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Integrating Research, Practice, Prevention, and Policy

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This book is dedicated to the survivors, families, and communities who have been impacted by child sexual abuse who motivate us to find ways in which we intervene before the abuse occurs, and provide support to those who have been affected by abuse; to our families, whose unwavering support have allowed us to devote our careers to sexual violence prevention; to our mentors, colleagues, and students who have provided guidance and assistance every step of the way; and to the researchers, professionals, and organizations who are dedicated to understanding, investigating, prosecuting, treating, and preventing child sexual abuse.

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Elizabeth L. Jeglic is Professor of Psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Binghamton University. Dr. Jeglic conducts research on sexual violence prevention and evidence-based public policy and along with Dr. Georgia Winters is one of the foremost experts on sexual grooming. She has published over 140 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. Dr. Jeglic is the co-author/editor of five books: *Handbook of Youth Suicide Prevention* (Springer, 2022); *Handbook of Issues in Criminal Justice Reform in the United States* (Springer, 2021); *New Frontiers in Offender Treatment: The Translation of Evidence Based Practices to Correctional Settings* (Springer, 2018); *Sexual Offending: Evidence Based Legislation and Prevention* (Springer 2016); and *Protecting your Child from Sexual Abuse: What You Need to Know to Keep your Kids Safe* (Skyhorse, 2018). She is the former Associate Editor of the journal *Sexual Abuse* and is on the editorial board of *Sexual Abuse* and *Psychology, Public Policy and Law.* Along with Dr. Cynthia Calkins, she is co-director of the Sex Offender Research Lab (SORL). She was awarded the Fay Honey Knopp Award from the New York State Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers for her contributions to the prevention of sexual violence.

Chapter 1
Introduction

In the United States (US), the estimated lifetime prevalence for child sexual abuse (CSA) is 26.6% for girls and 5.1% for boys (Finkelhor et al., 2014). It is believed that as many as half of these CSA cases involved elements of pre-offense behaviors utilized by the individual to facilitate the sexual abuse, a process known as "sexual grooming" (Canter et al., 1998; Groth & Birnbaum, 1978; Winters & Jeglic, 2021). While the exact definition of the term varies (see Chap. 3), sexual grooming is typically used to describe the behaviors or tactics a person may use in preparation for committing a sex crime against a minor (e.g., Craven et al., 2006; McAlinden, 2013; van Dam, 2001). These behaviors are used to manipulate the potential victim and those around them in order to more easily enact the sexual abuse. Of note, in this book we will be using the terms "child sexual grooming" and "sexual grooming" interchangeably to refer to the tactics an individual may use in preparation for sexual abuse of the minor.

The aims of sexual grooming are to ultimately prevent detection from others and disclosure from the victim, as well as to facilitate future abuse of the minor. As such, it is difficult to establish true prevalence rates of these behaviors. Nonetheless, several empirical studies have sought to provide some evidence as to the frequency of which these tactics are used in cases of CSA. Groth and Birnbaum (1978) categorized 175 adults with CSA offenses based on the methods they used to lure their victims into the sexual abuse. Results suggested that in 30% of cases, the individual used "seduction" and "enticement" strategies (e.g., bribes, rewards, use of authority) to facilitate the sexual abuse. Canter et al. (1998) coded 97 police records of CSA cases and found that 45% involved intimate (i.e., grooming) behaviors, as defined by the authors as desensitization, affection, reassurance, the promise of gifts, kissing, and oral sex performed by the individual on the victim. Of note, these studies were published more than two decades ago and thus likely reflect an underestimate of the number of CSA cases that involve sexual grooming. The understanding and operationalization of grooming-like behaviors in these studies may not fully encapsulate the current conceptualization of the construct, as the current literature

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on sexual grooming includes far more potential behaviors than were examined in these studies (Winters et al., 2020). Moreover, these numbers likely underrepresent the prevalence given that they only capture sexual grooming rates in reported cases of CSA, meaning cases that were *not* reported to law enforcement were not included in these estimates. Indeed, a recent pilot study of a newly developed self-report measure of sexual grooming (*Sexual Grooming Scale – Victim Version*) by Winters and Jeglic (2021) found that 99% of a sample of 100 adult victims of CSA self-reported having experienced at least one sexual grooming behavior during the offense process, with an average of 15 out of 42 possible behaviors being reported by the victims. However, this study included a relatively small sample size consisting of adult undergraduate students who endorsed experiencing CSA; therefore, the results may not be fully representative of victims' experiences of sexual grooming. In sum, while the exact prevalence rates are largely undetermined, sexual grooming has nevertheless become a construct that has become synonymous with the process of CSA (McAlinden, 2013; Thornton, 2003).

Broadly speaking, as outlined in Fig. 1.1, sexual grooming can be conceptualized in five overarching stages that describe the tactics used throughout the process which is based on the content-validated Sexual Grooming Model (SGM; see Chap. 2; Winters et al., 2020). First, the adult seeks to identify a potential victim based on psychological, emotional, and environmental vulnerabilities. Second, the individual will attempt to gain access to the victim and then isolate him/her from others. Third, in the trust development phase, the individual seeking to commit the sexual offense deceptively creates an emotional attachment with the potential victim and those around the child. Fourth, the child is gradually exposed to sexual content and physical contact over time in order to desensitize him/her to sexualized acts before the impending abuse. Fifth, after the initial sexual abuse incident, the adult may seek to maintain the sexual grooming of the child to prevent them from disclosing the abuse and/or to continue ongoing sexual abuse of the victim.

These overarching steps involved in the grooming process may be used by an adult to lure the child victim into sexual abuse. However, it is important to note that sexual grooming is a complex and nuanced process that varies widely in terms of the behaviors used and the time spent grooming the child. While the adult may progress sequentially through the stages outlined above, it is likely that many would simultaneously use tactics from multiple stages (e.g., continue to use trust development techniques intertwined with sexual desensitization tactics), vacillate between the stages (e.g., select a new victim if they have difficulty gaining access to their selected target), or skip certain stages if not applicable in their situation (e.g., a family member living with the child has a preselected victim whom they have access to). The stages and/or specific behaviors used in the process may also differ depending on the characteristics of the adult and minor. For example, it has been suggested that males and females who commit CSA may employ different types of sexual grooming behaviors (Love & Fremouw, 2009; see Chap. 9). Additionally, the adult may use age-specific tactics with the minor they are sexually grooming, such as providing an adolescent with alcohol or drugs and pornography (Christiansen & Blake, 1990). Contextual (e.g., the relationship between the adult and victim; the

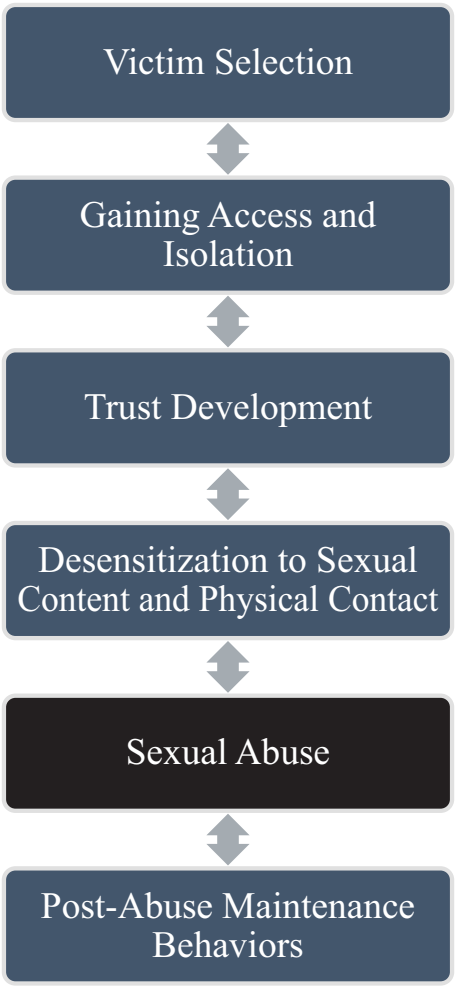

Fig. 1.1 Stages of sexual grooming

setting in which the sexual grooming is occurring) and cultural factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, religious and cultural beliefs, and practices) may further influence the sexual grooming process. Regarding the context, sexual grooming differs depending on whether these behaviors occur in-person versus online (see Chap. 5; Davidson, & Gottschalk, 2011). The relationship between the adult and minor can also have an impact on which sexual grooming behaviors are employed; though strangers may use sexual grooming tactics, there may be more extensive sexual grooming involved in cases where the perpetrator is a relative or acquaintance (McAlinden, 2006). Lastly, as sexual grooming is designed to increase the likelihood the individual goes unnoticed, the "effectiveness" of the strategies and fear of disclosure will drive the types of behaviors used, and the timing for when the sexual abuse will occur (Conte et al., 1989; Elliott et al., 1995).

While the adult aiming to commit CSA may generally adhere to the five overarching stages, it is clear that there are nonetheless many variations and permutations of behaviors and tactics employed in the sexual grooming process, and thus one case of sexual grooming can look very different from the next. In turn, this can result in difficulty identifying some of the more nuanced and subtle tactics. Sexual grooming is difficult to recognize prior to the discovery or disclosure of CSA, as many of these behaviors are similar to normal adult/child interactions but with underlying deviant sexual motivations. Empirical research has shown there is a hindsight bias related to sexual grooming, in that individuals tend to overestimate the likelihood they would have recognized these behaviors before learning that sexual abuse indeed occurred (Winters & Jeglic, 2016). Moreover, there is further evidence to suggest that people have a difficult time identifying sexual grooming behaviors as potentially predatory (Winters & Jeglic, 2017), although they may be more likely to deem behaviors related to isolation (e.g., taking select children to get ice cream, accompanying children to the restroom) and desensitization to touch (e.g., having children sit on their lap, horse playing with children, hugging) as inappropriate compared to the more covert techniques (e.g., selecting vulnerable children, trust development tactics; Winters & Jeglic, 2016). Not only are these behaviors not easily recognized by others, but also the likelihood of the victim disclosing the abuse may be reduced when sexual grooming behaviors are present (Terry, 2008; van Dam, 2001). Then, even if concern is raised by the victim or those around the child, these reports may be minimized as it would be unlikely for law enforcement to be able to intervene if sexual abuse has not yet taken place (Salter, 1995).

1.1 History of the Term Sexual Grooming

Historically, dating back to the 1800s, the term "grooming" was used in reference to preparing or mentoring an individual for a specific career, or process of beatifying oneself or animals (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2008). Yet today, this term is now commonly associated with sexual offenses committed against a minor (Thornton, 2003). It is unknown at what exact point of time the term sexual grooming became part of the lexicon of CSA (McAlinden, 2013). Burgess and Hartman (2017) proposed the term originated from Ken Lanning in the Federal Bureau of Investigation Academy's Behavioral Science Unit in the 1970s. Lanning (2010) described that historically the term "seduction" was used to describe the behavior of adults who engaged in sexual grooming, which he argues may be the more appropriate term given that it is more easily understood and common in vernacular. Others have suggested that the term was first associated with CSA in a 1985 Chicago Tribune article that noted, "These 'friendly molesters' become acquainted with their targeted victim, gaining their trust while secretly grooming the child as a sexual partner" (BBC, 2008).

Regardless of the exact origin, sexual grooming has since been deemed "a ubiquitous feature of the sexual abuse of children" (Thornton, 2003, p. 144). Other terms used to describe sexual grooming include "entrapment," "engagement," "subjection," "coercive control," or "enticement" (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014; Conte, 2018; Gallagher, 1998; Howitt, 1995; Kierkegaard, 2008; Salter, 1995). The term has been used as a noun (i.e., "sexual groomer," "sexual grooming"), verb (i.e., "sexually groom a victim"), and adjective (i.e., "the sexually groomed victim"; Burgess & Hartman, 2017). It has been suggested that the evolution of the term over time has improved both victims' and the public's understanding of the complex reactions victims may have to their sexual abuse (Burgess & Hartman, 2017), and it may explain why a person may not disclose the abuse. This information has been helpful for both clinical contexts (e.g., understanding the victim's experiences), as well as the criminal justice system (e.g., law enforcement profiling cases of CSA).

In the 1990s, the concept of sexual grooming became increasingly used in the mainstream media. With the surge of the Internet, there was concern about individuals who target potential victims and sexually groom them through online chatrooms (BBC, 2008). Subsequently, empirical research and theoretical literature on the subject of in-person and online grooming began to proliferate in the 2000s (Craven et al., 2006; McAlinden, 2007). Throughout the past two decades, the use of the term sexual grooming has become increasingly popular in cultures across the world (Burgess & Hartman, 2017), in large part due to several high-profile cases in the US and other countries. These well-known cases of CSA often contain evidence showing the individual who committed the abuse went undiscovered for years (decades, in some cases), despite numerous "red flags" in the individual's behaviors toward children. It was hypothesized that the elusiveness in these high-profile cases was due to these manipulative, pre-offense behaviors, which ultimately led to the term sexual grooming becoming a part of common vernacular.

1.2 Public Recognition of Sexual Grooming

1.2.1 The Case of Jerry Sandusky

One of the most prominent cases that put the concept of grooming on the global map was that of Jerry Sandusky. Sandusky was a Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) assistant football coach from 1969 to 1999. In 2011, the nation was stunned by accusations of numerous counts of CSA committed against at least eight male victims during a 15-year period spanning from 1994 to 2009. Sandusky was convicted of 45 CSA-related counts for these crimes and sentenced to 30–60 years in prison (see CNN, 2020 for a detailed description of the counts). Through the publicization of this case, the term sexual grooming moved to the forefront of society, as it soon became clear that Sandusky had utilized sexual grooming behaviors to help avoid detection and disclosure from his victims for over a decade. To further

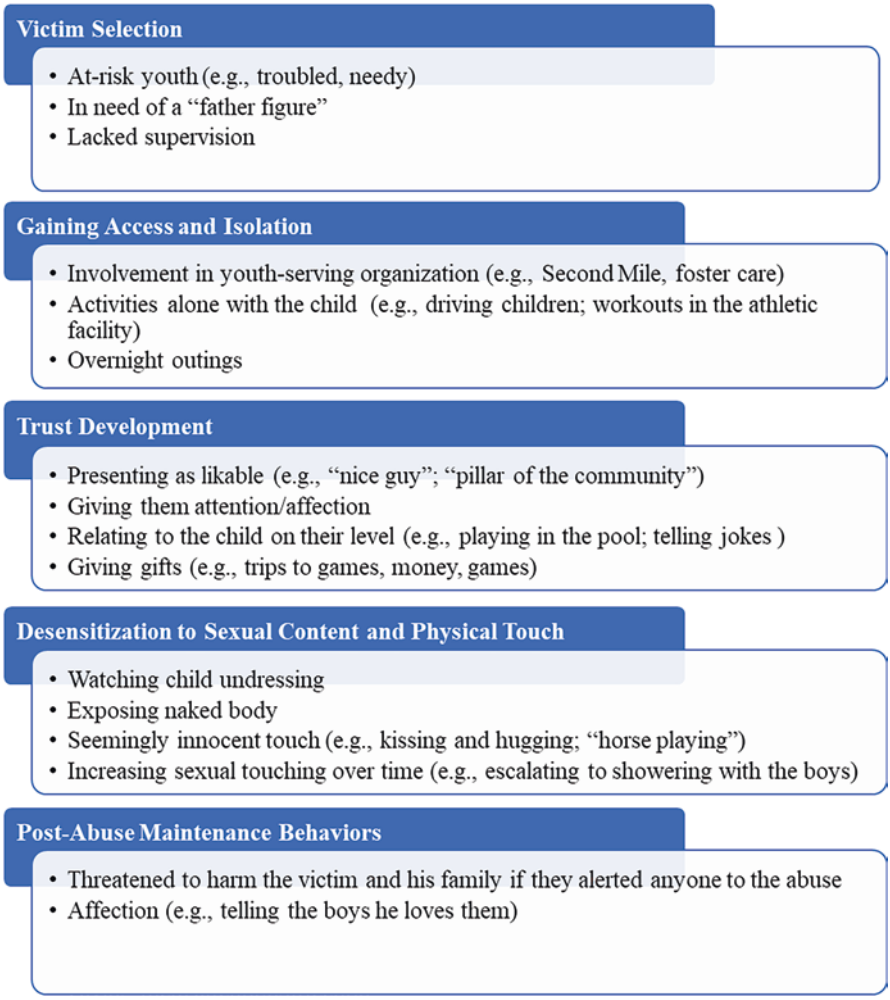

Fig. 1.2 Sexual grooming behaviors in the Jerry Sandusky case

elucidate this case, the sexual grooming behaviors documented in this incident are summarized in Fig. 1.2 and described in-depth in text.

1.2.1.1 Selecting a Vulnerable Victim

Sandusky targeted at-risk youth who were perceived as needy or troubled and/or came from difficult family situations. In 1977, Sandusky founded a nonprofit organization, The Second Mile, which provided millions of dollars in support to as many as 100,000 underprivileged youth annually (ESPN, 2011; Gladwell, 2012). Most of his victims were at-risk children he met through The Second Mile organization,

typically those without a father figure and who were 8–12 years of age (O'Neill, 2012). Court records further outlined the vulnerabilities of his victims, including that three resided in public housing, three were in foster homes, and one resided in a trailer with his single mother (O'Neill, 2012). In a *New York Times* article, it was noted that Sandusky screened potential victims to select those who lacked supervision; he asked the young boys if they wanted to stay after school, and those who were not able to stay without parental permission were "screened out" by Sandusky. Moreover, Sandusky even adopted one boy whom he previously sexually abused (Moody, 2015). The boy had been using illicit substances and alcohol and was sent to a juvenile detention center. Sandusky then adopted the boy who moved into his family home, where he continued to abuse the child.

1.2.1.2 Gaining Access and Isolation

As noted above, Sandusky used his roles within youth-serving organizations to gain access to his victims. He utilized his position at Penn State and The Second Mile organization to have contact with children, including at special events and youth football camps. He even continued to be actively engaged in these organizations following his retirement from Penn State. In a Penn State report, they acknowledged that Penn State "empowered Sandusky to attract potential victims by allowing him to have unrestricted and unsupervised access to the University's facilities and affiliation with the University's prominent football program. Indeed, the continued access provided Sandusky with the very currency that enabled him to attract his victims" (Dutton, 2012).

Regarding isolation, once Sandusky had access to a potential victim, he would create situations in which he could be alone with the child without other adults. As examples, he would offer to drive the child home or bring the child for individual workouts at the Penn State athletic facilities. Penn State acknowledges in their internal report that Sandusky had sexually assaulted a number of his victims on Penn State's campus locations. Additionally, Sandusky utilized overnight stays and outings to get time alone with the victims, including having young boys stay in his basement bedroom or bringing the victims to a hotel room.

1.2.1.3 Trust Development

First and foremost, Sandusky was highly respected in the community due to his involvement with the Penn State football team and his charitable work. He was well liked by most due to his "goofiness" (Gladwell, 2012). He even received a presidential award from President George H. W. Bush for the charitable work he did through The Second Mile. Sandusky showed the boys attention and affection; he was noted to kiss one of his victims on his head and say "I love you" and write "love letters" to another victim. One victim described viewing Sandusky as a "father figure" (O'Neill, 2012). Sandusky made efforts to relate to his victims through childlike

activities, such as shuffleboard, video games, playing in the pool, and telling jokes (Moody, 2015). Sandusky took the boys on fun outings, such as Penn State football games, picnics, tailgate parties, and meals at restaurants. He would also provide the victims with gifts and rewards, such as money, athletic apparel, games, clothing, and electronics (O'Neill, 2012).

1.2.1.4 Desensitization to Sexual Content and Physical Contact

Evidence showed that Sandusky desensitized his victims to sexual content and physical contact gradually over time. He engaged in seemingly innocent touch, such as frequently "horse playing" with the children or placing his hand on their knees during car rides (Gladwell, 2012). Sandusky reportedly kissed the boys atop their heads and blew "raspberries" on their stomachs. He would also hug, tickle, and cuddle with his victims (Danahy, 2011; Gladwell, 2012; Moody, 2015); Sandusky even sometimes called himself "the Tickle Monster". Sandusky would then increase the intensity of the sexual contact over time. CNN (2012) reported that he would grope the boys down their shorts in the swimming pool, give "naked bear hugs," and start soap fights in the shower of the locker room. Records indicate that in one instance in 1998, Sandusky invited an 11-year-old boy from The Second Mile to the athletic facility at Penn State. He drove the boy to the facility where they worked out on exercise machines and wrestled together. This eventually led to one of the most infamous sexual grooming tactics used by Sandusky, which involved him showering naked with his victims at the athletic facility following workouts. In this particular case, he "wrapped his hands around the boy's chest" and "lifted the boy to 'get the soap out of' the boy's hair" in the shower.

1.2.1.5 Post-abuse Maintenance

Sandusky was known to engage in post-abuse maintenance behaviors in an effort to prevent the victims from disclosing. One victim described during his testimony that Sandusky threatened him, stating that he would remain in foster care and not see his family if he told anyone about the abuse (O'Neill, 2012). Moreover, Sandusky was known to continue abusing the boys over time with ongoing gifts ("perks" as one victim put it) and told the boys he loved them.

In sum, the Penn State Sandusky scandal drew the attention of the public globally. With clear evidence of sexual grooming, many were left wondering how this pervasive abuse was not recognized sooner. One particularly interesting circumstance of this case was that concerns *had* been raised about Sandusky's behavior with young boys one decade before he was formally charged. In 1998, the Penn State police, alongside the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, investigated a reported incident committed by Sandusky (CNN, 2020; Gladwell, 2012). A mother of an 11-year-old boy raised concerns that Sandusky showered with her son. Sandusky was subsequently interviewed by a psychologist, Alycia Chambers, who

concluded this was "likely pedophile's pattern of building trust and gradual introduction of physical touch, within a context of a 'loving,' 'special' relationship (Gladwell, 2012)." However, a caseworker assigned to the incident, Jerry Laura, reported that he disagreed with the psychologist's assessment, noting these behaviors were in the "gray" area related to "boundary issues." An evaluation of the boy was conducted by a counselor, John Seasock, who indicated, "There seems to be no incident which could be termed as sexual abuse, nor did there appear to be any sequential pattern of logic and behavior which is usually consistent with adults who have difficulty with sexual abuse of children." Seasock stated he did not see evidence of sexual grooming and rather Sandusky should be informed about how to "stay out of such gray area situations in the future." Ultimately, Sandusky admitted to showering with the boy but denied any further wrongdoing and assured the behavior would not happen again. The district attorney determined no formal criminal charges should be filed and advised the Penn State police chief to close the case. The discrepancy between trained professionals and the failure to detect Sandusky's abusive behavior resulting in over a decade more of sexual abuse clearly demonstrates the difficulty of recognizing and preventing these potentially predatory behaviors.

1.2.2 Sexual Grooming Cases in the Spotlight

Sadly, the Sandusky case is not an anomaly as reports of sexual abuse in the media are a daily occurrence. One of the more recent high-profile cases involving grooming was that of Larry Nassar, the former US Gymnastics national team doctor (Hauser & Zraick, 2019). Following a 2016 investigation by the *Indianapolis Star*, there were hundreds of female victims who accused Nassar of sexually abusing them over the course of three decades (Evans et al., 2018). Nassar used the guise of medical practice to commit inappropriate sexual contact against young gymnasts. Like Sandusky, Nassar was a valued member of the community, who was respected and liked by many; he was deemed the National Contributor of the Year from the US Elite Coaches Association and noted to be a "highly respected, visible, eager osteopathic physician." Victim testimony revealed that Nassar created situations in which he was alone with potential victims (e.g., inviting a young girl to his home for an alleged medical study). He would provide victims with candy, gifts, and emotional support (Lapook, 2018) and send private messages via email and texting (Evans et al., 2018). Eventually, he would increase touching over time, mainly under the guise of medical practice, such as massaging private areas and conducting invasive pelvic examinations that were not medically necessary (Evans et al., 2018).

On a larger scale, there have been numerous sexual abuse scandals among global and national organizations that have involved sexual grooming. For the past two decades, there have been documented cases of sexual grooming involving CSA in the Catholic Church in both media and empirical research. Research conducted on a large sample of CSA cases in the Catholic Church found that these premeditated behaviors (i.e., sexual grooming) were not uncommon in that setting (Terry &

Tallon, 2004; Winters et al., 2022). Another study found that priests convicted of CSA had used tactics such as providing alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to the victim, going on overnight stays and trips, establishing trusting relationships with the victim's family, showing favoritism, physical playing, gift giving, and misusing the respect and authority of their position (see Chap. 8; Spraitz & Bowen, 2018). Similarly, the Boy Scouts of America is currently facing nearly 100,000 claims of sexual abuse said to have been committed by scoutmasters and volunteers. It was reported that 81% of these cases involved grooming techniques (Abused in Scouting, 2020).

Not only has there been an increase in attention to in-person grooming, but also the notion of adults sexually grooming children online has drawn considerable attention. In 2004, a new Dateline NBC television show, To Catch a Predator, featured host Chris Hansen confronting individuals attempting to meet minors they conversed with on the Internet. These so-called "sting" operations were in partnership with a volunteer organization, Perverted Justice, which trained adults to pose as child decoys in chatrooms. This show, along with individual cases in the media, has highlighted the potential dangers of children in online forums. More recently, with children having increased access to social media and online gaming, there has been a rise in children being targeted through these online platforms (BBC, 2019).

Ultimately, all these cases of online and in-person sexual grooming that have flooded the media in recent years have led to the public becoming more aware of the role of sexual grooming in CSA. It is hard for many to understand how adults who commit sexual abuse can go undetected for so long and how these sexual grooming behaviors are not recognized sooner. In order to better prevent CSA before it occurs or to stop ongoing abuse, it is paramount that these potentially observable and identifiable pre-offense behaviors be better understood. Clearly, there remains a great need to better examine these elusive pre-offense behaviors in an effort to prevent CSA.

1.3 Conclusion

There has been increased attention to the concept of sexual grooming in recent decades, yet there remains much to be explored about this construct. To date, there have been notable advances in the empirical literature of online grooming due to the increased use of the Internet by minors; however, in-person grooming has somewhat fallen to the wayside. A significant portion of the in-person sexual grooming literature has included theoretical reviews (e.g., Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014; Craven et al., 2006), and of the few empirical studies that have been conducted, many are outdated and may not reflect the current conceptualization of the term (e.g., Berliner & Conte, 1990; Conte et al., 1989; Elliott et al., 1995). Despite the importance of the subject, sexual grooming remains an understudied phenomenon, and there remains confusion in the field as to the true definition and conceptualization of the

term. To this end, in this book we aim to provide an in-depth examination of the current understanding and research regarding sexual grooming.

Below, we provide an overview of the remaining content of this book:

The book will begin in Chap. 2 with a review of existing models that have been developed to describe the sexual grooming process, including a more detailed description of the SGM (Winters et al., 2020). Chapter 3 will review previously proposed definitions and culminate in the proposal of our new operational definition based upon the SGM. In Chap. 4, we will focus on the developing research examining the impact that sexual grooming may have on its victims at the individual, family, and community levels. The advent of the Internet has given those aiming to commit sexual offenses against children access to large numbers of victims on online platforms (e.g., gaming, social media, chatrooms); therefore, Chap. 5 will review what is known about online sexual grooming, including a discussion regarding how it differs from in-person grooming. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will investigate what is known about self (i.e., as personal grooming or self-grooming in order to justify, deny, or minimize the harm caused by their abuse), familial and community (i.e., strategies that perpetrators use to groom a child's family and community so that they may gain access victims and prevent detection or disclosure), and institutional grooming (i.e., individuals who commit non-familial CSA working in child-serving organizations, such as Boy Scouts of America, educators, coaches, etc.). For Chaps. 9, 10, 11 and 12, we focus on sexual grooming for specific populations, including females who commit CSA, juveniles who commit CSA, and sexual grooming of adult victims. Chapter 13 is a clinically focused chapter that will provide an overview of assessment tools, including the newly developed *Sexual Grooming Scale–Victim Version* (Winters & Jeglic, 2021), and strategies for treatment of victims of CSA and those who have been convicted of sexual abuse involving sexual grooming. Chapter 14 will use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s socioecological model to highlight sexual grooming efforts to prevent grooming at the individual, relational, community, and societal level. Chapters 15 and 16 address the role that sexual grooming plays in law enforcement and the courts, as well as the importance of national and international legislation designed to punish those who engage in sexual grooming. Lastly, the book will conclude with Chap. 17, which will summarize the most important conclusions about the current state of the sexual grooming field, as well as propose future directions for the research and prevention of sexual grooming.

This book is a research-oriented book addressing the problem of sexual grooming in cases of CSA. We believe having a comprehensive review of sexual grooming is important for various areas of practice, including research, primary prevention, clinical work, law enforcement, and policy. Improved empirical research on sexual grooming can further our understanding of the construct, which can provide evidence-based data for what the process entails and how to intervene and treat these individuals. Knowledge of sexual grooming can help children, caregivers, and those working closely with children (e.g., teachers, doctors, coaches) recognize

potentially concerning behaviors of adults toward children before the abuse occurs. Clinicians can utilize this information when assessing or treating victims of CSA, as well as those adults who used sexual grooming in their offense process. Criminal justice agencies may improve their investigation and prosecution of CSA cases with aspects of sexual grooming. Lastly, policies and legislation regarding sexual grooming can be improved based on a solid understanding of what this process may entail. All of these important domains would benefit from a comprehensive examination of the construct of sexual grooming, and thus, we hope the information will be of use to numerous audiences including scholars, academics, students, mental health providers, and organizations that address sexual violence prevention.

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Chapter 2
Models of Sexual Grooming

Social scientists use models in the development of theories and constructs. Models in this context are defined as general or hypothetical explanations that are used to assess or define a construct (Glanz & Rimer, 1995). Models are deemed to be an integral part of the social sciences as they aide in guiding both theory development as well as research design by developing a framework through which hypotheses are developed and problems are investigated (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Windahl and McQuail (1993) define a model as "a consciously simplified description in graphic form of a piece of reality" that aims to "show the main elements of any structure or process and the relationships between these elements" (p. 2).

Models are developed or generated through two main stages or steps (Chinn & Kramer, 2011). While these steps are not ubiquitous within social science research, they generally adhere to the following pattern. The first stage in developing a model is the construction of conceptual meaning. In other words, what are the various elements or components of the construct that you are trying to explain? In the social sciences, this process typically involves researching the current state of the field (i.e., past research and theory) to identify key factors or variables that overlap and to understand how the various components of the model interact with one another. A good model should be parsimonious and ultimately measurable. In the second step, the model is structured and contextualized within existing frameworks and theory to be useful in practical settings. Further, context can be applied to the model's findings, and assumptions that are made about the model should be specified (Chinn & Kramer, 2011).

Shoemaker et al. (2004) highlight four main uses for models in research:

1. Models can be used to organize data by highlighting the most important parts of a process and how those parts are related.
2. Models can help to make predictions as they describe the relationship between variables, enabling researchers to test hypotheses.

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