interactions, both physically and emotionally. The child has the potential to internalize the perceptions created due to the CSA experience, and their interactions with others as adults can be distorted. The victim can experience confusion about sexual boundaries, and their interactions with other adults will likely be affected. The model has been examined by many researchers and has had a strong impact on CSA investigations (Senn et al., 2017). It has also provided mental health professionals with a better understanding of the experience and helped developed ways to improve treatment of CSA victims.

### ***Focal Concerns Theory of Sentencing***

People were more likely to report a shoplifter and ask for a tough sentence when their perception of the offender's appearance was related to stereotypes of a specific social group (Steffensmeier, 1976). Judges often view young Black men as less redeemable and dangerous (Steffensmeier et al., 1998). The original version of Steffensmeier's focal concerns theory contemplated practicality, chivalry, unsophistication, permanence of behavior, and perception of dangerousness as possible influences on a judge's sentencing decision (Steffensmeier, 1980). This theory was further developed and studied. The version of focal concerns theory on sentencing used for this study proposes that judges and prosecutors consider three areas when making a legal decision: blameworthiness, community protection, and practical constraints and consequences (Steffensmeier et al., 1998).

Blameworthiness is related to the defendant's culpability and considers their role in the crime as well as the existence of a criminal background (Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000). Community protection focuses on their interest to protect their society and prevent future crime (Steffensmeier & Demuth, 2000). Practical constraints and consequences consider additional issues related to legal matters, such as costs of sentencing, prison space, and number of pending cases. The theory has been examined in other studies and is recognized by scholars as a major theory in the field (van Wingerden et al., 2016).

All of the aforementioned categories can be influenced by personal opinions and social constructs (Leiber et al., 2018). Members of society comprise juries, and their perceptions influence their decisions. Theoretical assessments on criminal sentencing decisions consider how offender characteristics are measured as indicators on the risk of recidivism and have an influence on sentencing results, also taking into consideration that time and information is limited for judicial decision makers (van Wingerden et al., 2016). Ideally, the decision makers would have sufficient time to study each case thoroughly before making a decision with life-altering implications to the defendant, victim, the families involved, and the community. Quick decisions may be unconsciously impacted by personal beliefs. Researchers have determined that juries often consider severity of the offense by gender of the involved parties, and women often receive more lenient sentences when compared to men (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). Individual experiences, stereotypes, and cultural aspects of our society influence decisions, and are considered extralegal factors.

Race, age, education level, attractiveness, gender, and other factors interrelate in legal cases and may influence sentencing decisions due to stereotypes (Franklin, 2017; Leiber et al., 2018; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017; Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). Cultural factors have an effect on the stereotypes and perceptions people form of others (Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Perceptions impact the way individuals judge others. There is concern on the probability these factors will influence decisions and how it will have an effect on the principles of justice and equality in the criminal courts.

Focal concerns perspective theory can be expanded by considering the influence a specific factor may have on sentencing, which demonstrates it is a current topic of discussion in the field (Franklin, 2017). There is little to no research on sentencing disparity with detailed consideration of offender circumstances associated with risk assessment by the judicial decision maker (Van Wingerden et al., 2016). Failure to consider extralegal factors may have a severe effect on sentencing outcomes. Focal concerns theory on sentencing is highly relevant to this study because the factors it includes relate directly to perceptions on gender and how they may influence sentencing decisions. The model helps to explain the decision process and might serve to explain the results of the present study. The traumagenic dynamics model considers the psychological outcomes of the trauma related to CSA to aid in understanding the experience, and improve support to victims (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). The model relates to this study because it considers the different levels of the experience and harm caused. Focal concerns theory on sentencing contemplates on the process individuals



follow to decide the appropriate punishment for a defendant, and how it may be biased (Steffensmeier, 1980). Courtroom decisions can be biased due to court situations, external and environmental circumstances, educational attainment, and even political conditions (Franklin, 2017).

These theories or models were selected based on the study's variables and objectives. The present study is in the field of forensic psychology, which is why relevant theories from psychology and criminology were considered. It was central to this study to explore three areas of main interest, which are the nature of the CSA relationship, CSA consequences and perceptions, gender stereotypes causing inequality in judgment, and extralegal factors influencing perceptions of the offense. Researchers have discussed how teacher-student sexual contact is sometimes perceived differently than other types of CSA, which is due to varying opinions on consent and the type of relationship (Anderson et al., 2018). The population used in this study was selected based on their underrepresentation in scientific research and their unique cultural characteristics. The various factors influencing perceptions on psychological and physical consequences of CSA, blameworthiness, and perceptions on gender were investigated.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables**

This section includes a discussion about the key variables related to the research problem of this study. The information was divided to address the main areas of focus for this study, which are CSA, gender stereotypes, female sexual offenders, teacher sexual misconduct, gender disparity in the courts, and gender in relation to CSA by region.

### **CSA Consequences, Perceptions, and Statistics**

Ample evidence supports CSA as a profoundly negative experience with enduring negative effects on physical and psychological functioning (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Meyer et al., 2017; Sabella, 2016; Sumner et al., 2016). The sexual abuse disturbs the victim's developmental progression, causing anguish related to their sexuality and attachment anxiety (Meyer et al., 2017). The effects of CSA on victims are extensive, and there are significant consequences for society as well (Voogt & Klettke, 2017). It has also been linked with an increased risk for perpetration of sexual aggression and revictimization (Krahé & Berger, 2017; Papalia et al., 2017; Papalia et al., 2021; Sumner et al., 2016).

There is prejudice and gender stereotyping involved when considering sexual activities between adults and minors (Anderson et al., 2018; Fromuth et al., 2016; Romain, 2016; Stemple et al., 2017). Stereotypes may influence sentencing decisions, and people's perceptions of what constitutes CSA (Leiber et al., 2018). CSA victims can have difficulties in areas of intimate partner violence, sexual offending, and general relations with others (Sumner et al., 2016). CSA can cause permanent damage to adult functioning due to the trauma. Victims of CSA often have more attachment anxiety in sentimental relationships and sexually compulsive behaviors (Meyer et al., 2017). Treatment of CSA requires a leveled health care plan, which considers gender differences in victims and its implications (Daigneault et al., 2017).

Experiences of CSA in males have been related to long-term mental health problems such as substance abuse, development of personality disorders, and suicidal

ideation (Turner et al., 2017). One study with Black and Puerto Rican women found those with a history of CSA had more sexual partners, a higher risk of HIV, and reported many of their partners used drugs and had a history of incarceration (Pahl et al., 2019). Another area of concern in CSA research is reporting rates and perceptions of what is CSA. Survivors who have severe CSA experiences often recognize it as abuse, but others whose experience were less obvious might not realize they are victims of CSA (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2016).

Early sexual experiences define what is considered as right or wrong in our sexual development, many victims might not know the difference because the behavior is normalized. As explained in the traumagenic dynamics model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985), the stages of traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization at an early age can negatively alter the child's development and prevent reporting. The stages of trauma cause enduring psychological distress, and perceptions of the experience could deter the victim from seeking support. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico reported a child population of 772,752 for 2014, male children accounted for 398,119 while female children accounted for 374,633 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). There were 11,601 reported cases of child maltreatment in Puerto Rico, and 201 (2.6%) of the cases classified as maltreatment due to sexual abuse. The report identifies women as primary perpetrators of child maltreatment in all categories except CSA, constituting 54.1% of perpetrators and men at 44.8%.

For Puerto Rico, the 2014 statistics for the perpetrator count of child maltreatment indicates 2,115 were males and 3,593 were females (U.S. Department of Health &

Human Services, 2016). For 2015, statistics for the perpetrator count of child maltreatment indicates 1,921 were males and 3,304 were females (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). No information was provided for 2016 by the local authorities in Puerto Rico (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018). For 2017, statistics for the perpetrator count of child maltreatment indicates 1,683 were males and 2,729 were females (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019). For 2018, statistics for the perpetrator count of child maltreatment indicates 1,241 were males and 2,105 were females (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). For 2019, statistics for the perpetrator count of child maltreatment indicates 1,360 were males and 2,306 were females (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2021).

Approximately 800 children a year are treated for CSA-related health concerns in emergency rooms across the island of Puerto Rico (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). The primary age range of the victims of CSA in Puerto Rico is between 10 and 14 years old, and offenders are predominantly family members such as biological parents or stepparents (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). Child maltreatment prevention could mitigate and avert development of depression and other mental health concerns in Puerto Rican youth (Jaschek et al., 2016). Researchers considering prevention strategies in Puerto Rico determined there are few evidence-based practices being used, and experts in the field have indicated there is a lack of human and financial resources in the island (Sánchez Cesáreo et al., 2016).

A recent study on child maltreatment with a Puerto Rican population determined all types of abuse, except neglect, caused an increase of depressive symptoms, especially

when the victim had other mental health disorders and was exposed to violence (Jaschek et al., 2016). Scientific studies on psychological consequences of child maltreatment in Puerto Rico are few, due in part to low participation from professionals in the psychology field in research activities and publication (Sánchez Cesáreo et al., 2016). Child maltreatment is a serious issue in Puerto Rican society, which could be influenced by gender inequity, stereotypes, and cultural norms (Colón, 2017; Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Professionals who treat CSA victims should have cultural competency (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017), so they can be aware of how societal norms may impact symptoms, and how they may manifest differently in boys and girls.

In some cases, the public perceives older male victims of CSA by older women as fortunate (Zack et al., 2018). Males may downplay the abuse and females may focus on the experience of fear, due in part to their cultural scripts (Ruiz, 2016). Male victims of CSA may need to be evaluated differently by mental health professionals since they are prone to delayed disclosure (O’Leary et al., 2017). Sexual violence against boys has been related to depression, anxiety, and future high-risk sexual behavior, which may lead to prostitution and contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Sumner et al., 2016). Male victims of CSA are more prone to substance abuse than female victims of CSA (Gray & Rarick, 2018). It is important for the community to know about these findings on CSA since they are the ones who can stop abuse when detected, especially when the victim does not report it. In sum, CSA studies are many, but they have significant limitations. Researchers agree more investigative efforts on CSA should be dedicated to

understanding gender and racial differences in victims and offenders, and how it affects CSA and its treatment (Ruiz, 2016).

### **Gender Stereotypes**

There has been considerable progress in achieving gender equality in the last 30 years, but there is also evidence of inertia when considering gender stereotypes and their influence (Haines et al., 2016). Representations on gender stereotypes are everywhere, and they can influence both children and adults. Some are blatant; others are meant to be funny, and others are offensive. Gender often works as a method of social control (Schulze, 2016).

There seems to be a perpetuation of patriarchal ideals in gender perspectives in which men are the dominant sex while women are seen as submissive (Murnen et al., 2016; Stemple et al., 2017). Such stereotypes make it difficult for people to see women as capable of violent or sexual crimes. It also serves to minimize the trauma of CSA in male victims, whose mental health treatment has been shown to benefit from a focus on how their culture's male gender portrayal may cause disconnection (Graves et al., 2017). Male survivors may have trouble with shock and surprise in response to their CSA experience, while female survivors may express feelings of betrayal (Foster, 2017). Such findings support the importance of exploring gender self-acceptance and the differences in experience for each sex.

There is a lack of equality in how sexuality by gender is interpreted, and how children and adolescents are taught to handle sexual advances. The inaccurate depictions of gender by the media may influence the perceptions of the public. Media coverage on

violent male offenders focuses on psychopathological reasons while coverage on violent female offenders' centers on social and personal circumstances of the female offender, such as gender inequity (Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016). Another common theme found in gender and CSA studies is how gender role socialization may influence the decision to disclose or report CSA. Traditional ideas on masculinity may make it difficult for males to identify as victims because it is believed they can fight back or would welcome sexual advances (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2016).

As discussed by Pereda and Tamarit (2019), if the male victim is ignored when studying violence in interpersonal relationships, then it is impossible to manage the problem adequately since it is not being analyzed correctly and considering the complexity of the issue. This can be applied to other examples of violence and abuse, such as CSA and male victims. Such a skewed position, which is clearly rejected by the evidence of many years of related studies, can only perpetuate patriarchal norms and cause further harm to victims.

When male victims of CSA question their masculinity, sexual orientation, and status as a victim, it could increase the trauma, decrease the likelihood of reporting, and limit their access to help for the trauma (Hohendorff et al., 2017). Researchers considering public perception of sex offenses by female teachers with students reviewed online comments in news reports and determined the public recognized how gender stereotypes lead to unequal treatment in the courts (Zack et al., 2018). Although more research is necessary to determine the specific impact of gender stereotypes on behavior, it is evident these stereotypes continue to have an influence on society.

Gender stereotypes are common in children's products, and male characters are more likely to be advertised with stereotypical characteristics related to ideas on masculinity and vice versa (Murnen et al., 2016). Clothing and positions in female characters are often sexualized, while male characters focused on functional clothing, weapons, and expressions of anger (Murnen et al., 2016). Most toys depict female characters as submissive, with an emphasis on their appearance while toys of male characters portray them as aggressive, hyper-masculine, and with an emphasis on action (Murnen et al., 2016). Similar results were discovered when comparing male and female characters in video games and children's costumes (Murnen et al., 2016).

Society is not ignorant of the problem of gender roles, and stereotypes impact the way an offender's blameworthiness is evaluated. Common stereotypes about women describe females as submissive and nurturing; it is difficult for many to consider that they can be dominant or sexually violent (Stemple et al., 2017). Violence, dominance, and aggressiveness are traits associated with males (Cohen, 2016). Some believe sexually abusive behavior in females is only possible if a man forced them, or that their actions are not as detrimental as male sexual offending (Cortoni et al., 2017).

Moreover, males are regularly portrayed as more violent and prone to criminal activity than females in the news and media (Cohen, 2016). The media's focus on sex crimes has increased. Female sex offenders and teacher sex scandals garner much media attention (Zack et al., 2018). An increase in coverage has also led to the realization that society does not view teacher sex offenses the same as other examples of CSA (Anderson et al., 2018; Zack et al., 2018), which is why it is an ideal example to use for this study.



Researchers recognize cultural beliefs in most societies are partly to blame for gender-based violence (Fakunmoju et al., 2016). Respondents could accept the possibility of female sexual offenders, but there was notable influence of stereotypes when asked why they believed women would commit such crimes (Cain & Anderson, 2016). The majority of male respondents indicated that their motive is primarily related to emotional reasons, which are consistent with stereotypes of women.

Male victims of CSA have demonstrated difficulty in identifying the experience as sexual abuse (Foster, 2017), hence confirming how traditional gender roles on sex has an effect on the behavior considered appropriate for each gender (Cain & Anderson, 2016). Sexual violence has traditionally been associated with female victimization. Recent findings of significant prevalence of female-perpetrated sexual victimization against men and women suggest otherwise (Stemple et al., 2017). International law is beginning to focus on gender-inclusive classifications while ensuring female victimization is not minimized (Touquet & Gorris, 2016).

Childhood sexual violence against males is not studied as much as females but has been evidenced in different countries and is considered a serious problem (Sumner et al., 2016; Touquet & Gorris, 2016). Even international policy documents have historically focused on female victimization only, but there is significant evidence to support male victimization (Touquet & Gorris, 2016). Victims are less likely to report the experience if they have difficulty labeling it as sexual abuse (Foster, 2017). Victim disclosure as abuse can sometimes depend on the age of the perpetrator and having experienced prior emotional abuse from their mother (Lahtinen et al., 2018).

Male victims of CSA are vulnerable to negative self-perceptions due to the stigma on maleness and the public's incorrect opinions on male victims of CSA and their characteristics (O'Leary et al., 2017). Gender roles regarding sexual victimization tend to associate women as victims and males as the perpetrators, which is not always accurate (O'Leary et al., 2017; Touquet & Gorris, 2016). A focus on female perpetration does not dismiss male perpetration of sexual crimes, and it is important to consider other forms of abuse, the impact of power relations, and challenge gender-based stereotypes (Stemple et al., 2017).

The population of Puerto Rico interiorizes gender stereotypes. It is evident in the way the society's patriarchal structure has influenced the culture (Colón, 2017). There are many stereotypes being upheld by both men and women. Although there are few studies with the Puerto Rican population regarding gender stereotypes, a study by Pérez-Jiménez and Orengo-Aguayo (2012) concluded that both male and female Puerto Ricans have sexual and gender stereotypes. Their study's results demonstrate how Puerto Rican men have more severe traditional and patriarchal stereotypes than Puerto Rican women, and that sexual relations are not perceived to be equal between men and women. This study had 429 heterosexual participants, and the majority of the male participants revealed their sexist views in which sexual rights were favored for men and not for women (Pérez-Jiménez & Orengo-Aguayo, 2012). Although it is not a recent study, these findings are significant and an area of study that requires more exploration.

When comparing gender stereotype studies from over 30 years ago, there was almost no difference in how men and women were separated and there is evidence for the

same gender stereotyping common in the past (Haines et al., 2016). The emergence of female sexual offenders in crime statistics is challenging traditional gender roles. Many people view sex crimes by women as less harmful (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017).

Traditional sex roles may facilitate a lack of reporting of female perpetrated abuse (Cain & Anderson, 2016). This is a problem considering how many victims may not be reporting the abuse, and therefore do not have access to physical and mental health services. Gender stereotypes remain due to a variety of reasons, such as cultural delays, confirmation bias, resistance to change, and categorical beliefs regarding the roles of each gender (Haines et al., 2016).

### **Female Sexual Offenders: CSA and Teacher Sexual Misconduct**

Female sexual offenders' existence is undeniable; the primary discussion now focuses on its prevalence and significance (Cortoni et al., 2017). Men and women who commit crimes have significant differences in motive, experiences, treatment, and judgment by society (Österman & Masson, 2018). Although research on female sexual offenders is relatively scarce, researchers have been able to establish important differentiations between male and female sexual offenders and have attracted attention to the need of a gender specific focus to understand the phenomenon (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Stemple et al., 2017; Turchik et al., 2016; Weinsheimer et al., 2017). Statistics on sexual offenders support the notion that they are mostly male, although there is sufficient evidence of female sexual offenders and the possibility, they often go undetected (Stemple et al., 2017). A lower frequency of violence is associated with women when compared to men, which may also influence why the topic has received little interest

from researchers (Soldino & Romero-Martínez, 2016). Women who are aggressive are often seen as a biological abnormality simply because aggressiveness has been deemed a male trait (Schulze, 2016).

Females are often the victims of sexual abuse, but some victims become perpetrators (Soldino & Romero-Martínez, 2016). Researchers performed a meta-analysis including 12 countries and determined females commit 2% of sexual offenses reported to the police, but the information in victimization surveys differed, and 12% of sexual offenses informed were by females (Cortoni et al., 2017). Such findings are evidence female sexual offenders are more numerous than previously considered. Stereotypes on gender make it difficult for most people to consider the possibility of a woman committing a sexual crime against a child or adult (Ruiz, 2016; Stemple et al., 2017). Rape definitions sometimes do not consider male victimization (Cohen, 2016). Evidence of being childhood victims of CSA was found for both male and female offenders of CSA (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017).

Women are likely to be both victims and perpetrators of crime, often due to having experienced abuse and neglect in their upbringing (Soldino & Romero-Martínez, 2016). Findings support a long-held assumption of sexual offenders being prior victims, which also applies to males (Turchik et al., 2016). Female offenders who transgress with male offenders are more likely to choose a victim they know, such as a dependent child (Budd et al., 2017). Female-perpetrated victimization is complex, and there has been an increase in awareness related to their offending and management by the criminal justice

system (Österman & Masson, 2018). A renewed interest in female sexual offenders is due in part to more media attention to female teacher sex offenses (Zack et al., 2018).

There are significant biological, sociological, and psychological differences between men and women, and they will directly influence the way they transgress (Van Gundy, 2016). Researchers who reviewed cases of female-perpetrated CSA in Canada determined the alleged abuser was usually a family member, and the victim's age was around ten years old while the suspected abuser's age was approximately 30 years old (Weinsheimer et al., 2017). They also found female abusers transgressed for a shorter period when compared to males. Biological mothers who sexually abused their children more commonly used non-penetrative forms of abuse (Mathews et al., 2017).

The public perceives female perpetrated CSA as a less serious crime (Zack et al., 2018). This could be related to a lack of penetration or physical evidence in many cases, or due to an expectation, the victim will not report it or will not consider the experience as CSA. The female sexual offender is emboldened by the security of victims not disclosing the abuse (Mathews et al., 2017). Such findings postulate an area of future study with female sexual offenders and the differences when compared to male sexual offenders.

Female offenders in CSA cases have long evaded detection; there is a breach between the offenses with the social authorities and processes allowing them to go undetected (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). Experts have emphasized the importance of obtaining a profound understanding of the offending patterns of female offenders. Information related to offending patterns of female offenders can aid in supporting

victims during treatment (de Vogel & Nicholls, 2016). Although the majority of research on CSA focuses on male offenders, research on female offenders is starting to emerge. Investigators have determined significant differences between male and female perpetrators of CSA, such as women being more likely to have both male and female victims and the help of a co-offender (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017).

There has also been an increased interest in the victimization of boys. Boys also report sexual violence to a lesser extent than girls and may minimize the importance of the traumatic experience (O’Leary et al., 2017; Ruiz, 2016; Wekerle & Black, 2017). Researchers who interviewed male adolescent victims of sexual abuse found that many faced disbelief and discrimination when reporting the experience (Hohendorff, et al., 2017). Some people incorrectly believe adolescent male victims should be glad that they had a sexual experience with an older female, and therefore are not victims (Zack et al., 2018). For males, accepting sexual victimization may lead to feeling their masculinity is being challenged, and they may be seen as weak due to gender stereotypes in the culture (Cohen, 2016).

Based on the findings reviewed, women are considered less culpable of their offenses in some cases, and it is challenging to explain why. Since female criminals disobey gender norms, their criminal actions are considered atypical by society while male criminality is more accepted (Cohen, 2016). Perceptions of gender can influence why female teachers who engage in sexual acts with their students attract more public scrutiny than male teachers (Zack et al., 2018). One factor to consider is how the media describes female offenders by focusing on gender-based rationalizations for their crimes,

such as domestic violence, financial dependence, emotional frailties, postpartum depression, and other psychological disorders (Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016).

Another factor to consider is their perceptions of harm to the victim. Sexual contact between female teachers and male students was viewed as less damaging than sexual contact between male teachers and female students (Anderson et al., 2018; Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The participants expressed that male adolescents suffered less harm from the CSA experience, and they recommended a shorter sentence for female teachers (Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). Female participants were more prone to identifying interactions between teachers and students of both sexes as inappropriate and suggested a longer prison sentence for the teacher (Fromuth et al., 2016). When attractiveness of the offenders was considered, the researchers concluded that it was a determining factor for female offenders but not for male offenders. Attractive female offenders were treated more leniently, while unattractive females were judged similarly to males (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The investigators commented on how cultural norms sometimes encourage young males to have sexual relationships with older women, consequently causing the male victim to think the occurrence was an achievement and did not need to be reported (Fromuth et al., 2016).

Researchers found that it is common for adult female sexual offenders to transgress with the assistance of someone else, usually a man with whom they have an intimate relationship or friendship (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). Compared to males, female offenders of CSA are younger, more likely to offend with their offspring or other

known minors, and less likely to be violent with their victims (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). Every case is different and specific factors should be taken into consideration individually in court. It is incorrect to generalize and apply stereotypes on gender, which may lead to fewer convictions for female offenders of CSA. A sympathetic angle is often applied to female offenders, which may sometimes serve to justify their actions due to their social circumstances, and it does not focus on personal responsibility regardless of gender (Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016).

Public perceptions are influenced by representations in the media, which may be one of the reasons women offenders are often judged as less harmful than male offenders (Anderson et al., 2018; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). Low reporting rates should inspire further study since there is evidence of male victims being less likely to report female-perpetrated sexual abuse based on gender constructs, sexual scripts, and cultural traits (Ruiz, 2016). Research on female-perpetrated CSA is limited due to the infrequency of reported cases. Underreporting might be related to social stereotypes of women and requiring more evidence of abuse before being reported (Weinsheimer et al., 2017). Recent research on the subject has established female sexual offending is not as rare as previously thought but it is rarely recognized as a threat, which may result in low reporting rates due to our perceptions on females as the gentler sex (Budd et al., 2017; Stemple et al., 2017; Weinsheimer et al., 2017). This may explain why the female sexual perpetrator often goes unnoticed.

The findings discussed confirm female offenders are different from male offenders in many ways. Investigators have determined some children lack sufficient



knowledge about CSA to label their experience as abuse, which is why there should be a stronger emphasis on providing minors with the right information to keep themselves safe, empowering victims, and encouraging early disclosure (Lahtinen et al., 2018). This type of preparation will help to detect predators as well as prevent CSA and other types of sexual violence. Simplistic ideas and gender bias related to sexual victimization are harmful, and victims of female perpetrators are affected when their experience of abuse does not gather sufficient importance (Stemple et al., 2017). Some people insinuate female-perpetrated abuse is less harmful than male perpetrated abuse, and stereotyped views are misconstrued since both experiences are intrusive and damaging (Anderson et al., 2018; Cortoni et al., 2017; Cortoni & Gannon, 2016).

### **Perception of Harm and Gender Disparity in Criminal Cases**

Theories on inequality outcomes often consider how the interaction of race, ethnicity, age, gender, and other extralegal factors influence on sentencing decisions (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016). Findings confirming women are given less severe sentences than men are consistent across the research on criminal punishment (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). Judicial sentencing decisions favor women in all racial and ethnic groups (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016). In the Netherlands, women who offend are less likely to receive an incarceration sentence, and when they did, it was a shorter sentence (van Wingerden et al., 2016).

Researchers using the focal concerns theoretical perspective concluded gender of the offender had an influential role in judicial sentencing (Leiber et al., 2018). Female

offenders' sentences in the Dutch population were similar to the findings from studies in the United States on gender disparity in sentencing; the researchers theorized the leniency in sentencing might be related to special concerns on women's health and their familial responsibilities (van Wingerden et al., 2016). A significant influence on gender roles is the media, which continues to depict men and women in stereotypical roles and influence the public's perceptions of gender (Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016). Potential jurors' opinions and biases can influence legal results, and there is a need for education on gender misconceptions corrupting their function (Voogt & Klettke, 2017).

CSA legal cases are unique because victim testimony is sometimes the only evidence, which increases the possibility of extralegal factors having an influence on the jury's judgment towards victim and offender (Klettke et al., 2016). CSA cases are particularly difficult because the likelihood of re-victimization is high, especially when there is a lack of physical evidence to support the victim's claims. In accordance with focal concerns theory on sentencing (Steffensmeier, 1980), extralegal factors may influence a judge's perception in areas such as blameworthiness and community protection.

Not all sexual offenders fit the stereotypes created by their culture. Most people believe that a woman is incapable of CSA due to gender stereotypes, which is an incorrect assumption (Cortoni et al., 2017; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Stemple et al., 2017). Some women choose to sexually abuse children, and their actions defy long-standing stereotypes (Cortoni et al., 2017). Male adolescents who are not old enough to consent and engage in sexual acts with a female teacher are victims of CSA, even though

some may not categorize it as CSA (Anderson et al., 2018; Zack et al., 2018). Criminal antecedents and current criminal behavior influence sentencing results, and the attribution of risk and liability are influenced by perceptions on race, gender, and age (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016). Judges sometimes have information and time restraints for their sentencing decision, which may influence their reliance on stereotypes and preconceptions on the offender to determine a sentence (van Wingerden et al., 2016).

Taking into consideration the blameworthiness factor of the focal concerns theory, it is evident how stereotypes may influence the judges' perception of danger and culpability of the offender (Leiber et al., 2018; van Wingerden et al., 2016). The same theory can be applied to understanding why race, age, and gender are linked to stereotypes influencing sentencing decisions (Franklin, 2017). Although it may not be a conscious decision, researchers have determined extralegal factors influence our decisions on accountability of the offender. When comparing sentencing between genders, women are more likely to receive less severe criminal consequences (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016). Female criminals are treated more mercifully than male offenders, and gender is important when deciding incarceration for the accused (Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016).

Female offenders were more likely to receive community sanctions than incarceration (Leiber et al., 2018). Sex crimes committed by females are seen as less damaging (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). Males were more likely than females to believe accusations of sexual abuse were false, and females are more empathetic to victims (Klettke et al., 2016). When presented with teacher and student dyads of sexual abuse,

participants chose shorter sentences for female teachers when involved with male students and judged the experience of the male adolescent victim as less harmful than for the female adolescent victim engaged with a male teacher (Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The studies add to the research on perceptions of juries and how gender affects credibility. Female sexual offending is not as prevalent as male sexual offending, but if police and courts are unable to identify it or believe it is not as damaging, they belittle the experience of victims of female sexual offenders (Cortoni et al., 2017).

Gender differences in sentencing exist and are discussed in the research. Legal consequences differ between females and males accused of CSA, such as plea resolutions, bail amount, and sentence length (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017; Weinsheimer et al., 2017). Part of the problem is related to how subjective impressions influence decisions, and researchers suggest decision makers need to be aware of the tendency to minimize the impact of harm inflicted on the victim (Lindholm & Cederborg, 2016). Defendant characteristics in relation to sentencing is an understudied subject, particularly with Hispanic and female populations (Steffensmeier et al., 2016).

There are conflicting patterns in sentencing due to gender differences for cases of CSA, and it might influence rehabilitation programs and public policy (Weinsheimer et al., 2017). It is necessary to focus on why the influence occurs and the psychological factors responsible (van Wingerden et al., 2016). Females' experiences with the criminal justice system are very different from males' experiences both before and following a verdict (Weinsheimer et al., 2017). Judicial decision-making should be based only on the

concrete evidence provided and not be influenced by perceptions of the offense or offender (Voogt & Klettke, 2017).

### **Gender and CSA by Region**

Perception studies are common in relation to CSA, and researchers have found significant differences and variations by region. In a qualitative study with a group of Chinese parents, researchers determined parents' perceptions on victim characteristics of CSA included being a girl, of a low socioeconomic class, being a migrant child, and living in a rural area (Xie et al., 2016). They also determined some of their participants felt that boys could not be abused because the experience is not as traumatic. The perpetrator characteristics were male and related to the child in some way. Their inability to consider female offenders is due in part to how women in Chinese culture are raised to be submissive, non-sexual, and discreet (Xie et al., 2016). The participants in the study recognized CSA experiences as severely traumatic, hard to recover from, and a source of humiliation for the victim.

Gender stereotypes often stem from the ideas the culture promotes, which vary based on the society's values. Long-held stereotypes about sexual crimes and gender are incorrect, and there is a significant prevalence of female sexual perpetrators (Stemple et al., 2017). The mass media's portrayal of CSA influenced China's parents' perceptions on CSA (Xie et al., 2016). In Jordan, where the culture strongly condemns rape, younger mothers with low income and low levels of education were particularly vulnerable to a lack of knowledge on the different types of CSA (Alzoubi et al., 2018). Media coverage in the United States focuses primarily on the worst cases of CSA, and the content tends to

concentrate on the offenders' individual culpability while ignoring societal influences (Weatherred, 2017). Although it is a taboo topic, sexual violence against boys is a significant and neglected issue in different countries (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Sumner et al., 2016). Reporting rates and characteristics of victims or perpetrators vary by country due to distinctive cultural considerations, but the negative effects on victims are universal (Sumner et al., 2016).

Reporting of CSA by male victims who are abused by people in a position of trust is often delayed (Cashmore et al., 2017). Many boys remain silent about their experiences of sexual violence (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2016). The reason for the behavior may vary by culture, but it appears boys may think the experience is normal or a part of growing up in the region. There is urgency for the professionals who interact with perpetrators and victims to be aware of the complexities of sexual victimization and consider specific matters such as female perpetration and gender-sensitive issues (Stemple et al., 2017).

Researchers working with a Spanish population determined males often did not realize they were victims due to a lack of knowledge on CSA (Pereda et al., 2016). Investigators with a sample of males from Haiti, Kenya, and Cambodia uncovered that Haiti had the highest rate of sexual violence against boys (Sumner et al., 2016). The researchers urged future research is needed to understand the variability by country and its importance in identifying risk factors. Latin cultures are known for being allocentric, which means they center their attention or actions on others before themselves, which

may influence reporting rates (Pereda et al., 2016). Research in the area is scarce, which makes it difficult to reach definite conclusions.

The perception related to some types of violence being a normal part of maturing may make child victims of sexual abuse less likely to report it and receive support. Children in the Caribbean have been historically susceptible to violence and abuse (Jeremiah et al., 2017). A study on perceptions on CSA was done with six Caribbean countries to study an underrepresented population rarely included in scientific research (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). The researchers found an interrelation between the respondents' ideas on when childhood ends, thoughts on male privilege, a traditional culture of silence, and a severe issue with gender inequality in patriarchal countries (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016).

Discussing the possibility of male victims of CSA in Caribbean countries was met with aggressive discourse on the “evils of homosexuality,” and perceptions of adult women as incapable of engaging in CSA (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). If women are involved, it was thought that they permitted the abuse but were not the primary abuser. Many Caribbean cultures have these characteristics in common. Due in part to a similar historical background in slavery, socioeconomic reasons, religious traditions, and mass migration, the Caribbean culture has emerged as adaptive and diverse (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016).

The Caribbean region's patriarchal structure manifests a culture of silence and outdated ideas on family honor, which need to be challenged by the victims and families to break the cycle of violence and abuse (Jeremiah et al., 2017). CSA reporting in Puerto

Rico has decreased considerably in the last five to six years, but sexual violence has not decreased and as such CSA is a serious and underreported public health concern (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). At least two victims of CSA receive emergency room services in the island on a daily basis (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). The majority of perpetrators of CSA are family members or persons known to the victim (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). It has been estimated over 5,000 children in Puerto Rico experience CSA in a year, but most do not report it (Escape, 2017).

CSA in the Caribbean has been associated with an increase in teenage pregnancy, HIV prevalence, unlawful abortions, and a wide range of psychological disorders (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). Intra-familial abuse (i.e., abuse in the privacy of the home, common in younger children) and transactional abuse (i.e., sexual exploitation for money, common in adolescents) are two prevalent types of abuse common to the Caribbean region (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). It is believed the abuse often starts as intra-familial at a young age and later evolves to transactional abuse. Children in minority groups experience higher rates of sexual distress trauma (Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

Puerto Rico's culture stands out in many ways due in part to its unique history. The population in Puerto Rico has a distinct culture in which concepts such as familism and machismo are relevant. *Familism* refers to Latinos' tendency to be family-oriented, while *machismo* is a conceptualization of Latino maleness as showing controlling behavior towards women (Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016). Parenting practices in Puerto Rico are heavily influenced by the aforementioned cultural principles and passed on through



generations (Miville et al., 2017; Mogro-Wilson et al., 2016). The culture is also swayed by the Christian religion, which can be judgmental towards others who do not follow their norms and can interfere in politics and government (Salcedo-Chirinos, 2016). Christian fundamentalist groups in Puerto Rico have fought against feminism, gender equality, theories on evolution, reproductive issues, the homosexual community, and other topics related to gender and sexuality (Martínez, 2017). In addition, Spanish-speaking countries with strong Catholic traditions have been shown to have low reporting rates when the abuse is perpetrated by a priest or other religious leader of the church in a position of power (Tamarit Sumalla, 2018).

In Hispanic cultures, marriage is usually a goal for both genders, but the male is predominantly responsible for providing economic support while the female expectations focus on matrifocality (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). *Matrifocality* means the female assuming responsibility for the family and motherhood as essential to be a woman, which is a common perception of how the female Puerto Rican should behave. The idea of women as nurturers and caregivers is in contrast with the risk of a woman having sexual interests towards children. Similar to the concept of matrifocality, *marianismo* also assigns family related responsibilities to the woman. The responsibilities include motherhood, purity, being loyal to your spouse, and sacrificing yourself to put family first (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). Traditional roles for gender are at odds with emerging ideas on gender perspective and gender equality. By quoting scripture, some believers of Christian fundamentalism have tried to influence lawmakers, public figures, and the public to limit rights for women and the LGBTQ+ community (Martínez, 2017).

Although there has been significant progress for women's rights in Puerto Rico, gender stereotypes remain ingrained in the culture. A possible explanation is a cultural lag between changes in society and attitudes on gender (Haines et al., 2016).

CSA is an area considered unmentionable and associated with family privacy in Puerto Rico. Recent efforts by professionals in the island are evident; there is an increased focus on gender, CSA, human rights, sexology, and matters related to child sexual development (Malavé-Rexach, 2016). There is a struggle for human rights in Puerto Rico, particularly by women and the LGBTQ+ community, due to religious fundamentalism in the culture and how it influences the society and its government (Martínez, 2017). The school's responsibility to report CSA when caretakers suspect abuse is emphasized. There is urgency for teachers and other school personnel to teach children about the dangers of CSA, the difference between respecting your elders and obeying blindly, and how to report any inappropriate action (Malavé-Rexach, 2016). A list of warning signs to detect possible sexual abuse in the students and how to handle the matter in Puerto Rico in accordance with the law is provided to teachers in some schools (Malavé-Rexach, 2016).

A study on gender perspectives in the Puerto Rican population, in which both men and women were included as participants, resulted in confirmation of the strong presence of interiorized gender stereotypes in the culture (Colón, 2017). The investigator focused on cultural gender stereotypes related to body image, social behavior, skills and competency, emotional dimension, affective expression, and social responsibility. Attractiveness in males was defined as having a strong body; for women it was related to

having a delicate body. In the interpersonal relationships and social interactions category, behavior deemed as daring or wild was valued in males while discreet and prudent behavior was valued in females. Women were thought to be better at careers related to social and psychological services while men were considered better at science and math-related areas (Colón, 2017). Women were associated with being responsible for taking care of the children while males are considered accountable for maintaining financial stability of the family. The study confirmed gender stereotypes in Puerto Rico are heavily influenced by culture and are present in both sexes (Colón, 2017).

The Puerto Rican culture is characterized as family oriented and deeply religious. There is a strong presence of patriarchal norms and conservative religious thinking (La Fountain-Stokes, 2018). Researchers have also discussed how Puerto Ricans have a colonial mentality due to their political status which may influence their mental health; this mentality is a form of internalized oppression and thoughts of inferiority (Capielo Rosario et al., 2019).

Vulnerability to CSA in the Caribbean is due to social factors related to culture, family structure, and socio-economic issues, among other historical elements (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016). The CSA perpetrators in Puerto Rico are primarily the biological parents and stepparents, and the majority of the victims are between the age of 12 and 14 (Rodriguez & Ward, 2016). Because there is such a strong emphasis on family, the findings indicate a perverse shift in what family means to the offenders and how religion can be used to justify their actions. Topics related to sexual activities or CSA are often considered inappropriate or private, especially when it involves family members

(Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). CSA reporting by children is less likely due to the pressure of maintaining family unison and status (Graham et al., 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

CSA is a serious global concern. The lasting effects CSA can have on the physical and mental health of the victims and families are detrimental to the development of healthy attachments and adequate perceptions regarding sexuality, as well as maintaining psychological stability in adulthood (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Meyer et al., 2017; Voogt & Klettke, 2017). CSA studies with Hispanic populations are uncommon, and minority populations remain underrepresented even though some studies have suggested children of minorities are particularly at risk (Ruiz, 2016). Some investigators have proposed children from ethnic minorities who are victims of CSA have more severe trauma symptoms and a tendency to not disclose or report the abuse (Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

When trying to identify risk factors for CSA, research has discovered female offenders are dissimilar from male offenders and their treatment must be managed differently (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017). A developing area of research related to CSA focuses on people's perceptions of the experience and how they can vary due to cultural norms. Of particular interest for this study is how perceptions can influence judgment for CSA cases, and if it relates to gender. Researchers determined CSA cases are sometimes treated differently, and extralegal factors such as gender of the involved parties may impact how the severity of the offense is perceived (Klettke et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). The teacher-student dyad was used to measure perceptions on CSA because

the relationship is often judged less severe than other instances of CSA (Anderson et al., 2018).

The theoretical foundation of this study was based on two seminal psychological frameworks, which are the traumagenic dynamics model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985) and the focal concerns theory of sentencing (Steffensmeier, 1980). Structure and depth are added by choosing two fundamental frameworks for this study. The traumagenic dynamic model examines the delicate issue of trauma caused by CSA, an important part of this study. The four factors of the model apply well to the student-teacher example used to measure perceptions of CSA. Whereas the focal concerns theory on sentencing helps to explore the extralegal factors' influence on judgment, such as gender of the offender. The frameworks provide a basis for the main variables and research question of the investigation.

To justify this study an extensive research review was performed, and the information relevant to this study was included in this chapter. Information was gathered on a variety of topics related to gender, CSA, female sexual offenders, and teacher sexual misconduct. To organize the research, it was divided by categories to simplify the review and analysis process. First, information regarding CSA's consequences, perceptions, and statistics was discussed. Pertinent information on the effects of CSA and statistics from Puerto Rico and the United States were included. Next was a review on gender stereotypes and their impact in society. Research related to female sexual offenders, sexual misconduct by teachers, and gender disparity in criminal courts followed. The review ended with a section on gender and CSA by region.

A gap was identified regarding how CSA studies rarely consider minority populations, and contrasts from White populations (Ruiz, 2016). Significant findings were included on Latin American children and why they may be more vulnerable to CSA due to cultural characteristics, which normalize the behavior, and the lasting consequences of the abuse (Jaschek et al., 2016; Ruiz, 2016). Also identified was how sexual violence studies fail to consider female offenders and little has been discussed on male victims (Turchik et al., 2016). A lack of investigations related to perceptions on gender of victims and offenders and their influence in judgment for CSA cases was identified. The majority of the research on CSA concentrates on the consequences for the victims and motives of the perpetrators (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Zagrodney & Cummings, 2016). If research only focuses on female victims and male perpetrators of sexual violence, efforts for prevention and awareness in the social, political, and legal context are restricted (Turchik et al., 2016). Opportunities for research on topics related to female offenders, sexual abuse, and male victimization are numerous.

The most common forms of child maltreatment co-occurring with CSA are emotional and physical abuse as well as exposure to interpersonal violence (Turner et al., 2017). There is empirical evidence to suggest some CSA victims are more likely to inflict harms on other and have difficulties with managing aggression in adulthood (Norton-Baker et al., 2019). The focus for this study on teacher sex offenses with children is due to the prevalence of these cases and the attention given by the media (Zack et al., 2018).

Females are commonly described as vulnerable and physically weak while males are considered the strong protectors in the Puerto Rican culture (Colón, 2017).

Considering women's notable presence in child maltreatment reports in Puerto Rico and the United States it is evident gender perceptions are contradicted by the facts (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). An increase in the media's portrayal of female sexual offenders has helped the public to accept women can commit this type of crime, males can be victims of sexual abuse, and there are inequality issues in the way the courts treat offenders based on gender (Zack et al., 2018).

A gender-specific, inclusive approach would allow professionals in the field to obtain a broad understanding of sexual violence against males and females, which would help in prevention efforts and providing better treatment for victims (Turchik et al., 2016). Lack of gender equity is a social justice problem in Puerto Rico because a large portion of the population is being judged or rejected because they do not fit in the traditional stereotype ascribed to their gender (Colón, 2017). Incorrect and subjective opinions can influence the professionals who treat victims of CSA. Providing culturally knowledgeable treatment to CSA victims is vital to improving their situation and effectively managing their symptoms (Ruiz, 2016). There is a clear need to raise awareness of CSA offending and prevention, particularly in how to ask a child about possible victimization according to their developmental stage (Lemaigre et al., 2017). Cultural competency is necessary to treat victims and professionals must have non-racist attitudes, work with a multicultural framework, and be aware of their special needs (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

To limit the influence of extralegal factors in sentencing decisions, the public should be educated on the effect of biases and perceptions (Voogt & Klettke, 2017). To further understand sexual victimization, it is necessary to avoid a one-dimensional view of sexual crimes considering only a male-on-female victimization archetype (Stemple et al., 2017). This study provided results with the potential to incite social change on CSA issues. Developing training and intervention models related to CSA by teachers is strongly recommended (Spakowski & Crespi, 2017). Society will benefit from challenging traditional ideas on gender in relation to sexual victimization. A lack of gender-specific focus continues to ignore male victims and female perpetrators of crime, which negatively impacts all of us (Cohen, 2016).

Chapter 2 included a thorough literature review of what is currently known about this study's variables of CSA in relation to sexual offenders, gender, teacher sexual misconduct, perceptions of CSA, and influencing factors in judgment. In Chapter 3, the research design chosen to address the research question is described. The quantitative research design used for this study permitted consideration of the relationship between perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA, and how they may vary by gender of the offender. The methodology used, special considerations on the population for this study, and a detailed explanation on the investigative process is described in Chapter 3.



## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The main purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of CSA in a sample of adults in Puerto Rico. CSA has been associated with many negative consequences for the victims such as substance use, hypersexuality, suicide attempts, and depression (Easton & Kong, 2017; Gray & Rarick, 2018; Turner et al., 2017). This investigation focused on evaluating how the gender of the offender influenced the chosen population for sentencing decisions and general perceptions in a teacher-student CSA case dyad. The data collected for this investigation can aid in understanding how the perceptions of gender of the offender can impact decisions on adequate punishment and level of harm for CSA offenses. Chapter 3 provides a discussion regarding the methodology used in this study and rationale for the selection.

Chapter 3 includes a description of the chosen research design, vital information concerning research variables, and the study population and their recruitment. It also includes the instrument and the plan implemented to analyze the data. Other factors such as internal and external validity, as well as ethical considerations, are presented. To collect the necessary data, a previously validated instrument was used. The researcher's permission was obtained to use the instrument and the instrument was adapted for the participants of this study. The reliability and validity, as well as the methods used to validate the instrument, are examined in Chapter 3. The plan used to measure the impact of the variables, gender of the offender, and perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA

in teacher sex offense cases are also presented. The techniques used to analyze the data, including the research question and statistical tests, are discussed.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Perceptions of CSA might be influenced by gender of the offender in a sample of the population of Puerto Rico. Gender has been shown to influence study participants in related CSA studies and practices in regard to perception and sentencing with other populations (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017; Tozdan et al., 2019). Female child sexual offenders are underreported, gender stereotypes influence individuals to believe they are rare, and there is a small number of studies addressing this problem (Tozdan et al., 2019). The specific research design for this cross-sectional quantitative study was correlational with an emphasis in performing a moderation analysis to evaluate interaction.

The goal of a correlational design is to investigate relationships between the chosen variables (Wilson & Joye, 2017). Correlational design was ideal for this study because it makes it possible to study a third variable (i.e., gender) and how it interacts between the independent and dependent variable. I also used a cross-sectional quantitative design. There are time and cost constraints associated with a doctoral investigation, and because the participants were anonymously recruited online, there is no need to follow up as it was not a longitudinal or experimental design. Cross-sectional designs are used when the data are collected at one specific timeframe only and can be used to identify a pattern in a population and analyze variables like gender or age in order to see if they relate to another variable in the study (Allen, 2017).

For Hypotheses 1 through 4 of this study, the independent variable was gender of the offender and the dependent variables were perceptions of responsibility, harm and general attitudes. For Hypothesis 5, the independent variables were perceptions of responsibility, harm, and general attitudes. The dependent variable was criminal sentencing, and the moderating variable was gender of the offender. Moderation in statistics was used to analyze through regression if the relationship between the independent (i.e., perception) and the dependent (i.e., sentencing) variables increased due to a third variable (i.e., gender). A statistical analysis was performed to examine the influence of gender of the offender in CSA teacher-student cases on the independent variables. A moderation analysis further evaluated the role of gender to better understand the phenomenon. This investigation can enhance the knowledge on related topics and evaluate perceptions of CSA in a population that is rarely used for scientific studies.

There has been a renewed interest in underrepresented populations for scientific study in psychology and increased attention to their experiences and needs even though these groups can sometimes be hard to recruit (Ballinger, 2018). The survey instrument developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) includes a variety of scales to measure perceptions of level of harm, responsibility, and general attitudes towards a teacher as the offender and the student as the victim. Ballinger (2018) recommended online surveys as a way to reach an underrepresented or minority population because they have the capability of reaching more individuals who might be interested in participating in this study.

Mackelprang and Becker's (2017) instrument was adapted for this study and was distributed online, which allowed for a faster and less expensive way to collect data.

Studies related to female sexual offenders of CSA are few in comparison to male sexual offenders of CSA. There is significant denial regarding the existence of female-perpetrated CSA in society, a resistance to investigating it, and inconsistencies related to prevalence rates (Tozdan et al., 2019). The current study can contribute to a growing area of investigation relating to CSA, gender bias, perceptions of harm, and female sexual offenders.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

The target population was male and female adults in Puerto Rico over the age of 18. Due to the variables related to perception and criminal sentencing of CSA cases, the participants of this study had to meet the eligibility criteria for collaborating as a juror in Puerto Rico. Any person who meets the following requirements may be selected to serve as a juror in Puerto Rico: They must be 18 years or older and a legal resident of Puerto Rico, be able to read and write in Spanish, be physically and mentally able to serve as a juror, and not have been convicted of a serious crime or other that implies moral depravation (*Ley 281-2003 para la Administración del Servicio de Jurado de Puerto Rico*, P. del S. 397).

Participants of this study were asked to confirm their eligibility for the study before gaining access to the survey instrument. The target population size was calculated based on the 2019 census information for the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. The total population estimate of the Puerto Rican population was 3,193,694, and the total population estimate for adults over 18 was 2,620,963 (United States Census Bureau,

2019). The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the data collection phase of this study. Action was taken to minimize selection bias and other concerns related to online research. As advised by De Man et al. (2021), ample categories were included in the sociodemographic section to demonstrate sample validity, different social media platforms were used for recruitment, a previously validated scale was used, and some of the questions included were in the same format used in the population census.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

A non-probability sample of convenience was used. Convenience sampling is a way to select participants based on their availability and specific pre-determined criteria (Frey, 2018). A limitation of this sampling technique is that participants who were excluded may be different from the ones included, and certain individuals in the population of interest were excluded due to factors such as education level and socioeconomic status (Frey, 2018; Toepoel, 2016). These issues are alleviated by a clear and extensive description of the target sample and eligibility criteria, making sure to acquire sufficient and diverse participation, and recruiting individuals who are relevant to the goals of the study (Frey, 2018).

The collection of data were achieved by adapting the instrument for the chosen population, making it available through an online platform, and promoting the survey through social media platforms. The link to the survey was shared via local groups and made public so people who saw the post could share it. The main social platforms used were Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Individuals who were interested in participating had to confirm that they met eligibility criteria then review the consent form that

provided information of this study and discussed any possible risks, as well as management of the information collected. After accepting the terms stated in the consent form, the data collection began by redirecting the participants to the survey instrument. The last section included sociodemographic questions such as age, education, and ethnicity, among others.

Exclusion criteria were residents of Puerto Rico under the age of 18, those who did not live in the island, those who were convicted of a serious crime or a crime related to moral depravation, those who lacked the physical and mental ability to serve as a juror, and those who were not able to write or read in Spanish. Inclusion criteria were adults over 18 in Puerto Rico with no criminal record, those who were physically and mentally able to participate, and those who could read and write in Spanish.

The total population estimate in Puerto Rico over 18 years old is 2,620,963 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). By eliminating 7% of possible participants by taking into consideration they may not meet eligibility criteria, an approximate number for eligible men and women over 18 in Puerto Rico was 2,300,418. According to the formula, a minimum of 288 participants were needed. The goal was to recruit at least 300 total participants for this study. More participants were recruited to increase generalizability. The formula used to calculate the sample size for this research and the result is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Formula for Calculating Sample Size*

$$n = \frac{N * z_a^2 * p(1 - p)}{e^2 * (N - 1) + z_a^2 * p(1 - p)}$$

$$n = \frac{3,193,693 * 1.96^2 * .75(1 - .25)}{.05^2 * (3,193.693 - 1) + 1.96^2 * .75(1 - .25)}$$

$$n = \frac{2300417.788}{7984.9528}$$

$$n = 288.09$$

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Recruiting began after the university and the doctoral committee approved the proposal and the Institutional Review Board gave permission to proceed. The process began by sending the link to the survey via social platforms. The social platforms used were Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Recruitment for this study started by sharing an invitation to participate and the link to the instrument on these social media sites. Social media is a highly effective tool for finding participants from underserved populations (Bhatia-Lin et al., 2019). Potential participants were notified about a study regarding CSA in Puerto Rico and a page was created for this study in Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Ads were also used as a way of reaching more potential participants. Passive recruitment using social media, defined as circulating materials such ads and flyers (Gelinis et al., 2017), was the primary method used to attract eligible individuals to consider participating in the current study.

The invitation emphasized that participation was anonymous and voluntary, the approximate time it would take to complete the instrument (10-15 minutes), the importance of this study and the potential for positive social change in the Puerto Rican community when the results are available. Individuals who decided to participate read a consent form and answered some questions to establish eligibility. The informed consent form included a brief summary of this study, a discussion of the risks or lack thereof, information regarding anonymity, and safe-keeping of the contact information and data collected. The consent form also explained to prospective participants that their participation was completely voluntary, and they could decide to stop answering survey questions at any time, although completion of the survey was encouraged.

The data collection began once individuals who received the invitation and met eligibility criteria decided to participate in this study. The informed consent did not require a signature because it was an online survey, but participants had to choose if they agreed and wished to continue in order to gain access to the study survey. As discussed by Gelinis et al. (2017), when using social media for recruitment it is key to guarantee investigator transparency and participant privacy. As recommended by Bhatia-Lin et al. (2019) in their guidelines related to social media recruitment, the informed consent for this study addressed any potential risks with ways to mitigate them, emphasized that the data were to be kept secure, and explained that their participation was completely anonymous.

To collect the necessary data, a previously validated instrument was used. The instrument was a survey with a hypothetical case and scales developed by Mackelprang



and Becker (2017) and used in their study regarding how gender and attractiveness of the offender influences judgment of CSA offenders and victims in a teacher-student dyad. Permission from the researchers were obtained to use the instrument and adapt it for the participants of this study. Necessary changes were made to the instrument regarding language, legal, and cultural differences. The original instrument was in English and the first step was to translate and adapt it to the population of Puerto Rico. It was translated and back-translated to ensure correctness by two different, independent translators. The finished instrument in Spanish was reviewed by a mental health expert and two legal consultants to ensure legal and psychological accuracy in both the translation and cultural adaptation process.

The survey instrument was administered online, and the answers were kept completely anonymous as the participants were not asked to identify themselves with specific personal information other than the sociodemographic questions used to establish eligibility. The validity and reliability of the data were enhanced due to this method of data collection. All participants received the same consent form, eligibility questionnaire, and instructions for completion of the instrument. There was no direct influence or contact with me. Once a participant completed the task, they were thanked for their participation and contact information was provided again in case they had any questions.

The statistical test performed for the research was point-biserial correlation. The biserial and point-biserial correlation coefficients are best for use when one of the study variables is dichotomous, or is categorical with two categories (Field, 2017). For this study, a point-biserial correlation analysis was ideal. As explained by Field (2017), point-

biserial correlation coefficient is used when a variable is a strict dichotomy. For this investigation, the biological gender variable was a dichotomous variable as defined for this study. Furthermore, a moderation analysis was performed to evaluate relationship and impact of the gender variable.

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

#### **Survey and 5 Scales**

Mackelprang and Becker (2017) developed the survey instrument used for this investigation and provided permission for me to adapt and use their instrument (see Appendix A). The original survey included four vignettes with an *N* between 106 and 112, and each one describes illegal sexual contact between a 35-year-old male or female teacher and a 14-year-old female or male student (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The sections of the original survey and scales used in this study are included (see Appendix B). The original study measured a variable related to attractiveness and the vignettes included pictures of possible offenders. I did not consider attractiveness as a variable, which is why only two vignettes were used, different only in the gender of the offender and victim section.

The hypothetical stories in the two vignettes were adapted to the chosen population of the current study. The specific changes made were the language used from American English to Puerto Rican Spanish, names of the characters to reflect common names in the Puerto Rican culture, and other necessary legal and cultural adaptations. Some minor changes were made to the statements and the Likert-type scale was reduced

from a 7-point to 5-point scale. The instruments were subjected to backtranslation to reduce bias and ensure adequate translation.

The vignettes were identical, except for changes in the gender dyad of the teacher-student hypothetical scenario. The variation in the gender dyad was key to this study, since gender of the offender was the variable being observed as an influence and moderator. Vignettes were randomly assigned to participants. After reading the vignette, the participant was asked to answer questions regarding bail and length of time in the sex offender registry; they were also asked to select an adequate criminal sentence for the male or female teacher. This section has 10 questions. In the original study, this section had 14 questions.

The next part of the survey included five scales with five statements each. The scales measured the perceptions the participant had about the relationship between the teacher and student through a Likert-type scale, as described in the vignette (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). There was a total of 25 questions which addressed the participant's perceptions of the teacher and student responsibility, harm to the teacher and student, and general attitudes about CSA offenses. According to Mackelprang and Becker (2017), the scales are reliable with a Cronbach's alpha score between .60 and .70.

The original study by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) evaluated attractiveness of the offender as a variable to examine if it has an influence on the participants' answers. The current study did not include this variable and focused on punitive actions, level of harm, level of responsibility, and general attitudes only. Mackelprang and Becker (2017) developed the instruments for their study with 432 undergraduate students at a large

southwestern university. The gender and race of the participants varied. There were 149 males between the ages of 18 and 42, and 280 females between the ages of 18 and 55 (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017).

In Mackelprang and Becker's (2017) study, most participants were White (55%), additionally, 20 % were Latino, 13% were Asian, and 3% were African American. Other participants did not provide information related to race. The current investigation is different from Mackelprang and Becker's (2017) study in three key areas. The current study did not measure attractiveness and the participants were not provided with a visual representation of the offender. The participants in this study were more diverse in age and were from an underrepresented population. Changes were made to adapt their instrument to fit this investigation and be adequate for use with the population in Puerto Rico.

### **Operationalization**

The variables measured were gender of the CSA offender, perceptions of CSA (i.e., harm, responsibility, general attitudes), and criminal sentencing. The general operational definition for CSA is when an adult engages in a sexual relationship with a minor who is unable to consent due to their age (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2016). The operational definition for gender of the offender is the term used to address gender roles or expectations on gender ascribed to each biological sex. For this study, gender of the offender was considered as male or female based solely on the biological sex assigned at birth. The variables of harm, responsibility, and general perceptions were meant to be defined by the participants.

The variables aligned with the theoretical framework selected for this study. The traumagenic dynamics model considers four principal issues with CSA victims, which are traumatic sexualization, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). These factors apply to both male and female victims of CSA. In this study, the perceived severity of the experience of the CSA victim as evaluated by the participants was measured through the scales which asked participants to consider level of harm to students and level of responsibility of the student. The focal concerns theory on sentencing proposes that there are extralegal factors which influence decisions on criminal sentencing (Steffensmeier et al., 1998). Steffensmeier and Demuth (2000) discussed how an individual's position in the social structure has an effect on the way they are treated in the legal system. These extralegal factors often include personal bias and stereotypes, which were assessed in the instrument used to collect data for this study.

The variables were measured in the instrument used for data collection. The vignettes assigned to participants alternated and each participant was randomly assigned one male teacher-female student CSA vignette, or a female teacher-male student CSA vignette. This was possible through a random assignment feature available in the PsychData website where the instrument was made available to participants. This procedure ensured participants were not aware that the gender of the offender was the main focus of this study and answered in regard to the single vignette they reviewed. The vignettes were identical except for the gender dyad since gender of the offender and how it affected the participants' response was one of the main variables. Participants received one of two vignettes, each with the same story; the only difference was the gender of the

offender and victim (see Appendix B). For this study, the vignette was translated to Puerto Rican Spanish and culturally adapted by changing the names of those involved and the police department information.

The variables relating to perceptions (i.e., harm, responsibility, general attitudes) were measured in the second section of the instrument and included 25 statements to be answered using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The original instrument used a 7-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores in this section indicated that the participant adjudicated greater responsibility, more harm, and negative general attitudes towards CSA offenses (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The variables relating to punitive actions and criminal sentencing were measured in the second section of the instrument and included 10 questions total; the majority were multiple choice questions and three were fill-in-the-blank questions. The scores were used to measure if participants believed the offender described in the vignette deserved a punishment, and if so, the type and length of punishment. The instrument was designed to consider the severity of the punishment as a more negative or positive view towards the CSA vignette. Participants who chose a harsher punishment viewed CSA more harshly than those who chose a more lenient punishment. Gender of the offender was evaluated by changing the gender-dyad in the vignette. The last section included sociodemographic questions.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The software used for the analyses after data collection was the IBM SPSS Statistics program. SPSS is a statistical analysis package for the social sciences used to

perform statistical analyses for quantitative design studies. The following research question (RQ) and hypotheses were considered in relation to the data collection:

RQ1: Does the gender of the offender have an effect on perceptions of responsibility, harm, general attitudes and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico?

*H01*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on perceptions of responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H01*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the perceptions of responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a</sub>1*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on perceptions of responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H02*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on perceptions of harm for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H02*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the perceptions of harm for CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a</sub>2*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on perceptions of harm for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H03*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on general attitudes of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H03*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the general attitudes of CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a3</sub>*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on general attitudes of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: Gender of the offender does not have an effect on criminal sentencing of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>04</sub>*: There is no statistically significant effect between the gender of the offender and the criminal sentencing of CSA teacher sex offenses.

*H<sub>a4</sub>*: Gender of the offender does have an effect on criminal sentencing of CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

*H<sub>05</sub>*: The gender of the offender will not statistically significantly moderate the relationship between the general perceptions and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses.

A point-biserial correlation coefficient test was performed to assess the relation between variables, since the gender variable is dichotomous. Calculating a point-biserial correlation is similar to a Pearson correlation and the dichotomous variable (i.e., gender) is coded with *0* for male gender and *1* for female gender, or vice versa (Field, 2017). This type of regression analysis determines a relationship between the variables or not, and if the relationship is enhanced or diminished when introducing a third variable (Belhekar, 2016). A negative but statistically significant relationship means that the males, coded with *0*, are judged more severely and receive higher sentencing from the participants. A positive but statistically significant relationship means that the females, coded with *1*, are judged more severely and receive higher sentencing from the participants.



The data analysis plan included performing a correlation analysis to assess if there is a relationship between the variables of gender and perceptions (i.e., harm, responsibility, general attitudes) and judgment of the crime (i.e., criminal sentencing). A correlation analysis was performed for each of the dependent variables using a point-biserial correlation analysis to do a statistical calculation. In addition, a moderation analysis was completed using PROCESS (Hayes, 2017). PROCESS is a tool created by Andrew Hayes and is used to estimate direct and indirect effects of the moderator variable. For this investigation, PROCESS was utilized to assess if the gender variable significantly and statistically moderated or interacted with the relationship between perceptions and criminal sentencing of teachers accused of CSA with students. The use of these statistical analyses provided accurate results to explore the relationship between the variables as well as the influence and interaction of gender. Threats to external and internal validity were evaluated to avoid endangering the integrity of the investigation, and specific steps were taken to ensure ethical practices are involved in every step of the data collection process.

### **Threats to Validity**

Evaluating threats to validity in quantitative designs is necessary to ensure adequate methodology is used for data collection. Quality control is an important aspect of scientific research and the researcher must be committed to minimizing any internal or external validity threats. Internal validity refers to the factors the researcher must control to ensure consistency, as well as logical and factual concordance in all stages of the investigation (Layder, 2018). Internal validity is evaluated for this study through

continuous revisions by the researcher, peer reviews, and supervision by the doctoral committee. Selecting a previously validated instrument is another example of avoiding problems with internal validity. External validity refers to factors out of the researcher's control, how this study compares with results from other similar studies, and how generalizable the results are (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

Some internal validity concerns for this study were investigator bias and the possibility of influencing the participants answers. To minimize this issue, the data collection process was completely anonymous and the investigator had no direct contact with the participants. Taking into consideration the delicate topic of study, it was of utmost importance that the participants felt safe enough to answer as honestly as possible without fear of repercussions or breach of confidentiality. Since the participants were asked to answer the survey measure one time and there was no follow-up, the threat of mortality of the participants was not an issue. The method used to collect data helped to minimize internal validity concerns because it offers anonymity, confidentiality, and made it more likely for the participant to disclose their honest views. The instrument used included demographic information to improve internal validity as well.

Sampling characteristics or sample bias is a common threat to external validity in nonexperimental quantitative designs. Sampling bias can occur when the individuals who participate in this study are too similar, and the sample does not sufficiently represent the chosen population. Although this study was promoted extensively through social media, it may not have reached specific age groups or people who are not as exposed to technology, for example. Robson (2017) suggested that a possible solution to avoid

sampling bias in survey research was to obtain a high response rate. The population selected for this study guaranteed that over two million people were eligible to participate, and 300 participants was the minimum goal for recruitment. Data collection for this study was done anonymously and through an online platform. Ballinger (2018) discussed how dispensing the study measure online is an effective way to reach a more diverse group of people in the chosen population and target specific demographic characteristics.

Another concern regarding validity is social desirability bias. As explained by Frey (2018), it is difficult to accurately measure perceptions in studies using surveys for data collection because participants may intentionally misreport. Social desirability explains a common occurrence in which people tend to self-report socially desirable attributes. This is an important factor to discuss since this study focuses on social bias and gender stereotypes, which is why participants were not given specific details about the variables or how they were measured. A way to reduce social desirability bias is to emphasize the confidentiality measures and steps taken to protect the information (Frey, 2018). When participants are assured that their honest views will not be personally identified in any way, they are more likely to answer truthfully without fear of social disapproval. By conducting the data collection through an online survey, participants were ensured privacy and anonymity.

Validity of an instrument used in scientific research refers to if the scale is adequately composed as to measure the included constructs (Wilson & Joye, 2017). Validity of a scale can be assessed in different ways; these strategies are known as face

validity, content validity, convergent construct validity, discriminant construct validity, and predictive validity. Face and content validity are evaluated by logical thinking and consider if the instrument addresses all the constructs of the study correctly, while convergent construct validity is evaluated by comparing the scale to other similar measures (Wilson & Joye, 2017). Discriminant construct validity is assessed when the instrument does not correlate with an instrument to measure constructs that are unrelated, and predictive validity refers to how much an instrument can predict future results because it captures the construct so well (Wilson & Joye, 2017).

To enhance validity of the instrument used for this investigation, a previously validated measure was selected. Mackelprang and Becker (2017) established internal consistency of their instrument by using Cronbach's alpha; a score between .60 and .70 deems that they are considered reliable. The instrument was evaluated and used in this investigation because it met the requirement for face validity, content validity, convergent construct validity, discriminant construct validity, and predictive validity. This investigation's variables were aligned with the survey instrument developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) and the current study is very similar to the study for which the measure was created. One specific concern regarding the instrument was the possibility of affecting validity because it was translated from English to Spanish, and it was the first time the instrument is used with the population in Puerto Rico. This risk was mitigated by using a larger sample size to ensure the results are valid (i.e., internal validity) and generalizable (i.e., external validity).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Every participant in a scientific study must be informed about the ethical procedures used to protect individuals and the integrity of the investigation. An investigation carried out in an ethical manner is more likely to have well-developed research questions and better-quality outcome (Robson, 2017). Ethical practices are a key component of scientific studies and a requirement for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to data collection. Once approval was obtained by the IRB, the consent form and study instrument were uploaded to an online platform to begin data collection.

Participants were recruited through a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The researcher's contact information was provided to all potential participants as part of the informed consent. Including the researcher's contact information is a way to ensure participants can communicate their questions before or after participating in this study. The study instrument was administered online, and participants were asked to read the consent form, asked if they wish to participate, asked to acknowledge their understanding, and were given the option to continue or leave the study. Marking their answer in the informed consent documents appropriately confirmed consent, and participants were informed their participation was completely voluntary.

Possible risks and benefits of participating in this study were outlined in the consent form. There were no major foreseeable risks due to participation in this study. The potential benefits included contributing to an understudied area of research, and how the findings could have a positive impact on in the way mental health professionals and

law enforcement intervene in CSA cases. Contact information regarding emotional support and CSA resources for participants were included. Participants were encouraged to keep a copy of the digital consent form. The data collected will be kept for five years in an external memory device purchased exclusively for this purpose. Once the five-year timeframe is up, the information will be erased using a software to destroy the information (e.g., WipeFile). To ensure anonymity, the survey instrument was designed in a way that does not record or keep information about the participant's IP address. The PsychData website used for administering the study instrument provides the option of ensuring anonymity by not keeping any information from the participants.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 consisted of a discussion of the quantitative research design and rationale for this study. A correlational, cross sectional quantitative design explored the relationships between CSA, gender of the offender, perceptions, and criminal punishment. The plan used to analyze gender as a moderator variable to assess the effects on these relationships was discussed. The instrument selected for this study was adequate and its use is justified. The methodology used in the investigation was explained thoroughly and consistently. The plan for data collection and data analysis was included. Threats to validity and ethical considerations are addressed and specific details are provided to ensure validity and reliability of the data collection methods.

Chapter 4 comprises a detailed discussion of the data collected as well as the measures taken during the process. Any challenges or limitations encountered are addressed. The guidelines of the IRB were followed, and the process was supervised by

the dissertation committee. Specific aspects from the results, the analyses conducted to answer the research question, interpretation of the findings, recommendations, implications, and any other relevant statistical information are meticulously discussed in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

Violence against children is a pressing public health problem and an international priority (Wirtz et al., 2016). Sexual abuse of children and adolescents has severe health consequences for victims and is a serious human rights violation (World Health Organization, 2017). CSA continues to be an area of concern with little being done towards prevention by the state and community; although there have been meaningful advances, these do not compare to the advances related to strategies for sexual exploitation by offenders (Salter, 2018).

The purpose of this study was to measure perceptions of CSA offenders in Puerto Rico and how the gender of the offender influences their opinions. Participants were eligible for this study if they met jury duty criteria in Puerto Rico, which includes all adults over 18 who are legal residents, have no criminal record, and can read and write in Spanish. Participants answered questions regarding responsibility, harm, general attitudes and sentencing related to a hypothetical case of teacher perpetrated CSA. A previously validated instrument developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) was adapted and used for data collection.

For this study, the main objective was to gather data to explore if the gender of the offender had an effect on perceptions of responsibility, harm, general attitudes, and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses in Puerto Rico. The population was chosen in part due to being underrepresented in scientific studies. There are few investigations on violence related to child and adolescent maltreatment, prevention, and



mitigation of consequences in Puerto Rico even though there is a high prevalence (Pérez Pedrego et al., 2016; Sánchez Cesáreo et al., 2016). This quantitative study was designed to collect information with the potential to aid in gaining a better understanding of a social issue and public health problem that is prevalent in Puerto Rico but rarely studied.

The purpose for this study was described in the context of the research question. Descriptive statistics are provided to demonstrate participants represented the population in Puerto Rico who are eligible for jury duty. Descriptive statistics from each test regarding the study variables are also included. The results from the point biserial correlation and moderation analyses using the research question and hypotheses are reported. Additional statistical tests conducted are presented and discussed. A Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was used to compare the distribution of random samples (Frey, 2018). The Kruskal-Wallis test (*H*) is used for when the data are not normally distributed (Frey, 2018). A cross-tabulation analysis was performed for the sentencing variable in the additional statistics section as well as a chi-square test, which was performed to evaluate if differences were statistically significant. This chapter includes information on data collection, statistical analyses, tables, figures, and results. The information discussed in Chapter 4 provides a clear illustration and explanation of the results.

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected over a period lasting approximately a month and a half, from September 17, 2020 to November 6, 2020 using non-probability convenience sampling. A total of 802 persons were interested in participating in this study, although

only a total of 525 participants completed the main instrument and thus were considered. The response rate for this study was 65%. The response rate could have been affected by the sensitive topic of the study and the graphic details in the hypothetical cases. Nonetheless, the number of participants who completed the study instrument exceeded the minimum amount needed for this study (288 participants) and helped to increase generalizability for the study.

The data collection process was accomplished in the exact way outlined in Chapter 3, as approved by the dissertation committee and the IRB. None of the participants were in direct contact with me, and the completely anonymous process was completed online through the PsychData website. There were no major complications experienced during the data collection process. Due to the results, some additional statistical tests were performed and rationale for including these tests is discussed in this section.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

A total of 802 individuals accessed this study. A total of 525 participants completed the main instrument on the PsychData website (see Appendix C). These participants accepted the terms in the digital consent form and confirmed they met eligibility criteria (see Appendix D). Participants were 125 males, 372 females, and three participants who did not specify gender. The average age of participants was 46 years old, with the youngest participant being 18 and the oldest being 84.

Most participants were between 30 and 62 years old. Each participant was randomly assigned one hypothetical case and the study survey. The baseline descriptive characteristics of the sample are included in Table 1. Based on the demographics, the results best represent middle-aged women eligible for jury duty in Puerto Rico. According to the United States Census Bureau (2019), women represent approximately 53% of the population in Puerto Rico.

**Table 1**

*Baseline Descriptive Characteristics*

Baseline characteristic	<i>M(SD)</i>
Age	45.69(15.63)
	<i>f (%)</i>
Group (gender of the teacher)	
Female (Mrs. Guzmán)	254 (48.4)
Male (Mr. Guzmán)	271 (51.6)
Gender	
Male	125 (23.8)
Female	372 (70.9)
Other (did not specify)	3 (0.6)

**Statistical Assumptions**

*Point-Biserial Correlation*

Point-biserial correlation ( $r_{bis}$ ) was conducted to measure if there was a statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable (i.e., perception) and the independent variable (i.e., gender) which is in a dichotomous measure scale (see Field, 2017). A negative, statistically significant relationship between the variables would

mean that the males, coded with 0, are judged more severely and receive higher sentencing from the participants, while a positive, statistically significant relationship would mean that the females, coded with 1, are judged more severely and receive higher sentencing from the participants.

### ***Moderation***

The moderation analysis is a type of regression analysis that explores if the statistically significant relationship that was established changes in magnitude when a third variable is introduced (Belhekar, 2016). The moderation analysis applies to the fifth hypothesis, which is related to criminal sentencing.

### **Statistical Analyses**

The dependent variable (i.e., perceptions of CSA) was measured with five scales developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) and includes statements related to responsibility, harm, and general attitudes of CSA (see Appendix B). The independent variable was gender of the offender (i.e., teacher). Gender of the offender was manipulated by randomly assigning participants to either a female teacher with a male student CSA hypothetical case or a male teacher with a female student CSA hypothetical case. Both hypothetical cases were identical except for the gender of the teacher and the student. For the moderation analysis, gender of the offender and general perceptions for CSA were independent variables while criminal sentencing was the dependent variable.

### ***Point-Biserial Correlation ( $r_{bis}$ )***

The (RQ) was addressed using the traumagenic dynamics model and the focal concerns theory as the framework. For the RQ, five hypotheses were developed. The RQ

explored if the gender of the offender has an effect on perceptions of responsibility, harm, general attitudes, and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico.

RQ1: Does the gender of the offender have an effect on perceptions of responsibility, harm, general attitudes, and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico?

**First Hypothesis: The Gender of the Offender Has an Effect on the Perceptions of Responsibility for CSA Teacher Sex Offenses in a Sample of the Population in Puerto Rico.** For the first hypothesis, a biserial correlation analysis was performed to analyze the relationship between the responsibility attributed to the teacher and the student, separately, and for both. With regards to the relationship between the gender of the offender and the perception of responsibility for the CSA case, the results showed a negative, weak, statistically significant relationship ( $r_{bis} = -.143, p = .001$ ). These results indicated that being a male teacher CSA offender, labeled 0 in the database, had a statistically significant relationship with a higher perception of the responsibility attributed. This means that the male teacher CSA offender is attributed greater responsibility than the female CSA offender.

When analyzing the results for the correlation analysis of the gender of the offender and the responsibility attributed to the student (i.e., the victim), a statistically significant relationship was not found between the variables ( $r_{bis} = -.029, p = .510$ ). These results mean that there is no significant relationship between the gender of the offender and the responsibility attributed to the student victim.

The third aspect analyzed in the first hypothesis was the relationship between the gender of the offender and the overall perceived responsibility for both individuals: the teacher and the student. The results showed that there was a negative, weak, statistically significant relationship between the gender of the offender and the overall perceived responsibility for both the teacher and the student ( $r_{bis} = -.102, p = .019$ ).

These results indicated that there is a general perception of greater responsibility when the teacher is male. The strength of the relationship between the teacher's gender and responsibility diminishes when the responsibility of the student is considered (when the strength of the correlation is compared to the relationship of only the teacher's responsibility), but even so, it was observed that there is an interdependence between being a male teacher and having greater responsibility. Table 2 provides more information.

**Table 2**

*Correlations Between the Gender of the Offender and the Perception of Responsibility (N = 525)*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Gender of the teacher	-			
2. Responsibility of the offender	-.143**	-		
3. Responsibility of the victim	-.029	.446**	-	
4. Responsibility of both	-.102*	.858**	.843**	-

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

In Tables 3 and 4, the mean and standard deviations for both sub-scales of responsibility (i.e., teacher's responsibility and students' responsibility) are presented.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Responsibility of the Offender*

Gender of the teacher	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Mr. Guzmán	271	8.00	25.00	19.80 (3.86)
Mrs. Guzmán	254	8.00	25.00	18.71 (3.69)

*Note.* *N* = sample, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

To analyze whether there are statistically significant differences between the gender of the teacher and the responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses, a Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was performed to analyze whether the data were normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test is a procedure used in statistics to compare the distribution of random samples (Frey, 2018). This analysis was used to identify the type of contrast of means to be performed (i.e., parametric or non-parametric). The results showed that the gender of the offender (i.e., teacher) along with the responsibility attributed for the CSA offenses ( $D(271) = .130, p < .01$ ;  $D(254) = .097, p < .01$ ) indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, it was necessary to perform a non parametric Kruskal-Wallis (*H*) contrast of means analysis.

The Kruskal-Wallis test (*H*) is used when the data are not normally distributed (Frey, 2018). The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (*H*) indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the offender and the

responsibility attributed for CSA offenses ( $W(1) = 1.954, p < .01$ ). When observing the averages of both groups (i.e., gender of the offender), it was identified that the male teacher was attributed more responsibility for the CSA offense when compared to the female teacher. This means that the average for the male teacher was statistically greater than the female teacher. When analyzing the averages, 79% ( $\% = 19.80/25.00$ ) of responsibility was attributed to the male teacher and 75% ( $\% = 18.71/25.00$ ) of the responsibility for CSA teacher sex offenses was attributed to the female teacher.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Responsibility of the Victim*

Gender of the teacher	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M(SD)</i>
Mr. Guzmán	271	8.00	25.00	18.50 (3.69)
Mrs. Guzmán	254	8.00	25.00	18.29 (3.63)

*Note.* *N* = sample, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

To analyze whether there are statistically significant differences between the gender of the teacher and the responsibility attributed to the victim (i.e., the student) for CSA offenses, a Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was performed to analyze whether the data were normally distributed. This was done to identify the type of contrast of means to be performed (i.e., parametric or non-parametric). The results indicated that the gender of the offender (i.e., the teacher) along with the responsibility was attributed to the victim (i.e., the student) for CSA offenses ( $D(271) = .102, p < .01$ ;  $D(254) = .113, p < .01$ )



indicate that the data are not normally distributed; therefore, it was necessary to perform a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis ( $H$ ) contrast of means analysis.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $H$ ) indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the gender of the offender and the responsibility attributed for the CSA offense ( $H(1) = .528, p = .468$ ). When observing the averages of the groups, it was identified that both means were very similar (see Table 4); therefore, there were no statistically significant differences between them. It is important to indicate that the average of responsibility of the victim for the CSA offenses could be considered high. When analyzing the averages, 74% ( $\% = 18.50/25.00$ ) of responsibility was attributed to the 14-year-old female victim and 73% ( $\% = 18.29/25.00$ ) of the responsibility was attributed to the 14-year-old male victim.

**Second Hypothesis: The Gender of the Offender Has an Effect on Perceptions of Harm for CSA Teacher Sex Offenses in a Sample of the Population in Puerto Rico.** For the second hypothesis, a biserial correlation analysis was performed to analyze the relationship between the harm attributed to the teacher and the student, separately, and for both. With regards to the relationship between the gender of the offender and the perception of harm to the student, the results showed a negative, moderately weak, statistically significant relationship ( $r_{bis} = -.253, p < .01$ ). These results indicated that the CSA offense performed by the male teacher was perceived as being more harmful to the student than those performed by the female teacher.

When analyzing the results for the correlation analysis for the gender of the teacher and the perceived harm to the teacher, a negative, weak, statistically significant

relationship was found between the variables ( $r_{bis} = -.215, p < .01$ ). These results mean that being a male teacher CSA offender was perceived to cause more harm when compared to a female teacher CSA offender.

The third notion of harm analyzed in the second hypothesis was the relationship between the gender of the offender and the overall perceived harm for both the teacher and the student. The results showed that there was a negative, moderately weak, statistically significant relationship between the gender of the offender and the overall perceived harm for both the teacher and the student ( $r_{bis} = -.289, p < .01$ ). These results mean that most participants perceived the facts as stated in the hypothetical case as harmful for both the teacher and the student as shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5**

*Correlations Between the Gender of the Teacher Sex Offender and the Perception of Harm (N = 525)*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Gender of the teacher	-			
2. Harm to the student	-.253**	-		
3. Harm to the teacher	-.215**	.261**	-	
4. Harm to both	-.289**	.726**	.854**	-

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

In Tables 6 and 7 below, the mean and standard deviations for both sub-scales of harm (i.e., students' harm, teacher's harm) are presented.

**Table 6***Descriptive Statistics for the Harm to the Victim (Student)*

Gender of the teacher	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Mr. Guzmán	271	11.00	25.00	19.94 (2.80)
Mrs. Guzmán	254	10.00	25.00	18.48 (2.81)

*Note.* *N* = sample, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

To analyze whether there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the teacher and the harm to the victim, a Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was performed to analyze whether the data were normally distributed. This was performed to identify the type of contrast of means to be performed (i.e., parametric or non-parametric).

The results showed that the gender of the offender (i.e., the teacher) along with the harm to the victim for CSA offenses ( $D(271) = .123, p < .01$ ;  $D(254) = .104, p < .01$ ) indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, it was necessary to perform a non parametric Kruskal-Wallis (*H*) contrast of means analysis. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis (*H*) test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the offender and the harm attributed for CSA offenses ( $H(1) = 35.582, p < .01$ ). When observing the averages of the groups, it was identified that the male teacher was attributed more harm to the victim when compared to the harm caused by the female teacher.

**Table 7***Descriptive Statistics for the Harm to the Offender (the Teacher)*

Gender of the teacher	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Mr. Guzmán	271	6.00	25.00	19.45 (3.96)
Mrs. Guzmán	254	9.00	25.00	17.81 (3.49)

*Note.* *N* = sample, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

To analyze whether there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the teacher and the harm to the offender (i.e., the teacher) for CSA offenses, a Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was performed to analyze whether the data were normally distributed. This was done to identify the type of contrast of means to be performed (i.e., parametric or non-parametric).

The results indicated that the gender of the offender (i.e., the teacher), along with the harm to the teacher attributed to the CSA offense ( $D(271) = .095, p < .01$ ;  $D(254) = .083, p < .01$ ), showed that the data were not normally distributed; therefore it was necessary to perform a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (*H*) contrast of means analysis. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis (*H*) test indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the offender and the harm attributed for CSA offenses ( $H(1) = 28.008, p < .01$ ). When observing the averages of the groups, it was identified that the mean for the harm to the offender was greater for the male teacher when compared to the female teacher.

**Third Hypothesis: The Gender of the Offender Has an Effect on General Attitudes of CSA Teacher Sex Offenses in a Sample of the Population in Puerto**

**Rico.** For the third hypothesis, a biserial correlation analysis was performed to analyze the relationship between the gender of the offender and the general attitudes of CSA offenses. The results showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the variables ( $r_{bis} = -.070$ ,  $p = .108$ ) as shown in Table 8 below. Results showed that the general attitudes towards the CSA offense were unfavorable regardless of gender of the offender.

**Table 8**

*Relationship Between the Gender of the Offender and the General Attitudes of CSA*

*Teacher Sex Offenses (n = 525)*

Variables	1	2
1. Gender of the teacher	-	
2. Attitude	-.070	-

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Fourth Hypothesis: The Gender of the Offender Has an Effect on Criminal Sentencing of CSA Teacher Sex Offenses in a Sample of the Population in Puerto Rico**

**Rico.** For the fourth hypothesis, a biserial correlation analysis was performed to analyze the relationship between the gender of the offender and the criminal sentencing of the CSA offenses. For the variable sentencing, the years the participants indicated the teacher should be sentenced to prison and the years the teacher should be listed in the sex offender registry were considered. The results showed that there was a negative, moderately weak, statistically significant relationship between the variables ( $r_{bis} = -.465$ ,

$p < .01$ ). These results mean that there is a relationship between being a male teacher sex offender and receiving more time as a sentence by the participants in this study as shown in Table 9 and Table 10 below.

**Table 9**

*Relationship Between the Gender of the Teacher and the Criminal Sentencing of CSA*

*Teacher Sex Offenses*

Variable	1	2
1. Gender of the Offender	-	
2. Sentencing	-.465**	-

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 10**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Criminal Sentencing of CSA Teacher Sex Offenses*

*Depending on the Gender of the Offender (the Teacher)*

Group	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M (SD)</i>
Mr. Guzmán	251	.00	198.00	50.42(43.71)
Mrs. Guzmán	242	1.00	105.00	15.71 (16.01)

*Note.* *N* = sample, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation

To analyze whether there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the teacher and criminal sentencing the participants gave to the CSA offenders, a Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was performed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test is used to analyze whether the data are normally distributed in order to identify the type of

contrast of means to be performed (parametric or non-parametric). The results showed that gender of the teacher and criminal sentencing the participants gave to the offenders for CSA offenses ( $D(251) = .134, p < .01$ ;  $D(242) = .191, p < .01$ ) indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, it was necessary to perform a non parametric Kruskal-Wallis ( $H$ ) contrast of means analysis.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test ( $H$ ) indicated there were statistically significant differences between the gender of the teacher and criminal sentencing the participants gave to the offenders for CSA teacher sex offenses ( $H(1) = 132.984, p < .01$ ). When observing the averages of the groups, it was identified that the mean for the criminal sentencing the participants gave to the male offender was greater than the one given to the female teacher.

**Fifth Hypothesis: The Gender of the Offender Will Statistically Significantly Moderate the Relationship Between the General Perceptions and Criminal Sentencing for CSA Teacher Sex Offenses.** To test the hypothesis that the attitude towards criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses are a function of multiple risk factors, and more specifically whether the gender of the offender moderates the relationship between the general perception and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted.

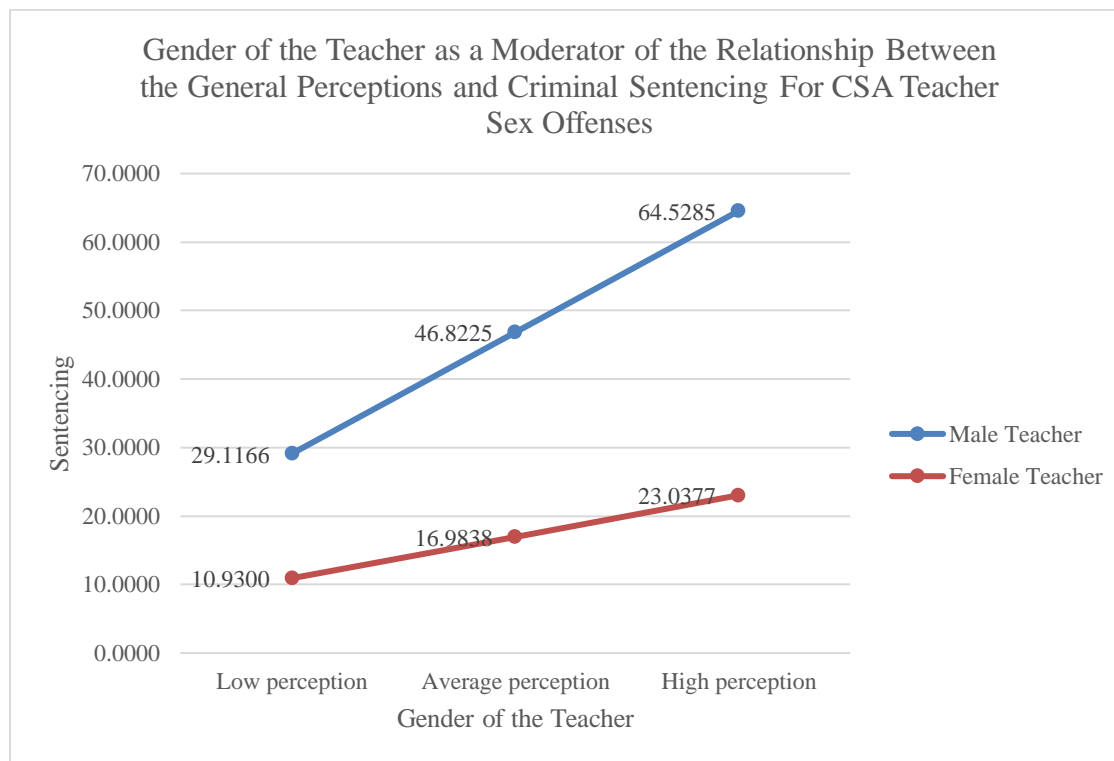
In the first step, two variables were included: gender of the offender and general perception for CSA teacher sex offenses. The gender of the offender and general perceptions for CSA teacher sex offenses were independent variables, while criminal sentencing was the dependent variable for this analysis. These variables accounted for a

significant amount of variance for the criminal sentencing for CSA teacher offenses,  $R^2 = .349$ ,  $F(2, 490) = 131.431$ ,  $p < .001$ . This result means that gender of the offender and perceptions of the CSA offense explain 35% of the answers related to criminal sentencing.

To avoid potentially problematic high multicollinearity with the interaction term, the variables were centered and an interaction term between the gender of the teacher and the general perception of CSA teacher sex offenses was created (Aiken & West, 1991). Next, the interaction term between gender of the teacher and the general perception for CSA teacher sex offenses was added to the regression model, which accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in the sentencing of the teacher,  $\Delta R^2 = .032$ ,  $\Delta F(1, 489) = 25.339$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $b = -.932$ ,  $t(489) = -4.15$ ,  $p < .01$ .

This means that the amount of variance related to criminal sentencing increased by 3.2%. The amount of variance explained for the dependent variable was 38.1%. Examination of the interaction plot showed an enhancing effect; while the gender of the teacher was male and the perception towards CSA teacher sex offenses was unfavorable, the criminal sentencing given increased as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2***Simple Slope of Moderation Analysis*

*Note.* The Simple Slope for the moderation analysis shows a tendency of interaction between the variables.

**Additional Statistical Tests**

Additional statistical analyses were conducted to further understand the influence of the teacher's gender in the variables of responsibility, harm, and sentencing.

***Sentencing***

A cross-tabulation analysis was performed to explore the participants' perception of sentencing CSA teacher offenses. This analysis was performed for years in prison,

years the teacher should be registered as a sex offender, and a mean of both variables considered.

### ***Years in Prison***

Eighty-nine percent (89.1%) of the participants who completed the questions regarding the male teacher indicated that he should probably or undoubtedly be incarcerated. However, 81.5% of the participants that completed the questions regarding to the female teacher's case indicated that she should probably or undoubtedly be incarcerated. A total of 85.4% of the participants indicated that both should probably or undoubtedly be incarcerated. Interestingly, 14.6% ( $n = 76$ ) indicated not being sure that either teacher should be incarcerated to that they undoubtedly should not be incarcerated.

It is noteworthy that specifically for the male teacher, 10.9% were among the categories of not being sure that he should be incarcerated to undoubtedly should not be in prison compared to 18.5% for the female teacher. This could mean that when sentencing CSA male teacher offenses, the perception of the sentence is more severe compared to the sentence imposed on female teachers (see Table 11). A chi-square test was performed to evaluate if this difference was statistically significant. The results showed that the male teacher was perceived by the participants as needing to be incarcerated for more years when compared to the years given to the female teacher ( $\chi^2(6) = 29.810, p < .01, \mathcal{V} = .240, p < .01$ ).

**Table 11***What Do Participants Think About the Teacher and Incarceration?*

	Group		Total
	Mr. Guzmán	Mrs. Guzmán	
Perception of incarceration	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)
The teacher undoubtedly deserves to be imprisoned.	191 (71.8)	130 (51.2)	321 (61.7)
The teacher probably deserves to be jailed.	46 (17.3)	77 (30.3)	123 (23.7)
I'm not sure if the teacher deserves to be incarcerated or not	24 (9.0)	35 (13.8)	59 (11.3)
The teacher probably does not deserve to be incarcerated.	2 (0.8)	8 (3.1)	10 (1.9)
The teacher absolutely does not deserve to be incarcerated.	3 (1.1)	4 (1.6)	7 (1.3)
Total	266	254	520

When asked about the quantity of years the participants thought a judge would sentence the teachers for CSA offenses, statistically significant differences were found between the years of sentence to the male teacher versus the female teacher ( $\chi^2(5) = 25.804, p < .01, \nu = .225, p < .01$ ). These results showed that the participants of this study believe that a judge will sentence the male teacher more years in prison compared to the years given to the female teacher. This question is different than the previous one because it focuses on how many years a judge would probably choose as a sentence, not the sentence they would choose if it was their decision (see Table 12).

**Table 12**

*If a Judge Sentenced the Teacher to Serve Time in Prison, How Long Do You Think the Sentence Would Be?*

Quantity of sentence	Teacher		Total
	Mr. Guzmán	Mrs. Guzmán	
	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)
Less than one year	19 (7.4)	33 (13.0)	52 (10.2)
1-5 years	68 (26.6)	95 (37.4)	163 (32.0)
6-10 years	48 (18.8)	57 (22.4)	105 (20.6)
11-15 years	35 (13.7)	24 (9.4)	59 (11.6)
16-20 years	36 (14.1)	13 (5.1)	49 (9.6)
21 or more years	50 (19.5)	32 (12.6)	82 (16.1)
Total	256	254	510

#### *Years Registered as a Sex Offender*

It was observed that the male teacher CSA offender was perceived as needing to be registered in the sex offender registry more years when compared to the female teacher. A chi-square test was performed to evaluate if this difference was statistically significant. The results showed that the male teacher was perceived by the participants as needing to be registered for more years compared to the female teacher ( $\chi^2(24) = 400.550, p < .01, \nu = .895, p < .01$ ).

While none of the participants that completed the questions regarding Mr. Guzmán (i.e., the male teacher) answered that he should not be registered as a sex offender, for Mrs. Guzmán (i.e., the female teacher), 5.6% ( $n = 14$ ) of the participants who answered the questions regarding her case indicated that she should not be registered as a sex offender. Also, 58.5% ( $n = 148$ ) of the participants felt that the male teacher

should be registered for 21 or more years. Meanwhile, the participants who answered the questions regarding the female teacher's case, 41.4% ( $n = 104$ ) indicated that she should be registered as a sex offender for 21 or more years (as shown in Table 13 below).

**Table 13**

*Participant's Perception of Sex Offender Registry*

	Teacher		Total
	Mr. Guzmán	Mrs. Guzmán	
Quantity of years registered	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)
None	0 (0.0)	14 (5.6)	14 (2.8)
Less than one year	13 (5.1)	7 (2.8)	20 (4.0)
1-5 years	18 (7.1)	1 (0.4)	19 (3.8)
6-10 years	37 (14.6)	57 (22.7)	40 (18.7)
11-15 years	19 (7.5)	17 (6.8)	20 (7.1)
16-20 years	18 (7.1)	51 (20.3)	45 (13.7)
21 or more years	148 (58.5)	104 (41.4)	153 (50.0)
Total	253	251	504

*If the Teacher Should be Registered as a Sex Offender*

The descriptive results showed that participants selected a higher quantity of years registered as a sex offender for the male teacher than the female teacher. In this question, there were some incongruencies when compared to the previous question, especially in that some participants selected the option of probably not or not having to register as a sex offender for both. Regardless, most participants agreed both teachers should be required to register as sex offenders. It is important to note that a brief explanation about how the sex offender registry is and how it works was provided to the participants in the

survey instrument (see Appendix B). These differences resulted not being statistically significant ( $\chi^2(4) = 5.131, p = .274$ ) as shown in Table 14 below.

**Table 14**

*Perceptions on the Teacher Being Registered as a Sex Offender*

Perception	Group		Total <i>f</i> (%)
	Mr. Guzmán <i>f</i> (%)	Mrs. Guzmán <i>f</i> (%)	
Definitely yes	210 (83.0)	191 (75.8)	401 (79.4)
Probably yes	26 (10.3)	42 (16.7)	68 (13.5)
I don't know / I'm not sure	10 (4.0)	12 (4.8)	22 (4.4)
Probably not	3 (1.2)	4 (1.6)	7 (1.4)
Definitely not	4 (1.6)	3 (1.2)	7 (1.4)
Total	253	252	505

**Analyses of Specific Questions of the Instrument Administered to the Sample**

Additional analyses were performed with the objective of exploring the answers of the participants regarding specific questions in order to analyze the perception specific to the responsibility, harm, and attitude of CSA teacher sex offenses. In general, the descriptive statistics results showed that the male teacher has more responsibility and causes more harm, and that participants have a more severe attitude towards CSA teacher sex offenses when the offender is a male teacher.

In the following section, it is important to note participants who were randomly assigned the Mr. Guzmán hypothetical case read about a 14-year-old female victim and participants who were randomly assigned the Mrs. Guzmán hypothetical case read about a 14-year-old male victim. Both cases were identical except for the gender and name of

the teacher (i.e., offender) and the student (i.e., victim). Appendix B shows the survey instruments which include the hypothetical case and questions answered by all participants. More information on these analyses is shown in Table 15.

**Table 15***Analyses to Specific Questions of the Instrument Administrated to the Sample*

Question		<i>f (%)</i>
<hr/>		
The teacher is probably a pedophile.		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	15 (5.5)
	In disagreement	11 (4.1)
	Neither agree nor disagree	39 (14.4)
	Agree	66 (24.4)
	Completely agree	140 (51.7)
	Total	<hr/> 271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	12 (4.7)
	In disagreement	12 (4.7)
	Neither agree nor disagree	38 (15.0)
	Agree	73 (28.7)
	Completely agree	119 (46.9)
	Total	<hr/> 254 (100.0)
<hr/>		
The teacher's license must be revoked (that is, he/she will not be able to practice as a teacher).		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	17 (6.3)
	In disagreement	5 (1.8)
	Neither agree nor disagree	16 (5.9)
	Agree	30(11.1)
	Completely agree	203 (74.9)
	Total	<hr/> 271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	11 (4.3)
	In disagreement	6 (2.4)
	Neither agree nor disagree	11 (4.3)
	Agree	53 (20.9)
	Completely agree	173 (68.1)
	Total	<hr/> 254 (100.0)
<hr/>		
The student should assume the responsibility for his/her participant in this relationship		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	19 (7.0)
	In disagreement	47 (17.3)
	Neither agree nor disagree	30 (11.1)
	Agree	63 (23.2)
	Completely agree	112 (41.3)
	Total	<hr/> 271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	15 (5.9)
	In disagreement	33 (13.0)
	Neither agree nor disagree	34 (13.4)



	Agree	85 (33.5)
	Completely agree	87 (34.3)
	Total	254 (100.0)
<u>The student's parents should consider focusing some of their anger on their daughter/son for her/his involvement in this relationship.</u>		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	14 (5.2)
	In disagreement	38 (14.0)
	Neither agree nor disagree	40 (14.8)
	Agree	63 (23.2)
	Completely agree	116 (42.8)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	14 (5.5)
	In disagreement	41 (16.1)
	Neither agree nor disagree	28 (11.0)
	Agree	77 (30.3)
	Completely agree	94 (37.0)
	Total	254 (100.0)
<u>The student will likely not have any long-term psychological damage as a result of this relationship.</u>		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	3 (1.1)
	In disagreement	18 (6.6)
	Neither agree nor disagree	30 (11.1)
	Agree	91 (33.6)
	Completely agree	129 (47.6)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	6 (2.4)
	In disagreement	20 (7.9)
	Neither agree nor disagree	44 (17.3)
	Agree	89 (35.0)
	Completely agree	95 (37.4)
	Total	254 (100.0)
<u>The student is a victim.</u>		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	10 (3.7)
	In disagreement	9 (3.3)
	Neither agree nor disagree	29 (10.7)
	Agree	72 (26.6)
	Completely agree	151 (55.7)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	14 (5.5)
	In disagreement	3 (1.2)
	Neither agree nor disagree	30 (11.8)
	Agree	72 (28.3)
	Completely agree	135 (53.1)

	Total	254 (100.0)
<u>The teacher is a victim.</u>		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	3 (1.1)
	In disagreement	6 (2.2)
	Neither agree nor disagree	16 (5.9)
	Agree	44 (16.2)
	Completely agree	202 (74.5)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	3 (1.2)
	In disagreement	7 (2.8)
	Neither agree nor disagree	21 (8.3)
	Agree	61 (24.0)
	Completely agree	162 (63.8)
	Total	254 (100.0)
<u>The teacher needs mental health treatment as a result of this relationship, not incarceration.</u>		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	35 (12.9)
	In disagreement	34 (12.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	40 (14.8)
	Agree	69 (25.5)
	Completely agree	93 (34.3)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	52 (20.5)
	In disagreement	47 (18.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	51 (20.1)
	Agree	55 (21.7)
	Completely agree	49 (19.3)
	Total	254 (100.0)
<u>There is no situation in which it is acceptable for a teacher to have sex with a student.</u>		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	17 (6.3)
	In disagreement	16 (5.9)
	Neither agree nor disagree	15 (5.5)
	Agree	40 (14.8)
	Completely agree	183 (67.5)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	10 (3.9)
	In disagreement	9 (3.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	14 (5.5)
	Agree	42 (16.5)
	Completely agree	179 (70.5)
	Total	254 (100.0)

Without the use of physical force or a weapon, a person cannot really be raped.

Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	11 (4.1)
	In disagreement	12 (4.4)
	Neither agree nor disagree	11 (4.1)
	Agree	46 (17.0)
	Completely agree	191 (70.5)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	19 (7.5)
	In disagreement	9 (3.5)
	Neither agree nor disagree	5 (2.0)
	Agree	56 (22.0)
	Completely agree	165 (65.0)
	Total	254 (100.0)
When a person reaches puberty, they should be able to make their own decisions about their sexuality.		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	12 (4.4)
	In disagreement	29 (10.7)
	Neither agree nor disagree	49 (18.1)
	Agree	68 (25.1)
	Completely agree	113 (41.7)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	14 (5.5)
	In disagreement	24 (9.4)
	Neither agree nor disagree	50 (19.7)
	Agree	81 (31.9)
	Completely agree	85 (33.5)
	Total	254 (100.0)
There must be stronger legal penalties for teachers who have sex with students.		
Mr. Guzmán	Completely disagree	12 (4.4)
	In disagreement	8 (3.0)
	Neither agree nor disagree	41 (15.1)
	Agree	69 (25.5)
	Completely agree	141 (52.0)
	Total	271 (100.0)
Mrs. Guzmán	Completely disagree	18 (7.1)
	In disagreement	12 (4.7)
	Neither agree nor disagree	51 (20.1)
	Agree	71 (28.0)
	Completely agree	102 (40.2)
	Total	254 (100.0)

### **Internal Consistency Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)**

With the objective of analyzing the internal consistency (i.e., scale's reliability) a Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) established that an instrument which is acceptable and is one that has at least a .70 Cronbach's alpha coefficient result. The scales used for this investigation were originally developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017), who established internal consistency of their instrument by using Cronbach's alpha with a score between .60 and .70. Their scales were adapted and translated for use in this study. The reliability index for the scales used in this study indicated a Cronbach's alpha of .817 for the 25 items of the scale that measured perception via a Likert Scale. This index indicated that the reliability of the test and its construct validity is acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

### **Summary**

CSA is examined in different ways depending on sociocultural variables and the way they manifest in a society (Wekerle, & Black, 2017). Children are one of the groups who have historically endured acts of violence in Latin America and the Caribbean—including CSA—due to many cultural influences that perpetuate it (Céspedes & Robles, 2016; Wirtz et al., 2016). The current study included an investigation of perceptions of harm, responsibility, and general perceptions of a teacher-student CSA offense by participants who were eligible for jury duty in Puerto Rico. This study also included a moderation analysis to ascertain if those perceptions related to criminal sentencing of the CSA offenders. The results of this study were analyzed, and correlations were established

using the IBM SPSS statistical software. The IBM SPSS is used for statistical analysis in the social sciences to facilitate data interpretation, the software runs predictive and comparative tests in a user-friendly manner (Frey, 2018). The results were interpreted using the theoretical frameworks, research questions, and relevant hypotheses to the study.

The RQ investigated if the gender of the offender has an effect on perceptions of responsibility, harm, general attitudes and criminal sentencing for CSA teacher sex offenses in a sample of the population in Puerto Rico. The point-biserial correlation ( $r_{bis}$ ) was conducted to address Hypotheses 1 through 4 and measured if there was a statistically significant relation between variables the dependent variable (i.e., perception of CSA teacher offenses) and the independent variable (i.e., gender of the CSA offender). For the fifth hypothesis, a moderation analysis was completed to explore if the gender of the offender and general perceptions for CSA moderated criminal sentencing for the CSA offender.

Some of the main results related to responsibility and harm for the student victim and the teacher offender. The results showed that the male teacher CSA offender was attributed greater responsibility than the female teacher CSA offender. Results also showed that the male teacher was considered to be more harmful to the victim when compared to the harm caused by the female teacher. General perceptions of CSA were unfavorable in the majority of participants for both hypothetical cases. No significant relationship was determined between the gender of the offender and the responsibility attributed to the student that was the victim.

A Kruskal-Wallis (*H*) contrast of means analysis was done when the data were not normally distributed. This analysis yielded a surprising result which was not previously considered. The percentage of responsibility attributed to the 14-year-old was high, regardless of gender. The majority of participants attributed some of the responsibility of the CSA offense to the male or female victim as previously discussed in the results. The result was surprising due to the victim's age and the facts described in the hypothetical case. As previously discussed, the Puerto Rican culture is influenced by patriarchal norms and religious influences which may contribute to the idea that childhood ends at a younger age. This finding may also be related to victim-blaming, a phenomenon widely discussed in the literature related to sexual crimes. This finding is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Results showed that there was a relationship between being a male teacher CSA offender and receiving more time as a sentence. The gender of the offender and perceptions of the CSA offense explained 35% of the answers related to criminal sentencing. The interaction plot showed an enhancing effect; while the gender of the teacher was male and the perception towards CSA teacher sex offenses was unfavorable, the criminal sentence given increased. In addition, the male teacher CSA offender was perceived as needing to be registered in the sex offender registry for more years when compared to the female teacher. This particular finding could have implications related to the participants' perceptions of dangerousness for the offenders.

The reliability index for the scales used in this study indicated a Cronbach's alpha of .817 for the 25 items of the scale that measured perception in Likert Scale. This result

is important because the original scales for this study were developed for and validated with a different population. The instrument used in this study went through a process of cultural adaptation and revisions by experts in law and psychology as well as translation and backtranslation to ensure it was adequate for the chosen population. The original instrument had a Cronbach's alpha score between .60 and .70.

Estimates of CSA and other acts of violence against children in Latin American and the Caribbean are believed to be incorrect and an underestimation (Rodríguez & Ward, 2016; Wirtz et al., 2016). CSA research done by Latin American and Caribbean authors between 1992 and 2017 is low compared to other countries and it is a recent research topic with a limited increase of publications between in recent years (Vega-Arce et al., 2019). The current study contributes to the scarce scientific findings of CSA in a minority population. In general, the results showed that the male teacher was attributed more responsibility, was considered to cause more harm, and participants had a sterner attitude towards CSA teacher sex offenses when the offender is male. Results also showed that participants felt the victim shared the blame with the offender. The implications of these findings and recommendations are further discussed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

CSA is an intricate phenomenon that affects all societies. Approximately one in three female victims in the United States report their first rape experience between the age of 11 and 17, while one in nine reported being 10 years old or younger (Smith et al., 2017). Almost 25% of male victims who were forced to penetrate someone else indicated that their first victimization was before the age of 18 (Smith et al., 2017). These numbers are just an estimation of a more severe and concurrent problem. Even though there has been significant progress in related research, it continues to be a challenge to implement efficient public policy to aid in prevention, identification of victims, and proper response (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019).

CSA is a current and ongoing public health problem due to its correlation with psychosocial disturbances and high prevalence (Norton-Baker et al., 2019). As discussed by Herrenkohl et al. (2021), there is a higher risk of child abuse and neglect due to the current pandemic which has caused many complications for families, as well as local and federal authorities. There may be fewer reports of child abuse at the moment, but it does not mean the abuse is not occurring. Experts believe the abuse is easier to hide due to the quarantine and isolation restrictions imposed to avoid further spread of the COVID-19 virus (Herrenkohl et al., 2021). There is an urgent need to do more to protect children from this damaging experience.

Related studies have also addressed that CSA victims seek more health care as adults, providing evidence of how this type of victimization has long-term consequences,



and not just for the victim. Female victims are less likely to follow up on gynecological care and men are less likely to disclose that they are victims of CSA and therefore ask for help (Guha et al., 2020). The aforementioned findings reiterate a need to address the many complications of CSA offenses and the way they affect the victim both physically and psychologically, and their consequences on society in general.

The purpose of this study was to examine adults' perceptions of CSA offenders in Puerto Rico by focusing on differences by gender of the offender and their views on responsibility, level of harm, and adequate sentencing. This study is important because there are few studies with Puerto Rican populations and related to perceptions of sexual abuse. The influence of gender of the offender on perceptions and criminal sentencing was evaluated via a correlational analysis. The current quantitative study was cross-sectional and correlational with an emphasis in performing a moderation analysis to evaluate interaction between gender of the offender and other variables. The variables measured included gender of the offender as the independent variable and perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA as the dependent variables. The variable of perceptions focused specifically on level of responsibility and harm for both the victim and offender as well as general attitudes.

The population chosen for this study was adults living on the island of Puerto Rico who were 18 years or older and eligible for jury duty. The population was chosen because they are underrepresented in scientific studies and for their unique cultural characteristics. The theoretical framework was selected based on their relation to the research problem. The traumagenic dynamics model aligned with the main topic of CSA,

while the focal concerns theory aligned with the variables of perceptions and sentencing.

As directed by the selected theoretical frameworks, the negative impact of CSA on victims and the extralegal factors that influence perceptions and judicial decisions regarding these cases were two of the main components of the investigation.

Furthermore, the perceived severity of the experience of the CSA victim as gauged by the participants was measured through the scales that asked participants to consider the level of harm to students and the level of responsibility of the student. The instrument used for the current study was developed and used by Mackelprang and Becker (2017). The original English version of the instrument (see Appendix B) was previously validated and had an internal consistency of between .60 and .70 using Cronbach's alpha. The adapted Spanish version of the instrument used in the current study has a Cronbach's alpha score of .817 (see Appendix C).

The research questions and hypotheses for this study were addressed using different types of statistical analyses. The point biserial correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between the variables for Hypotheses 1 through 4. Moderation analysis, a type of regression analysis, was used to verify if the extent of a statistically significant relationship was altered with the variable of criminal sentencing for the fifth hypothesis. Based on the preliminary findings, additional tests were needed to reach conclusive results. The Kolmogorov-Smirnoff (*D*) test was performed to analyze whether the data were normally distributed and to compare random samples distribution. The Kruskal-Wallis test (*H*) was used when the data were not normally distributed. A cross-tabulation analysis was used to explore perceptions related to sentencing. A chi-square

test was performed to evaluate if this difference was statistically significant in relation to the findings related to number of years in prison and years registered as a sex offender.

The results of this study provided evidence of a statistically significant influence of gender of the offender in perceptions and criminal sentencing of CSA cases in Puerto Rico. The majority of the 525 participants who participated in this study, who were mostly female, were more punitive and attributed more responsibility and harm towards the male teacher offender than the female teacher offender of CSA. Results revealed that there was a relationship between gender of the offender and more negative opinions regarding CSA when the offender was male. As discussed in Chapter 4, the findings indicated a relationship between being a male teacher and receiving a higher sentence. In addition, gender of the offender and perceptions of the CSA offense explained 35% of the variance related to criminal sentencing. All of the proposed hypotheses were supported by the results of this study. The main findings and other unexpected results are further discussed in this chapter.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of this study support some of the conclusions of the literature discussed in previous chapters regarding CSA and gender of the offender. This study had similar results to previously cited works measuring perceptions of CSA in a teacher-student scenario with a different population (see Anderson et al., 2018; Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). There is evidence in the current study of gender bias and influence of the victim's age as discussed in studies by Burgess-Proctor et al. (2017) and Fromuth et al. (2016), as well as evidence of cultural stereotypes on gender

that influence perceptions and criminal sentencing (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Leiber et al., 2018; Quintero-Johnson & Miller, 2016; Ruiz, 2016).

The results of this study also aligned with findings related to more lenient judgment of female sexual offenders (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2017; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017), and less severe sentences in general when compared to males (Leiber et al., 2018; Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). As discussed previously, there is consensus in the medical and scientific community that CSA is a serious problem and crime in many countries, with disastrous consequences to the victim's physical and mental health (Guha et al., 2020; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Meyer et al., 2017; Norton-Baker et al., 2019; Sabella, 2016; Shevlin et al., 2017; Sumner et al., 2016; Voogt & Klettke, 2017; WHO, 2017). In addition, CSA may affect children of ethnic minorities more severely due to cultural stereotypes and gender bias that discourages victims from disclosing the abuse or even realizing they are victims (Céspedes & Robles, 2016; Graham et al., 2016; Jeremiah et al., 2017; Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017; Wirtz et al., 2016).

The findings of the current study also revealed how CSA is generally condemned in Puerto Rican society, regardless of gender of the offender. Most participants of this study clearly expressed that they were against the actions described in the hypothetical case they read before answering the survey section of the instrument. Similar findings were present in previously discussed studies with other populations (Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The main results of this study relate to the research

questions and hypotheses. In the current study I found that participants attributed more responsibility and harm to the male teacher than the female teacher after reading a hypothetical case of CSA with a 14-year-old student. The participants also gave a higher sentence to the male offender than the female offender.

General attitudes towards CSA were negative regardless of gender of the offender. The results of the current study revealed that while the gender of the teacher was male and the perception towards CSA teacher sex offenses was unfavorable, the criminal sentence given increased. This finding supports previous studies demonstrating how CSA offenses are judged more harshly for male offenders (Mackelprang & Becker, 2017). The results may be related to how stereotypes on gender perpetuate the idea of women being less predatory or sexual, especially with children (Ruiz, 2016; Stemple et al., 2017). The findings may also be related to how most definitions of rape do not include the possibility of a male being raped by a woman (Cohen, 2016), a general perception of female sex offenses being less severe (Anderson et al., 2018; Fromuth et al., 2016; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017; Zack et al., 2018), or how sexual stereotypes can lead society to believe boys will enjoy the abuse as an affirmation of masculinity (Cohen, 2016). Burrow et al. (2020) distinguished that “failure to criticise hegemonic masculinity and how such impacts the disparate application of law reinforces patriarchy and ensures the continued denied victimisation of teenage male statutory rape victims” (p. 328).

Additional tests were completed to gain a more profound understanding of the results related to sentencing. Most respondents thought that the teachers should be incarcerated regardless of gender, but it was higher for the male teacher. The results

indicated that most participants agreed the male offender should receive more years in prison. In addition, the majority said a judge would probably give the male a higher sentence than the female. None of the participants who read the male teacher and minor female student case thought that he should not be registered as a sex offender. This finding was different for the female teacher. Fourteen of the participants ( $n = 14$ ) assigned to the female teacher and minor male student CSA case felt that she should not be registered as a sex offender. In addition, more participants thought that the male teacher deserved to be registered for a longer time on the sex offender registry than the female teacher.

As illustrated in Table 15, there were some specific questions in the instrument that yielded unexpected results. Approximately 19% ( $n = 50$ ) of all participants did not classify the male or female teacher as pedophiles. This finding suggested that some participants might not be clear on the definition of the word, they may not agree with the definition, or they might have difficulty applying it to this specific hypothetical case. Another possibility to consider is that they do not think the offender has a persistent and repetitive attraction to minors or the attraction is not exclusive to minors, which is a key part of the definition of pedophilia as a mental disorder in psychology (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is also not uncommon for participants to have a tendency of considering older minors less innocent or more sexually mature (Fromuth et al., 2016; Klettke et al., 2018; Voogt et al., 2020). Investigators have persistently concluded that the credibility ratings of CSA victims decrease with age, which means that young children are more likely to be believed than adolescents (Voogt et al., 2020). This

finding could also be related to how some people defend the idea that adults having sex with minors is not necessarily a negative experience and can be harmless (see Pilgrim, 2018).

Approximately 15% ( $n = 39$ ) of respondents did not think the teachers should have their license revoked, and 10.2% ( $n = 27$ ) were not sure. This finding was surprising because most disciplines have a code of ethics and improper sexual conduct can lead to the loss of a job and license. Furthermore, registration as a child sex offender will prohibit the offender from being close to schools and places where there are children, as explained to participants in the criminal sentencing section of the current study's instrument (see Appendix C). This finding may be due to a lack of knowledge of the law and ethics in the workplace, particularly in institutions that work with children.

The instrument used for this study asked participants about the responsibility of both the teacher offender and the student victim. An unexpected finding was that most participants thought the male or female student should assume responsibility for their participation in the relationship. A total of 64.5% ( $n = 175$ ) of respondents assigned to the male teacher and female student case (i.e., Mr. Guzmán) selected the *completely agree* or *agree* category. A total of 67.8% ( $n = 172$ ) of respondents assigned to the female teacher and male student case (i.e., Mrs. Guzmán) selected the *completely agree* or *agree* category. Respondents also demonstrated their tendency of attributing responsibility to the minor when asked if the parents of the victims should focus some of their anger on their child. For the Mr. Guzmán case, 66% ( $n = 179$ ) of respondents selected the *completely agree* or *agree* category, and for Mrs. Guzmán it was 67.3% ( $n = 171$ ). The

results suggested that participants of this study attribute significant responsibility to the minor for the CSA victimization.

The results revealed that many participants believe that a victim who is legally recognized as a minor—and therefore unable to consent by local legal guidelines—may be partly responsible for the abuse by an adult. Klettke et al. (2018) concluded that both men and women ascribed more culpability to sexual abuse victims who were 15 years or older, which is similar to this study's findings regarding culpability of a 14-year-old male or female victim. Contrary to these findings, Mackelprang and Becker (2017) did not conclude that their participants assigned responsibility to the victims. In the current study, I used Mackelprang and Becker's instrument for data collection, so this finding is particularly significant because it demonstrates the differences between the populations used. As explained by Jones and Trotman-Jemmott (2016), culture in the Caribbean is patriarchal, which can lead to gender inequality and beliefs that childhood ends at an earlier age. Research findings indicated that participants are more likely to believe younger victims, which suggests that adolescent victims must be prepared and protected in legal cases because they are sometimes perceived as almost adults even though the law defines them as children (Klettke et al., 2018).

Most respondents thought that it was not likely the victims would experience long-term psychological damage due to the CSA experience. For the Mr. Guzmán case, 81.2% ( $n = 220$ ) of respondents indicated that extended trauma was not likely, and for the Mrs. Guzmán case it was 72.4% ( $n = 184$ ). A small but significant number of participants did not think the students in the hypothetical case were victims. For the Mr. Guzmán



case, 7% ( $n = 19$ ) of respondents said that they completely disagreed or disagreed with the statement that stated that the student was a victim, and for the Mrs. Guzmán case it was 6.7% ( $n = 17$ ). These findings were surprising as it has been clearly established in scientific studies how the CSA experience disrupts development of the child which, in turn, creates vulnerabilities in functioning related to behavioral domains and leads to the development of mental health issues which can make them more susceptible to revictimization (Krahé & Berger, 2017; Papalia et al., 2018; Papalia et al., 2021).

Many participants of the current study identified the teacher as a victim. For Mr. Guzmán, 90.7% ( $n = 247$ ) of respondents indicated that they agreed the teacher was a victim, and for Mrs. Guzmán it was 87.8% ( $n = 223$ ). This finding suggests participants may have different interpretations of what it means to be a victim and may not know how the law defines an offender. A following question asked if the teacher needed mental health treatment instead of incarceration as a result of the relationship. Once again, the participants demonstrated empathy for the offenders and 59.8% ( $n = 162$ ) of respondents selected the completely agree or agree option for the Mr. Guzmán case, while 41% ( $n = 104$ ) selected the same option for the Mrs. Guzmán case.

When asked if it was possible to rape a person without the use of physical force or a weapon, most of the participants did not think it was possible. For the Mr. Guzmán case, 87.5% ( $n = 237$ ) of respondents indicated they agreed it was not possible, and for the Mrs. Guzmán case it was 87% ( $n = 221$ ). Another result of particular interest was related to cultural definitions regarding puberty and sexual development. Participants were asked if when a person reaches puberty, they should be able to make their own

decisions about their sexuality. For the Mr. Guzmán case, 66.8% ( $n = 181$ ) of respondents selected the *completely agree* or *agree* category, and for the Mrs. Guzmán case it was 65.4% ( $n = 166$ ).

The results of the current study were interpreted using the traumagenic dynamics model for CSA. The instrument used for data collection and some of the findings of this study represent the stages of the traumagenic dynamics model which are trauma, betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization (see Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). The four stages were present in the hypothetical case. Traumatic sexualization was present because it emphasized how the child's behavior changed due to the CSA experience; this included the child's confusion regarding the sexual activity and their feelings as well as the negative impact on their development. Betrayal was evident when the child was interviewed and there was a realization something wrong happened since the police were involved, which may lead to a consideration that there may have been some manipulation. This led to the powerlessness stage and stigmatization when the relationship was discovered and both parties were forced to disclose. The experience became negative in the family's life, there is a loss of power, and feelings of shame and guilt.

Although most participants of this study clearly reacted in a negative way to the hypothetical case, there were some contradictions that are worth noting and discussing. The traumagenic dynamics model contemplates how the family and society reacts to disclosure of the abuse and how important it is to manage the situation adequately to reduce trauma in the child (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). Considering the results of the

current study and the participants as representatives of society, their views can affect the outcome of the child victim. The findings of this study that most participants attributed responsibility to the minor and victim could be a cause for further trauma to the child. Furthermore, the fact most participants of this study did not think the child was likely to suffer long-term psychological consequences demonstrates profound ignorance on the subject. Such views may lead to minimizing the importance of the abuse and further victimization.

The traumagenic dynamics model proposes that, in direct response to the CSA experience, the child can develop psychological problems such as depression, difficulties with self-esteem, promiscuous behavior, and negative coping skills (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985). CSA victims are at a higher risk for violent and non-violent revictimization (Papalia et al., 2021). Klettke et al. (2018) expressed concern about their findings related to attribution of guilt to sexual abuse victims and the persistence of rape myths, because if people perceive some victims to be partly responsible of their sexual victimization they are at an increased risk of secondary traumatization. These findings are consistent with recent studies focusing on victimization and revictimization after abuse experiences (Palusci & Ilardi, 2019; Pittenger et al., 2018). Pittenger et al. (2018) further suggested that the victim's experience of disclosure in the first occurrence can have an influence on their decision to report a second occurrence, which can alter revictimization reporting rates.

Another area of particular focus for this study was to explore factors related to jurors' decisions and sentencing of CSA cases. This is why the focal concerns theory was

also included in the theoretical framework for this study. Focal concerns theory regarding sentencing proposes three areas are contemplated when making a legal decision: blameworthiness, community protection, and practical constraints and consequences (Steffensmeier et al., 1998). The three areas can be manipulated by other influences not based on the evidence. Factors that are not related to the legal evidence, usually called extralegal factors, can have a profound effect on judicial decisions for CSA cases (Jones et al., 2020). These factors are somewhat explored in pretrial surveys and during the *voir dire* process, which is a legal term for when the attorneys ask questions to potential jurors and choose those whom they believe will sympathize with their cause. *Voir dire* refers to speaking the truth, and it is a process in which potential jurors answer questions and their possible prejudices are measured to verify they can be objective, and each side has the opportunity to eliminate those who they think are biased (Lee, 2019).

The manual of federal sentencing guidelines specifically states characteristics of an offender related to their sex, race, religion, and social status should be irrelevant and not considered by a judge when sentencing (Vinyard, 2016). As evidenced by the focal concerns theory and related empirical studies previously discussed, there is evidence of extralegal factors influencing judicial decisions. Investigations on sentencing have consistently shown how factors deemed to be legally irrelevant have an impact and may be an issue that contributes to sentencing disparity (Leiber et al., 2018; Vinyard, 2016). Furthermore, related studies have determined juries are more lenient with women (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016), and other factors such as race, age, education, and perceived attractiveness can affect judicial

decisions (Franklin, 2017; Leiber et al., 2018; Mackelprang & Becker, 2017; Steffensmeier et al., 2016; van Wingerden et al., 2016). Applying the focal concerns theory on sentencing may help to understand the decision process of this study's participants and the diverse factors that influenced their answers.

The eligibility criteria for participation in the current study was the same used to participate as a juror in Puerto Rico (see Appendix D). Jones et al. (2020) determined that mock jurors who were victims of CSA were more empathetic to CSA victims and assigned more guilt to the offender. Anderson et al. (2018) discussed how CSA perpetrated by a teacher with a student is sometimes judged differently because people have diverse ideas about consent as well as culturally constructed definitions of the relationship. A study by Vinyard (2016) concluded that only 38.3% of child pornography offenders were sentenced to lifetime supervised release as allowed by law, demonstrating the judicial conflict and the possible influence of non-legal factors. These are just a few examples of influences that can deviate jurors and judges from focusing on the evidence. A lack of impartiality by a judge or jurors is a serious threat to a legal system that strives to be objective and fair.

The prevalence, severe harm, and cross-cultural recognition of CSA has led to acknowledgement of this heinous act as a type of severe maltreatment by many international organizations (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019). The findings of this study confirmed several topics which were discussed in previous chapters as well as in the hypotheses. The results demonstrated how people's perceptions of CSA are influenced by extralegal factors, how cultural stereotypes can alter an individual's views on sexual

offenses, and the prevalence of gender bias in relation to female sexual offenders. Less research has been dedicated to study CSA in male victims, and judicial opinions have reinforced incorrect sexist views of male victimization that belittles their experiences (Burrow et al., 2020). Ideas such as there are few negative effects for male CSA victims of female offenders, that minor males cannot be raped by a woman, or that an inappropriate sexual encounter is not rape because the victim had a biological response to sexual stimulation are just some of the examples discussed in the literature that confirm the abundance of fallacies regarding CSA (Lowe & Rogers, 2017; Walfield, 2018).

Other questions included in the survey served to extend the knowledge of this population's perceptions of CSA in relation to victim culpability, empathy towards offenders, and lack of appreciation of the severe consequences of the CSA experience. Gender differences were evidenced in regard to perceptions of the offender, but the results did not show this tendency when considering the minor victims. The finding that there were no statistically significant differences based on gender of the victim, since most participants attributed much responsibility to the victims regardless of gender, was an unexpected result that will shape future research in this area. The population chosen for this study were people living in Puerto Rico who were eligible for jury duty, and most of the participants identified as Puerto Ricans. Some of the results of this study may be related to current topics of public discussion in the island. Since 2006, Puerto Rico has been involved in a tumultuous debate related to gender and the possible inclusion of a gender perspectives curriculum in the education system, for which there has been a lot of opposition from conservative groups (Fontanet Maldonado et al., 2018).

The topic of victim culpability and revictimization is highlighted in the findings. The relationship between CSA and future revictimization has been an area of recent interest in related studies. A recent study of CSA in Australia determined that female CSA victims are at a higher risk of sexual revictimization, while male CSA victims are at a higher risk for both violent and non-violent revictimization (Papalia et al., 2021). Klettke et al. (2018) expressed concern about their findings related to attribution of guilt to sexual abuse victims and the persistence of rape myths, because if people perceive some victims to be partly responsible of their sexual victimization, then they are at an increased risk of secondary traumatization. These findings are consistent with recent studies focusing on victimization and revictimization after abuse experiences (Palusci & Ilardi, 2019; Pittenger et al., 2018). Pittenger et al. (2018) further suggested that the victim's experience of disclosure in the first occurrence can have an influence on their decision to report a second occurrence, which can alter revictimization reporting rates.

The media can revictimize by the way crimes are reported because it influences how a society perceives the victim (Betancourt Díaz & Rodríguez Ramos, 2020). Victims of sexual crimes are prone to revictimization due to overwhelming prejudice and stereotypes related to gender and sexuality in general. Examples may include—but are not limited to—implying that the victim is responsible, sexist assumptions regarding gender roles, revealing private information about the victim, reporting the facts in a theatrical manner, sharing information about the victim's lifestyle to influence public perception, and minimizing the perpetrator's actions or the harm caused to the victim(s). Betancourt Díaz and Rodríguez Ramos (2020) highlighted how this type of symbolic

violence against the victim is a type of revictimization often seen in Puerto Rico's local media. A gruesome news narrative implying that the victim is responsible without a comprehensive analysis of the social phenomena and systemic structures that perpetuate it, only makes the situation worse by numbing the audience and trivializing violent crime (Betancourt Díaz & Rodríguez Ramos, 2020).

When considering the different sources of influence of how this study's population perceives victims and perpetrators, television shows focused on gossip and entertainment information are distinctive in Puerto Rico. Betancourt Díaz and Rodríguez Ramos (2020) argued that these shows have sensationalist tendencies that can sway public opinion on social issues and may alter their perceptions. These types of shows are common in Spanish-speaking countries and have long been criticized for the way they handle sensitive topics related to crime, victimization, and other social issues. When violence and social phenomena are mediatized and sensationalized, the media can shape the way we know and interpret the world (Betancourt Díaz & Rodríguez Ramos, 2020). The influences that shape individuals' views come from many sources and can alter their understanding and perceptions of CSA cases.

Pilgrim (2018) stressed the social acceptance of adult-minor sexual interactions by highlighting a minority group that does not condemn them. Groups who defend what they sometimes call "intergenerational sex" argue that the sexual experience can be harmless and positive for the child, and most people condemn it due to moral panic (Pilgrim, 2018). The moral panic theory has been used by these groups to justify how society's negative attitude towards sexual activity between minors and adults stems from



how a group of people becomes defined as a threat due to societal values and moral barricades, but it fades away eventually. Pilgrim (2018) argued that the moral panic theory does not apply to CSA and is not valid in the context of child-adult sexual interactions, even though it is widely used by these minority groups. The scientific community's consensus regarding CSA is, as discussed previously, that it has long-term, harmful consequences for the victim. Nonetheless, there is a strong possibility this kind of message influences people's views regarding sexual acts between a child and an adult.

Another point to consider is how the issue of male sexual victimization is often minimized and ignored in different ways. When male victims of CSA undergo questioning of their status as a victim, it can increase the psychological consequences and prevent them from disclosing (Hohendorff et al., 2017). Pereda and Tamarit (2019) discussed how the prevailing ideology remains because mass media rarely addresses male sexual victimization, most studies and statistics focus on female sexual victimization, and the possibility of a female sexual aggressor is mostly ignored. The findings of this study can lead to more interest in research related to child sexual abuse, revictimization, offender culpability, perceptions of female sexual perpetrators and the lack of attention to male victims of CSA.

### **Limitations of the Study**

All scientific studies have limitations and should be discussed clearly and objectively by the investigator. One of the principal limitations of this study is that the methodology used cannot determine causation. This is a common issue in social sciences studies that do not use an experimental design, but it does not mean the study is invalid

(Bryman, 2016; Frey, 2018). The current study was proposed and completed using a quantitative cross sectional, correlational design. The results showed there are relationships between the variables. The methodology used and results obtained do not provide evidence to support claims of causation related to CSA, sentencing, or perceptions. This limitation was previously discussed and considered from the beginning of the investigation process. It was not a primary concern because it was not a goal of this study to establish causation on the sensitive topics explored in this investigation.

Generalizability is another factor to consider. Even though the number of participants was higher than expected and there is evidence of a diverse sample, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Puerto Rico. The results of this study best represent the views of middle-aged women in Puerto Rico who are eligible for jury duty, since most of the participants were in this category. Women constitute 53% of the population in Puerto Rico, according to the census (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Nonetheless, the recruitment goal of this study was a minimum of 288 and it was greatly surpassed with a total of 525 participants. Having more participants increased the external validity of this study and makes the results representative of adults eligible for jury duty in Puerto Rico.

The participants of this study recognized CSA as a negative experience and a harmful crime deserving of punishment, but most of them did not think the victims would have long term psychological damage due to the experience. Although a smaller amount, some of the participants did not identify the minor students as victims and did not think the teachers were pedophiles. As discussed previously, many participants identified the

teacher as a victim. These contradictory findings suggest there could be some influence of social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is a type of response bias that can influence people to misrepresent their true opinions in order to give the appearance of a more favorable and socially acceptable view (Charles & Dattalo, 2018). Social desirability bias might explain why the general response to the CSA hypothetical case is unfavorable, but there is evidence of conflicting views when considering specific questions on the responsibility of the victim, the consequences of the CSA experience, and the role of the teacher.

As discussed by Charles and Dattalo (2018), studies with sensitive topics are prone to this issue because the questions may feel intrusive and uncomfortable, so the participant might skew their answer to reflect a more socially acceptable attitude. To minimize the effect of social desirability bias, this study was completed following various recommendations. Primarily, very little information was given to the participants about the objectives and specific variables of this study to minimize influence. Participation was voluntary and completely anonymous via online recruitment using a survey instrument; no compensation was offered. Since self-reported survey instruments can be altered by bias (Frey, 2018), it is a limitation of this study. Participants could have answered untruthfully even though anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. These factors cannot be controlled, but steps were taken to minimize their impact.

Another method used in this study to minimize social desirability bias was context. A context strategy is implemented when fewer upsetting questions are asked at first and the questioning slowly proceeds to the sensitive issues; in this manner focus on

the main questions of interest may be reduced (Charles & Dattalo, 2018). It is a way to reduce defensiveness of participants. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, social desirability bias is a usual concern in survey studies because the participant may intentionally misrepresent their opinions (Frey, 2018). The steps taken to minimize the influence of social desirability bias may explain part of the results and the incongruities in perceptions as evidenced by the participants' answers. For example, this would explain why most participants had negative general attitudes towards CSA, yet they demonstrated empathy for the offenders and were highly judgmental towards the victims by attributing responsibility and harm to the minors.

When conducting online research, De Man et al. (2021) recommended using a variety of platforms for recruitment and using a previously validated instrument. A variety of social media platforms were used to recruit participants and due to the nature of these platforms, other users shared the survey, resulting in more interest in the investigation. As recommended by Gelinis et al. (2017), maintaining investigator transparency and assuring participant privacy was an important part of using social media recruitment for this study. In addition, a previously validated scale was used with permission of the investigators. The scales used for this investigation were originally developed by Mackelprang and Becker (2017) with an internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha of between .60 and .70. The reliability index for the scales used in this study indicate a Cronbach's alpha of .817. This is significant, because by using the previously validated instrument and making some changes, the reliability of the scale was increased. In this way a possible limitation was addressed.

Conducting online research on a sensitive topic requires a strong sense of ethical responsibility and an objective analysis of the potential benefits and risks (Sipes et al., 2020). Using the internet for social science research can be considered a limitation. As highlighted by Sipes et al. (2020), conducting online research of sensitive topics requires providing protection to participants as well as the researcher. The implications of the results can cause discomfort and participants as well as researchers should seek support or counseling as needed. To minimize these issues, information on how to proceed if the topics caused discomfort was included in the consent form. In addition, the investigation was subjected to scrutiny and supervision by the IRB. The investigator's contact information was provided as well as contact information for the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study cannot provide a simple or specific answer as to why CSA happens, which exact factors influence perceptions, or why exactly the participants had such varying reactions to the hypothetical cases reviewed. They do provide scientific evidence of correlation between the variables and unexpected findings related to perceptions of CSA in Puerto Rico. The findings also extend knowledge on this issue with an underrepresented population related to a topic that is scarcely studied in Puerto Rico from a forensic, criminological, and behavioral context. Recommendations are made based on the results and taking into consideration the strengths of the investigation as well as the limitations.

The age of the victim, the sexual gratification component, and the abuse factor are what helps to define CSA (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019). This may not be common knowledge in the population chosen for this study. One recommendation inspired by the findings is to conduct further research related to knowledge of CSA in Puerto Rico by the general population. Although this study's instrument included definitions and explanations of important legal terms, some of the results suggest many of the participants may not fully comprehend the extensive damage to CSA victims and the legal responsibility of adult CSA offenders. CSA is such a complex problem that it would be ideal for legal and sociological scholars to take an interest in related studies, as well as more interest from investigators in different disciplines. Maybe even an interdisciplinary collaboration in order to study CSA in different ways and increase the knowledge of this phenomena in Puerto Rico.

Another recommendation is to conduct a similar study using qualitative methodology or mixed methods. Although this is a sensitive topic and steps must be taken to ensure the wellbeing of participants, a qualitative approach would provide a deeper understanding of the issue via interviews with open ended questions. In addition, a study using a mock jury would be ideal for further exploring the influences of extralegal factors and gender differences for criminal punishment. A study similar to the investigation conducted by Anderson et al. (2018) using a mock jury would be an interesting way to address it. During the literature review process for this study, no investigations of CSA with mock juries in Puerto Rico were found. A possible weakness of this study is the way data were collected using an online survey. The aforementioned

options could provide much more insight into the intricacies of perceptions of CSA, criminal punishment of CSA, and differences by gender.

A recommendation based on a strength of this study relates to the information discovered due to additional tests and questions included in the instrument that are not directly related to the primary research questions. This quantitative study employed a previously validated instrument and rigorous statistical analyses to delve deeper into the main topics. Many of the additional findings suggest participants think a minor is partly responsible of their sexual victimization and therefore not necessarily a victim. As stated by Voogt et al. (2020), “It is clear that perceptions of child victim credibility are influenced by extra-legal factors such as child and defendant gender and victim age, likely representing misconceptions and stereotypes regarding children’s cognitive abilities, and propensity to lie” (p. 837). A strong recommendation for future research is to address these findings with a more ample and diverse sample of adults in Puerto Rico.

Another area of particular interest is male victimization. As a society, very little is known about adolescent males who are victims of female perpetrated CSA due, in part, to a patriarchal definition given to sexual offenses in which females are characterized as the victims of such crimes (Burrow et al., 2020). As discussed by Jones and Trotman-Jemmott (2016), Caribbean countries associate male sexual victimization with homosexuality and other gender or sexual orientation misconceptions. There is evidence of persistent sexist beliefs in the Caribbean related to when childhood ends, if a child can consent or not, gender constructs influencing low reporting rates, and the idea that

women are not capable of being CSA offenders (Jones & Trotman-Jemmott, 2016; Lahtinen et al., 2018; Ruiz, 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

Most systems in place to handle child welfare are oriented towards reaction when CSA occurs and not as much to prevention. As discussed by Herrenkohl et al. (2021), it is ideal to focus strongly on prevention and early intervention, but the economic and political implications of such actions make it more difficult to achieve. In no way would a greater focus on prevention minimize the importance of investigation and intervention when a child is harmed, but it would possibly aid in reducing dangerous situations, improve quality of life for these children, and ultimately reduce governments costs (Herrenkohl et al., 2021). Assink et al. (2019) highlighted the need for clinicians to adequately evaluate the risks of CSA so prevention efforts can be implemented. It is necessary to understand more about risk factors for CSA and how to reduce the possibility of further victimization.

More can be done in the legal arena to dissuade and reduce the probability of CSA occurrences. Educators have a responsibility to teach, but more should be done by administrators to ensure that staff who are in constant contact with minors can detect and take the correct steps to report a suspected case of CSA (Fontarigo et al., 2018). By providing them with knowledge and training related to sexual education, they can become better at detecting and preventing abuse. For teachers who might engage in CSA with a student, a continued emphasis by the administration of the seriousness of this offense and the consequences for both the minor and the adult might be another way to prevent sexual abuse. Ignoring the problem or avoiding the topic will continue to



preserve a taboo environment which puts children at risk. When a population has difficulty understanding what consent means and how it is defined, it is much more pliable to different types of influence.

Voogt et al. (2020) suggested that public education campaigns are a beneficial way to clarify misconceptions and address the prevalence of personal bias regarding the credibility of CSA victims. A study by Fontanet Maldonado et al. (2018) concluded there is a profound lack of knowledge related to sexual education and gender identity topics in Puerto Rico. Therefore, another recommendation based on the results of this study is to improve education efforts related to the topic of CSA, its psychological outcomes for victims, and the legal consequences of this crime. There are four areas of importance that define CSA: (a) a power relationship enforced by the offender, (b) inequality in position, (c) the child's vulnerability, and (d) the inability to consent (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019).

I suggest a more aggressive approach towards education and prevention that includes information on the phenomenon of sexual grooming of minors, reasons why the abuse goes unnoticed, and why sexual aggression does not require the use of force. No developed society should continue to perpetuate rape myths that lead to victim blaming and stereotypes of CSA. The results of this study can provide a guide to addressing the problem for future research, inspire changes in public policy, and efforts to increase prevention of CSA towards effecting positive social change in Puerto Rico.

### **Implications**

The objectives of this study were achieved and the results in relation to the research question were as expected, but some results were unexpected. The findings of this study have severe implications related to participants views on gender differences of the offender, victim culpability, psychological consequences, and criminal sentencing of CSA. The potential for positive social change is vast due to the scarcity of studies on this topic and with the chosen population, as well as the implications of these results. Topics related to sex offenses and sex in general are taboo in Puerto Rico and must be addressed in relation to the social and legal context (Fontanet Maldonado, 2018).

On an individual level and family level, comprehending the results could have an impact in the way victims and offenders are managed by their community, law-and-order agencies as well as organizations who aid victims. The results of this study could be used to make societal changes and recognize how possible bias can have a negative effect in the way these offenses are judged and handled. Government agencies in charge of addressing this social issued can associate these results to a severe need for education regarding rape myths, gender stereotypes, and the long-term harm caused by CSA. More can be done towards designing prevention programs and working with the community to face their misconceptions and address them in a prosocial manner. Such actions and considerations have the potential to alter people's opinions on the topic and lead to major changes in the way CSA prevention efforts are applied, and how CSA offenders and victims are handled.

The theoretical implications of these findings and their clear relation to the variables is an area of opportunity. The alignment with the theoretical frameworks in this study could be used for changes in treatment and a better application of the traumagenic dynamics model for CSA cases. I contend the results of this study could have a strong impact at the organizational level. There are many organizations in Puerto Rico dedicated to protecting children and victims of crime. Further, the results could provide a better understanding of how the focal concerns theory can be applied to study sentencing disparity in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican society will benefit from a scientific study in psychology that provides insight into the views of the population and it is an opportunity to reflect on why so many participants displayed sexist opinions and ascribed responsibility to minors for their victimization. A recommendation for practice related to this finding is to implement a stronger focus on recognizing the existence of female sexual offenders and equating the harm caused with a male sexual offender. Sexist attitudes prevalent in patriarchal cultures may hinder people's perceptions related to the level of harm interpreted based on the gender of the offender. In addition, there should be a stronger emphasis on educating the public on why children and adolescents are unable to consent to sexual acts, and the harms of victim blaming.

CSA has been associated with an increased risk for perpetration of sexual aggression and revictimization (Krahé & Berger, 2017; Papalia et al., 2017; Sumner et al., 2016). The presence of mental health disorders has consistently been associated with a higher risk of revictimization in CSA victims and the development of disorders such as

personality and anxiety disorders, as well as posttraumatic stress disorders, affective disorders, and substance abuse (Papalia et al., 2021; Pittenger et al., 2018). The results of this study will be used to inform and educate the population in related topics and advocate for changes in practice. Being able to implement positive social change by disseminating and widely discussing these results is a priority. The plan is to find local outlets in which the results can be presented and discussed. Action will be taken to publish these results as well. Steps will be taken to use media outlets, professional settings, and other platforms available for discussion of this study. An additional goal is to partner with an organization to provide information regarding CSA to parents, teachers, caregivers, law enforcement, and other adults in leadership positions.

### **Conclusion**

A quantitative research method was used to measure potential correlations between gender of the offender and perceptions of CSA. Further, a moderation analysis was completed to evaluate the role of gender in relation to criminal sentencing. The findings demonstrated a general unfavorable perception towards the CSA hypothetical cases. The gender of the offender was shown to influence perceptions of harm, general attitudes of responsibility, and criminal sentencing. The results showed that most participants were more punitive towards the male offender, ascribing more harm and responsibility in the Mr. Guzmán case. For the moderation analysis, results showed that criminal sentencing increased when the offender was male, and the participant had an unfavorable perception of the offense.

The current study's findings confirmed participants who read the female teacher offender case were less punitive towards the teacher. However, an unexpected discovery was that male and female victimization of minors were almost equally dismissed in this study in the areas related to responsibility of the victim and CSA consequences. The results could imply a general hesitancy to believe older CSA victims and misconceptions about the child's ability to consent. The results also demonstrated how most participants did not consider the child would have long term mental health consequences due to the CSA experience, as well as a presence of victim-blaming. These attitudes imply there is a profound lack of comprehension about the mental health needs of victims, and a tendency of attributing responsibility and blame to the victim in CSA cases.

A review done by Assink et al. (2019) determined some factors that put children at a high risk for CSA had a family history of previous CSA occurrences, parents with mental health issues, intimate partner violence in the home, low-competence parenting, and a non-nuclear family structure. A meta-analysis study by Ventus et al. (2017) discussed how long-term CSA victims are more prone to other unfavorable experiences in their upbringing. A recent study on parents' attitudes of CSA found Hispanic/Latino parents felt more uncomfortable than White/Non-Hispanic parents in discussing sex-related topics with their children (Prikhidko & Kenny, 2021). An individual's background is important when it comes to perceptions of CSA, and studies have found that people who are very focused on law and policy are generally pessimistic about CSA prevention while victim-focused individuals are optimistic (Socia et al., 2020). This could explain part of the findings of this study.

All the previous findings discussed throughout this project, as well as the findings of the current study, should be discussed with the public so that individuals can understand the many factors surrounding CSA, child endangerment, and how diverse influences on our perceptions can put children at a higher risk. Prevention of CSA needs to be a major focus in Puerto Rico. There is significant shame associated with CSA for both victims and offenders. It is necessary to develop strategies to educate adults about CSA and their role in protecting children through prevention efforts (Cheung et al., 2019).

Recent studies have discussed how educators are not adequately prepared to recognize and take action to prevent CSA and child maltreatment since many do not take action for fear of being wrong, or they try to manage the issue without involving the proper authorities (Fontarigo et al., 2018). Schools and other institutions in constant contact with children should establish clear guidelines regarding CSA prevention, detection, and intervention. Difficulties associated with CSA occurrences cost the United States an estimated nine billion dollars annually in criminal justice, community initiatives, and healthcare costs (Letourneau et al., 2018). The psychological and sociological implications are difficult to measure in numbers, but all studies cited in this work provide evidence of the magnitude of the problem.

Overpowering and patriarchal ideals related to stereotypes on sexuality are still very present in judicial decisions. One common myth is that teenage boys should accept sexual advances by adult women or that they do not need protection (Burrow et al., 2020). Horan and Goodman-Delahunty (2020) proposed a way to educate juries and

minimize the effect of sexual assault myths is to prepare the evidence well—especially the medical evidence and being able to present all the evidence in a judicious manner—and to assume jurors want hard evidence as well as ensure a thorough medical examination of the victim is completed. Interestingly, even when the female perpetrator suffers consequences, the focus is often on degrading the female perpetrator for her impropriety and not the damage done to the male victim (Burrow et al., 2020). In addition, judges have difficulty labeling teenage males as CSA victims and often portray the female perpetrator as someone who made a mistake but meant no harm, minimizing both the minor males' experience and the actions of the female offender (Burrow et al., 2020). Based on the results of the current study, age as an influencing variable on CSA perceptions should be further studied with the population of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican authorities have been ineffective in the prevention and management of CSA for decades. Recent changes have led to more organizations getting involved with this social issue. In 2013, the approval of Law 158 gave way to the creation of integrated services centers for CSA victims in Puerto Rico (*Ley 158-2013 Ley Habilitadora de los Centros de Servicios Integrados a Menores Víctimas de Abuso Sexual*). The law also established the responsibility of the diverse government agencies regarding CSA situations. Unfortunately, the law has had little impact on a problem that is much more complex and has received criticism. De Jesús Rosa (2018) recommended making changes to public policy of CSA in Puerto Rico to redirect it towards an emphasis on human rights and integral protection, as well as a more inclusive approach of all involved parties and a stronger focus on prevention of CSA. Medina-Sustache et al. (2017) emphasized

efforts to eradicate a minor's exposure to maltreatment and protect them as a vulnerable group by redirecting attention to prevention programs, psychoeducation, and more research initiatives.

Sexual education in Puerto Rican schools should include age-appropriate discussions about gender and sexuality starting in preschool and elementary school; they currently do not and there is significant silence regarding these topics (Muriel Vega, 2019). Even basic sexual education, such as learning to call their body parts by their correct terms, can be a way to prevent sexual abuse. There is no need to automatically sexualize the body or associate sexual education with sexual acts. Children can learn about their own body and its functions without the sexual implications that some conservative groups associate with this type of education.

One study on sexual education in public schools found that some teachers used the Bible as a tool for the class, demonstrating how religion is deeply engrained in the education system in Puerto Rico and there is little supervision towards maintaining separation of church and state (Ortiz Resto, 2017). The same study also determined students in high school reported most didactic material related to sexual education was uninteresting to them because it related to biology, prevention of sexual behaviors, and frequently focused on abstinence.

Muriel Vega (2019) proposed that educators in Puerto Rico can address these topics according to the grade and age of the student. Children from preschool to first grade should learn about their body parts, the meaning of gender and gender equity, and examples of diversity in family composition. Children can be engaged in conversations



about how toys are not gender exclusive, as well as showing them how both boys and girls can achieve similar goals regarding hobbies, careers, domestic tasks, and studies (Muriel Vega, 2019). Education empowers children and knowing more about the development of their bodies, its capabilities, and other topics related to gender and sexuality is a powerful weapon against those who seek to take advantage of them. Education can also empower their parents and caregivers. There is an urgent need for these topics to be widely discussed without the presence of taboos, cultural stereotypes and criticism from conservative groups. Cultural influences have the power to affect our views of CSA which can impact reporting rates, as well as the lack of urgency in addressing more aggressive strategies for CSA prevention (Liang et al., 2016).

Current public policy related to sexual education in Puerto Rico is not inclusive and mostly avoids any inclusion of sexual topics that are not heteronormative and conservative, which hinders the discussion of evidence-based information while promoting disinformation and taboos (Muriel Vega, 2019; Nieves-Rolón, 2012). It is also necessary to include a focus on cultural competency in any educational efforts with professionals working with CSA related issues because culture has been consistently shown to influence our reactions to CSA (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017).

Researchers in Puerto Rico have expressed concern about the ignorance related to gender topics in the general population, the persistence of sexist attitudes, and the deficient sexual education programs currently in place because they leave young students unprepared for dealing with peer pressure, sexual abuse, unsafe sex practices, unwanted pregnancies, and gender violence (Fontanet Maldonado et al., 2018; Muriel Vega, 2019;

Nieves-Rolón, 2012; Ortiz Resto, 2017). There is much action needed in this area and many opportunities for future investigations and changes in public policy which may lead to social change. This study is just one of the steps taken toward improving knowledge about CSA, addressing the impact of perceptions of responsibility and harm, exposing gender differences in CSA sentencing, and taking necessary action to prevent sexual victimization of children in Puerto Rico.

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### **Appendix A: Permission to Use Survey and Scale Instruments**

Re: Instrument for investigation Emily Mackelprang  
Mon 7/23/2018 1019 PM  
To: Sigrid Vazquez

Hi Sigrid, I've spoken with my co-author and it sounds like we can honor your request.  
Thank you,

Emily Mackelprang, Ph.D.  
Licensed Psychologist Tacoma, WA

Emily Mackelprang  
Sun 8/12/2018 12:13 PM

Mackelprang Beauty Beholder Survey.pdf  
502 KB  
Hi Sigrid,

Attached is the survey that I used for the study. This is the version for Ms. Anderson/Christopher, so the names/pronouns would obviously need to be changed for the male teacher/female student variation. There's also a Sexual Double Standard Scale, though I don't believe I actually used this in the final analyses for the study. Please let me know if there is anything else that you need.

Thank you, and good luck!

Emily Mackelprang, Ph.D.  
Licensed Psychologist Tacoma, WA

## Appendix B: Original Vignette, Survey and Scales

(Original English version from Mackelprang & Becker, 2017)

*This appendix includes the sections and questions from the original survey instrument that were used for this study.*

Michelle Anderson is a 35-year-old junior high school teacher who was recently arrested and charged with Sexual Conduct with a Minor. The minor, Christopher Simmons, is a 14-year-old boy who was a student in her English class this past year.

Christopher's mother discovered the relationship when she saw a text message on his cell phone from Ms. Anderson saying "I need u inside me now." His mother proceeded to look through her son's text history and found several such text messages, including "I love you" and "tonite @ my place."

Christopher's mother immediately called the school to report what she had found. The school then called the police. Christopher was picked up from school and taken to the Child Advocacy Center to be interviewed. Although he initially denied having a sexual relationship with Ms. Anderson, when he was confronted with the text messages his mother had found, he told interviewers that he and Ms. Anderson began having a sexual relationship approximately 6 months ago. He said that it began when Ms. Anderson asked him to come to her classroom after school for extra tutoring. She suggested that he come for tutoring after school 3 times a week. Christopher stated that Ms. Anderson sometimes rubbed his shoulders while he was working on his homework. Christopher was uncomfortable with this physical contact, but he told interviewers that he knew it "must be ok" because Ms. Anderson was a teacher. After several weeks of this behavior, Ms. Anderson kissed Christopher one evening in the classroom after school. Again, Christopher states that he was uncomfortable, but he liked the way the kissing made him feel. After kissing for a few weeks, he stated that Ms. Anderson and he began having oral sex (both giving and receiving). He stated that they had oral sex approximately 3 times before having sexual intercourse for the first time. He estimated that they had had sexual intercourse at least a dozen times, usually in her locked classroom after school. Christopher told interviewers that he had initially been uncomfortable with the relationship, but that because Ms. Anderson was a teacher, he did not think anyone would believe him if he were to tell them about the sex. He stated that he did not like having sex with Ms. Anderson at first, but that he now is in love with her. He tells interviewers that he and Ms. Anderson plan to marry when he is old enough.

Christopher has always been an A and B student, but his grades slipped the second half of the school year, and he now has three Cs. He has also started cutting classes and sneaking

out of the house at night. Christopher has never had a girlfriend, but he attended two school dances last year with female friends. He says that he loves Ms. Anderson and does not want to get her in trouble.

Christopher's parents are incredibly angry. They say that Ms. Anderson raped their son "over and over again" and that they want her to "rot in jail" for what she did. They are very worried about their son. After Christopher's interview, police brought Ms. Anderson to their precinct for questioning. Ms. Anderson originally denied having a sexual relationship with Christopher, saying that someone else must have stolen her phone and sent the sexual text messages to him. However, after police questioned her further, she began to cry and admitted to "making love" to Christopher "maybe six or seven times," saying, "I know I shouldn't have done it, but I really love him. He wants to marry me." When asked if she thought it was wrong for a 35-year-old teacher to have sex with a 14-year-old boy, she stated, "You have to believe me—I just couldn't help myself."

### *Notes*

1. For the male sexual offender vignette, only the names and pronouns of the teacher and student were altered to reflect a male offender and female student. The vignettes were otherwise identical.

### **Section 1: Crime-Related Questions**

1. What do you think about Ms. Anderson and incarceration?
  - a) Ms. Anderson absolutely deserves to be incarcerated
  - b) Ms. Anderson probably deserves to be incarcerated
  - c) Ms. Anderson might deserve to be incarcerated
  - d) Unsure of whether or not Ms. Anderson deserves to be incarcerated
  - e) Ms. Anderson might **not** deserve to be incarcerated
  - f) Ms. Anderson probably does **not** deserve to be incarcerated
  - g) Ms. Anderson absolutely does **not** deserve to be incarcerated
2. How long do you think Ms. Anderson deserves to be incarcerated?
  - a. I do not believe Ms. Anderson deserves to be incarcerated
  - b. Less than 1 year
  - c. 1-3 years
  - d. 4-6 years
  - e. 7-9 years
  - f. 10-12 years
  - g. More than 12 years
3. How many years exactly do you believe Ms. Anderson deserves to be incarcerated? a. \_\_\_\_\_

*Text: A judge may choose to release a defendant from jail and allow the defendant to live at home throughout the legal process. This is known as releasing a defendant “on their own recognizance.” For some crimes (usually crimes in which an offender is violent, dangerous, or cases in which the judge believes the defendant may try to leave the jurisdiction in order to avoid a trial), the judge will “remand” the defendant, keeping them in jail until their trial. In other cases, a judge may allow a defendant to go home while awaiting trial, as long as the defendant pays “bail.” This means that the defendant will have to pay a certain amount of money before being released. Judges do this in an attempt to guarantee that the defendant will show up for his/her trial. As long as the defendant shows up for trial, s/he gets the bail money back. If the defendant cannot afford bail, s/he will remain in jail until trial.*

4. If the judge requires Ms. Anderson to pay bail, how much do you believe bail should be? (i.e., how much money do you believe Ms. Anderson should have to pay in order to get out of jail while awaiting trial?)

- a. Less than \$1000
- b. \$1,000-\$5,000
- c. \$5,000-\$10,000
- d. \$10,000-\$15,000
- e. \$15,000-\$20,000
- f. \$20,000-\$25,000
- g. More than \$25,000

5. How much bail exactly do you believe Ms. Anderson should have to pay? (if you do not believe Ms. Anderson should have to pay bail, enter “0”)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

6. If a judge were to sentence Ms. Anderson to serve time in prison, how long do you think the sentence would be?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1-3 years
- c. 4-6 years
- d. 7-9 years
- e. 10-12 years
- f. 13-15 years
- g. More than 15 years

7. Exactly how many years do you think a judge would sentence Ms. Anderson to serve in prison? (if you believe a judge would **not** sentence Ms. Anderson to serve time in prison, enter “0”) a. \_\_\_\_\_



*Text: In Arizona, individuals who have been convicted of sexual crimes are often required to register as a sex offender. This requires them to provide their address to police, who then notify the community of the offender's presence. Registered sex offenders are not allowed to live within a certain distance of facilities in which children are present, such as a school, daycare, or rec center. Their picture, address, and criminal information are posted online, where they are accessible to the public. Most individuals who are required to register as a sex offender find it to be a stressful experience that can make their lives significantly more difficult.*

8. Do you believe Ms. Anderson should be required to register as a sex offender?

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Maybe yes
4. Don't know/Unsure
5. Maybe not
6. Probably not
7. Definitely not

9. For how long do you believe Ms. Anderson should be required to register as a sex offender?

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1-3 years
3. 4-6 years
4. 7-9 years
5. 10-12 years
6. 13-15 years
7. More than 15 years

10. Exactly how many years do you think Ms. Anderson should have to be registered as a sex offender? (if you believe Ms. Anderson should **not** have to be registered as a sex offender, enter "0")

a. \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 2: Likert Questions

You will now read a number of statements. You will be asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting a number. The numbers correspond to the following: **(note: in the survey, these questions will be presented randomly, and will not be labeled with the Scale name/number).**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
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### Scale 1: Teacher responsibility

1. Ms. Anderson is probably a pedophile
2. Ms. Anderson forced Christopher to have sex with her
3. Ms. Anderson probably didn't mean to harm Christopher.
4. Ms. Anderson should have her teaching license revoked (i.e., she should not be able to teach anymore)
5. Ms. Anderson probably would have stopped if Christopher had only told her to.

### Scale 2: Student responsibility

1. Christopher should take responsibility for the part he played in this relationship.
2. Christopher probably should have told someone about the relationship
3. Christopher's parents should consider directing some of their anger at their son for the role he played in this relationship.
4. Christopher wanted to have sex with Ms. Anderson.
5. If Christopher was uncomfortable, it was his responsibility to stop going to Ms. Anderson's classroom after school

### Scale 3: Harm to Student

1. It will be difficult for Christopher to have a "normal" romantic relationship in the future
2. Christopher probably won't have any long-lasting psychological damage as result of this relationship
3. Christopher is a victim
4. Christopher's friends probably think that he is lucky to have had sex with Ms. Anderson
5. Christopher's parents should probably take him to see a therapist

### Scale 4: Harm to Teacher

1. This relationship was probably emotionally harmful to Ms. Anderson
2. Christopher's behavior was harmful to Ms. Anderson
3. Ms. Anderson is a victim
4. Ms. Anderson needs mental health treatment as a result of this relationship, not incarceration
5. After being with Christopher, it will probably be difficult for Ms. Anderson to have a "normal" romantic relationship in the future

**Scale 5: Attitudes about this type of relationship in general**

1. There is no situation in which it's okay for a teacher to have sex with a student
2. Without the use of physical force or a weapon, a person can't really be raped.
3. Once an individual has hit puberty, they should be able to make their own decisions about their sexuality
4. People tend to make too big a deal out of teacher/student relationships
5. There should be harsher legal punishments for teachers who have sex with students

## Appendix C: Adapted Instrument in Spanish

### Vignette, Survey and Scales

*This appendix includes the exact survey instruments used in the current study.*

#### **Caso #1**

*(Adaptado de Mackelprang & Becker, 2017)*

Camila Guzmán, de 35 años, es una maestra de escuela secundaria que fue recientemente arrestada y acusada de Agresión Sexual con un Menor. El menor, Sebastián Hernández, es un niño de 14 años que fue estudiante en su clase de inglés el año pasado.

La madre de Sebastián descubrió la relación cuando vio un mensaje de texto de la Sra. Guzmán a su teléfono celular diciendo "Te necesito dentro de mí ahora". Su madre procedió a revisar el historial de textos de su hijo y encontró varios mensajes de texto incluyendo "Te amo" y "Esta noche en mi casa". La madre de Sebastián llamó inmediatamente a la escuela para informar sobre los textos que había encontrado. La escuela llamó a la policía. Luego de recoger a Sebastián en la escuela, lo llevaron a la División de Delitos Sexuales y Maltrato de Menores del Negociado de la Policía de Puerto Rico para ser entrevistado.

Inicialmente, Sebastián negó haber tenido una relación sexual con la Sra. Guzmán, pero al confrontarlo con los mensajes de texto que su madre había encontrado, les dijo a los entrevistadores que él y la Sra. Guzmán comenzaron a tener una relación sexual hacía aproximadamente 6 meses. Explicó que todo comenzó cuando la Sra. Guzmán le pidió que fuera a su salón de clases después de la escuela para tutorías adicionales. Ella sugirió que viniera a tutoría después de la escuela, 3 veces a la semana. Sebastián declaró que la Sra. Guzmán a veces le frotaba los hombros mientras él estaba trabajando en su tarea. Aunque se sentía incómodo con este contacto físico, pensaba que "debía estar bien" porque la Sra. Guzmán era maestra. Después de varias semanas de este comportamiento, la Sra. Guzmán besó a Sebastián una tarde en el salón de clases después de la escuela. Una vez más, Sebastián se sintió incómodo, pero le gustaba la forma en que lo besaba. Después de besarse durante unas semanas, declaró que la Sra. Guzmán y él comenzaron a tener sexo oral (mutuo). Afirmó que tuvieron sexo oral aproximadamente 3 veces antes de tener relaciones sexuales por primera vez.

Estimó que habían tenido relaciones sexuales al menos una docena de veces, generalmente en un salón cerrado, después de la escuela. Sebastián les dijo a los entrevistadores que inicialmente se había sentido incómodo con la relación, pero que como ella era maestra, no creía que nadie le creyera si les contaba sobre el sexo. Dijo que al principio no le gustaba tener sexo con la Sra. Guzmán, pero que ahora él está

enamorado de ella. Les comparte a los entrevistadores que él y la Sra. Guzmán planean casarse cuando sea lo suficientemente mayor.

Sebastián siempre ha sido un estudiante de A y B, pero sus calificaciones declinaron durante la segunda mitad del año escolar, y ahora tiene tres C. También comenzó a cortar clases y a salir a escondidas de la casa por la noche. Sebastián nunca tuvo novia, pero el año pasado asistió a dos bailes escolares con amigas. Él dice que ama a la Sra. Guzmán y no quiere causarle problemas. Los padres de Sebastián están increíblemente enojados. Dicen que la Sra. Guzmán violó a su hijo "una y otra vez" y quieren que se "pudra en la cárcel" por lo que hizo. Están muy preocupados por su hijo.

Después de la entrevista con Sebastián, la policía llevó a la Sra. Guzmán al precinto para interrogarla. La Sra. Guzmán originalmente negó haber tenido una relación sexual con Sebastián, diciendo que alguien debió haber robado su teléfono y enviado los mensajes de texto sexuales. Sin embargo, después que la policía siguió interrogándola, comenzó a llorar y admitió haber "hecho el amor" a Sebastián "tal vez seis o siete veces", diciendo: "Sé que no debí haberlo hecho, pero realmente lo amo". Él quiere casarse conmigo ". Cuando se le preguntó si creía que era incorrecto que un maestro de 35 años tuviera relaciones sexuales con un niño de 14 años, ella dijo: " Tiene que creerme, no pude evitarlo".

### Sección 1: Cinco escalas (*Adaptado de Mackelprang & Becker, 2017*)

Ahora leerá una serie de declaraciones. Se le pedirá que indique en qué medida está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con cada afirmación seleccionando un número. Los números corresponden a lo siguiente: **(nota: en el cuestionario, estas preguntas se presentarán de forma aleatoria y no se etiquetarán con el nombre / número de la Escala).**

1	2	3	4	5
Completamente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo, ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Completamente de acuerdo

#### Escala 1: Responsabilidad del maestro

1. La Sra. Guzmán probablemente es una pedófila.
2. La Sra. Guzmán obligó a Sebastián a tener relaciones sexuales con ella.
3. La Sra. Guzmán probablemente no tenía la intención de hacer daño a Sebastián.
4. La licencia como maestra de la Sra. Guzmán debe ser revocada (es decir, no podrá ejercer como maestra).
5. La Sra. Guzmán probablemente se hubiese detenido si Sebastián así lo hubiese pedido.

**Escala 2: Responsabilidad del estudiante**

1. Sebastián debe asumir la responsabilidad por su participación en esta relación.
2. Sebastián probablemente debió haber hablado con alguien acerca de la relación.
3. Los padres de Sebastián deben considerar enfocar algo de su enojo hacia su hijo por su participación en esta relación.
4. Sebastián quería tener sexo con la Sra. Guzmán.
5. Si Sebastián se sentía incómodo, era su responsabilidad dejar de ir al salón de la Sra. Guzmán después de la escuela.

**Escala 3: Daño al estudiante**

1. Será difícil para Sebastián tener una relación romántica "normal" en el futuro.
2. Sebastián probablemente no tendrá ningún daño psicológico de larga duración como resultado de esta relación.
3. Sebastián es una víctima.
4. Los amigos de Sebastián probablemente piensan que tiene suerte de haber tenido relaciones sexuales con la Sra. Guzmán.
5. Los padres de Sebastián probablemente deben llevarlo a ver a un terapeuta.

**Escala 4: Daño al maestro**

1. Esta relación probablemente fue emocionalmente dañina para la Sra. Guzmán.
2. El comportamiento de Sebastián fue dañino para la Sra. Guzmán.
3. La Sra. Guzmán es una víctima.
4. La Sra. Guzmán necesita tratamiento de salud mental como resultado de esta relación, no encarcelamiento.
5. Después de estar con Sebastián, probablemente le resulte difícil a la Sra. Guzmán tener una relación romántica "normal" en el futuro.

**Escala 5: Actitudes sobre este tipo de relación en general**

1. No hay ninguna situación en que sea aceptable que un maestro tenga relaciones sexuales con un estudiante.
2. Sin el uso de la fuerza física o un arma, una persona realmente no puede ser violada.
3. Cuando una persona llega a la pubertad, debe poder tomar sus propias decisiones sobre su sexualidad.
4. Las personas tienden dar demasiada importancia a las relaciones maestro / estudiante.
5. Debe haber castigos legales más fuertes para los maestros que tienen relaciones sexuales con estudiantes.

**Sección 2: Preguntas legales relacionadas con el crimen**

*(Adaptado de Mackelprang & Becker, 2017)*

1. ¿Qué piensa usted sobre la Sra. Guzmán y el encarcelamiento?
  - a) Indudablemente la Sra. Guzmán merece ser encarcelada.
  - b) Probablemente la Sra. Guzmán merece ser encarcelada.

- c) No estoy seguro si la Sra. Guzmán merece o no ser encarcelada.
  - d) Probablemente la Sra. Guzmán no merece ser encarcelada.
  - e) Absolutamente la Sra. Guzmán no merece ser encarcelada.
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo cree que la Sra. Guzmán merece ser encarcelada?
- a) No creo que la Sra. Guzmán merezca ser encarcelada
  - b) Menos de 1 año
  - c) 1-5 años
  - d) 6-10 años
  - e) 11-15 años
  - f) 16-20 años
  - g) 21 años o más
3. ¿Cuántos años exactamente cree que la Sra. Guzmán merece ser encarcelada?

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*Texto: Un juez puede permitir que un acusado permanezca en la libre comunidad antes y durante el juicio, siempre y cuando el acusado pague **fianza y/o cumpla con condiciones restrictivas**. Esto significa que el acusado tendrá que pagar cierta cantidad de dinero antes de ser liberado. La fianza es un derecho que le permite a la persona permanecer en libertad durante el proceso judicial en su contra. Usualmente, si el acusado no puede pagar la fianza, él / ella permanecerá en la cárcel hasta el juicio.*

4. Si el juez le pide a la Sra. Guzmán que pague la fianza, ¿cuánto cree que deba ser la fianza? (es decir, ¿cuánto dinero cree que la Sra. Guzmán debe pagar para salir de la cárcel mientras espera el juicio?)
- a) Menos de \$ 1000
  - b) \$ 1,000- \$ 5,000
  - c) \$ 5,000- \$ 10,000
  - d) \$ 10,000- \$ 15,000
  - e) \$ 15,000- \$ 20,000
  - f) \$ 20,000- \$ 25,000
  - g) Más de \$ 25,000
5. ¿Cuánta fianza exactamente cree que la Sra. Guzmán debe pagar? (Si no cree que la Sra. Guzmán debe pagar fianza, ingrese "0") \_\_\_\_\_
6. Si un juez sentenciara a la Sra. Guzmán a cumplir un tiempo en prisión, ¿cuánto tiempo cree que será la sentencia?
- a) Menos de 1 año
  - b) 1-5 años
  - c) 6-10 años
  - d) 11-15 años
  - e) 16-20 años

f) 21 años o más

7. ¿Exactamente cuántos años cree que un juez condenaría a la Sra. Guzmán a servir en prisión? (Si usted cree que un juez no sentenciaría a la Sra. Guzmán a cumplir un tiempo en prisión, ingrese "0") \_\_\_\_\_

*Texto: En Puerto Rico, a las personas que han sido condenadas por crímenes sexuales se le puede imponer registrarse como ofensores sexuales. Los ofensores sexuales registrados no pueden vivir a cierta distancia de las instalaciones en las que hay niños presentes, como una escuela, centro de cuidado de niños o centro de recreación. Su fotografía, dirección e información criminal se publican en línea, donde son accesibles al público a través del Registro de Personas Convictas por Delitos Sexuales y Abuso contra Menores.*

8. ¿Cree que se le debe exigir a la Sra. Guzmán que se registre como ofensor sexual?

- a) Definitivamente sí
- b) Probablemente sí
- c) No sé / No estoy seguro
- d) Probablemente no
- e) Definitivamente no

9. ¿Por cuánto tiempo cree que se le debe exigir a la Sra. Guzmán que se registre como ofensor sexual?

- a) Menos de 1 año
- b) 1-5 años
- c) 6-10 años
- d) 11-15 años
- e) 16-20 años
- f) 21 años o más

10. ¿Exactamente cuántos años cree que la Sra. Guzmán debería estar registrada como ofensor sexual? (Si cree que la Sra. Guzmán no debería estar registrada como ofensor sexual, ingrese "0") \_\_\_\_\_

### **Sección 3: Preguntas Sociodemográficas**

1. ¿Cuál es su género?

- a. Hombre
- b. Mujer
- c. Otro \_\_\_\_\_

2. Indique su edad:

\_\_\_\_\_



3. ¿Es usted Hispano, Latino o de origen Español?
  - a. No, no soy de origen Hispano, Latino o Español
  - b. Sí, soy Puertorriqueño(a)
  - c. Sí, soy Cubano(a)
  - d. Sí, soy Dominicano(a)
  - e. Sí, soy de **otro** origen Hispano, Latino o Español  
Especifique: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Ejemplo: Salvadoreño, Mexicano, Colombiano, Español, etc.)
  
4. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación/escolaridad obtenido?
  - a. Doctorado/Post Doctorado
  - b. Maestría
  - c. Bachillerato
  - d. Créditos universitarios aprobados (sin grado terminado)
  - e. Grado Asociado o Certificado Técnico
  - f. Cuarto Año
  - g. Intermedia
  - h. Elemental
  
5. ¿Cual de las siguientes opciones describe mejor su creencia o afiliación religiosa?
  - a. Católico
  - b. Mormón
  - c. Testigo de Jehová
  - d. Judío
  - e. Musulmán
  - f. Pagano
  - g. Protestante
  - h. Evangélico
  - i. Adventista
  - j. Pentecostal
  - k. Santería
  - l. Espiritismo
  - m. Mita
  - n. Budista
  - o. Ninguna afiliación religiosa
  - p. Otro/prefiero no contestar
  
6. ¿Cuántas veces al mes asiste a la iglesia, servicios religiosos o eventos relacionados a sus creencias?
  - a. Nunca

- b. Menos de 1 vez al mes
- c. 1-3 veces al mes
- d. 4 o más veces al mes

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Mackelprang, E., & Becker, J. V. (2017). Beauty and the eye of the beholder: Gender and attractiveness affect judgments in teacher sex offense cases. *Sex Abuse, 29*(4), 375-395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063215597646>

### Caso #2

*(Adaptado de Mackelprang & Becker, 2017)*

Diego Guzmán, de 35 años, es un maestro de escuela secundaria que fue recientemente arrestado y acusado de Agresión Sexual con un Menor. La menor, Amelia Hernández, es una niña de 14 años que fue estudiante en su clase de inglés el año pasado.

La madre de Amelia descubrió la relación cuando vio un mensaje de texto del Sr. Guzmán a su teléfono celular diciendo "Necesito estar dentro de ti ahora". Su madre procedió a revisar el historial de textos de su hija y encontró varios mensajes de texto incluyendo "Te amo" y "Esta noche en mi casa". La madre de Amelia llamó inmediatamente a la escuela para informar sobre los textos que había encontrado. La escuela llamó a la policía. Luego de recoger a Amelia en la escuela, la llevaron a la División de Delitos Sexuales y Maltrato de Menores del Negociado de la Policía de Puerto Rico para ser entrevistada.

Inicialmente, Amelia negó haber tenido una relación sexual con el Sr. Guzmán, pero al confrontarla con los mensajes de texto que su madre había encontrado, les dijo a los entrevistadores que ella y el Sr. Guzmán comenzaron a tener una relación sexual hacía aproximadamente 6 meses. Explicó que todo comenzó cuando el Sr. Guzmán le pidió que fuera a su salón de clases después de la escuela para tutorías adicionales. Él sugirió que viniera a tutoría después de la escuela, 3 veces a la semana. Amelia declaró que el Sr. Guzmán a veces le frotaba los hombros mientras ella estaba trabajando en su tarea. Aunque se sentía incómoda con este contacto físico, pensaba que "debía estar bien" porque el Sr. Guzmán era maestro. Después de varias semanas de este comportamiento, el Sr. Guzmán besó a Amelia una tarde en el salón de clases después de la escuela. Una vez más, Amelia se sintió incómoda, pero le gustaba la forma en que la besaba. Después de besarse durante unas semanas, declaró que el Sr. Guzmán y ella comenzaron a tener sexo oral (mutuo). Afirmó que tuvieron sexo oral aproximadamente 3 veces antes de tener relaciones sexuales por primera vez.

Estimó que habían tenido relaciones sexuales al menos una docena de veces, generalmente en un salón cerrado, después de la escuela. Amelia les dijo a los entrevistadores que inicialmente se había sentido incómoda con la relación, pero que como él era maestro, no creía que nadie le creyera si les contaba sobre el sexo. Dijo que al principio no le gustaba tener sexo con el Sr. Guzmán, pero que ahora ella está enamorada de él. Les comparte a los entrevistadores que ella y el Sr. Guzmán planean casarse cuando sea lo suficientemente mayor.

Amelia siempre ha sido una estudiante de A y B, pero sus calificaciones declinaron durante la segunda mitad del año escolar, y ahora tiene tres C. También comenzó a cortar clases y a salir a escondidas de la casa por la noche. Amelia nunca tuvo novio, pero el año pasado asistió a dos bailes escolares con amigos. Ella dice que ama al Sr. Guzmán y no quiere causarle problemas. Los padres de Amelia están increíblemente enojados. Dicen que el Sr. Guzmán violó a su hija "una y otra vez" y quieren que se "pudra en la cárcel" por lo que hizo. Están muy preocupados por su hija.

Después de la entrevista con Amelia, la policía llevó al Sr. Guzmán al precinto para interrogarlo. El Sr. Guzmán originalmente negó haber tenido una relación sexual con Amelia, diciendo que alguien debió haber robado su teléfono y enviado los mensajes de texto sexuales. Sin embargo, después que la policía siguió interrogándolo, comenzó a llorar y admitió haber "hecho el amor" a Amelia "tal vez seis o siete veces", diciendo: "Sé que no debí haberlo hecho, pero realmente la amo". "Ella quiere casarse conmigo". Cuando se le preguntó si creía que era incorrecto que un maestro de 35 años tuviera relaciones sexuales con un niño de 14 años, él dijo: "Tiene que creerme, no pude evitarlo".

### **Sección 1: Cinco escalas (Adaptado de Mackelprang & Becker, 2017)**

Ahora leerá una serie de declaraciones. Se le pedirá que indique en qué medida está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con cada afirmación seleccionando un número. Los números corresponden a lo siguiente: **(nota: en el cuestionario, estas preguntas se presentarán de forma aleatoria y no se etiquetarán con el nombre / número de la Escala).**

1	2	3	4	5
Completamente en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo, ni en desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Completamente de acuerdo

#### **Escala 1: Responsabilidad del maestro**

1. El Sr. Guzmán probablemente es un pedófilo.
2. El Sr. Guzmán obligó a Amelia a tener relaciones sexuales con él.
3. El Sr. Guzmán probablemente no tenía la intención de hacer daño a Amelia.

4. La licencia como maestro de el Sr. Guzmán debe ser revocada (es decir, no podrá ejercer como maestro).
5. El Sr. Guzmán probablemente se hubiese detenido si Amelia así lo hubiese pedido.

**Escala 2: Responsabilidad del estudiante**

1. Amelia debe asumir la responsabilidad por su participación en esta relación.
2. Amelia probablemente debió haber hablado con alguien acerca de la relación.
3. Los padres de Amelia deben considerar enfocar algo de su enojo hacia su hija por su participación en esta relación.
4. Amelia quería tener sexo con el Sr. Guzmán.
5. Si Amelia se sentía incómoda, era su responsabilidad dejar de ir al salón de el Sr. Guzmán después de la escuela.

**Escala 3: Daño al estudiante**

1. Será difícil para Amelia tener una relación romántica "normal" en el futuro.
2. Amelia probablemente no tendrá ningún daño psicológico de larga duración como resultado de esta relación.
3. Amelia es una víctima.
4. Las amigas de Amelia probablemente piensan que tiene suerte de haber tenido relaciones sexuales con el Sr. Guzmán.
5. Los padres de Amelia probablemente deben llevarla a ver a un terapeuta.

**Escala 4: Daño al maestro**

1. Esta relación probablemente fue emocionalmente dañina para el Sr. Guzmán.
2. El comportamiento de Amelia fue dañino para el Sr. Guzmán.
3. El Sr. Guzmán es una víctima.
4. El Sr. Guzmán necesita tratamiento de salud mental como resultado de esta relación, no encarcelamiento.
5. Después de estar con Amelia, probablemente le resulte difícil a el Sr. Guzmán tener una relación romántica "normal" en el futuro.

**Escala 5: Actitudes sobre este tipo de relación en general**

1. No hay ninguna situación en que sea aceptable que un maestro tenga relaciones sexuales con un estudiante.
2. Sin el uso de la fuerza física o un arma, una persona realmente no puede ser violada.
3. Cuando una persona llega a la pubertad, debe poder tomar sus propias decisiones sobre su sexualidad.
4. Las personas tienden dar demasiada importancia a las relaciones maestro / estudiante.
5. Debe haber castigos legales más fuertes para los maestros que tienen relaciones sexuales con estudiantes.

**Sección 2: Preguntas legales relacionadas con el crimen**  
*(Adaptado de Mackelprang & Becker, 2017)*

1. ¿Qué piensa usted sobre el Sr. Guzmán y el encarcelamiento?
  - f) Indudablemente el Sr. Guzmán merece ser encarcelado.
  - g) Probablemente el Sr. Guzmán merece ser encarcelado.
  - h) No estoy seguro si el Sr. Guzmán merece o no ser encarcelado.
  - i) Probablemente el Sr. Guzmán no merece ser encarcelado.
  - j) Absolutamente el Sr. Guzmán no merece ser encarcelado.
  
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo cree que el Sr. Guzmán merece ser encarcelado?
  - h) No creo que el Sr. Guzmán merezca ser encarcelado
  - i) Menos de 1 año
  - j) 1-5 años
  - k) 6-10 años
  - l) 11-15 años
  - m) 16-20 años
  - n) 21 años o más
  
3. ¿Cuántos años exactamente cree que el Sr. Guzmán merece ser encarcelado?

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*Texto: Un juez puede permitir que un acusado permanezca en la libre comunidad antes y durante el juicio, siempre y cuando el acusado pague **fianza y/o cumpla con condiciones restrictivas**. Esto significa que el acusado tendrá que pagar cierta cantidad de dinero antes de ser liberado. La fianza es un derecho que le permite a la persona permanecer en libertad durante el proceso judicial en su contra. Usualmente, si el acusado no puede pagar la fianza, él / ella permanecerá en la cárcel hasta el juicio.*

4. Si el juez le pide a el Sr. Guzmán que pague la fianza, ¿cuánto cree que deba ser la fianza? (es decir, ¿cuánto dinero cree que el Sr. Guzmán debe pagar para salir de la cárcel mientras espera el juicio?)
  - h) Menos de \$ 1000
  - i) \$ 1,000- \$ 5,000
  - j) \$ 5,000- \$ 10,000
  - k) \$ 10,000- \$ 15,000
  - l) \$ 15,000- \$ 20,000
  - m) \$ 20,000- \$ 25,000
  - n) Más de \$ 25,000
  
5. ¿Cuánta fianza exactamente cree que el Sr. Guzmán debe pagar? (Si no cree que el Sr. Guzmán debe pagar fianza, ingrese "0") \_\_\_\_\_
6. Si un juez sentenciara a el Sr. Guzmán a cumplir un tiempo en prisión, ¿cuánto tiempo cree que será la sentencia?
  - g) Menos de 1 año

- h) 1-5 años
- i) 6-10 años
- j) 11-15 años
- k) 16-20 años
- l) 21 años o más

7. ¿Exactamente cuántos años cree que un juez condenaría a el Sr. Guzmán a servir en prisión? (Si usted cree que un juez no sentenciaría a el Sr. Guzmán a cumplir un tiempo en prisión, ingrese "0") \_\_\_\_\_

*Texto: En Puerto Rico, a las personas que han sido condenadas por crímenes sexuales se le puede imponer registrarse como ofensores sexuales. Los ofensores sexuales registrados no pueden vivir a cierta distancia de las instalaciones en las que hay niños presentes, como una escuela, centro de cuidado de niños o centro de recreación. Su fotografía, dirección e información criminal se publican en línea, donde son accesibles al público a través del Registro de Personas Convictas por Delitos Sexuales y Abuso contra Menores.*

8. ¿Cree que se le debe exigir a el Sr. Guzmán que se registre como ofensor sexual?

- f) Definitivamente sí
- g) Probablemente sí
- h) No sé / No estoy seguro
- i) Probablemente no
- j) Definitivamente no

9. ¿Por cuánto tiempo cree que se le debe exigir a el Sr. Guzmán que se registre como ofensor sexual?

- a) Menos de 1 año
- b) 1-5 años
- c) 6-10 años
- d) 11-15 años
- e) 16-20 años
- f) 21 años o más

10. ¿Exactamente cuántos años cree que el Sr. Guzmán debería estar registrado como ofensor sexual? (Si cree que el Sr. Guzmán no debería estar registrado como ofensor sexual, ingrese "0") \_\_\_\_\_

### Sección 3: Preguntas Sociodemográficas

7. ¿Cuál es su género?
  - a. Hombre
  - b. Mujer
  - c. Otro \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Indique su edad:  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
9. ¿Es usted Hispano, Latino o de origen Español?
  - a. No, no soy de origen Hispano, Latino o Español
  - b. Sí, soy Puertorriqueño(a)
  - c. Sí, soy Cubano(a)
  - d. Sí, soy Dominicano(a)
  - e. Sí, soy de **otro** origen Hispano, Latino o Español  
Especifique: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Ejemplo: Salvadoreño, Mexicano, Colombiano, Español, etc.)
  
10. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación/escolaridad obtenido?
  - a. Doctorado/Post Doctorado
  - b. Maestría
  - c. Bachillerato
  - d. Créditos universitarios aprobados (sin grado terminado)
  - e. Grado Asociado o Certificado Técnico
  - f. Cuarto Año
  - g. Intermedia
  - h. Elemental
  
11. ¿Cual de las siguientes opciones describe mejor su creencia o afiliación religiosa?
  - a. Católico
  - b. Mormón
  - c. Testigo de Jehová
  - d. Judío
  - e. Musulmán
  - f. Pagano
  - g. Protestante
  - h. Evangélico
  - i. Adventista
  - j. Pentecostal
  - k. Santería
  - l. Espiritismo
  - m. Mita
  - n. Budista
  - o. Ninguna afiliación religiosa

p. Otro/prefiero no contestar

12. ¿Cuántas veces al mes asiste a la iglesia, servicios religiosos o eventos relacionados a sus creencias?
- a. Nunca
  - b. Menos de 1 vez al mes
  - c. 1-3 veces al mes
  - d. 4 o más veces al mes

#### Bibliografía

Mackelprang, E., & Becker, J. V. (2017). Beauty and the eye of the beholder: Gender and attractiveness affect judgments in teacher sex offense cases. *Sex Abuse, 29*(4), 375-395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063215597646>



## Appendix D: Eligibility Criteria and Study Flyer

### Criterios de Elegibilidad

Favor de confirmar que cumple con los siguientes requisitos para establecer su elegibilidad para participar en el estudio:

- Es mayor de 18 años
- Es residente legal de Puerto Rico que ha residido en Puerto Rico por 1 año y 90 días o más
- No ha sido condenado por un delito grave o cualquier otro delito que implique depravación moral
- No es abogado(a), u oficial jurídico, secretario o taquígrafo de un abogado

Si usted cumple con los requisitos, favor de seleccionar “sí”. Si no cumple con los requisitos, favor de seleccionar “no”.

Gracias.

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### Eligibility Criteria (English translation for IRB only)

Please confirm that you meet the following requirements to establish your eligibility to participate in the study:

- You are over 18 years old
- You are a legal resident of Puerto Rico who has resided in Puerto Rico for 1 year and 90 days or more
- Not been convicted of a serious crime or any other crime involving moral depravity
- You are not a lawyer, or a legal officer, secretary, or stenographer of a lawyer

If you meet the requirements, please select "yes". If you do not meet the requirements, please select "no".

Thank you.



### **SE BUSCAN VOLUNTARIOS PARA ESTUDIO DE PSICOLOGÍA FORENSE EN PUERTO RICO**

Se trata de un nuevo estudio sobre el abuso sexual infantil y las sentencias criminales en Puerto Rico. Su participación será anónima y la encuesta es en línea.

**Este estudio podría tener un impacto positivo en cómo los profesionales de la salud mental, la policía y otras agencias de ley y orden intervienen en casos de abuso sexual infantil.**

Esta encuesta es parte de la investigación doctoral de Sigrid Vázquez-Tirado, estudiante de PhD en Walden University. La recopilación de datos tendrá lugar durante \_\_\_\_\_ 2020.

#### **SOBRE EL ESTUDIO:**

- Lectura de un caso hipotético.
- Completar un cuestionario en línea que toma aproximadamente 10-15 minutos.
- Para proteger su privacidad, su participación en el estudio es anónima y voluntaria.

#### **LOS PARTICIPANTES DEBEN SER ADULTOS QUE CUMPLAN CON LOS CRITERIOS DE ELEGIBILIDAD PARA SERVIR COMO JURADO EN PUERTO RICO:**

- Mayores de 18 años.
- Residentes legales de Puerto Rico.
- No haber sido condenado por un delito grave o cualquier otro delito que implique depravación moral.
- No ser abogado, u oficial jurídico, secretario o taquígrafo de un abogado.

Para participar, favor de presionar el enlace:

[ENLACE A CUESTIONARIO AQUÍ](#)

**¡GRACIAS!**