

Attitudes towards child sexual abuse

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Preface

This thesis aims to reveal Norwegian adults' attitudes towards child sexual abuse and to give more knowledge about personal, social and cultural factors that are related to these attitudes. The thesis consists of three papers as well as an introductory section. The introductory section gives an overview of the three papers and aims to create a more extensive picture of attitudes towards abuse than the three papers are allowed to do separately. However, the papers can be read independently. All three papers are built on the same data collection, thus, reiterations may occur.

Although I am the single author of the current thesis, this does not indicate that I would have been able to do this on my own. I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Torbjørn Rundmo, for believing in me, his availability and valuable remarks. I would also like to thank Professor Lennart Sjöberg and Associate Professor Ute Gabriel for crucial comments and my husband, Sveinung Olav Tennfjord, for discussions and encouragement.

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List of Papers included

Paper I: Tennfjord, O. S. (2006). Attitudes towards child sexual abuse – development and validation of a new scale. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (submitted for publication).

Paper II: Tennfjord, O. S. (2006). Prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse among three different Norwegian samples. *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 12 (3), 245-263.

Paper III: Tennfjord, O. S. (2007). Norwegian adults' attitudes towards child sexual abuse and the interest to seek knowledge about abuse. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* (submitted for publication).

Abstract

The main purpose of the present thesis was to develop a measurement instrument aimed to reveal attitudes towards child sexual abuse, and to measure attitudes and associating personal, social and cultural factors among three different samples of Norwegian adults. Additional aims were to explore the relation between participants' knowledge-seeking on the one hand, their experiences, attitudes and actual knowledge about abuse on the other hand.

Three studies are presented based on the same data material collected in Norway in spring 2004. Three samples were included in the survey: A sample of randomly selected adults between 18-67 years ($n = 296$). A sample of active Christians between 22-65 years ($n = 125$) and finally a sample of imprisoned child sexual offenders between 21-74 years ($n = 36$).

Study I was primarily concerned about the development and validation of a new measurement instrument, entitled Attitudes towards child sexual abuse (ACA). The scale consisted of four different attitudinal dimensions. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed the four-factor structure. The four dimensions were entitled 1) Acceptance and responsibility, 2) Fatalism, 3) Damages caused by abuse, and 4) Legal issues. The result showed that there were significant attitude differences across the samples. The differences were in the expected direction e.g. offenders reported more abuse-accepting attitudes than the random adults and active Christians, and men had more abuse-accepting attitudes than women. This confirms the discriminative properties of ACA. Furthermore, the factors hypothesized to be associated with attitudes towards abuse behaved as expected, e.g. high empathy was related to more aversive attitudes. Conclusively, the scale was found to be valid and reliable.

Study II further investigated attitudes towards abuse and explored cultural, social and personal factors associated with these attitudes. The results showed that different factors were predictors of attitudes in the three samples. Empathy and normlessness were the best predictors of attitudes among the random sample of adults and the active Christians. The most significant predictors of attitudes among the prisoners were their view of women and femininity. This may imply that different intervention strategies should be chosen depending on the target group.

Study III aimed to explore attitudes towards and knowledge-seeking about child sexual abuse among the samples. It was hypothesized that those who seek more knowledge had more accurate knowledge about abuse, and that the difference in knowledge-seeking and attitudes were related to the respondents' own

experience with abuse. It was furthermore expected that both knowledge-seeking and attitudes were predictors of abusive behaviour. The results suggested that attitudes and knowledge-seeking differed across samples and gender. The active Christians had most aversive attitudes towards child sexual abuse and sought more knowledge about abuse than the comparing samples. The respondents who reported high knowledge-seeking seemed to have more knowledge of abuse as well. However, a more comprehensive measurement of both knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge is recommended in future studies. Knowledge-seeking was related to both direct and indirect experience, e.g. victims of abuse had higher knowledge-seeking compared to non-victims and those who knew a victim had higher knowledge-seeking than those who did not know a victim. Abusive behaviour was predicted by attitudes, gender and sample. Knowledge-seeking did not predict abusive behaviour.

Taken together, the three studies showed that the hypothesized attitudinal differences between the three samples, were confirmed. Furthermore, the expected relation between attitudes on the one hand and social, cultural, and personality factors and knowledge-seeking on the other hand, was supported. The result as a whole may serve as a guide to interventions aimed to prevent abuse.

1. Introduction

1.1. Child sexual abuse – prevalence, consequences and costs

Children are in many ways more vulnerable than adults. The UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (Convention on the Rights of the Child (n.d.)) gives a reminder of this vulnerability when stating the rights children have. In addition, laws and rules exist to protect the child from harmful acts, exploitation and damage. Child sexual abuse is one of the harmful acts children should be protected from. Still, many children do experience abuse. In some groups, e.g. disabled children in Norway, as many as 33–40% are victims of child sexual abuse (Kvam, 2004). Based on several US and Canadian studies, Gorey and Leslie (1997) concluded that in the general population 12–17% of all women have experienced sexual abuse as a child. The corresponding number for men was found to be 5–8%. Similar prevalence rates are found in Norwegian samples. Bendixen, Muus and Schei (1994) reported that 19.4% of female Norwegian students had been victims of child sexual abuse, while the corresponding figure for male students was 3.5%. Sætre (1997) concluded that the prevalence of sexual abuse among Norwegian adults was generally 20%, ranging from 7% to 36% for women and 3% to 29% for men. The variability of prevalence rates depends on the sample included in the study, response rate, the use of open or closed questions, and other methodological issues. However, the child functions in several social settings; the child has family, friends, attends school and participate in leisure activities. The causes and consequences of sexual abuse will therefore affect a large group of people and not solely the child. In addition to the acute damage caused, it is also common that abuse causes longitudinal damage, although the severity of these effects is questioned (Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, Dacosta, Akman & Cassavia, 1992; Rind, Tromovitch & Bauserman, 1998; Kvam, 2001; Lilienfeld, 2002; Tyler, 2002; Ulrich, Randolph & Acheson, 2005-06). For many of the victims it takes a long time to recover from abuse. The consequences of abuse will therefore indirectly constantly affect new people. It may be the employer that will have her or his employee reported sick. It may be the National Insurance Service who will have to cover the sick pay. It may be the child welfare authorities that will have to use resources on the misbehaved adolescent. It may be the psychiatric ward that will have to use resources on treatment for trauma, anxiety and depression. It may be the hospital that will have to treat the woman who suffers from self damaging

behaviour. It may be the boyfriend who does not understand his girlfriend. It may be the children who have a constantly tired and exhausted mother. Separately, and taken together, all these possibilities indicates that child sexual abuse is a burden that the child should refrain from carrying. The cost to both the individual and society are high.

Consequently, all research aimed at reducing the incidence of abuse is important as well as all research that aims to give more insight into different aspects of sexual abuse. How can abuse happen? What is the role of culture? Is child sexual abuse equally common in all cultures? What attitudes do people have towards child sexual abuse? Is there a relation between attitudes and abuse? How can the extent of damage be reduced? Are some children more vulnerable to abuse than others? Who become the victims of abuse? Who are the perpetrators? All these questions are important and need to be answered, though not by the same study. For this reason there is a need for a diversity of research questions and studies. This thesis aims to contribute to the research literature by answering some of the questions. The focus will be on attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Traditionally, the research in this area has concentrated upon treatment evaluation studies, in addition to risk assessment studies where prediction of relapse has been central. Specific groups have mainly been the target of interventions and evaluations. The focus has been on tertiary prevention. In a community psychology context this view is perceived as too narrow. Society-based interventions are concerned with primary prevention in the general population. This kind of prevention focuses on attitudes and knowledge and the factors influencing these variables. It rests upon the numerous studies which have examined the relation between attitudes and behaviour and found that attitudes predict behaviour (see the discussion in the following). Thus, the aim in the present thesis is not to test any models explaining the relation between attitudes and behaviour. Rather, the main aim of the present study is to develop a measurement instrument and explore the attitudes people in Norway have towards child sexual abuse. In addition, the thesis examines social, cultural and personal factors as predictors of attitudes. Finally, the thesis aims to answer the following questions: Are adults interested in knowing more about abuse and do they have knowledge about abuse? What about their own experience? Do these experiences guide peoples knowledge-seeking and attitudes?

1.2. Attitude and behaviour

The underlying assumption in many studies regarding child sexual abuse as well as studies concerning rape and domestic violence is that there is a correlation between

attitudes toward abuse and abusive behaviour. Positive attitudes to abuse are seen as important predictors of abusive behaviour. This is the main reason to why attitudes are seen as important targets of investigation. Following Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 1), an attitude is defined as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor”. This definition is widely accepted although some researchers have questioned the term “psychological tendency” (Sjöberg, 2005).

There are four major theories that try to explain sexual offending: Finkelhor’s (1984) precondition theory, Marshall and Barbaree’s (1990) integrated theory, Hall and Hirschman’s (1992) quadripartite model of child molestation, and Ward and Siegert’s (2002) pathway model.

Finkelhor’s (1984) model suggests that four preconditions must be satisfied before sexual abuse can occur. First, the offender must have an inner motivation to have a sexual relationship with a child. Second, he or she must overcome internal inhibitions against abuse. Third, the offender must overcome the external control against abuse, and finally it is necessary to overcome the child’s resistance. The preconditions proceed in a temporal sequence with each being necessary for the next to occur. To inhibit attitudes against abuse is seen as important for the second precondition. Thus, attitudes are judged to be precursors to abuse. Given this model, preventing a potential abuser from inhibiting abuse-accepting attitudes may then turn him or her away from abusive behaviour.

Marshall and Barbaree (1990) focus on vulnerability factors and resilience. The transition into adolescence is a critical period. It is in this period that individuals are most “receptive to acquiring enduring sexual scripts, preferences, interests, and attitudes” (Beech & Ward, 2004, p. 41). Sexual offences tend to occur because individuals fail to inhibit deviant desires and impulses, which stem from their developmentally adverse history. The model also postulates causal mechanisms thought to generate phenomena associated with child sexual abuse. Among these are maladaptive beliefs and attitudes. However, the theory could have further specified how these mechanisms interact and the contribution of each of them.

Hall and Hirschman’s (1992) model is based on four components: physiological sexual arousal, inaccurate cognitions that justify sexual aggression, affective dyscontrol, and personality problems. Personality (trait factors) is perceived to be the source of deviant arousal, affective disturbance, and/or distorted thinking (state factors) which contribute to abusive behaviour. Hall and Hirschman (1992) also think that each factor on its own can constitute sexual

offending, e.g. distorted thinking and attitudes may be sufficient to cause offensive behaviour.

Ward and Siegert's (2002) pathway model aims to incorporate all the strengths from the former three theories in a more comprehensive theory. They argue that there are five etiological pathways to sexual offending, but "all sexual crimes will involve emotional, intimacy, cognitive, and arousal components" (Ward & Siegert, 2002, p. 335). Similar to Hall and Hirschman (1992), Ward and Siegert (2002) think that one factor can serve as a primary factor for the offender and that this factor can activate the other factors, but as opposed to Hall and Hirschman (1992) one factor can never act on its own to cause sexual deviance. Thus, attitudes (cognitions) alone will never cause sexual deviance, but Ward and Siegert (2002) nevertheless argue that cultures with distorted beliefs and attitudes regarding children and women are more likely to have a higher incident rate of sexual offending. This indicates that they perceive attitudes to have an important role in the cause of sexual abuse.

To sum up, all four models are multifaceted and give several explanations and causes as to why sexual offending occurs, and in all models attitudes and cognitive distortions are seen as important precursors of abusive behaviour (Beech and Ward, 2004). The models differ on *how* crucial attitudes are to sexual offending. The data supporting the theories nevertheless show that attitudes are important in the field of sexual abuse. Hence, attitudes are obvious targets in primary prevention interventions.

In social psychology, the study of attitudes and behaviour is very extensive. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), theory of reasoned action (Fishbein, 1982), and theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) are all social cognitive models that are based on a comprehensive analysis of determinants of behaviour. All three models hold that attitudes can predict behaviour. However, according to Sjöberg (2005), these models, supported by subsequent research show that "attitudes predict our behaviour to some extent, but only if we have the means and ability to carry it out". Thus, Sjöberg takes part in the ongoing debate about the relevance of attitudes to behaviour. Several researchers argue that there are clearly other variables than attitudes that can predict and explain behaviour, and call for an inclusion of economic factors as well as emotion. Nevertheless, the theories have been tested empirically in numerous studies, which have shown that attitudes predict behaviour (for a thorough discussion see Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005). The present thesis is based on this empirically validated relationship between attitudes and behaviour and it is not considered necessary to further test the models. The aim of the thesis is (as already mentioned) to examine attitudes and factors affecting

these attitudes in order to serve as an underlying empirical basis for primary interventions. Yet what about the relation between attitudes and abusive behaviour? Lanier (2001) found that males who had forced someone to have sex with them did not have significantly more rape-supportive attitudes one year after the first reporting. Lanier further reported that males who had more rape supportive attitudes were 1.9 times more likely to commit forced sex compared to males with less supportive attitudes. Hence, the study concluded, rape accepting attitudes were not a consequence, but precursors to sexually aggressive behaviour. Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel and Siebler's (2005) study support this conclusion. They argued that there is a causal link between rape myth acceptance and rape proclivity. However, in the same study they argued that rape myths may serve to justify sexual aggression, which in turn indicates that behaviour may precede attitudes. Sugarman and Frankel (1996) concluded in a meta-analysis that there is a relation between attitudes and violent behaviour, and also indicate that attitudes are predictors of behaviour. This view is supported by other theoretical perspectives suggesting that violent behaviour may cease if broader social norms are addressed (Banyard, Plante & Moynihan, 2004). In summary, based on the aforementioned empirical findings, attitudes to abuse are found to be determinants of abusive behaviour.

Furthermore, offender treatment programmes address attitudes and beliefs that are possessed by the offenders. These attitudes and beliefs are named "cognitive distortions", a term first used by Abel, Becker and Cunningham-Rathner in 1984. The term includes the offenders' attitudes and beliefs about their own abusive behaviour. The name "distortions" was chosen because it was found that offenders have a clear tendency to rationalize and explain their acts in ways contradicting the general views of what happened. They tend to minimize the damage caused by child sexual abuse. They claim that the child took the initiative in the act(s). They see the child as equal to themselves. They claim that their abusive acts were done spontaneously, though studies have shown that the offenders planned their act often a long time ahead. This planning is called "grooming" (Singer, Hussey & Strom, 1992; Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2006). In treatment programmes cognitive distortions are seen as important targets of change (Maletzky, 1998). According to Hanson and Morton-Buorgon (2005), models of sexual offence risk suggest that apart from sexual deviancy and lifestyle instability, three additional characteristics of persistent sexual offenders are present: negative family background, problems with friends and lovers, and attitudes tolerant of sexual assault. Furthermore, Hanson and Morton-Buorgon (2005) claimed that these content areas have a large amount of credibility among those who evaluate treatment programmes. However, in their meta-study they found "attitudes tolerant

of sexual crime” to be small, although significantly, related to sexual recidivism. The category “sexual attitudes” was found to be a significant predictor of both sexual and non-sexual crime recidivism. The study concluded that antisocial orientation and deviant sexual interests were the most important predictors of sexual recidivism. The paper included studies where the offenders had been exposed to treatment as well as patients who had received no treatment at all. The kind of treatment the offenders had been given was not specified.

Anderson and Whiston (2005) executed a meta-analytic examination of the effects of sexual assault education programmes. The content of the programmes was either informative, empathy focused, socialization focused (e.g. societal messages that influence rape), strategy focused (e.g. teaching specific strategies to reduce the risk of rape), or a combination of these methods. The results showed that the programmes changed attitudes towards rape and increased knowledge about rape. No definitive conclusions about decrease in rape behaviour could be drawn. This finding is in accordance with Foubert (2000). In Foubert’s study, an intervention was found to be effective in reducing rape myth acceptance. Although the effect rebounded in time it was still present at the 7-months follow-up study. The content of the programme was informative and empathy based, as well as including plenum discussions that aimed to help the participants to change societal norms that condone rape. The programme seemed to have no effect on sexually coercive behaviour. Foubert (2000) argued that this probably was due to method and design issues. The intervention lasted for one hour and the reporting of sexually coercive behaviour may have been dependent on the participants’ level of knowledge about such behaviour (Foubert, 2000). Apparently, many of the programmes included in the aforementioned studies were mainly knowledge-based interventions. The underlying assumption was that knowledge affects attitudes, which in turn change behaviour. However, knowledge may also be directly related to behavioural change. Nevertheless, it seems as though the majority of the few studies executed on this topic conclude that the most important role of knowledge of behaviour is mediated through attitudes.

Many methodological problems arise when measuring abusive behaviour. One area of inquiry would be an exploration of different ways to measure abusive behaviour. Another limitation of several studies is the lack of longitudinal measures: behaviour is often measured in retrospect, and only exceptionally does the length of the follow-up studies exceed six months. Follow-up studies may also teach the participants which behaviour is undesirable and which is desirable, leading to an underreporting of sexually abusive behaviour. The nature of abusive behaviour is taboo, and some abusive behaviour is rather seldom in occurrence. In

addition, few surveys and experimental designs have been able to predict future behaviour based on retrospective reports (Foubert, 2000; Anderson & Whiston, 2005). Alternative designs should be developed and tested. One way to circumvent the problem is to use another criteria variable than (abusive) behaviour. The present study includes a group of imprisoned offenders and expects that this group will have significant different attitudes than non-offenders. Furthermore, discriminant and construct validity testing are essential, as well as other ways of validating the design and method of the studies. Many studies that have tested one of the three aforementioned social cognitive models report that specificity between attitudes and behaviour are needed to draw decisive conclusions about the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. These methodological challenges may be the reason to why the literature fails to give an unambiguous conclusion about the relation between attitudes and abusive behaviour. However, a rejection of the assumption that this correlation exists is incorrect. Several studies in different research areas have found that attitudes predict behaviour. It seems to depend on finding suitable methods to reveal this relation. Thus, the ability to determine whether interventions are needed and effective is strongly tied to the ability to measure relevant attitudes as well as behaviour. The next question is then: How to measure attitudes towards child sexual abuse?

1.3. Measurement and dimensionality

There seems to be a common understanding that attitudes towards abuse consist of several dimensions, e.g. studies report several attitudinal aspects and cognitive distortions (Abel et al., 1984; Veach, 1999; Langton & Marshall, 2001). The idea of unidimensionality seems also to be contradicted by reports from victims of abuse. Many victims may experience both positive and negative reactions from the social settings they are a part of (N. With, personal communication, February 12, 2007). Saunders (1988) designed four scales for detecting different topics or factors relevant to sexual abuse. The aim of the scales was to explore different professionals' attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The scales cover topics including victim credibility, victim culpability, offender culpability, crime seriousness, and punishment of child sexual abuse. According to Saunders, (1988) the scales are four different measures which are not to be combined as one overall scale. However, there is a possibility that the scales measure the same construct consisting of four different factors. The reliability of the scales was found to be satisfactory, but it would have been an advantage if the scales had been tested in a confirmatory factor analysis or checked for their discriminant validity. Saunders

(1988) was concerned about construct validity i.e. his rationale for the selection of the four topics was mainly based on previous findings and outlined from the objective of his study. Construct validity is actually not testable; it is only possible to seek indicators that test the measures (the operationalization) of the construct well enough. Validation combines scientific inquiry with rational arguments. Saunders (1988) gave rational arguments, but was less specific about the scientific inquiry, e.g. whether the scale behaved as expected. However, he seems to have expected that the scales would behave in a way such that they would reveal differences between groups of professionals. Saunders (1988) expected that the professionals' different roles within the helping system mean they will hold different attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The result showed that this assumption was partly right and partly wrong. The groups of professionals differed from each other in regard to attitudes towards victim credibility and punishment of offenders, but shared the same attitudes toward victim and offender culpability, as well as crime seriousness.

Trute, Atkins and MacDonald (1992) developed the Professional Attitudes Regarding the Sexual Abuse of Children (PARSAC) scale aimed at exploring attitudes among three different groups of professionals: police, child welfare workers and community mental health workers. An exploratory factor analysis showed that the scale consisted of three dimensions: 1) beliefs in regard to extensiveness and seriousness of the issue, 2) treatment versus punishment priority, and 3) view regarding the identity of those who perpetrate child sexual abuse. The first two dimensions showed satisfactory reliability, while the third dimension showed weaker reliability. As expected, women perceived child sexual abuse to be more common and a more serious phenomenon than men. Men believed more in punishment of offenders, women more in therapy. As opposed to Saunders (1988), Trute et al. (1992) did not give an extensive rationale basis for the selection of dimensions, except that the items were based on scales used in previous studies. Further, Trute et al. (1992) would have improved the quality of their study if they had tested the construct validity of the attitude scale, i.e. explored how the scale behaves in relation to other constructs. Like Saunders (1988), Trute et al. (1992) were satisfied with revealing differences between genders and between groups of professionals. Both studies perceived attitudes towards abuse to be multidimensional.

Briere, Henschel and Smiljanich (1992) constructed the Attitudes toward Sexual Abuse scale. This scale was developed in the absence of a scale that specifically measures attitudes towards child sexual abuse. It includes statements that discount the incidence of abuse, and questions the honesty of victims and the

punishment of offenders. The scale consists of 15 items and is considered to be unidimensional. It was tested on a sample of university students. The reliability of the scale was found to be satisfactory. As hypothesized, attitudes supportive of sexual contact with children were associated with social and personal variables previously associated with sexual interest in children, e.g. male gender, greater number of sexual partners, use of pornography, and accepting attitudes of violence towards women. In other words, the scale showed satisfactory construct validity. However, Briere et al. (1992) reported that they could not find any relation between attitudes and history of sexual abuse. This finding was unexpected, and the authors suggested that there may be other processes not accounted for in their study that governed this lack of relation. However, it could be claimed that this argument is invalid as attitudes seem to be quite related to experience. The stability of attitudes is believed to depend on personal experience. It is harder to change a person's attitude if the attitude is related to the person's personal experience than if the person has no experience of the given topic (Fabrigar, MacDonald & Wegener, 2005). Such a counterintuitive result may also be grounded in the imperfection of the scale used in the study. It is argued that a unidimensional approach may also contribute to the aforementioned finding. It is possible that a multidimensional approach may have been able to counter this counterintuitive finding. An automatic assumption of unidimensionality may lead to ignoring other aspects important in predicting attitudes towards abuse. The different dimensions may also function in different ways among different groups, e.g. men may be more positive to lowering the age of legal consent than women, but women may be less inclined to report abuse compared to men. Findings such as these will not be possible to detect with a unidimensional scale. Structural clarity may also contribute to explain illogical findings, such as the assumption that experience is unrelated to attitudes. Consequently, based on the discussion above, the present thesis hypothesizes that attitudes towards child sexual abuse are multidimensional.

To this authors' knowledge, few studies have used the different measures referred to. In general, the studies' results have been reported in other studies, but the scales have not been subject to extensive use. There may be several reasons for this. Exploring attitudes towards child sexual abuse in different groups may have seemed irrelevant to the inquiry. Developing interventions and therapy programmes for, e.g. offenders and victims of abuse, may have been of greater interest. The scales used in previous studies may have been perceived as designed for specific groups and therefore less suitable for mapping other more general groups. The scales may also have been perceived as poorly validated and tested. Hence, there is a need for a validated measurement aimed at measuring attitudes

towards child sexual abuse among different groups and large populations in general. Yet why should there be concern about larger groups' attitudes toward child sexual abuse?

As noted earlier, in community-based interventions larger general populations are of primary interest. In this context it is seen as important to know to what degree a population holds attitudes supportive of child sexual abuse. This knowledge can guide prevention programmes and it enables the researchers to explore whether or not there are differences between groups, e.g. between men and women and between different samples. Studies have found gender differences in attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Men have more abuse-accepting attitudes than women (Briere et al., 1992; Hegna, Mossige & Wichstøm, 2004). Furthermore, group differences are relevant in the validation of a scale as cultural background is expected to affect attitudes. For this reason, the present study chose two samples, in addition to the sample of the general adult Norwegian population. One of the two samples comprises offenders in prison. It is expected that offenders have more abuse-accepting attitudes compared to the average Norwegian. The other sample, a group of active Christians, has been exposed to knowledge about abuse and it is therefore expected that this group will have the most restrictive attitudes towards abuse. The rationale for the inclusion of the three samples will be more thoroughly discussed in the following. Further, when revealing attitudes it is possible to explore the relation between attitudes and other aspects. This includes aspects shown to be correlated with attitudes and aspects that have not previously been the scope of research. This enables researchers to identify groups that will be in greater need of knowledge about abuse and also maybe therapy.

It is argued that a scale must take into account what has been done and reported previously. In addition, the scale must add something new to what already exists and defend this inclusion. The purpose and aim of a scale will always be determinative for which factors to include. In practice, the necessity of developing a scale grew from the aim of the study, as the scales used in earlier studies had different aims compared to the present study, e.g. exploring groups of professionals' attitudes towards abuse. This thesis was in need of a scale intended to measure attitudes towards abuse in the general public as well as a group of offenders, and the assumption was also that these attitudes are multidimensional. Hence, Briere et al.'s (1992) scale could not be used. However, looking at the contents of the aforementioned attitude scales, all included items covering the victim's credibility and the crime seriousness/incidence of abuse. All three studies agreed that these aspects should be included in a scale intended to measure attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Hence, it was considered that these aspects

ought to be covered in the present thesis. Furthermore, due to the aim of their studies, Trute et al. (1992) included identity regarding perpetrators and Saunders (1988) included offender culpability. Governed by the aim of the present thesis, punishment of offenders will not be included in the new scale. These aspects were relevant to Saunders (1988) and Trute et al.'s (1992) studies because the different groups of professionals all dealt with offenders as a part of their profession. However, the question is which other aspects, in addition to victim credibility and crime seriousness, should be included in a scale measuring attitudes toward child sexual abuse primarily in the general population?

In the field of risk research, fatalistic attitudes or tendencies has been shown to be a significant predictor of risk behaviour (Mearns, Rundmo, Flin, Fleming & Gordon, 1997; Somlai, Kelly, Heckman, Hackl, Runge & Wright, 2000; Varga, 2001; Mearns, Rundmo, Gordon & Fleming, 2004). The failure to report abuse may also be seen as risk behaviour, as failure to report may put the non-reporter and others at risk of abuse. Official numbers in Norway show that few cases of sexual abuse and rape are reported to the police, and even fewer cases are taken to court (Størvold, 2001; Sætre & Grytdal, 2004). Studies show that many victims of child sexual abuse do not talk about abuse or wait until they are adults (Lannem, 2001; Kvam, 2004). Could this retention be due to fatalistic tendencies among the abused? Alternatively, is fatalism common among the general population as well? Such fatalistic tendencies may then contribute to new victims of abuse. Accordingly, fatalism will be included as a dimension on the new attitude scale.

Furthermore, the age of legal consent seems to be controversial among several groups. Paedophiles state that they will fight to lower the age of legal consent and ultimately to have no lower limit (Brantsæter, 2001). The rationale behind this statement is that many paedophiles see children as equal sexual partners, and sexual relations should not only be valid between adults. They claim that children are free to choose for themselves and that voluntary sex between an adult and a child is not harmful. Is this notion of the paedophiles just a special attitude expressed by a certain group or is it an attitude held by a larger group of adults in Norway? Do offenders in prison have a more liberal view on this issue than non-offenders? Hence, the scale will include items regarding age of legal consent. The protest in the Netherlands towards the self-appointed paedophile Norbert de Jonge and his party PNVD (Partij voor Naasteliefde, Vrijheid und Diversiteit) may imply that the age of legal consent is seen as a protection for children not to be forced into relations which are potentially harmful or regarded as harmful (Monaghan, 2006; *Protest tegen pedo-partij* (n.d.)). It is therefore

expected that child sexual offenders will be more positive towards a lowering of the age of consent than the general public.

1.4. Prediction of attitudes

As mentioned previously, the relation between attitudes and behaviour has been the subject of countless studies (see e.g. Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005). However, if attitudes are as essential in predicting behaviour as assumed it would be equally interesting to explore why people possess the attitudes they do. Xenos and Smith (2001) argue that cultural and subcultural values are important premise providers for attitudes. It is therefore of interest to reveal possible cultural and social factors in addition to personal factors that may promote positive attitudes towards adult-child sex. When psycho-social models have attempted to explain the relation between attitudes and behaviour, the focus has been almost solely on the individual's choice and traits. However, choices arise and are solved in contexts. It is therefore equally important when planning interventions to prevent abuse, to focus upon the context and how the context influences attitudes. This view is also supported by theories of sexual offending (Finkelhor, 1984; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Hall & Hirschman, 1992; Beech & Ward 2004)

This view is also in accordance with theories explaining the formation of attitudes. Attitudes are developed through learning and experience. They are established and/or developed through affective, cognitive and behavioural processes, and attitudes are learned by an interaction of these factors. Through this learning process, attitude schemes, also known as cognitive schemes, are developed. When exposed to a certain phenomenon, object or issue later in life, this will activate the cognitive scheme earlier established. The issue/object or event will then be perceived through the "glasses" of the scheme. Hence, social norms serve as precursors of attitudes. It is also shown that attitudes developed through specific incidences or events in life are more stable and harder to change than attitudes unrelated to own experience (Aarø & Rise, 1996; Fabrigar et al., 2005).

Based on the discussion presented thus far, it will therefore be of interest to examine more closely the factors believed to have prediction value for attitudes towards abuse. Which variables will have the largest explanatory power? Will different groups' attitudes towards child abuse be explained by the same social, cultural and personality variables, or will these variables behave differently among the different groups? Answers to these questions will guide future interventions because interventions which are intended to change people's attitudes to a phenomenon must be highly adjusted to the target group.

Attitudes towards sexual abuse have been shown to be related to different variables. Men have been shown to be more positive to adult-child sex compared to women (Briere et al., 1992; Hegna, Mossige & Wichstrøm, 2004). Men also endorse rape myths to a greater extent than women (Johnson, Kuck & Schander, 1997; Xenos & Smith, 2001) and the majority of perpetrators are men (Pedersen & Aas, 1995; Jonassen, 2004; Kjellgren, Wassberg, Carlberg, Långström, & Svedin, 2006). In addition, it seems that education plays a role in developing attitudes. Persons with a low level of education are less restrictive to abuse than persons with a high level of education (Xenos & Smith, 2001). Hence, the socio-cultural pattern is reflected also in these issues. Those who belong to a lower socio-economic class are at greater risk of possessing attitudes supportive of abuse compared to those belonging to a higher socio-economic class.

Furthermore, studies have found evident correlation between the views of women and attitudes toward rape and child sexual abuse. A conservative and patriarchal view of women as opposed to a modern view of women, is positively correlated with accepting attitudes towards adult-child sex and rape myths (Johnson et al., 1997; Simonson & Subich, 1999; Fitzpatrick, Salgado, Suvak, King & King, 2004). This is particularly true for men, and researchers believe that men are socialized into these attitudes. A man is expected to be dominant and aggressive while a woman is expected to be submissive and passive. This view is supported by Murnen, Wright and Kaluzny (2002). They report that men who identify with a masculine ideology are at greater risk of acting out sexual aggression. Murnen et al. (2002) state that endorsing a masculine ideology in itself will not cause sexual violence, but this may serve as a precursor because implicit in this ideology is an acceptance of the masculine being predominant and superior to the feminine. Gender role patterns are learned through socialization processes. Hence, culture is relevant in developing attitudes, including attitudes towards abuse against women and children. However, few studies focusing on child sexual abuse have investigated cultural differences. Most studies have described different countries' or a continent's cultures, e.g. described Asian culture compared to American culture and how these two promote or inhibit openness towards child sexual abuse (Futa, Hsu & Hansen, 2001). Further, in contrast to research in the risk domain, few studies have investigated the smaller subcultures within a large cultural sphere.

Built on Douglas and Wildavsky's (1982) cultural theory, Dake (1991) developed a measurement instrument intended to measure quantitatively which type of culture a person perceives him- or herself to be a part of. He included four different types of biases or worldviews: fatalism, hierarchy, individualism, and

egalitarianism. Based on this categorization, Dake (1991) tried to predict which risks an individual perceives as relevant or not. He found associations between certain worldviews and particular trends in risk perception. Dake's (1991) findings have been supported by more recent studies, e.g. Finucane, Slovic, Mertz, Flynn and Satterfield (2000). They reported that individuals with a hierarchical worldview tend to perceive less risk from genetically engineered bacteria and crops. However, the empirical examination of the cultural theory has not given decisive results and the theory has been criticized for this, e.g. by Sjöberg (1995) and Oltedal (2005). A possible explanation is that the cultural theory is incorrect: culture cannot predict risk perception. This argument is rejected by the large majority of studies showing that culture and social conditions affect attitudes and behaviour. Cross-cultural studies are therefore of interest, independent of the validity of the cultural theory. Another possibility is that the measurement developed by Dake is not adjusted to the cultural theory. In addition, the studies which have included Dake's scale have used regression analysis to predict risk perception. However, cultural theory states that respondents should be assigned to one of the four cultural categories or worldviews. Hence, regression analysis and correlational design may be the wrong methodological approach when testing the empirical value of the model. To circumvent this problem, Oltedal and Rundmo (2007) used cluster analysis in their study, but concluded that members with different worldviews did not perceive risk according to the patterns described by the cultural theory. Finally, it is possible that the cultural theory is unsuitable for the domain of risk research. Nevertheless, even if cultural theory has shown to have poor prediction value for certain risks, the underlying causal factors listed in the cultural theory may be highly relevant to issues regarding child sexual abuse. Culture theory may be more suitable for the area of abuse. Thus, this thesis aims to explore whether or not cultural theory (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982) can be a tool in the prediction of attitudes towards abuse.

As stated, culture and social conditions are important in the shaping of attitudes and behaviour. Different cultures may promote abuse while others may have an inhibitory effect on abuse. An obvious and grotesque example of this is the acceptance of the use of violence in war. During the war in former Yugoslavia there was a deliberate strategy by both sides to rape the enemy's female civilians. This shows that an abuse-accepting culture or subculture can develop if conditions change. Likewise, subcultures that discount such behaviour can develop. Hence, this thesis has included groups that represent different subcultures in Norway. The aim is to compare the groups' attitudes in order to be able to conclude whether or not the same variables predict attitudes in all groups. Therefore, in addition to a

sample of general adults, a sample of prisoners convicted of child sexual abuse and a sample of active Christians have been included. The latter group has not been primarily chosen because of their Christian belief, but rather because the local church in the group's community has initiated several local interventions to enhance the awareness and knowledge about abuse. The people active in these congregations have been asked to reflect upon their own attitudes and behaviour. The local church has arranged seminars and services about sexual abuse. In addition, self-help groups have been established and also those indirectly involved, e.g. partners and family, have been offered information. The present study hypothesizes that the three samples which is believed to represent different cultures will have different attitudes towards child sexual abuse. It is anticipated that those living in the area where the church has focused on abuse will have the most restrictive attitudes compared to Norwegian adults in general and the imprisoned offenders. Likewise, it is expected that those who have engaged in child sexual abuse, i.e. the prisoners, will have the most accepting attitudes of the three groups.

A social factor probably not previously examined in relation to attitudes towards abuse is social support. Social support is highly associated with good mental and physical health (Reifman, 1995; Uchino, Cacioppo & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996; Sarason, Sarason & Gurung, 2001). This may indicate that social support has an impact on abuse as well. Skorpe Skaug (1998) found that loneliness is related to enhanced risk for committing abusive acts. Furthermore, studies show that there is a relation between loneliness and social support (Ginter, Glauser & Richmond, 1994; Ponizovsky & Ritsner, 2004). Therefore, it may be that lack of social support functions as an indirect predictor of abusive behaviour. Research has shown that perpetrators have problems with adult relations and seek intimacy and support in socially and legally unacceptable manners, e.g. in a sexual relation with a child (Brantsæter, 2001; Hanson & Morton-Buorgon, 2005). Thus, social support may serve as a buffer against unacceptable attitudes and behaviour related to abuse. This is because if there is a high level of social support one of the premises for committing abuse is withdrawn. On the other hand, it may be that social support can contribute to abusive behaviour. If a culture to some extent accepts and promotes abuse a group member may feel forced to participate in such behaviour because he or she will fear being excluded from the group and hence the social support and interdependence the group gives.

It is shown that social and cultural factors have an impact on attitudes, but personal variables may also be relevant. There is an ongoing discussion about whether abusers have deficiency in empathy or not. The research literature does not show clear conclusions, but it is evident that empathy may serve as a buffer against

abusive behaviour. Wiehe (2003) found that male child offenders have empathy deficiencies and suggested that this can be the main reason for their abusive behaviour. Perez-Albeniz and de Paul (2004) showed that parents who violate their children lack empathy in general and in particular towards their own family members. However, in both of these studies the abusive acts investigated were physical and not sexual abuse. Wheeler, George and Dahl (2002) reported that empathy was a moderator of sexual aggression. Males in the “high-risk” group who had high empathy reported lower degree of sexual aggressive behaviour than men in the same group with low empathy. Wheeler et al. (2002) suggested that high empathy serves to protect against sexually aggressive behaviour. This thesis therefore hypothesizes that empathy will have a prediction value for attitudes supporting abusive behaviour.

Traditionally, normlessness has not been connected to attitudes towards child sexual abuse, although it has been used to predict attitudes towards other undesirable behaviour, e.g. traffic rule violation. Ulleberg and Rundmo (2003) found that normlessness is related to attitudes accepting different kinds of traffic rules violation. This finding is supported by Iversen and Rundmo (2002). According to Kohn and Schooler (1983), normlessness can be seen as the belief that “it is acceptable to do whatever one can get away with”. Since sexual abuse of children is seen as both socially and legally unaccepted behaviour, normlessness may serve as a predictor of such behaviour as well as other illegal acts, and therefore indirectly as a predictor of attitudes supportive of abuse.

Finally, several studies have shown that offenders rationalize their own offensive behaviour. One of these rationalizations is that offenders claim that their acts are spontaneous in nature, even when it is possible for outsiders to see that there was a plan behind the offence (Brantsæter, 2001; Craven et al., 2006). There seems to be the perception among offenders that the abuse would have happened anyway; it was beyond their control. Is it possible that this tendency is due to low mastery and high fatalism tendencies? In safety research, mastery and fatalism is essential to understand the safety behaviour. Rundmo and Hale (2003) reported that managers possessing high mastery and low fatalism ensured security on the working place to a greater extent than managers low in mastery and high in fatalism. Hence, mastery and fatalism are negatively correlated. Accordingly, the present study will examine the role of mastery in attitudes towards child abuse. It is hypothesized that low mastery is related to more positive attitudes towards abuse.

1.5. Knowledge and attitudes

As argued thus far, social, cultural and personal factors are believed to be important premise providers for attitudes. Still, there seems to be an important aspect missing, namely knowledge. In treatment programmes and educational interventions the goal of intervention is evaluated in terms of enhanced knowledge and changed attitudes towards the subject in focus (McCauley, Jenckes & McNutt, 2003; Salmon, Murphy, Baird & Price, 2006; Warburton, Hanif, Rowsell & Coulthard, 2006). Indirectly, these studies indicate that knowledge is seen as very important to both attitudes and behaviour. In addition, interventions designed to change personal attitudes have been shown to be effective. This implies that exposure to knowledge and attitudinal influences may have an effect in transforming problematic attitudes (Iversen, Rundmo & Klempe, 2005). According to Easteal (1992), acceptance of rape myths and social attitudes is a result of misinformation and myths regarding sexual violence. Implicitly, Easteal (1992) points out that valid information will result in a rejection of rape myths. Again, knowledge is believed to change attitudes.

Generally speaking, there are two major theories regarding the relation between knowledge and attitudes. The first is that knowledge generates attitudes. The same knowledge can generate different attitudes. This depends on the person's values and on his or her perception of the given information. The KAP-model (Knowledge – Attitude – Practice) can be regarded as a “pure” variant of this way of looking upon the relation between knowledge and attitudes. The KAP-model holds that information will lead to changed attitudes towards a subject or issue, which in turn will lead to changed behaviour (Aarø & Rise, 1996). Several countermeasures have been based on the assumption that information and knowledge leads to certain attitudes which further change behaviour. Salmon et al. (2006) evaluated the effect of an educational programme on midwives' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and implementation of routine antenatal enquiry for domestic violence. The results showed that there was an improvement in knowledge and a change in attitudes at post-test, and an increase in midwives' enquiry for domestic violence. Warburton et al. (2006) studied the changes in dental hospital staff's knowledge and attitudes towards domestic violence following attendance at a brief training intervention. Results showed a significant increase in knowledge as well as changed attitudes towards domestic violence. Other surveys support similar findings and thus confirm that changes in knowledge and attitudes result from interventions (Itzhaky & York, 2001; McCauley et al., 2003). However, the same studies have not investigated the association between knowledge and attitudes.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, Feng and Wu (2005) found that knowledge about abuse was the strongest predictor of nurses' intention to report child abuse. Knowledge was found to have an indirect effect on intention through both perceived behavioural control and attitude. This indicates that there may be a relation between knowledge and attitude. Attitude may also have a direct effect on behavioural intentions and behaviour.

On the other hand, the relation between knowledge and attitudes could be the opposite of what has been described. Attitudes may also be considered to guide knowledge, e.g. people seek knowledge that supports their own agenda. Existing attitudes will bias how new information is perceived and evaluated. Information that mismatches a person's existing attitudes will be perceived as less compelling than arguments that match the existing attitudes (Fabrigar et al., 2005). Peuhkuri (2002) argued that gaps in knowledge and controversy in scientific knowledge makes it possible to allow positions and attitudes to govern the selection of which knowledge to trust. Other processes are also believed to be involved, e.g. how motivated the person is to defend his or her existing attitudes. A discussion of these factors is beyond the scope of this thesis (see Fabrigar et al., 2005 for a thorough discussion of these issues).

However, in both of the aforementioned approaches, knowledge and attitudes are hypothesized to be associated and are assumed to influence behaviour. As mentioned, knowledge is included in interventions, even though the literature does not give a clear answer that knowledge leads to changed attitudes. Yet what about knowledge-seeking and attitudes? Is it possible that there is a connection between interest in a topic and attitudes towards the same issue?

A logical consequence of Peuhkuri's (2002) study is that it is possible to avoid certain kinds of information or to choose to not reflect upon some information. The reason may be that the information is perceived to be very unpleasant or too hard to understand. Drottz-Sjöberg and Sjöberg's (1991) study supports such a hypothesis. They found that among a sample of adolescents risk perception was negatively correlated with interest in the issues: the greater risk, the less interest in the topic. Sjöberg (1999) contradicts this mechanism. In his study interest in risks was found to be the greatest predictor of attitudes towards risk mitigation. A possible reason is that interest in something that is perceived to be a treat may give an enhanced feeling of empowerment and self-esteem because one acts upon important issues. It may seem that interest can affect attitudes, even if the causal direction can be discussed. To seek knowledge about an issue is an expression of interest in the issue. This thesis hypothesizes that knowledge-seeking about abuse and about attitudes towards abuse may be related. It is expected that

those who have high knowledge-seeking also have the most averse attitudes towards abuse.

Furthermore, this thesis focuses on the relation between seeking knowledge and actual knowledge. The literature is very scarce regarding this approach. Consequently, there are no empirical findings that give support to or reject such a hypothesis. Common sense suggests there must be a positive relationship between knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge. If a person is interested in a topic and seeks knowledge about this topic then it makes sense that he or she will learn more about the topic. On the other hand, knowledge has a lot of sources and there are several processes that may guide the choice of sources. At one extreme, there may be a skinhead who seeks information about the Holocaust. He or she will turn to sources which deny that Holocaust ever took place. However, in many other incidences this will not be the case and it will probably be possible to show a positive relation between knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge. This thesis will explore such a hypothesis.

Personal experience may also be important for seeking knowledge. Being a survivor of abuse may give enhanced need for knowledge about abuse, its consequences and phases. Informational support should not be underestimated. It is hypothesized that those who have been victimized will seek more knowledge about abuse compared to the non-abused. In addition, having “indirect experience”, e.g. being a close friend of a survivor may also be related to enhanced knowledge-seeking. The present study aims to find out whether or not experience is related to knowledge-seeking as well as to attitudes.

1.6. Summary of key research questions

To sum up, based on the discussions above, the main aims of this thesis will be the following:

- to develop and validate an instrument intended to measure attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The scale is intended to be multidimensional and consists of four dimensions. The dimensionality will be tested, as well as the homogeneity of the scale and the construct validity (Paper I).
- to explore different groups of Norwegian adolescents’ attitudes towards child sexual abuse and to investigate the factors contributing to these attitudes. Personal, social and cultural determinants are included in the prediction of attitudes (Paper II). It is hypothesized that active Christians

have the most restrictive attitudes towards child sexual abuse compared to the other two samples. Prisoners have the most accepting attitudes. Males are more accepting of child sexual abuse than women. It is expected that the personal, social and cultural variables included in the study will predict attitudes. The prediction value of the different variables will vary among the three samples.

- to investigate the relation between knowledge-seeking about child sexual abuse and attitudes towards abuse, as well as the relation between knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge. In addition, there will be an exploration of which sources the respondents gather information from (Paper III). Specific research questions are: Is there differences in attitudes and knowledge-seeking among the (sub-)samples and between genders? Will those who seek knowledge have more actual knowledge about abuse? Which sources of knowledge do the respondents use? Is personal experience related to knowledge-seeking and attitudes? Is there a positive relation between attitudes and knowledge-seeking? And finally, do attitudes and knowledge-seeking affect abusive behaviour?

For all three articles it is of interest to investigate differences between the three main samples as well as among different subsamples. It is of particular interest to investigate the differences between the abused and the non-abused, and between offenders and non-offenders. It will be explored in which ways these groups differ in attitudes, knowledge-seeking and behaviour.

2. Method

2.1. Sample and Procedure

All three papers included in the thesis are based on the same questionnaire survey. The data collection was carried out in spring 2004. The survey consists of three subsamples.

The first sample was a random sample of Norwegian adults aged 18–67 years ($n = 296$). The response rate was 30%. A total of 66% of the respondents were women and 34% were men. The mean age was 39.8 years ($sd = 12.8$). The sample is representative of the population with regard to age and marital status, but not according to gender. The education level was somewhat higher than that of the general population.

The second sample consisted of adults living in a community in Western Norway ($n = 125$). Several local activities (e.g. seminars and self-help groups) to enhance knowledge and awareness of child sexual abuse have been arranged in this area. These activities were initiated by the local church and the respondents were therefore recruited among the active Christians in these congregations. One-third of the respondents received the questionnaire by mail and the remaining two-thirds received it either during a choir rehearsal or a Christian meeting. The response rate of this sample was 51%. The age of the respondents ranged from 22 to 65 years and the mean age was 46.3 years ($sd = 10.6$). A total of 68% were women and 32% were men. The sample is believed to be fairly representative of active Christians in this region.

The third sample consisted of prisoners convicted of child sexual abuse. The prison and probation regions in Norway were contacted and five out of six regions agreed to let their prisoners participate in the study. One region refrained from participation due to few child sexual offenders in prison at the time and because of another ongoing research project. The prisoners were given the questionnaire by a local prison administrator. They were allowed to complete the survey in private and seal the return envelope before giving the envelope back to the administrator. The administrator then sent the questionnaires back to the researcher. A total of 36 out of 73 prisoners completed the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 50%. One of the respondents was a woman. The prisoners' ages ranged from 21 to 74 years and the mean age was 44.4 years ($sd = 13.9$). The sample is believed to be representative of the child sexual offender population in Norwegian prisons.

2.2. Measures

Several measures were included in the questionnaire. Background variables such as age, gender, education, marital status, and number of children were asked for on the first page of the questionnaire. Attitudes towards child sexual abuse were measured using the Attitudes towards Child Sexual Abuse scale (ACA). The version of the scale applied in Paper I consisted of 16 items and the scale used in Paper II consisted of 17 items. The scale covers four dimensions: 'acceptance and responsibility for abuse', 'fatalistic attitudes towards abuse', 'damage caused by abuse', and 'legal issues'. Paper I gives a detailed description of the development and validation of the measurement instrument. Further, several validated and well-known personality measures were included in the survey. Empathy was measured by the 7 Empathic Concern items from Davis' (1996) Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Cliffordson, 2001). Normlessness was measured by the 4 items of the Normlessness Scale (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). The Mastery Scale, consisting of 7 items (Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan & Mullan, 1981) was applied to measure mastery. Masculinity and femininity was measured by using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974; Chung, 1995). The scale consists of 30 items, where 10 items measure femininity, 10 items measure masculinity and the remaining 10 items are neutral fillers. Social support was operationalized by using a short version of Procidano and Heller's (1983) Social Support from Family and Friends scale. On this scale, 10 items reflect the perceived support from family and 10 items cover the perceived support from friends. A scale including 7 items was developed to measure to what extent the respondents identified with a modern or conservative view of women (see Paper I). Cultural biases such as egalitarianism, individualism and hierarchy were measured using the revised version of Dake's (1991) measurement (Rippl, 2002). Five items measure egalitarianism, 6 items measure individualism and 9 items measure hierarchy. Furthermore, 3 items operationalize knowledge-seeking about child sexual abuse. The scale was developed for this survey.

For all scales except for the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the items were measured with a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The Bem Sex Role Inventory uses a seven-point scale ranging from "always or almost always true" to "never or almost never true". Furthermore, the respondents were asked to report from which sources they obtain information about child sexual abuse and to what extent they use these sources. They were also asked to give their perception of the prevalence rates of female and male child sexual abuse and their own experience of abuse. Finally, they were asked to report if they

had had direct experience of abuse, either as a victim or as an abuser, and to inform about their indirect experience of abuse, e.g. whether they had close friends, family or acquaintances that were victims of abuse or were abusers.

2.3. Statistical methods

The internal consistency of the measurement instruments were measured by Cronbach's alpha and average inter-item correlation.¹ An alpha of .70 or more is satisfactory (Nunnally, 1978) and an average corrected inter-item correlation greater than .30 is satisfactory. In Paper I a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was executed to test the factor structure of the Attitudes towards Child Sexual Abuse scale (ACA). The CFA is a form of theory testing that confirms the existence of factors and offers a method for determining construct validity. The process tests a pre-determined hypothesis and determines the specific variables that correlate to specific factors. In this thesis it is hypothesized that the attitude scale consists of four different attitude dimensions. Several goodness-of-fit indices are reported: χ^2/df ratio, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and root means square of approximation (RMSEA). A $\chi^2/df < 3.0$ indicates a good fit of the model (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin & Summers, 1977). A GFI, AGFI and CFI $> .90$ indicate a good model fit and a RMSEA of 0.0–.05 is seen as a very good fit of the model to the data. A RMSEA between .05 and .08 indicates a fair fit.² Pearson's product moment correlation was used to test item discrimination in Paper I and to test the strength of the relation between ACA and knowledge-seeking in Paper III. In Paper II, a t-test was applied to test mean difference between two groups, e.g. male and female. Furthermore, a Chi-square test was carried out to explore the relation between own direct and indirect experience of abuse. In Paper III this test was carried out to determine whether men or women and abused or non-abused have different perceptions of prevalence of abuse. ANOVA was applied in Paper III to test the mean difference in knowledge-seeking between several groups. A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the mean differences in attitudes between different samples and gender in Papers I and II. In Paper I, MANOVA was executed to test

¹ Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items included in the measure and may give a low reliability due to the fact that the number of items is small. Average inter-item correlation can adjust for this bias and is therefore used on some measures in addition to Cronbach's alpha.

² RMSEA is often perceived to be the most important fit indicator as it is not affected by sampling error, but is based on the specifications made by the researcher and it favours a parsimonious model.

the construct validity. In addition, the relation between attitude and behaviour was tested with MANOVA. In Paper II a Linear Structural Relation analysis programme (LISREL) was applied to explore the relationship between background, personality, cultural and social variables, and attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The fit of the model was tested and the goodness-of-fit indices were reported.

3. Results

3.1. Summary of Paper I

“Attitudes towards child sexual abuse – development and validation of a new scale”

The purpose of Paper I was to examine the psychometric qualities of a measurement instrument of adults' attitudes towards child sexual abuse with regard to reliability and validity. The structure of the instrument was hypothesized to be multidimensional, i.e. that different attitude subscales reflect different dimensions of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The generating and selection of items, as well as the classification of the subscales, were based on the evaluation of already existing measures as well as the researcher's own rational-intuitive basis. The four factors were: 1) acceptance and responsibility for abuse, 2) fatalistic attitudes towards abuse, 3) damage caused by abuse, and 4) legal issues. This four-factor model was tested in a confirmatory factor analysis. The sample was randomly divided into two samples and the goodness-of-fit indices supported the model of a four-dimensional scale in both samples, although the RMSEA indicated that the fit of the model could still need some refinements. Furthermore, the subscales correlated. As expected, the correlation coefficients between the dimensions were not too strong, indicating that the scale measured the same construct, but consisted of different dimensions. The results showed that the scale differentiated between sample and gender. The active Christians had most restrictive attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The prisoners were most accepting of abuse. Males were more accepting than women. However, dimension 2, fatalism, failed to show this differentiation. One reason could be that the respondents' interpreted fatalism differently. The attitude dimensions were, as expected, associated with different backgrounds, personality and cultural variables previously linked to abusive behaviour. This indicates that the construct validity was satisfactory. Age and

education were negatively related to attitudes. The older the respondents and the higher their level of education, the more restrictive were their attitudes towards abuse. High empathy, femininity, mastery, social support, low normlessness, and a modern view of women were associated with restrictive attitudes toward abuse. Having a hierarchic cultural bias was also associated with restrictive attitudes. Those respondents possessing an individualistic worldview were more accepting of abuse. Finally, the results showed a relation between attitude and behaviour. In conclusion, the validity of the scale was shown to be satisfactory. However, behaviour was measured using one item and it was not possible to reach a conclusion about which dimension may have more influence on abusive behaviour than others. Hence, there is a need for a more comprehensive mapping of abusive behaviour and its relation with the different dimensions of ACA. On the other hand, the present study used an alternative way of measure the relation between attitudes and behaviour. The study included three different samples where one sample consisted of imprisoned offenders who by definition had committed child sexual abuse. As hypothesized, the offenders had more abuse-accepting attitudes than the comparing samples where the majority was non-offenders. Thus, attitudes are related to behaviour.

3.2. Summary of Paper II

“Prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse among three different Norwegian samples”

The aim of Paper II was twofold: the first aim was to examine attitudes towards child sexual abuse and the second aim was to investigate predictors of such attitudes among the three different samples. The results showed that men had more abuse-accepting attitudes than women. A separate analysis was carried out for male respondents only. The results showed that the differences were significant between the males in all three samples on ACA. The active Christian men had the most aversive attitudes and the prisoners had the most abuse-accepting attitudes. Furthermore, there were sample differences in personality, cultural and social variables. The active Christians were most empathic and had the lowest normlessness of the three samples. The prisoners were reported as having the highest normlessness. The prisoners and the random adults were equally empathic. The random adults had the most modern view of women and gave lowest support to a hierarchical culture compared to the active Christians and the prisoners. A structural equation modelling analysis was applied to explore the variables

predicting attitudes. Empathy and normlessness were shown to be the most significant predictors when the results for all three samples were pooled together: the more empathic, the more averse to sexual abuse; the more normless, the less restricted attitudes towards abuse. The fit of the model was satisfactory (RMSEA = 0.053). A multi-sample analysis was then carried out to investigate whether or not the proposed pattern was the same across the three samples. The non-constrained model fitted the data more satisfactorily than the constrained model. Among random adults empathy was the most significant predictor. Among active Christians empathy, normlessness and hierarchy were the most significant predictors, and among the prisoners, mastery and view of women showed the largest beta values. The goodness-of-fit indices for the three pathway analyses differed across the samples. (The RMSEA for random adults was 0.052, for active Christians 0.072, and for the prisoners 0.12.) The explained variance increased when the fit of the model decreased (R^2 for random adults was .38, for active Christians .49, and for prisoners .55). In short, this study showed that predictors of attitudes change across samples. Hence, different intervention strategies should be used depending on which population is targeted by the intervention.

3.3. Summary of Paper III

“Norwegian adults’ attitudes towards child sexual abuse and the interest to seek knowledge about abuse”

The focus of Paper III was on attitudes towards child sexual abuse and knowledge-seeking about child sexual abuse. The aims were to explore the relation between attitudes and knowledge-seeking, and between actual knowledge about abuse and knowledge-seeking. The sources of knowledge were also explored. Additional aims were to investigate the difference in knowledge-seeking and attitudes based on the respondents’ own experience of abuse and to examine the relation between attitudes, knowledge-seeking and behaviour. The results showed that attitudes and knowledge-seeking varied between samples and gender. Men and prisoners had more abuse-accepting attitudes than women and adults in general. As expected, the active Christians had the most aversive attitudes and the highest knowledge-seeking. The results partly supported the hypothesis that those scoring high on knowledge-seeking have more accurate knowledge about child sexual abuse. A more comprehensive measurement of both knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge is needed to draw decisive conclusions about this relationship. The respondents used a variety of sources to collect and acquire information about child

sexual abuse. Although the major source used by all respondents was mass media, the results showed that information about abuse could be distributed throughout diverse sources. In addition to how the sources present the information about abuse, further research should explore how this information is processed and perceived. The respondents' direct or indirect experience of abuse was related to their degree of knowledge-seeking and also to their attitudes. Direct or indirect experience of abuse was related to higher knowledge-seeking. Only direct experience as a victim or an abuser was related to attitudes, e.g. abusers had more abuse-accepting attitudes than non-abusers. Abusive behaviour was predicted by attitudes, gender and sample, but not by knowledge-seeking. The study emphasized the need for further exploration of the role of knowledge and experience with regard to abusive behaviour and attitudes towards abuse.

4. Discussion

In this thesis an instrument to measure attitudes towards child sexual abuse was developed and applied to explore cultural, social and personal factors contributing to these attitudes. The relation between participants' knowledge-seeking on the one hand, and their experiences, attitudes and actual knowledge on the other hand, were examined.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the thesis investigated factors believed to affect attitudes. However, despite the fact that the study includes what is often called "causal analyses" and uses terms such as "predictors", "explanatory value", "prediction value", etc., this does not imply that the current study has aimed to determine the direction of a causal relation between certain variables. Then, a different design (preferably longitudinal) would have been recommended. The present study recognizes that the individual is embedded in the social and cultural world and that the relation between cause and effect often is interdependent: they affect each other. Consequently, it is vital to understand the factors associated with these attitudes, including the factors that embed them. When this relationship is understood we may be able to distinguish between factors that are important to attitudes and the factors that are less important. In turn, this will strengthen our understanding of attitudes and enhance our ability to change these attitudes. Furthermore, it may guide intervention strategies in order to affect attitudes and abusive behaviour.

4.1. The problems of assessing attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is both a socially and legally unaccepted behaviour. Thus, when assessing attitudes towards child sexual abuse certain considerations need to be reflected upon. When using self-reports methods there is a possibility that the data are influenced by social desirability responses, i.e. the respondents' willingness to manipulate their answers according to what they regard as socially appropriate. The fact that only 24 out of 36 prisoners convicted of child sexual abuse reported that they themselves had engaged in sexual activity with a child below 16 years of age underlines this argument. It is seen as unlikely that 1/3 of the prisoners were exposed to injustice. A solution to this problem of misreporting may be to include a social desirability scale. Thus, a short version of the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale (Schuessler, 1982; Rudmin, 1999) was used in the survey and the

results showed that there were no significant differences between the three samples. Compared to an American study, the highest score among the Norwegian respondents in the present study was 4.75 and thus far below the American students' mean of 6.4 (Schuessler, 1982). Higher score means higher social desirability. Hence, Norwegian data ought to be trusted to a greater extent than American data. On the other hand, the result shows that Norwegians are not totally free from this self-serving bias, indicating that an inclusion of a social desirability scale is not able to staunch a misreporting of attitudes and behaviour. In order to circumvent this problem, some researchers have tried to develop scales aimed to measure propensity of abusive behaviour where the scale has no explicit references to abusive behaviour (Dutton, 1995). An alternative method is to choose groups with certain features and compare these groups. This is known as the "known group approach" (Hays, Anderson, and Revicki, 1998).

To test the attitude-behaviour relation the present study selected three groups. The prisoners were included because they had been convicted of child sexual abuse and therefore were child sexual offenders. The random adults were included because they represented a sample of the general Norwegian adult population. The third group, the active Christians, was chosen because they had been exposed to more knowledge and awareness of child sexual abuse than the comparing samples (see the Method section, p. 27). The findings showed that the active Christians shared certain features with both the offenders and the random adults. They shared the same conservative view of women as the prisoners, but they were more equal to the random adults with regards to gender distribution, age and education. This strengthens the active Christians' role as a comparison group.

4.2. Reliability and validity of the ACA

The known-group comparison strategy was used to evaluate the construct validity of the new scale. In addition, the construct validity was assessed by examining the logical relations that should exist with other measures. The results showed that the scores of the groups differed in the expected direction, confirming the discriminative properties of the ACA. The results also showed that the ACA correlated with several factors hypothesized to be associated with attitudes towards abuse, e.g. gender, education, empathy, and view of women. Hence, the construct validity of the scale was further strengthened. The factor structure of the scale consisted of four dimensions. The total sample was randomly divided into two samples and the same factor structure was tested on both samples. The expected four-factor structure was confirmed in both samples. This underlines the argument

that attitudes towards child sexual abuse are multidimensional. This finding is in accordance with that of several other studies which have used multidimensional indicators of attitudes. However, as opposed to the present study, many of these studies did not test the structure in a confirmatory factor analysis (Saunders, 1988; Trute et al., 1992). The internal consistencies (measured by Cronbach's alpha and average item-total correlation) for the total scale and the dimensions of the ACA were acceptable. Also, the reliability was acceptable among the three different samples included as well as in the three groups taken together.

The analysis showed that the random adults, active Christians and prisoners all showed lower mean scores on the dimension 'Acceptance and responsibility' compared to the other three dimensions. This implies that all three groups found it most easy to agree upon the statements that underline the adults' responsibility for adult-child sex and that there is low acceptance of adult-child sex. The random adults and the active Christians also stated that the consequences of an adult having sex with a child was damaging to the child and could have severe consequences. As expected, the prisoners were much more in doubt as to whether this is true or not. In turn, such information may guide intervention planning, with respect to what has to be focused upon specifically with specific groups.

It was expected that all four dimensions distinguished between the three samples. However, all groups were equally fatalistic, i.e. they were quite doubtful as to whether or not it is of any use to report child sexual abuse. One possible explanation is that fatalistic tendencies can serve as cognitive distortions to offenders and that the items used in the ACA were not able to distinguish between a fatalistic tendency and a cognitive distortion (see Paper I, p. 81). Hence, there was no difference across the samples. Furthermore, this lack of sample difference may reflect that, in fact, all respondents had no clear idea as to whom they should report (suspicion of) abuse. It is also possible that they held the opinion that reporting offences to the police is of no use because most cases are dismissed due to insufficient evidence. Finally, respondents may have perceived that abuse always will exist, and hence it would be useless to try to stop it completely. Nevertheless, fatalism should be included in the ACA scale, but an elaboration on the issues mentioned would further strengthen the interpretation of the findings of this thesis. It is also recommended that new items should be tested in order to distinguish between fatalistic tendencies and cognitive distortions.

4.3. Factors associated with attitudes

Paper II is mainly concerned with the personal, social, and cultural factors associated with attitudes towards child sexual abuse. An enhanced understanding of attitudes and associating factors may guide the development of interventions to prevent abuse. It was hypothesized that attitudes would be predicted by empathy, normlessness, mastery, masculinity, and femininity. Attitudes were also expected to be predicted by social and cultural values as social support, view of women and cultural biases. In addition, gender and education was believed to be associated with attitudes.

The results showed that the most significant predictors of attitudes were empathy, mastery, normlessness, femininity, view of women, and hierarchy; all showed significant beta values of $\geq .20$. The prediction value of the different predictors differed across the samples, showing that different factors influenced the same attitudes in different groups. Hence, group membership is important to decide which factors influence attitudes. The same factors had different prediction value across the three samples. This indicates that one cannot conclude that the same factors are associated with attitudes towards child sexual abuse across groups. From a prevention perspective, this implies that it is important to know which group is targeted in order to tailor the intervention to the specific group, e.g. among the prisoners it would be wise to encourage the prisoners to accept own feminine traits together with a focus on attitudes towards child sexual abuse in order to change these attitudes. This strategy probably would be less successful in a sample of random adults where femininity had no prediction value on attitudes.

4.3.1. Personality variables

The imprisoned offenders' attitudes towards child sexual abuse were partly explained by their lack of femininity and not their degree of masculinity. This result seems to oppose earlier findings that sexually abusive behaviour is associated with a masculine ideology (Murnen et al., 2002). Methodologically, this result can be due to what Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) call "the principle of compatibility", i.e. that the masculinity scale from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) is not very suitable to predict attitudes towards child sexual abuse because it does not measure any specific traits concerning acceptance of sexual abuse of children. Murnen et al. (2002) found that measures that included specific items regarding acceptance of sexual violence had better prediction value on sexual abusive behaviour. However, Murnen et al.'s (2002) metastudy was concerned

with sexual aggression against women. The present study focuses upon child sexual abuse.

This thesis argues that masculinity may play a different role in the relationship between men and women than between men and children. The relation between an adult and a child is by definition asymmetrical. There is no need to establish asymmetry, and the need for a very masculine orientation is limited. This may be the reason to why masculinity is not a predictor of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. This view is in accordance with studies that have found that child sexual offenders have problems with relations towards other adults. For instance, adult women are seen as threatening and men feel insufficient and subordinate (Brantsæter, 2001). Studies have also found that loneliness and intimacy deficits are significantly related to endorsement of rape myths (Marshall & Hambley, 1996; Bumby & Hansen, 1997). Marshall and Barbaree (1990) and Ward and Siegert (2002) also state in their theories of explaining sexual offending that child sexual offenders' ability to have close, intimate relationships with adults are limited or damaged; hence, a relationship with a child is preferred. The offenders themselves say that they feel equal to the child. This can also be an expression of being in control of a situation/relation, while the symmetry with the adult woman makes them feel subordinate. Thus, offenders may interpret symmetry and asymmetry differently to what is regarded as normal. This view is also in accordance with paedophiles' own descriptions of the relation between adults and children. They see the child as being equal to themselves with an ability to decide for itself. Paedophiles claim that they do not use force or power. They see no asymmetry in the relation between adults and children (Brantsæter, 2001). In conclusion, masculinity is not important as a predictor of attitudes towards child sexual abuse among offenders.

These results of the present study show that femininity is important. Among the imprisoned offenders, enhancing the acceptance of own femininity but not reducing own masculinity seems to be a route to more averse attitudes towards abuse. It also indicates that men are more vulnerable to possessing abuse-accepting attitudes and therefore commit abuse to a larger extent than women because women are more feminine than men in the first place. It seems that femininity serves as a protection against abuse-accepting attitudes and abusive behaviour. Unfortunately, e.g. Murnen et al. (2002) did not include femininity in their analyses of gender stereotypes and sexual abusive behaviour. Only masculinity was seen as relevant. As shown, this study suggests otherwise.

The hypothesis that empathy skills are important in attitudes towards child sexual abuse as well as towards abusive behaviour was supported. Empathy was

found to be the largest predictor of attitudes, though only in the sample of random adults and active Christians. Empathy did not come out as a significant predictor of attitudes in the sample of prisoners. This opposes earlier findings that have shown that empathy is associated with offensive behaviour and rape-myth acceptance (Bush, Mullis & Mullis, 2000; Wheeler et al., 2002). However, the sample of prisoners was small, suggesting that a larger sample size may have been preferable in order to draw more decisive conclusions. On the other hand, the population of imprisoned sexual offenders in Norway is relatively small. At the time when the survey was carried out there were approximately 88 child sexual offenders imprisoned in Norway,³ 36 of whom participated in the present survey. Accordingly, the sample included consisted of approximately 41% of the entire Norwegian population of imprisoned offenders. The sample is believed to be representative of the population. Thus, a small sample in itself does not invalidate the data.

Why did not empathy come out as a predictor of attitudes among the prisoners? In this group empathy was highly correlated with femininity ($r(n = 35) = .63, p < .01$). The correlation was lower among the other two samples, but the correlation between the three groups was not significantly different from each other. It is possible that among the prisoners empathy did not add any significant explanatory value to the variance already explained by femininity. This may imply that empathy actually is an underlying factor of attitudes towards abuse among prisoners as well as among the other two samples. However, when femininity was removed from the analysis, empathy was not revealed to be a significant predictor of attitudes. Still, it is possible that some aspects of empathy are closely related to femininity, and that this “gender role oriented” empathy is important in the prisoners’ attitudes towards abuse. One way to examine this relation would be to isolate the empathy items which have the strongest correlation with femininity, and then explore whether or not these items are more strongly associated with empathy than the other items. It is possible that it is actually the gender role orientation that is important to attitudes and not empathy per se. To this authors knowledge no studies have controlled for femininity when they have investigated the role of empathy upon abusive behaviour.

³ An exact number cannot be given since the survey was carried out over a certain period of time and only five out of six regions participated. The exact number of offenders was not given for the sixth region. However, based on the average number of offenders per region (73/5) it is estimated that the total number of child sexual offenders in prison in Norway was 88.

To summarize, personality variables served as predictors of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. This is in line with Smith, Bruner and White (1956) who suggest that interdependence exists between attitudes and personality. They claim that attitudes ought to be considered in the context of the total person. This suggests that attitudes are, in part, reflections of stable, underlying preferences, and that the thesis results should acknowledge the importance of personality traits in seeking to change attitudes towards child sexual abuse. This perspective also corresponds to the perspective of community psychology, which states that human behaviour is an interaction between the individual and the context (Orford, 1992; Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2005).

4.3.2. Cultural and social factors

It was expected that an approval of a hierarchical worldview (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982) would correlate with abuse-accepting attitudes. Several studies have shown that a patriarchal culture, in which hierarchy can be seen as a part of, and is assumed and found to promote oppression of women and male dominance (Brownridge, 2002; Murnen et al., 2002). This thesis' results support these former studies, but only with respect to the prisoners. In this group, approval of a hierarchic bias was associated with more abuse-accepting attitudes. Among the active Christians and the random adults, however, it was found that the more approval of a hierarchical worldview, the more averse attitudes were towards abuse. A possible explanation for this difference between the groups may be that the leaders' opinions, knowledge and attitudes in a group are crucial to the groups' knowledge and attitudes towards certain phenomena. If this is true, it is especially crucial which attitudes and behaviour leaders in certain cultures promote as well as what they do. From a prevention perspective, it will be very important to reach the leaders of hierarchical cultures so that they can affect and guide their groups in a desirable manner. Hence, based on the findings of this thesis it is not likely that a hierarchic worldview in itself will lead to more averse or abuse-accepting attitudes. It is more plausible that it is the qualities of the cultures that the different sample groups belong to that affect the direction of the effect of a hierarchical bias. This may counter many studies which claim that there is a certain worldview that promotes certain attitudes. Based on the present results it is equally logical that it is the providers of the norms, values and attitudes in a certain group or culture that are vital.

Discussion concerning the relation between general values and more specific attitudes is not new. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) rejected the idea that

general values can predict specific attitudes. Rather, a general value can promote several different attitudes. The results from the present study seem to support this view. In this case it is quite “optimistic” for, for example the feminist movement, to assert that a set of values are the cause of certain attitudes. It seems to be more valid to talk about the risk for developing certain attitudes being greater, but that this does not happen automatically. This view is also in accordance with the offender theories mentioned. The latter claim, that certain cultural norms can create accepting attitudes towards sexual abuse and hence abusive behaviour but that this is not true for all men. To men with deviant sexual arousal, attitudes and cognitive distortions will not be the main route to or primary cause of offensive behaviour. To these men, sexual arousal will be the main route (Hall and Hirschman, 1992). These arguments support the results of this thesis in that approval of a hierarchical bias was a predictor of abuse-accepting attitudes in the sample of prisoners, but the total opposite among the active Christians.

The active Christians and the prisoners had the same conservative view of women, but the prediction value of ‘view of women’ differed across the samples. View of women was the strongest predictor of attitudes towards abuse among the prisoners (beta = .53). This factor had only minor prediction value among the active Christians (beta = .17). This implies that supporting a conservative view of women was related to abuse-accepting attitudes. This is in accordance with studies that have reported a strong association between view of women and abusive behaviour (Fitzpatrick et al. 2004; Johnson et al. 1997). It seems as though, a conservative view of women to a much greater extent affected the attitudes of the imprisoned offenders than the other two samples, even though the level of conservatism was equal among the active Christians and the prisoners. As already argued in the Discussion, the same worldview may affect different groups in different ways and to different extents.

4.4. Knowledge-seeking

The third and last paper is primarily concerned with knowledge-seeking about child sexual abuse. The paper examines the amount of knowledge-seeking among the three samples and investigated the association between knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge. The respondents’ reported which sources of knowledge they gathered information from about child sexual abuse, and the study examined the difference in knowledge-seeking and attitudes based on the respondents’ own personal experience. In addition, the paper investigates the association between attitudes and knowledge-seeking and the relative importance of attitudes and

knowledge-seeking for abusive behaviour. In accordance with Sjöberg (1999), the study found that there was an association between knowledge-seeking (Sjöberg used the term “interest”) and attitudes.

The result showed that knowledge-seeking differed across the samples. As expected, the active Christians had the highest level of knowledge-seeking, which implies that they were most interested in this issue. The question is whether or not they were more interested in the topic in the first place or whether this interest was a result of the enhanced focus upon this topic in their local community. While this thesis has no answer to this, it is recognized that knowledge-seeking and interest often are accompanied by motivation to seek knowledge. Thus, it seems that own experience can serve as a motivator to seek knowledge.

The respondents were asked about their direct and indirect experiences of abuse, i.e. as victims of abuse, as offenders, or as family/friends/acquaintances of victims or offenders. The results showed that respondents with experience sought more knowledge about abuse than those without such experiences. Accordingly, a significantly larger per cent of the active Christians compared to the sample of random adults should have reported more indirect and direct experience of abuse since they had more knowledge-seeking behaviour as well. This result was confirmed, except for the experience of being a victim of abuse, knowing a victim and knowing someone who has been exposed to miscarriage of justice (see Table 3 in Paper III, p. 137.) Both active Christians and random adults had the same amount of experience with regard to these categories. (The prisoners were left out of the comparison because they were all offenders.)

From a prevention perspective, this result showed that many respondents have experience of abuse in some kind which can serve as a motivator for them to seek knowledge about the topic. Interventions aimed to prevent abuse should try to “utilize” people’s experience. Interventions can address different “experience categories” and give them information adjusted to the group’s specific needs, e.g. partners of victims of abuse and friends of offenders. Furthermore, the intervention could aim to enhance people’s awareness of their own experience in order to make them more receptive towards receiving information.

4.4.1. Prevalence of abuse

As expected, the prisoners reported the highest prevalence rate of victims of abuse compared to the other two samples. Former studies have shown that approximately one-third of offenders are victims of sexual abuse (Faller, 1989; Stirpe & Stermac, 2003). Furthermore, the present study showed that 9.5% of the female random

adults and 12% of the female active Christians had been victims of sexual abuse. The prevalence among male random adults was 7% and 7.5% among the male active Christians. Compared to Sætre (1997), the prevalence was lower. Sætre (1997) concluded that among Norwegian adults, 19% of the women and 9% of the men had been victims of child sexual abuse. The present study's results are more in line with the conclusions of Gorey and Leslie (1997). Their meta-analysis showed that in the general population 12–17% of all women and 5–8% of all men had been victims of child sexual abuse. However, as mentioned in the Introduction, prevalence rates are dependent on, for example, the sample, the questions and the response rate. Hence, it is not likely that there has been an over-reporting of sexual abuse in the present study. Rather, the opposite is the case, as the wording of the item covering this issue did not mention “child sexual abuse” specifically, but referred to “sexual abuse”. Thus, the prevalence rates should be higher (since “child sexual abuse” is more specific than “sexual abuse”). On the other hand, the respondents' may have interpreted it as “child sexual abuse” as this was the context of the whole questionnaire.

4.4.2. Knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge

This thesis hypothesized that there may be an association between knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge. The results partly support this assumption. The respondents who underestimated the prevalence of child sexual abuse sought significantly less knowledge than those who had more accurate answers. However, those respondents who overestimated the prevalence of abuse also sought more knowledge. Furthermore, applying perception of prevalence as “actual knowledge” was quite ambiguous as prevalence rates vary across samples. In fact, victims of abuse perceived the prevalence rate to be higher compared to the non-abused, probably reflecting their own experience. This implies that their own experience may be more related to their knowledge about abuse than their knowledge-seeking. On the other hand, experience was associated with knowledge-seeking. Hence, knowledge-seeking and knowledge may be more closely related than this result can support. Further research should aim to include more comprehensive measurement of both knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge about abuse in order to test this hypothesis.

4.7. Limitations of the study

As discussed in the separate papers, the main factors that may represent possible limitations to the inferences drawn from the analyses concern generalizability and the perception of the word “child”.

The response rate varied across the samples. The random adults had the lowest response rate; after one reminder 30% returned the questionnaire. A low response rate does not in itself invalidate the data as long as the sample is representative. The random adult sample was representative of the general Norwegian adult population with regard to age and marital status, though not of education and gender. Far more women than men responded and the participants' education level was somewhat higher than in the general population. This is in accordance with several other studies which have found that men are generally more reluctant to respond to surveys and that people with less education have a greater tendency to refrain from answering compared to their more educated cohabitants (Miller, 1991). This indicates that the results of this research can not be generalized to the general Norwegian population, but to the population of Norwegians with higher education and to women more than men. This may further suggest that the attitudes reported are quite conservative, as studies have found that people from the lower socio-economic classes possess more abuse-accepting attitudes than those from the higher socio-economic classes (Xenos and Smith, 2001). It also suggests that the results presented separately for men should be interpreted with caution since the sample consisted of fewer men than women. On the other hand, the expected patterns of relations between certain variables were fulfilled, e.g. men had more abuse-accepting attitudes than women, showing that the skewed gender distribution did not invalidate the relations between expected variables. Regarding the two remaining samples, there is no reason to believe that they are not fairly representative of their respective populations.

The questionnaire was concerned with child sexual abuse, often with reference to “adult-child sex”. The term “child” was not specifically defined in the heading of the questionnaire. Hence, there is a possibility that each of the respondents might have perceived this term differently. On the other hand, in questions asked early in the questionnaire, “childhood” was defined as being between 0–16 years of age. In addition, considering that the context of the whole questionnaire was about adult-child sex and that the age of legal consent in Norway is 16 years, it is equally reasonable to believe that most participants thought of “child” as a child below the age of legal consent. Still, future studies are recommended to define the term “child” in order to prevent confusion.

4.8. Conclusions and implications for further research

The results reported throughout this thesis confirm that the new measurement instrument, the ACA (Attitudes towards child sexual abuse scale), could be a useful instrument for studying adults' attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The ACA was proved to be suitable for use with several groups of adults, including a general adult population as well as offenders. The three groups differentiated on the ACA. The instrument covers four different dimensions of attitudes towards child sexual abuse, is relatively short, and was found to give satisfactory validity and reliability. The dimension measuring fatalism could, however, be further elaborated with regards to defining which authority to report abuse to, and whether or not the reporting should be done after or during the abuse. In addition, the ACA should be further validated in new samples and in association with, for example, the use of pornography and loneliness. Despite the fact that the present study's focus was not upon the relation between attitudes and behaviour, the relation between attitude and behaviour has been tested indirectly as a sample of offenders was included in the study. As expected, the results showed that the offenders had most abuse-accepting attitudes towards child sexual abuse compared to the non-offenders. However, a further elaboration of the relation between ACA and abusive behaviour would enhance the validity of the scale.

From a prevention perspective, measuring attitudes is needed to give a perception of which attitudes are held in the general population and/or in the assumed intervention target group(s). The ACA will serve as a tool to reveal which attitude dimensions are most in need of change as well as a general overview of attitudes towards abuse. A basic principle is to tailor the intervention to the target group. The thesis has shown that several different factors are associated with different groups' attitudes towards abuse. For example, among the prisoners, a conservative view of women and lack of femininity was found to be highly associated with abuse-accepting attitudes, but among the random adults empathy was the largest predictor. This implies that different groups need different intervention strategies in order to change attitudes. Among the prisoners, enhancing the offenders' acceptance of own femininity and promoting a more modern view of women seem to be important in order to change attitudes. Among the random adults and active Christians, focusing on empathy will be important. How this should be done is not within the scope of this thesis.

Future studies should also explore the relation between masculinity and child sexual abuse. The findings of this thesis suggest that masculinity is perhaps irrelevant to attitudes towards child sexual abuse, although it has shown to be

associated with sexually aggressive behaviour against women. Further studies should test this assumption and elaborate the debate on the differences between child sexual abuse and abuse against adults. Briere and Runtz (1989) and feminist theorists such as Ward (1995) argue that the same underlying factors are present in the abuse of children and women. The results of the present study question this conclusion.

In addition, a hierarchic worldview was found to be associated with more averse attitudes among the active Christians, but with more abuse-accepting attitudes in the sample of prisoners. It is argued that this may be due to the leaders' own attitudes in the respective populations. Hence, providing leaders with better knowledge and encouraging healthy attitudes towards abusive behaviour is important in cultures where there is approval of hierarchy. How this should be done was not within the scope of this study, but is recommended to be further elaborated. Hierarchy is one of the four worldviews characterized in Douglas and Wildavsky's cultural theory (1982). As opposed to earlier studies primarily executed in the risk domain (Sjöberg, 1995; Marris, Langford, & O'Riordan, 1998; Oltedal, 2005), cultural theory was shown to be relevant in the prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. This implies that cultural theory may be area specific, i.e. it is suitable to explain attitudes in one research area, but not in another area. This further indicates that cluster analysis may be an interesting tool with which to explore whether or not members of certain clusters (worldviews) have different attitudes towards abuse or not. Oltedal and Rundmo (2007) used such a cluster analysis in the risk domain, but they found that members of different clusters perceived risks in similar ways and certainly not in accordance with the expected pattern cultural that theory has framed. However, if cultural theory is area specific, cluster analysis may add further explanatory value to attitudes concerning sexual abuse.

The active Christians sought more knowledge about abuse compared to the other two samples. Seeking knowledge and having interest in the topic was associated with experience; for instance, victims of abuse sought more information about abuse than did those who were non-abused. Both indirect and direct experience of abuse was related to knowledge-seeking, while attitudes were only dependent on direct experience of abuse. This may indicate that the need for knowledge about abuse is governed by other aspects than attitudes. Future studies should aim to explore these routes. In addition, intervention planners ought to consider that experience is an important motivating factor which should be used when planning interventions. Motivated participants will probably be easier to reach than less motivated participants. Furthermore, future studies should explore

the relation between knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge. The present study's result suggests that these two factors are related. A more comprehensive measurement of both knowledge-seeking and actual knowledge is needed in order to test this assumption.

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Paper II

Prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse among three different Norwegian samples

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Prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse among three different Norwegian samples

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to reveal attitudes towards child sexual abuse and investigate predictors of such attitudes. A random sample of the Norwegian adult population ($n = 296$), active Christians ($n = 125$), and prisoners convicted of child sexual abuse ($n = 36$) were included in the study. The results show that women were more negative towards child sexual abuse than men, and the prisoners had more accepting attitudes than the other samples. Predictors of attitudes differed across the samples. Empathy and normlessness were the best predictors of attitudes among the random sample of adults and the active Christians. The largest predictor of attitudes among the prisoners was their view of women. The implications of the results for prevention strategies are discussed.

Key words: attitudes towards child sexual abuse (ACA), gender, offenders, prediction

1. Introduction

Child sexual abuse is seen as a universal phenomenon and has severe personal, social and economic costs (Kendall-Tackett, 2002; Tyler, 2002). The need for studies that can help to inform efforts to prevent child sexual abuse is therefore evident. Several studies have shown that attitudes are related to and can predict behaviour (Parker, Lajunen & Strandling, 1998; O'Callaghan, Callan & Baglioni, 1999; Iversen & Rundmo, 2004). However, the relationship between attitudes regarding child sexual abuse and abusive behaviour has not yet been fully understood. Nevertheless, the most widely accepted theories of sexual offending conceive of attitudes and beliefs as important precursors to abusive behaviour (Finkelhor, 1984; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Hall & Hirschman, 1992; Beech & Ward, 2004). Hence, the focus of the present study is on adults' attitudes towards child sexual abuse and the factors influencing these attitudes. There is a need to learn more about the acquisition of attitudes towards child sexual abuse and the factors that influence the process. Furthermore, the current study is based on the assumption that attitudes are relevant to behaviour, and therefore relevant in the prevention of child sexual abuse. In the present study child sexual abuse is perceived to be sexual contact between an adult and an underage child. In Norway the age of legal consent is 16 years.

Several studies have focused on professionals' attitudes towards victims of sexual abuse and the implications for treatment (e.g. Fuselier, Durham & Wurtele, 2002). A few studies have focused on attitudes towards child sexual abuse itself, the samples being adolescents or students (Hegna, Mossige & Wichstrøm, 2004; Briere, Henschel & Smiljanich, 1992). The broader adult population seems to be absent from such studies. Despite the fact that an individual is much more likely to be exposed to abuse before the age of 18 than after this age (Schei, Muus & Bendixen 1994; Dhaliwal, Gauzas, Antonowicz & Ross, 1996), the literature is more comprehensive regarding attitudes towards rape and aggressive sexual behaviour than it is about child sexual abuse. Still, literature focusing on rape is highly relevant because the underlying factors explaining the relationship between rape-myth acceptance and rape behaviour are believed to be the same as for the causes of sexual abuse. Feminist theorists claim that rape and child sexual abuse are interrelated forms of sexual exploitation which share common social roots (Briere & Runtz, 1989; Ward, 1995). This view is also supported by studies showing that there is a positive relationship between traditional gender role attitudes and domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse (see Falchikov, 1996).

Additionally, in several validated treatment programmes for sexual offenders, attitudes and cognitive distortions are targeted as areas for change (Maletzky, 1998). This indicates that treatment programmes acknowledge attitudes to be important precursors of behaviour. In areas where respondents are less likely to report behaviour (e.g. because of the illegal and socially unacceptable character of the behaviour), measurement of attitudes may serve as important, although not sufficient, markers of behaviour.

1.1. Gender differences

Xenos and Smith (2001) demonstrated that attitudes of Australian students towards rape victims varied as a function of gender and education. Secondary school students displayed a higher level of rape-calling attitudes than university students and men had higher rape-myth acceptance than women. The same study also found that attitudes towards rape victims were strongly connected to conservative beliefs about women and their social roles. A study amongst Norwegian high school students aged 18-19 years (Hegna et al., 2004) found that males who reported some likelihood of having sex with partners younger than 14 years reflected a positive attitude towards child sexual abuse. Generally, the study showed that females had more negative attitudes towards child sexual abuse than males.

1.2. Social and cultural factors

Hegna et al. (2004) also reported that a larger amount of the adolescents who reported some likelihood of having sexual contact with a person 13-14 years had higher levels of loneliness than those who reported no likelihood for sexual contact with children of that age. Skaug (1998) reported in a study of Norwegian clergy that loneliness and loss of well-being may contribute to the disposition of some to transgress sexual boundaries. Other studies have shown that loneliness is related to social support (Ginter, Glauser & Richmond, 1994; Ponizovsky & Ritsner, 2004) and social support is highly related to good mental and physical health (Reifman, 1995; Sarason, Sarason & Gurung, 2001; Uchino, Cacioppo & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). Support is also important in the recovery from child sexual abuse, and support from family, especially mothers, is very important to children exposed to sexual abuse. Such support strengthens children's recovery process (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Everson, Hunter, Runyon, Edelson & Coulter, 1989; Ullman, 1999). It is therefore expected that social support may influence attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Social support may be a buffer against unfavourable attitudes

towards abuse or be a factor that may contribute to unfavourable attitudes, e.g. if a culture holds unfavourable attitudes, individuals who are part of that culture might adopt these attitudes in order to gain support within that culture.

Attitudes towards rape seem to be related to traditional gender-role stereotyping (Acock & Ireland, 1983; Check & Malamuth, 1983; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). Fitzpatrick, Salgado, Suvak, King, and King (2004) make a distinction between traditional and non-traditional gender roles. A traditional view on gender roles would be to perceive women and men as opposite units with different roles and where the man is active and the female is passive. In a non-traditional view, men and women are seen as equal. Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) found that both male and female university students with more traditional gender role views were more acceptable to the use of violence against women than those with non-traditional attitudes. This is in accordance with Johnson, Kuck and Schander (1997) who reported that respondents with a conservative gender role views had greater rape-myth acceptance than those with more liberal views. The authors claim that men are socialized to be dominant, aggressive and that they expect women to be more inferior, cooperative and compliant than men. This view is supported by Simonson and Subich (1999) who found that less traditional gender-role stereotypes were related to greater perceptions of the seriousness of the rape scenarios and reduced likelihood of blaming the victim. This study is important because the authors used a very comprehensive measurement of gender roles, covering several areas for gender role stereotyping such as parental roles and employment roles. In all studies cited, women had significant lower rape-myth and violence acceptance than men. However, the relationship between gender role and antisocial behaviour has not yet been fully understood. Nevertheless, it may be that understanding gender role attributions can broaden our understanding of criminal thinking and sexual offending behaviour (Walters, 2001).

In their meta-analysis, Murnen, Wright, and Kaluzny (2002) reviewed research that relates masculine ideology to sexual violence. They found that masculine ideology was associated with sexual aggression, but there were only small effect sizes for the sexual conservatism and gender-role stereotyping measured by the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Taken together, the result of the meta-analysis showed that hostile masculine ideology was moderately associated with sexual aggression and that attitudinal variables predicted sexual aggression. Murnen et al. (2002) argue that a sociocultural model, including the concept of patriarchy, is relevant to understanding sexual aggression. They suggest that patriarchal attitudes towards women may not be sufficient to predict sexual aggression, but that they can work as cognitive precursors for some men. The

present study aims to investigate if a conservative and patriarchal view of women may give some explanatory value to the prediction of liberal attitudes towards sexual contact with children. Simonson and Subich (1999) further suggest that gender-role beliefs are achieved through socialization and that makes culture relevant for the development of rape acceptance. In fact, cultural and social elements are seen as very important factors for the prevalence of both rape and child sexual abuse (Beech & Ward, 2004).

Several studies have focused on the cultural climate that may contribute to the prevalence and the maintenance of sexual abuse. However, these studies only point to different cultural aspects in, for example, an Asian and American culture (Futa, Hsu & Hansen, 2001) and do not measure the cultural underpinnings of respondents. The latter has been attempted, however, in the domain of risk research. Dake (1991) introduced the Cultural Biases Questionnaire which is used in risk research to measure cultural biases. The measurement instrument is based on the cultural theory of Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) who claim that individuals are embedded in social structures and that their social context shapes their values, attitudes and worldviews. These worldviews or cultural biases, Dake believes, influence the individual's perception and evaluation of risk. Douglas and Wildavsky developed four prototypical patterns of cultural biases: fatalism, hierarchy, individualism and egalitarianism. The current study intends to explore the relevance of cultural biases to attitudes towards sexual abuse.

1.3. Personality factors

Empathy is perceived to be an important aspect of sexual offending and almost all sex offender treatment programmes include some type of learning of empathy skills (Knopp, Freeman-Longo & Stevenson, 1992, cited in Pithers, 1994). Empathy can be defined as "identification with another person's feelings or situation" (Wheeler, George & Dahl, 2002, p. 750) and there are empirical findings that support a relation between a lack of empathy and aggression (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Rosenstein (1995) argues assessment of risk of child abuse must include a measurement of empathy. Her study showed that there was a (negative) relationship between parental levels of empathy and risk of child abuse. Two studies have further addressed this issue and both give support to Rosenstein's study. Wiehe (2003) found that child abuse perpetrators had deficiencies in empathy and that this may be the root of their abusive behaviour. Perez-Albeniz and de Paul (2004) found that parents at high-risk for child abuse show a

deficiency in general empathy and in empathy towards their family members. However, both studies refer to physical child abuse and not child sexual abuse.

Bush, Mullis, and Mullis (2000) studied the difference in empathy between offending and non-offending youth. They reported that there was a difference in empathy, but only in the affective dimension of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Cliffordson, 2001) called 'emotional tone'. They suggest that the lack of difference could be due to a function of developmental characteristics of adolescence, i.e. adolescents have not yet fully developed empathic skills. Unfortunately, the study does not describe the offenders, so we do not know what crime(s) these respondents have committed. Wheeler et al. (2002) used the "Confluence Model" (see Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes & Acker, 1995) and found that empathy was a moderator of sexual aggression. High-risk males (males with high hostile masculinity and high impersonal sex) with *low* empathy reported higher rates of sexual aggression than high risk males with *high* empathy and also all other males. This suggests that empathy deficiencies in perpetrators do have relevance for their behaviour. High levels of empathy can be seen as a protective factor making a potential perpetrator less likely to be sexually aggressive. Also, Starzyk and Marshall (2003) state that empathy deficiencies are one of the risk factors for sexual offending. However, despite the fact that empathic deficiencies are present in perpetrators, no clear cut evidence of the role of empathy has been reported. The present study aims to examine the prediction value empathy has on attitudes towards child sexual abuse and it is hypothesized that empathy will influence attitudes in a positive direction i.e. high empathy will be related to aversive attitudes towards sexual abuse.

Normlessness (Kohn & Schooler, 1983) is seen as an individual's belief that "it is acceptable to do whatever one can get away with". There is a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviours are required to achieve given goals. Normlessness has been shown to be related to attitudes of traffic rules violation (Ulleberg, 2002) and is negatively correlated with morality (Kohn & Schooler, 1983). Although not used in a study like this before, it is reasonable to believe that normlessness may influence attitudes towards sexual abuse since abuse of children is illegal and unacceptable.

Mastery is seen as the extent to which one regards one's life-chances as being under one's own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled. Low mastery will therefore have much in common with helplessness and fatalism. Mastery is seen as a psychological resource which protects against the stressful consequences of strain. There has been found evidence that low mastery contributes to depression (Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan & Mullan, 1981). But why should mastery or lack

of mastery influence attitudes towards child sexual abuse? Futa et al. (2001) point to fatalism as one factor in Asian culture that may contribute to the silent support of sexual abuse of children. Therefore, a measurement of mastery was included in the current survey. Fatalism is also seen as a relevant factor in risk perception, reflecting values which may contribute to safety cultures (Mearns, Rundmo, Gordon & Fleming, 2004). Furthermore, Rundmo and Hale (2003) found that, amongst other factors, high mastery and low fatalism seemed to be important attitudes for engineer managers. Managers possessing these attitudes ensured safety to a greater extent than managers not having these attitudes. Kouabenan (1998) found that fatalistic beliefs and mystical practices influence the perception of traffic accidents and consequently incite the individual to take more risks and neglect safety measures because respondents see it as beyond their control. Lack of mastery may therefore be an important factor in attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Low mastery may be associated with more abuse accepting attitudes because it is seen as useless to try to be restrictive to something that will happen anyway.

Several interventions designed to changed personal attitudes have been shown to be effective. This indicates that exposure to knowledge and attitudinal influences may have an effect in transforming problematic attitudes (Iversen, Rundmo & Klempe, 2005). Accordingly, it is hypothesized that individuals who have been exposed to knowledge about, and non-accepting attitudes towards, abuse may hold more reluctant attitudes towards child sexual abuse compared to individuals who have not been exposed to the same knowledge and attitudes.

As implied earlier in the introduction, the present study is based on the empirically supported assumption that attitudes are associated with behaviour. Attitudes are seen as expressions of underlying cultural and social values and they serve as precursors to sexual abusive behaviour. It is in this perspective that attitudes are important and it becomes highly relevant to investigate the attitudes in different cultures and samples. Furthermore, exploring attitudes and associating factors will be of advantage when evaluating the effects of prevention and treatment programmes, and in further investigation of the relationship between behaviour and attitudes.

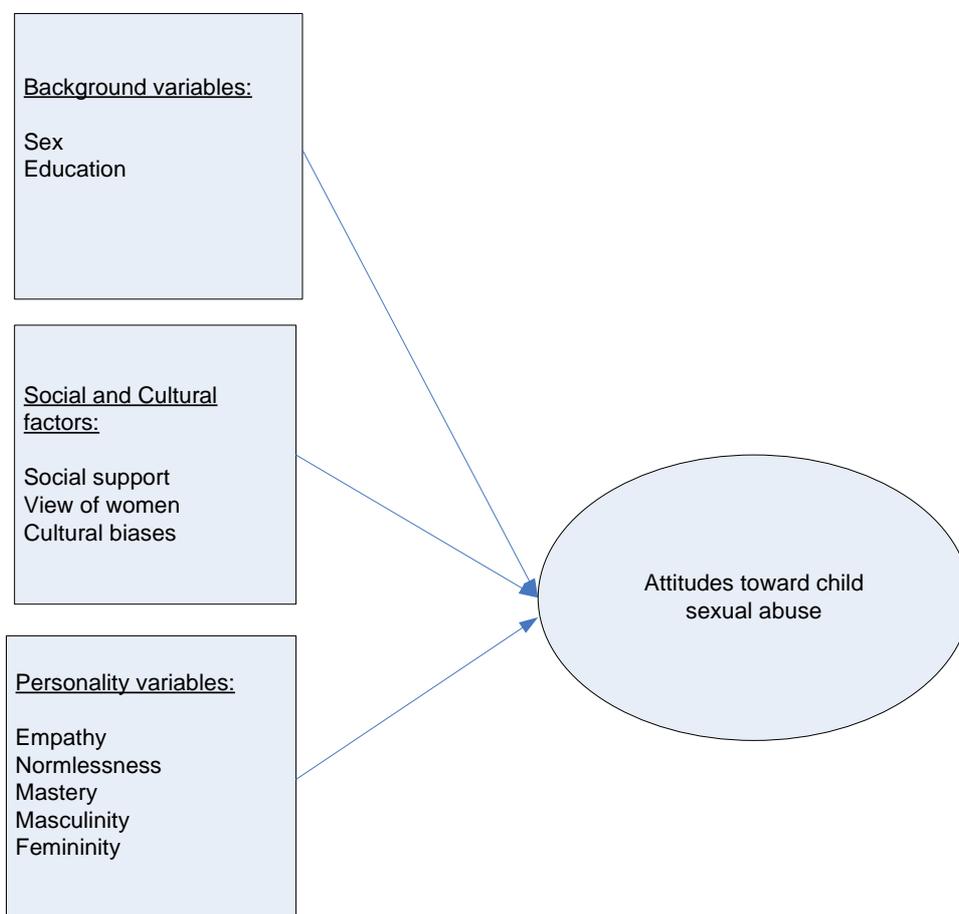


Figure 1. *Factors believed to influence attitudes towards child sexual abuse.*

Figure 1 shows an overview of the factors based on the research literature and referred to above, that are believed to influence attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Consequently, the main aim of the present study is to explore attitudes and associating factors towards child sexual abuse among adults in Norway. It is expected that the factors believed to influence abusive behaviour will influence attitudes towards child sexual abuse as well. Women may have more reluctant attitudes towards child sexual abuse than men, and individuals influenced by non-accepting attitudes towards abuse may hold more negative attitudes towards abuse compared to individuals who have not to the same extent been exposed to such knowledge.

2. Method

2.1. Samples and procedure

Three samples were included in the study, as follows.

Random adult population

A total of 1000 randomly selected men and women from the general adult Norwegian population were asked to complete a postal questionnaire during spring 2004. Due to unknown addresses, 20 questionnaires were returned by the postal service. After one reminder 296 completed the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 30 %. The mean age was 39.8 (SD = 12.8). The respondents were between 18 – 67 years of age. A total of 66 % were women and 34 % were men. The sample is representative of the Norwegian adult population with regards to age, marital status, and education, but not in terms of gender.

Active Christian adults

A representative sample of 245 active Christian adults in western Norway was asked to participate. About 1/3 of the sample received a postal questionnaire and 2/3 were asked to fill out the questionnaire at a choir rehearsal or Christian housemeeting. No reminder was given. The response rate was 51 %, n = 125. The participants were part of Christian fellowships that have had a focus on sexual abuse and the prevention of abuse. The mean age was 46.3 (SD = 10.6) and the youngest was 22, the oldest 65. A total of 68 % were women and 32 % were men.

Prisoners

Five out of six prison and probation service regions in Norway agreed to allow prisoners convicted of sexual contact with an underage child (< 16 years) to be approached to participate in the study. The 6th region refused because of other ongoing research projects, and due to the fact that they had only 4 convicted for the actual crime at the current time. The prisoners received the questionnaire with a covering letter and an envelope from their contact person in the prison. The prisoners were allowed to fill out the questionnaire in privacy and put it in an envelope which they themselves closed before the prison administrator returned the questionnaire. A total of 36 out of 73 convicted adults filled out the questionnaire. The response rate was 50 %. One of the 36 respondents was a woman. The mean

age was 44.4 (SD = 13.9) ranging from 21 to 74. The sample is representative for the population of offenders regarding age, marital status, gender and education.

2.2. Materials

In addition to demographic information, participants were administered the following measures:

Attitudes towards child sexual abuse (ACA)

The ACA scale consists of 4 subscales intended to measure different attitudinal dimensions regarding child sexual abuse. The 4 subscales are named 'acceptance and responsibility for abuse', 'fatalistic attitudes towards abuse', 'damage caused by abuse' and 'legal issues'. Altogether the scale includes 17 items. The psychometric properties of the scale are satisfactory and are addressed more thoroughly in Tennfjord (2006). All items were answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Responses were scored such that lower numbers reflected negative attitudes towards child sexual abuse.

Social and cultural variables

Perceived support from family and friends was measured by a short version of Procidano and Heller's *Social Support from Family and Friends* (Procidano & Heller, 1983). The scale consists of 20 items, 10 measuring support from family and 10 measuring support from friends. Cronbach's α for support from family was .82 (M = 2.22, SD = .52) and Cronbach's α for support from friends was .83 (M = 2.37, SD = .51). A measurement instrument was developed to measure the view of women (see Tennfjord, 2006). The scale includes 7 items. Despite a low Cronbach's α ($\alpha = .47$) the scale was used in the further analyses. Cultural biases such as egalitarianism, individualism and hierarchy were measured by using Rippl's revised version of Dake's measurement (Rippl, 2002). Nine items measured hierarchy, 6 items measured individualism and 5 items measured egalitarianism. Individualism obtained a Cronbach's α of .63 (M = 2.70, SD = .48), egalitarianism $\alpha = .74$ (M = 2.11, SD = .60) and hierarchy $\alpha = .69$ (M = 2.38, SD = .45). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Mean scores were computed, with lower scores representing high perceived support and a modern view of women.

Personality variables

Empathy was measured by the 7 Empathic Concern items from Davis' *Interpersonal Reactivity Index* (Cliffordson, 2001). Cronbach's α was .74, mean = .2.15 (SD = .50). Normlessness was measured by the 4 items of Kohn and Schooler's (1983) *Normlessness Scale*. Cronbach's α = .67, mean = 3.95 (SD = .62). The extent to which one regards one's life chances to be under one's own control or not was measured by Pearlin et al.'s (1981) *Mastery Scale*. The seven items obtained an α of .68, mean = 3.90 (SD = .51).

All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Lower scores reflected greater empathy, more normlessness and low degree of mastery. Masculinity and femininity were measured by using the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* (Chung 1995). Ten items measured masculinity and ten items measured femininity. The items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from "always or almost always true" to "never or almost never true". Cronbach's α for masculinity was .81 (M = 3.42, SD = .49) and for femininity .83 (M = 2.39, SD = .68). Low scores indicate a high degree of masculinity or femininity.

In addition, the respondents were asked to report their own experience with abuse, e.g. if they themselves or someone familiar had ever been exposed to sexual abuse or if they or someone familiar have had sex with an underage child.

2.3. Statistical analysis

A MANOVA analysis was carried out to test the differences in attitudes between the three samples and gender. Wilk's lambda is reported. To further explore differences in males, a Bonferroni post hoc pairwise comparison was used. To explore differences in females, a t-test was carried out. A 2X3 chi-square test was used to explore the relation between own experience and sample. Pearsons Chi-square is reported.

The Linear Structural Relation (LISREL) analysis program was applied to explore the relationship between background variables, personality variables, social and cultural variables, and attitudes towards child sexual abuse in all three samples, both together and separately. It was also used to test the goodness-of-fit of the model (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Structural Equation Modelling Made Simple (STREAMS) offers a consistent interface to the LISREL program and was used as support in the present study (Gustafsson & Stahl, 2000). Several fit indices were examined in order to assess the fit of the data to the model. The χ^2/df ratio was calculated (Mulaik, James, Van Alstine, Bennett, Lins & Stilwell, 1989). In

addition, goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and root means square of approximation (RMSEA) are all reported. In general GFI, AGFI and CFI > .90 indicate a good model fit. RMSEA is not affected by sampling error, but is based on the specifications done by the researcher. It favours a parsimonious model. A RMSEA from 0.0 - .05 is seen as a very good fit of the model to the data. A RMSEA between .05 – .08 is seen as a fair fit. According to Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin and Summers (1977) a $\chi^2/df < 3.0$ indicates a good fit of the model.

3. Results

3.1. Gender difference in attitudes towards child sexual abuse

Table 1. Gender differences in mean score on ACA and the 4 subscales of ACA

	Women (n = 280)		Men (n = 170)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
ACA	1.43	.34	1.71	.48
1. Acceptance and responsibility	1.15	.30	1.34	.47
2. Fatalism	2.06	.71	2.21	.73
3. Damage of abuse	1.35	.45	1.74	.68
4. Legal issues	1.55	.70	2.04	.86

Wilks' Lambda $F(5,443) = 14.254, p < .01$

Table 1 shows that there was significant difference between men and women on the total ACA and the 4 subscales of ACA. Women were most negative to sexual contact between adults and children. It is possible that the skewed gender distribution (i.e. more women than men answered the questionnaire) accounts for the attitudinal differences across the three samples. Therefore, to check this assumption separate analysis by gender was carried out:

Male difference

There was a significant difference between the males in all three samples on ACA and the dimensions of ACA, except for dimension 2, Fatalism (Wilks' Lambda $F(10,326) = 4.13, p < .01$). A Post Hoc Bonferroni showed that the difference on ACA was significant between random adults and prisoners, and between active Christians and prisoners. The difference was not significant between the random

adults and active Christians, but the active Christians had the most reluctant attitudes towards sexual child abuse. See Table 2.

Table 2. Male differences between samples on the ACA and the 4 subscales of ACA.

	Random adults n = 101		Active Christians n = 39		Prisoners n = 35	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
ACA	1.70	.46	1.56	.43	1.93	.53
1. Acceptance and responsibility	1.33	.47	1.21	.44	1.51	.47
2. Fatalism	2.24	.72	2.20	.71	2.14	.81
3. Damage of abuse	1.70	.60	1.51	.51	2.14	.88
4. Legal issues	1.96	.79	1.77	.69	2.61	1.01

Wilks' Lambda $F(10,326) = 4.13, p < .01$

On dimension 1, 'acceptance and responsibility', there was a significant difference only between active Christians and prisoners. On dimension 3, 'damage caused by abuse', there was significant difference between active Christians and prisoners, and between random adults and prisoners. The same was true for dimension 4, 'legal issues'. The active Christians had the lowest mean on all three dimensions, indicating that they had the least abuse-tolerant attitudes towards child sexual abuse.

Female difference

Because there was only one woman in the sample of prisoners, a t-test was performed to test the difference between attitudes (ACA) among female active Christians and random adults. Although the active Christian women were more negative towards child sexual abuse than the random Norwegian women, the attitudinal difference was not significant, $t(276) = 1.945, p = .053$.

Table 3. Differences between expected and observed frequencies regarding experience.

	Random adults (n = 296)		Active Christians (n = 125)		Prisoners (n = 36)		Pearson's χ^2
	Exp count	Obs count	Exp count	Obs count	Exp count	Obs count	
Have you yourself been exposed to sexual abuse?	32.6	25	13.7	13	3.8	12	22.39**
Has someone close to you been exposed to sexual abuse?	98.1	88	41.2	43	11.6	20	10.67**
Have you any acquaintances who have been exposed to sexual abuse?	163.5	142	69	87	19.5	23	18.45**
Has someone you know had sex with a child aged below 16 years?	98	66	41.3	61	11.7	24	40.27**
Do you know anyone who has been convicted of sexual child abuse?	83.9	33	35.5	75	9.7	21	123.67**
Have you yourself ever had sex with a child below 16 years?	25.3	15	10.7	0	3	24	176.63**
Do you know anyone who has been charged with child sexual abuse without being convicted?	29.9	22	12.6	18	3.5	6	6.82*
Do you know anyone who has been exposed to miscarriage of justice in connection with child sexual abuse?	27.4	21	11.5	10	3.2	11	23.21**

*p-value <.05, **p-value <.01

3.2. Difference in own experience

Table 3 shows that the samples differed regarding their own experience. The chi-square test showed that the difference between expected and observed frequencies was significant above all three samples. The tendency amongst random adults was that the reported counts were lower than the expected values. There were fewer random adults who had experienced abuse in some way (either as a victim/offender or knowing a victim/offender) than statistically expected. The opposite was true for the sample of active Christians regarding the questions about knowing an offender, but no one in that sample reported ever having had sex with a child below 16 years of age. A total of 13 active Christians reported having been exposed to sexual abuse and 43 reported that someone close had been exposed to sexual abuse, the same amount as statistically expected. The tendency among prisoners was that the reported frequencies were higher than statistically expected. However, the results are in accordance with previous research which suggests that offenders are more likely to be exposed to sexual abuse as children than people in a normal population (Faller, 1989; Freund, Watson & Dickey, 1990). It is also logical that the prisoners would have known about others convicted of child sexual abuse and that they themselves reported being an offender. In fact, it could have been expected that all 36 should have admitted having had sex with an underage child. Only 24 of the 36 did so. Thus, they indirectly claim that they were not guilty of charges although they were convicted for child sexual abuse.

3.3. Sample differences in personality, attitudes, and cultural and social variables

There was a significant difference between the samples regarding personality variables (Wilks' Lambda $F(10, 894) = 6.694, p < .01$). The MANOVA analysis showed that there was difference between the samples in empathy, masculinity, mastery and normlessness, but not in femininity. A post hoc Bonferroni showed that there was difference in empathy only between the random adults and active Christians. The same is true for masculinity, mastery, and normlessness. The active Christians were more empathic, but had a lower degree of masculinity and mastery than the random adults. In addition, there was difference between active Christians and prisoners regarding normlessness. The active Christians reported the lowest degree of normlessness. This difference was not significant between prisoners and random adults even if prisoners reported to be most normless of all three samples.

There was a significant difference between the samples on all the attitude dimensions except for dimension 2, 'fatalism' (Wilks' Lambda $F(8, 890) = 11.73$, $p < .01$). On all dimensions, the active Christians had the most aversive attitudes towards child sexual abuse. All samples differed significantly on Dimension 1, 'acceptance and responsibility', and Dimension 4, 'legal' issues. On Dimension 3, 'damage', there was difference in attitudes between random adults and prisoners, and between active Christians and prisoners.

The samples differed in their view of women and hierarchy, but not in support from friends (Wilks' Lambda $F(6, 888) = 3.86$, $p < .01$). Regarding the view of women, random adults and prisoners were significantly different from each other, with the random adults having a more modern view of women than the prisoners. Prisoners and active Christians did not differ significantly, but the random adults tended to have the most liberal view about women of the three samples. Regarding hierarchy, there was only a significant difference between random adults and active Christians. The random adults gave lower support to a hierarchical culture than the Christians.

3.4. Prediction of attitudes

A structural equation modelling analysis was carried out to investigate the factors that may explain differences in attitudes towards sexual abuse. The three samples were pooled together as one sample. Figure 2 shows the structural model with the standardized path coefficients of significant paths ($p < .01$). The path model explained 52 % of the variance in attitudes towards sexual abuse. The model fitted the data satisfactorily ($X^2 = 121.98$, $df = 69$, $X^2/df = 1.77$, $RMSEA = .053$, $CFI = .96$, $GFI = .94$ and $AGFI = .90$). The fit of the model increased when adding a path from gender to empathy and femininity, and from education to the view of women. This modification seems theoretically meaningful since women tend to be more empathic and feminine than men. A path from education to the view of women was also allowed since there is empirical evidence that level of education may influence the view of women. (These relations are marked with dotted lines in Figure 2.) As indicated by the size of the beta-values, the personality variables empathy ($\beta = .30$) and normlessness ($\beta = -.21$) were the largest predictors of attitudes. The more empathic, the more averse to sexual abuse. The more normless, the less restricted to sexual abuse. Approving a hierarchical social structure also achieved a beta-value above .20 ($\beta = .21$) indicating that hierarchical cultural values may protect against accepting attitudes towards sexual abuse. Furthermore, mastery ($\beta = -.18$) to some degree influences attitudes towards sexual contact between adult and child.

Higher mastery indicates more averse attitudes. Gender showed, not surprisingly, a beta-value of .16, confirming that women do hold more negative attitudes towards sexual abuse than men. Education ($\beta = -.11$) had a negative beta-value indicating that a low education level enhances the chance of having more accepting attitudes towards abuse. Having good social support from friends, however, seemed to be associated with more restricted attitudes ($\beta = .13$).

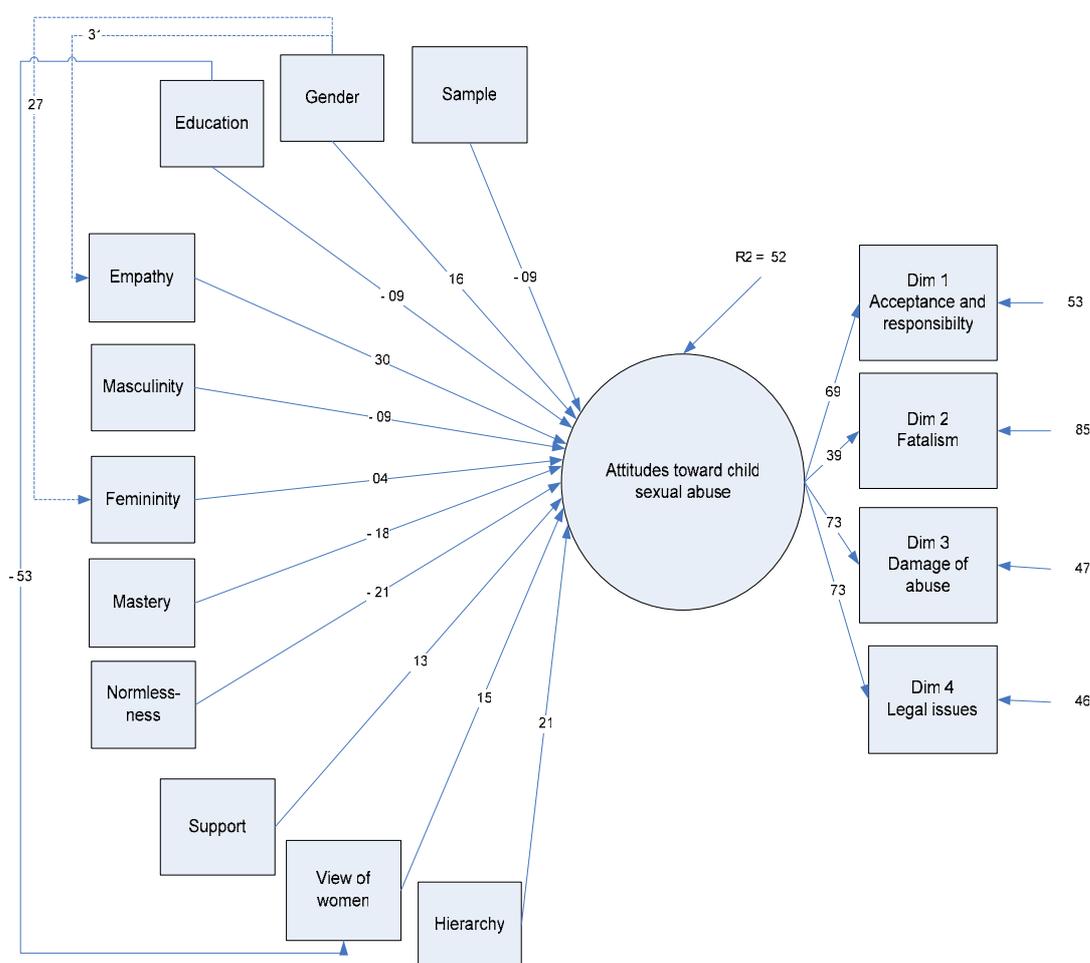


Figure 2. Path diagram of the relationship between background variables, personality variables, cultural and social variables, and attitudes towards sexual contact between adult and child.

3.5. Difference in predictors among the three samples

To investigate whether or not the proposed pattern of relationships is similar in the three samples, multisample analysis (MSA) was carried out. Testing invariance implies specifying a model in which particular parameters (i.e. specific paths in our proposed pattern of relationships) are constrained to be equal across groups and then comparing this model with a noninvariant model (non-constrained). The results show that the non-constrained model fitted the data more satisfactory than the constrained model, RMSEA changed from .12 to .064. Furthermore, the non-constrained model had the following goodness of fit indices: $\chi^2 = 294.81$, $df = 168$, $CFI = .93$, and $NNFI = .89$. This indicates that the three samples differed from each other regarding the pattern of relationships between the predictors and the dependent variable. Due to the fact that the sample of random adults was larger than the other two samples, it was expected that the analysis in this sample would be quite equal to the result where all three samples was included. Table 4 shows R^2 and beta-values from the analyses. Beta-values equal to or greater than .20 are marked with grey in the table. The results show that the predictor variables explained 55 % of the variance in the sample of prisoners, $R^2 = .55$. The total explained variance was 49 % for the sample of active Christians, $R^2 = .49$, and among random adults $R^2 = .38$. As expected, the analysis showed that in the sample of random adults empathy ($\beta = .28$) and normlessness ($\beta = -.19$) were the largest predictors. The more empathic and less normless the respondents were, the more aversive attitudes to abuse they possessed. In the sample of active Christians, empathy ($\beta = .39$), normlessness ($\beta = .20$), and hierarchy ($\beta = .23$) obtained the largest beta-values. This indicates that the more empathic the active Christians were, the less normless they were, and the more hierarchical oriented, the more aversive attitudes towards child sexual abuse they possessed. In the sample of prisoners mastery ($\beta = -.20$), femininity ($\beta = -.31$), and view of women ($\beta = .53$) explained most of the variance accounted for in the analysis. More aversive attitudes towards child sexual abuse were associated with high mastery, possession of feminine traits and a less conservative view of women.

Table 4. Beta-values from the three path models.

	Random adults (n = 290) (R ² = .38)	Active Christians (n = 122) (R ² = .49)	Prisoners (n = 31) (R ² = .55)
	β	β	β
Gender	.16	.15	.03
Education	-.09	-.16	-.07
Empathy	.28	.39	-.01
Mastery	-.17	-.13	-.20
Normlessness	-.19	-.20	-.04
Masculinity	-.11	.02	-.02
Femininity	.04	-.04	-.31
View of women	.15	.17	.53
Friend support	.04	-.02	.19
Hierarchy	.14	.23	-.13

The goodness-of-fit indices for the three pathway analyses showed that RMSEA differed across the samples. The random adults had the best model fit with an RMSEA of .052. The active Christians had an RMSEA of .072, and the prisoners an RMSEA of .12. The explained variance increased when the fit of the model decreased. GFI, AGFI, and CFI for the samples of active Christians and prisoners were low. This could partly be due to the sample size since the prisoners had only 36 respondents and the Active Christians 125 compared to the sample of random adults with 296 respondents. See Table 5.

Table 5. Goodness-of-fit indices for the pathway analysis in the three samples.

Model	X ²	Df	X ² /df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Random adults (n = 290)	98.79	56	1.76	.95	.91	.97	.052
Active Christians (n = 121)	93.90	56	1.68	.90	.82	.93	.072
Prisoners (n = 31)	102.12	56	1.82	.73	.49	.55	.12

GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit-index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square of approximation.

4. Discussion

The results of the study may be divided into two parts: difference in attitudes and experiences between subset of the samples, and the prediction of attitudes based on the theoretically relevant variables. The present study confirms earlier studies with regard to gender differences in attitudes. Women were most aversive towards child sexual abuse. There was no difference between women across the samples. Men differed across samples, and the active Christians had the most restrictive attitudes. As expected, prisoners had the most liberal attitudes. However, even if the mean difference was significant, the actual mean values for all three samples were in the lower part of the possible range of 1-5. This indicates that also the prisoners' reported attitudes were relatively restrictive. However, the prisoners had greater variance in their answering than the other two samples. This could be due to the fact that some of the prisoners had attended treatment for their abusive behaviour. These prisoners may have possessed more restrictive attitudes towards abuse than prisoners who had received no treatment. Future studies should control for treatment effects.

All respondents showed the lowest score on attitudes related to 'acceptance and responsibility', indicating that they in general perceived the adult as responsible for the sexual contact, and also to a great extent that they did not accept such contact. Regarding 'damage caused by abuse', the answers were a little more accepting and all respondents, but especially the prisoners, seemed to be in more doubt as to whether sexual contact with a child was damaging to the child or not. The prisoners were also more liberal regarding legal issues, thinking that the age of legal consent may be lower than 16 years for both boys and girls. It is interesting to note that the respondents were more uncertain as to whether sexual contact was damaging to a child or not than they were regarding responsibility for the sexual contact between a child and an adult. This insecurity may be an area for change. Researchers and clinicians do have an important task communicating information about the damage of abuse. They must ensure that empirical results become available to lay people as well as professionals, so that they can have valid knowledge from which to draw conclusions.

The respondents had different experiences with abuse either as/or knowing an offender, or as/or knowing a victim. The tendency was that the random adults had less experience with these aspects than the active Christians, while the prisoners had most experience. 8.5 % of the random adults had been exposed to sexual abuse, as opposed to 10.5 % for the active Christians and 33 % for the

prisoners. These prevalence rates are in accordance with several other studies (Gorey and Leslie, 1997). 30 % of the random adults, 35 % of the active Christians and 55 % of the prisoners reported knowing someone close who had been sexually abused. This shows that sexual abuse, directly or indirectly, does affect large numbers of people. In addition, many respondents knew about an offender. Not surprisingly, most of the prisoners (67 %) knew someone who had had sex with a child below 16 years. It is likely that they at least knew about another inmate. However, 49 % of the active Christians reported knowing an offender as opposed to only 22% of the random adults. Does this indicate that abusive behaviour is more common in a Christian culture than in other cultures? Or may it reflect that people who have been abused in childhood are more likely to turn to the church for support? There is no empirical evidence that what have been entitled 'Christian countries' do have a higher prevalence rate of abuse than, for example, countries from the Middle East (Finkelhor, 1994). But within countries and cultures there are sub-cultures and there is empirical evidence that some ideologies may be connected to abuse, e.g. patriarchal ideology and a conservative view of women are related to rape-myth acceptance and sexual aggression (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Murnen, Wright & Kaluzny, 2002). Furthermore, several articles point to the mechanisms of power, gender roles and guilt when talking about conditions present in sexual abuse (Anstorp, Hovland & Torp, 2003; Lundgren, 1985; Ganzevoort, 2002). However, the sample of active Christians reported the most restrictive attitudes towards abuse and no one reported having had sex with a child. Another possible explanation may be that the Christians from this area reported the same perpetrators, indicating that abusive behaviour is no more common in this culture than in the general Norwegian culture. But why did the Christians pay attention to and focus on abuse in the first place, if not for the fact that abuse may happen more frequently in this culture than in other sub-cultures in Norway? There is no research supporting such an assumption, and the explanations of enhanced focus can be of a different kind. It was first in the early nineties that the active Christians in Norway seemed to begin to understand that abuse was prevalent in their own subculture as well as outside their congregations. This recognition resulted in an enhanced focus on abuse in the Church of Norway and other Christian organisations (Lannem, 2001).

The active Christians had more restrictive attitudes than the random adults. They also seemed to be more aware of the existence of abuse and abusive behaviour than the adults in general. This difference could be a result of enhanced knowledge and openness to abuse in this Christian culture in Norway. It is a fact that several congregations in the area from which the sample was drawn have

become aware of sexual abuse. There have been arranged services and meetings with particular focus on child sexual abuse. Self-help groups for survivors of abuse have been established and the local media have been involved. All this seems to have created awareness towards the fact that abuse affects a large amount of people and that prevention is necessary. In addition, it is possible that Christians are involved in diaconal activities that bring them into more contact with questions of sexual abuse. However, this study did not measure any attitudes or experience before this culture was exposed to more knowledge about child sexual abuse. Accordingly, no conclusions can be drawn.

As noted earlier, the current study is based on the assumption that attitudes are relevant to behaviour, and the result of the study is relevant for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Two strategies are outlined as a buffer against abusive behaviour: changing behaviour through changing attitudes directly and changing behaviour through the predictors important to attitudes.

The path analysis of the pooled sample showed that the variables explained 52 % of the variance in attitudes towards child sexual abuse. This shows that the theoretically based variables, as hypothesized, were relevant for the prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. The sample had a moderating effect regarding the relation between the predictor variables and the attitudes. Different variables explained the different amount of variance in the three samples. This indicates that in different samples different predictors should be targeted as areas of change if attitudes are to be changed. The path model which fitted the pooled sample quite well was tested on all three samples.

When searching for a constrained model, i.e. the relationships between all variables should be equal in all three samples, the global model fit was very poor (RMSEA = .12). When searching for a non-constraint model the global fit was satisfactory (RMSEA = .064). However, each sample's goodness of fit-indices differed widely. The random adults had the best fit (RMSEA = .052), the prisoners the worst (RMSEA = .12). Because the sample of random adults was the largest sample and therefore had largest influence on the pooled sample, it was expected that this sample had the best model fit. However, the explained variance in the sample of random adults was 38 % indicating that other latent variables not included in the analysis may be important for the prediction of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Further studies need to explore this possibility. The prisoner group had the largest explained variance ($R^2 = .55$) but the poorest model fit. This indicates that the predictor variables used in the model are relevant to the prediction of attitudes towards abuse in this sample, but the estimates are somewhat unstable since the prisoner sample is small. The results should be

interpreted with caution and the generalizability of the results should be tested in future studies. The variance was also larger in this group than in the other groups. This may partly explain why the explained variance was largest in this sample despite the poor fit of the model.

The analyses showed that among prisoners mastery, femininity and their view of women were the largest predictors of attitudes towards child sexual abuse. It was hypothesized that low mastery would be related to more accepting attitudes and the hypothesis was confirmed. 'Views of women' was the largest predictor and having a modern view of women was highly related to attitudes against abuse of children. This is in accordance with the weight of studies showing that conservative and patriarchal views of women are associated with rape myth acceptance and abuse (Johnson et al., 1997; Simonson & Subich, 1999). If the intention is to change the prisoners' attitudes towards child sexual abuse the findings here suggest that it will be necessary to change their view of women. This result is supported by theories suggesting that the same ideologies and cultures underpin both child sexual abuse and abuse against women (Briere & Runtz, 1989; Ward, 1995). It is therefore not surprising that views of women came out as the largest predictor of attitudes towards child sexual abuse.

Another possible way of changing attitudes may be to enhance the prisoners' feeling of mastery. The prisoners should learn to take control over their own actions and learn to perceive that they do have control over their behaviour. Femininity was also positively related to attitudes, showing that the more feminine the more aversive were the attitudes towards abuse, indicating that acknowledgement of own femininity may be a buffer against child sexual abuse. However, a focus on *how* changes in view of women, mastery and femininity should be achieved is not within the scope of this article. Literature from different areas should be examined and treatment programmes evaluated. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the prevention of abusive behaviour must start early in life and include parents, school and other relevant social institutions.

Among the Christians and the random adults, empathy and normlessness were the two largest predictors. Those with higher empathy had more aversive attitudes towards abuse than those with lower empathy. Enhancing empathic skills and reducing normlessness may therefore be of interest in preventing sexual abuse in non-convicted samples. However, why have prevention programmes in samples where only very few people happen to be an offender? Wouldn't it be more reasonable to use the same strategies towards these populations as in the prisoner population? The problem here is that we do not have sufficient knowledge whether or not convicted offenders are equal to or different from non-convicted offenders.

The empirical literature in this research area concentrates almost solely on convicted offenders. It may be that the same intervention strategies should be selected for both groups, but it may also be that other strategies would be more effective. Future studies do have an important task to try to find methods that can reveal more knowledge about non-convicted abusers.

In the sample of active Christians, in addition to empathy and normlessness, hierarchy was most related to attitudes towards child sexual abuse. Approval of a hierarchic cultural bias was associated with more aversive attitudes. It may be that when the leadership speaks strongly against abuse this will be accepted in cultures which approve of hierarchy. In that case, what the leaders teach and do will be crucial and leaders in hierarchical cultures should receive specific knowledge about abuse and abuse prevention.

The present study considers attitudes as important precursors to behaviour. However, attitudinal interventions are often criticised and perceived to be ineffective. This is an over-simplification not very well rooted in the literature. Interventions should be made in several areas and should not be restricted to only one type.

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Paper III

Norwegian adults' attitudes towards child sexual abuse and the interest to seek knowledge about abuse

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Appendix

1. Questionnaire (In Norwegian)

SPØRREUNDERSØKELSE

om holdninger til seksuell kontakt mellom voksne og barn

Hovedformålet med denne undersøkelsen er å få vite mer om voksne menneskers holdninger til seksuell kontakt mellom voksne og barn. Vi ønsker å vite hvilke holdninger og kunnskaper folk i Norge har til dette temaet. Det er ikke noe "lett" tema, men vi håper du ser betydningen av å delta i denne undersøkelsen. Vi ber deg også svare det du innerst inne tenker, og ikke det du anser som sosialt akseptabelt. På forhånd takk for svar.

Vi vil understreke at undersøkelsen besvares anonymt og alle besvarelsene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Skriv derfor **ikke** navn på skjemaet. Merk også at det er spørsmål på både for- og baksiden av hvert ark.

Denne undersøkelsen er en del av et doktorgradsprosjekt ved Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet NTNU. Ta gjerne kontakt om du har spørsmål om undersøkelsen.



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LES DETTE FØR DU STARTER!	Skjemaet skal leses av en maskin. Følg derfor disse reglene:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bruk svart/blå kulepenn, ikke tusj/svak blyant. Skriv tydelig, og ikke utenfor feltene. Bare feltene blir lest.• Sett bare ett kryss på hvert spørsmål, slik: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>• Krysser du feil, setter du nytt kryss på rett sted. Pass på at det rette krysset blir kraftigst, slik: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>• Ikke bruk overstryking når du skal korrigere feilkryssinger. Ved flere kryss på samme spørsmål regnes alltid det kraftigste som ditt svar• Ikke brett arkene, og ikke kopier skjemaet. Bare originale skjema blir lest.

Feil kryss *Korrigering*

1. Kjønn: Kvinne..... ₁ 2: Alder: år 3. Hvor mange barn har du? (Skriv 0 hvis ingen) barn
Mann..... ₂

4. Din høyeste fullførte utdanning:

Grunnskole..... ₁
Videregående skole, yrkesfaglig..... ₂
Videregående skole, allmennfaglig..... ₃
Høgskole/universitet..... ₄

5. Din sivilstatus:

Enslig..... ₁
Gift/samboer..... ₂
Separert/skilt..... ₃
Enke/enkemann..... ₄

- | | svært enig
1 | enig
2 | verken/
eller
3 | uenig
4 | svært uenig
5 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7. Det er ikke noe galt i å lære barn om sex ved å berøre deres kjønnsorganer..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Selv om en 14 år gammel person synes å ønske sex med en voksen, har ikke den voksne lov til å oppføre seg seksuelt i forhold til ham eller henne..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Små barn har sjelden seksuelle fantasier om voksne..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Mange barn vil komme til å like sex med en voksen når de har forsøkt det..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Noen 13-åringer er så modne at det ikke er noe galt i at de har sex med en voksen..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. De som forgriper seg seksuelt på barn bør fengsles..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Barn sier av og til at de har blitt misbrukt for å få oppmerksomhet eller for å ta igjen for noe..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Sex med barn er relativt harmløst..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Sex mellom en 17-åring og hans eller hennes steforelder bør ikke betraktes som kriminelt..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Dersom barnet samtykker er det i orden å ha sex med barnet..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Dersom barnet reagerer seksuelt på berøring er det helt i orden å ha sex med barnet..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Når det skjer sex mellom barn og voksen er barnet et offer..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Det er for få som blir dømt for sex med barn..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. Sex mellom barn og voksen er ikke alltid noe negativt..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Dersom noen blant vennene mine skulle hatt sex med barn ville jeg tilgitt vedkommende..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Blant mine venner er sex mellom barn og voksen totalt uakseptabelt..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Seksuelle overgrep er ikke noe tema blant mine venner..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | svært sannsynlig
1 | sannsynlig
2 | verken/
eller
3 | usannsynlig
4 | svært usannsynlig
5 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 24. Hvor sannsynlig er det at du ville hatt sex med et barn hvis du var sikker på at ingen ville få vite det og at du helt sikkert ikke ble straffet?..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Hvor enig eller uenig er du i disse påstandene?

- | | svært enig
1 | enig
2 | verken/
eller
3 | uenig
4 | svært uenig
5 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Det er lettere for kvinner enn for menn å lykkes i jobben..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Kvinner som begår regelbrudd får ofte lavere straff enn menn som gjør det tilsvarende..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Det er vanskeligere for kvinner enn for menn å få lederstillinger..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Kvinnen bør ha ansvaret i hjemmet og mannen i samfunnet..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Kvinner har større innflytelse enn de tror de har..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Menn har mistet mye av sin innflytelse..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Kvinnefrigjøringen har gått for langt..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Dine holdninger til seksuelle overgripere:

	svært enig 1	enig 2	verken/ eller 3	uenig 4	svært uenig 5
1. Mange overgripere har selv vært utsatt for overgrep i sin barndom, derfor er det akseptabelt at overgrep skjer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Den seksuelle driften er større blant overgripere enn blant andre	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Man må tilgi overgripere og la dem få leve normalt igjen	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Det er for mange uskyldig dømt for seksuelle overgrep	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Media overdriver skadevirkningene av det å ha sex med barn.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Overgripere må også få en ny start	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. Sex er en privatsak uansett	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. Overgripere er i mindre grad enn andre i stand til å styre sine drifter	<input type="checkbox"/>				

13. Dine meninger om rapportering av overgrep

	svært enig 1	enig 2	verken/ eller 3	uenig 4	svært uenig 5
1. Om jeg får vite at andre har sex med et barn er det ikke mitt ansvar å gripe inn.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. Det nytter lite å si fra om seksuelle overgrep.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Det er pinlig å si fra om seksuelle overgrep.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Seksuelle overgrep bare skjer – det er umulig å hindre det.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Det hjelper lite å anmelde seksuelle overgrep.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Om jeg fikk mistanke om overgrep ville jeg i alle fall prøvd å gjøre noe	<input type="checkbox"/>				

14. Hvem er etter din mening ansvarlig for seksuelle overgrep?

	svært enig 1	enig 2	verken/ eller 3	uenig 4	svært uenig 5
1. Det er barnets egen skyld at det blir utsatt for seksuelle tilnærminger	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Det er først når voksne definerer sex mellom barn og voksne som uheldig at det blir skadelig for barnet.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. De som har seksuell kontakt med barn er opptatt av at barnet skal ha det godt seksuelt	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Skadevirkningen av sex mellom voksen og barn er betydelig overdrevet ...	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. Man skal aldri ha sex med barn uansett	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. Barn tar alltid skade av seksuell kontakt med voksne	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. Det er bare grove overgrep som samleie som barnet kan ta skade av.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	svært enig 1	enig 2	verken/ eller 3	uenig 4	svært uenig 5
13. Barn er ikke modne nok til å kunne vurdere om sex med en voksen er noe de bør avslå eller ikke	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14. Dersom en voksen har sex med et barn er det fullt og helt den voksnes ansvar	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15. Barn som kler seg utfordrende må regne med seksuelle tilnærmelser.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16. Noen barn kan nok ønske seg sex med en eldre kvinne eller mann	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17. Den seksuelle lavalder bør senkes fra 16 til 15 år.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
18. Den seksuelle lavalder bør være lavere for gutter enn for jenter	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Før du fortsetter: Kontroller at du har svart på alle spørsmålene på denne sida!

