

Chapter 6 summaries

Paedophilia and cognitive distortions

- Paedophilia is defined in the DSM-IV-TR as having several symptoms, including experiencing intense and recurrent sexually arousing fantasies over a minimum of six months, or urges or behaviours that involve sexual activities with a prepubescent child or children.
- This definition has been critiqued by several authors.
- Hebephilia is an attraction to pubescent children who have not reached sexual maturity.
- Cognitive distortions are excuses and rationale that an offender provides themselves (and sometimes others) with, which allow them to justify their behaviour to themselves.
- Cognitive distortions can occur among both contact child sex offenders (those who abuse children directly) and offenders who view and collect child pornography, but do not engage in contact offending.
- Several common cognitive distortions among these groups have been noted, but these are relatively easily refuted.

Models of paedophilia

- Several efforts have been made to understand why some individuals show paedophilic tendencies.
- Many of these efforts have focused around the childhood of paedophiles.
- Some of the most influential models which attempt to explain paedophilia are
 - Finkelhor's (1984, 1986) 'four preconditions model of paedophilia':
 - assumes that child sex offending has several causes, and that four preconditions need to be present for a sexual assault to occur:
 - the motivation to commit the crime

- overcoming internal inhibitors
 - overcoming external inhibitors
 - overcoming the victim's resistance.
- Hall and Hirschman's (1991) 'quadripartite model':
 - Also identified four factors in offending behaviour
 - But suggested that different offenders could have different dominant factors. These four factors include:
 - affective dyscontrol
 - personality problems
 - physiological sexual arousal
 - the presence of cognitive distortions
 - Ward and Siegert's (2002) 'pathways model':
 - suggests that there are four different pathways to becoming a paedophile, and so there are four different types of paedophile:
 - the use of cognitive distortions
 - the presence of deviant sexual scripts
 - intimacy deficits
 - dysfunctional emotional regulation.
 - a fifth pathway could involve dysfunctions across multiple areas.

The predation process online

- In many cases, victims of online predators are adolescents rather than younger children.
- There is normally a gradual 'grooming' of the adolescent in order to prepare them for a sexual encounter.

- In many cases the adolescent is aware of (and consents to) the sexual nature of the contact in advance of its occurrence.
- Predators use a variety of online technologies and communication mechanisms to identify and communicate with potential victims.
- Predators use online conversations to develop the victim's empathy and trust, and the victim may begin to enjoy the attention.
- Pornographic material may be used to desensitise the youth to sexual content, and the offender may use a variety of techniques to ensure that the victim does not discuss the sexual activity.
- These techniques appear to be different to the techniques used by offline offenders, probably due to the difference in the likelihood of the victim knowing the offender beforehand.
- Adolescents may have a higher tendency to talk about more personal matters with strangers in online contexts than if they met them face to face, thus potentially leading to faster progression to sensitive topics such as sex.

The psychology of online predators and their victims

- The psychological models describing paedophiles may not be relevant to internet child predators due to their preference for adolescents.
- Some of the characteristics which may describe online predators include feelings of inadequacy, arrested psychosocial development, lower levels of education, increased likelihood of criminal history, impulsivity (although there is some disagreement regarding this), anger, curiosity, a desire for power, a wish to relive adolescent experiences, a wish to seek admiration from victims and possibly patience.
- Most victims of online solicitations are female, and when boys are targeted, it is usually by males.
- The majority of victims are over fourteen years of age.

- Youths who send personal details to strangers, or who talk to strangers online about sex, are more likely to receive aggressive sexual solicitations.
- Most youths seem to deal fairly well with online predation, but some experience severe psychological distress.

Improving the safety of children online

- Educational strategies should be primarily targeted at adolescents instead of younger children, and they ideally should be targeted at the potential victims themselves, rather than their parents or caregivers.
- It is also preferable that prevention methods are targeted at youth behaviours, rather than the specific online locations they frequent.
- Technological methods of child protection are insufficient, as they can be circumvented by both predators and children.
- Police impersonation of juveniles may lead to arrests, but it is uncertain whether those apprehended are representative of most online predators.
- There are a variety of rehabilitation programmes used for sex offenders generally, many of which may be applied to online child predators.
- It is important that any precautions that are taken do not prevent the child or adolescent from reaping the full benefits of online life.

Ratings of child pornography materials

- Child pornography is not a new offence, but the development and distribution of such images and videos have been facilitated by the emergence of new technologies.
- Offenders may have a false sense of anonymity due to the online nature of the offence.
- The COPINE (Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe) project (Taylor, Quayle and Holland, 2001) described ten levels of content of child pornographic materials.

- Another rating scale is used by the UK's Sentencing Advisory Panel.

Child pornography offenders

- There may be several different types of child pornography offenders, including various types of collectors, producers and distributors.
- Krone (2004) suggested a typology of nine different types of Internet child pornography offenders.
- Researchers have found users of internet child pornography to be mostly male, white, single, never married, experiencing internet dependence, well-educated and/or in good employment.
- Offenders often search for specific types of images or videos, which may relate to pre-existing sexual fantasies.
- Several differences have been noted between the psychology of internet child pornography offenders and contact offenders.

Victims of online child pornography

- It is thought that there may be differences between the psychological reactions of victims of internet child pornography and those of children who have been abused, but pornography has not been developed and distributed.
- This may be partly due to an inability to ensure that all copies of the material have been destroyed.
- In addition to symptoms experienced due to the abuse itself, victims may experience many other types of psychological distress.
- There has been very little research to date examining the effects on victims of such abuse.

Punishment and rehabilitation of child pornography offenders

- Internet child pornography offenders appear to have low levels of recidivism.
- There is therefore some debate as to whether or not resources should be dedicated to their rehabilitation.
- Most assessment and treatment programmes to date have been adapted from generic sex offender programmes.
- But these may not be appropriate due to the differences between contact and non-contact offenders.
- Middleton and colleagues developed the i-SOTP to prevent further viewing behaviours and escalation to contact offending, and it has been found to be effective.