

PART I

Background,  
developmental frameworks  
and predictive accuracy

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# 1

## Characteristics of Sexual Offenders

### INTRODUCTION

In England and Wales, the average prison population in 2001 was 66,300 (Councell & Olagundoye, 2003) with 7.6% of those in custody convicted of sex offences (4,840 adults and 199 juveniles). Just over half (52%) of the 5,039 sex offenders imprisoned in 2001 had committed rape offences and 200 (4%) of them had also murdered their victim (Fisher & Beech, 2004). Of those individuals residing in special hospitals, 12% have been convicted or charged for a sexual offence (Home Office, 2005).

The Home Office reports 6,046 recorded sex offences for England and Wales between 2004/05. This represented 5% of recorded violent crime and 1% of all crimes recorded by the police. The vast majority of contact sex offenders (80%–95%) are male (Finkelhor et al., 1986; Jehu, 1988). However, evidence does exist for the presence of a small number of female sex offenders (see Sarajen, 1996). Prison statistics for England and Wales in 2001 show that only 25 females were imprisoned for sex crimes compared to 4,840 males (Councell & Olagundoye, 2003). However, a meta-analysis of eight victim surveys found that on average 2.5% of female victims and 21.3% of male victims report that they were abused by female perpetrators (Fergusson & Mullen, 1999), so the prison statistics may not reflect the true picture.

Sex offenders are usually separated into individuals who commit ‘*non-contact*’ sex offences involving little or no direct contact with the victim (for example, exhibitionists and internet offenders) and those offenders who indecently assault a child or adult victim (for example, Paedophiles and rapists) frequently referred to as ‘*contact sexual abuse*’. In this chapter we will describe the different types of sexual offender, offender characteristics and the various theories associated with sexual offending.

## EXHIBITIONISTS

Exhibitionist is the term used to describe individuals who expose their genitals to others. Victims are usually female. Exposure to adult male victims is rare (Murphy, 1997). Furthermore, a significant minority of victims (28%) are children and adolescents aged between 5 and 13 years (MacDonald, 1973). The prevalence of females encountering an exhibitionist is high, as surveys of UK nurses (44%) and US college students (32%) have shown (Cox & MacMahon, 1978; Gittleson, Eacott & Mehta, 1978; respectively). The motivation underlying male genital exposure separates exhibitionists into two types:

1. Men who expose themselves to seek sexual interaction with others and to become sexually aroused by their victim seeing their genitals (*the narcissistic exhibitionist*).
2. Men who expose themselves to intimidate and cause fear in others and to become sexually aroused by the shocked and frightened reaction of their victim (*the sadistic exhibitionist*).

Both types of exhibitionism begin in the offender's mid-teens (Abel & Rouleau, 1990), although it is the sadistic exhibitionist who is more likely to escalate into serious contact offences. Indeed, one in five exhibitionists also commits contact sexual offences (Gebhard et al., 1965) and this rate increases to one in four when there is also a history of mental health problems (Sugarman et al., 1994), which demonstrates the importance of treatment programmes for this group. Most exhibitionists receive community sentences when there is no record of contact sexual offences and now convicted adult exhibitionists are expected to attend accredited sex offender treatment programmes in the community run by probation (see Chapter 7, also Beech & Fisher, 2004). Interventions for young offenders are organised by the youth offending teams, some of which have set up 'Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour Units' to treat the early onset of genital exposure to others and internet sex offences committed by juveniles.

## INTERNET OFFENDERS AND THE USE OF PORNOGRAPHY

An estimated 100 million individuals had access to the internet in 2001 and one in five people visit sexually oriented sites at least once a month (Cooper, Delmonico & Burg, 2000). Indeed, 1 per cent of North Americans spend more than 40 hours per week engaged in online sexual activity, the vast majority visiting adult pornography sites which are considered legal by most countries law enforcement agencies (Cooper, 2002). However, a significant number of internet sites offer illegal child pornography and paedophilic contacts which can be downloaded at leisure onto

personal computers and provide reinforcement for sexual fantasies involving children. Between 1988 and 2001, 3,022 individuals were cautioned or charged with downloading illegal child pornography from the internet (Carr, 2003).

Recent research has suggested three different types of internet offenders (Carnes, Delmonico & Griffin, 2001; Cooper, 2002):

1. The '*Discoverers*' with no evidence of a prior interest in sexual activities with children and adolescents but who now find these images interesting and stimulating.
2. The '*Pre-disposed*' who have previously fantasised about sex with children and/or adolescents and now use the images available on the internet to trigger and fuel these sexual fantasies.
3. The '*Sexually Compulsive*' who use images on the internet as another way of acting out their sexual fantasies and behaviours and who may heighten their arousal and lower their inhibitions by looking at these images prior to committing a sexual assault.

For all three groups, sexually violent material and sexual images of children and adolescents on the internet serve to 'normalise' a deviant sexual interest and reinforce the distorted view that sexual fantasies about children and young people, and non-consensual sex, are commonplace and not problematic. Furthermore, internet offenders create a market for the production and distribution of child sexual abuse and therefore are indirectly responsible for sexual offences against children and young people.

Investigating the possession of internet child pornography now accounts for one in ten child sexual abuse cases known to the police, but only 7% of these 'non-contact' offenders are also known to directly sexually assault others (Gallagher et al., 2006). It appears that only a small minority of internet offenders use images of children and adolescents in a sexually compulsive way and that even those predisposed to sexual fantasies about children and young people may not act out such fantasies, unless they become compulsive. Indeed, Foss (2003) showed that internet offenders have significantly less cognitive distortions and more emphatic concern for children (but similar low self esteem) compared to child molesters, which may partly explain why they are less likely to act out their deviant thoughts and fantasies.

Research into the preparatory effect of child pornography on paedophiles seeking to physically abuse children is contradictory, and there is no established research that indicates that child pornography either causes offending or even that it maintains molestation patterns (Howitt, 1997). However, paedophilic fantasy has been positively linked to offending behaviour and is unlikely to be effectively controlled by the exclusion of pornography.

Not surprisingly, the majority (86%) of child molesters have admitted under polygraph examination that they use pornography, in a compulsive way, as a

precursor to offending. Earlier studies have found a smaller number of child molesters (21% and 33%) who use illicit pornography (Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995; Marshall, 1998; respectively) but report how the men used thoughts and fantasies about their previous victims and sex assaults prior to committing another sex offence. Some men had their own 'scrap books' of cut out legal images of children taken from newspapers, magazines and shopping catalogues.

Seto, Cantor and Blanchard (2006) investigated whether being charged with a child pornography offence is a valid diagnostic indicator of paedophilia, as represented by an index of phallometrically assessed sexual arousal to children. In a sample of 685 male patients they found that child pornography offenders showed greater sexual arousal to children than to adults and differed from groups of sex offenders against children, sex offenders against adults and general sexology patients. Malamuth (2001) examined the effect of pornography on sexual aggression and found that pornography consumption is related to sexually coercive behaviour only among those who exhibit traits and attitudes (for example, hostile masculinity) that are well established correlates of sexual aggression. While the use of pornography itself has not been identified as a risk factor (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004), it is a potentially salient variable for those who are already at risk.

Indeed, Seto, Alexandra and Barbaree (2001) argue that the evidence for a causal link between pornography use and sexual offending remains equivocal. They suggest that individuals who are already predisposed to sexually offend are the most likely to show an effect of pornography exposure and are the most likely to show the strongest effects. Men who are not predisposed are unlikely to show an effect; if there actually is an effect, it is likely to be transient because these men would not normally seek violent pornography. More recently, Seto and Eke (2005) argue that the likelihood that child pornography offenders will later commit a contact sexual offence is unknown. In their study they examined 201 adult male child pornography offenders using police databases and examined their charges or convictions after the index child pornography offence(s). They found that 56% of the sample had a prior criminal record, 24% had prior contact sexual offences, and 15% had prior child pornography offences. One-third was concurrently charged with other crimes at the time they were charged for child pornography offences. The average time at risk was 2.5 years during which 17% committed other offences and 4% committed a new contact sexual offence. It was found that child pornography offenders with prior criminal records were significantly more likely to offend again in any way compared to those with no criminal histories.

## **RAPISTS**

In line with the Sex Offences Act 2003 (see Chapter 9), rape is defined as an assault upon an individual with the intent to commit penetrative sexual acts without the

victim's permission (Fisher & Beech, 2004). The British Crime Survey (1998; 2000), using a narrower definition of 'forced sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal penetration)', showed that one in twenty adult women, over the age of sexual consent of 16 years or more, claimed that they had been raped but only a minority (20% of rape victims) had reported it to the police. Twice as many (1 in 10) adult women claimed that they had suffered some form of sexual victimisation (Myhill & Allen, 2002).

Sexual assaults by strangers are those most often reported to the police and represent 36% of all reported rapes. This gives a distorted picture of the prevalence of rape by someone known to the victim. Date rape, acquaintance and marital rape are much less likely to be reported to the police, but according to prevalence studies, such as the British Crime Survey, appear to be more common (45% of rapes as opposed to 8% by strangers). In a recent review of marital rape, Martin, Taft and Resick (2007) estimated that 10% to 14% of married women have experienced forced sex by their intimate partner and as many as 40% to 50% of battered women are raped within their physically abusive relationship. In an earlier study, Russell (1991) interviewed 930 women in San Francisco, 644 of whom were married. It was found that 4% had experienced 'marital rape' but no other physical violence, 14% had been raped and battered, and 12% had been battered but not raped.

Likewise, Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) previously estimated that 1 in 10 women in Boston had experienced forced sex by their intimate partner. In 82% of the cases, this occurred after they had separated. They categorised 'marital rape' into three types, based on Groth's (1977, 1979) previous work:

- In 10% of the cases, the intimate partner was forced to engage in bizarre and perverse sexual activities without their consent (e.g. bondage). Such activities had an obsessive element and were likened to Groth's '*sadistic rapists*'.
- In 40% of the cases, violence was used only to obtain sex from the spouse and rarely occurred at other times. This control and authority over intimate partners was associated with Groth's '*power rapists*'.
- In 50% of cases, the forced sex is a part of the general domestic violence suffered by the woman and used as another way of humiliating and degrading her. This was associated with Groth's '*anger rapists*'.

The nature of sexual violence in intimate relationships, whether married or non-married, are not limited to heterosexual couples and occur to a similar extent between homosexual and lesbian relationships (Renzetti, 1992). Furthermore, the occurrence of physical and sexual violence is not restricted to co-habiting couples or those who previously lived together. Acquaintance and date rape is just as common and surveys of college students in the USA revealed that 15% reported having unwanted sexual advances (Levine & Kanin, 1987) and 7% to 9% reported being raped during a date (Pirog-Good, 1992; Mufson & Kranz, 1993).

### *CHARACTERISTICS OF RAPISTS*

There are few significant differences between rapists and other men who commit serious crime (Brownmillar, 1975). All are likely to have low school achievement with a history of truancy, unstable family backgrounds, poor employment records and few social competences (Hudson & Ward, 1997). Furthermore, levels of psychosis, serious brain dysfunction or learning disabilities among adult rapists (5% to 8%) are similar to the general population (Marshall, 2000).

It has been claimed (Groth, 1979) that sexual activities are merely the medium used by adult rapists to express their feelings of anger and hostility towards women and sometimes men. There is a need to assert power and to control and dominate the victim to compensate for feelings of frustration, helplessness, anxiety and sexual inadequacy. Sometimes, these feelings are associated with cognitive distortions about masculinity, male identity and status. For example, the distorted belief that when women say 'no' to sex, they really mean 'yes' is a common myth, often portrayed on film and television. Where these 'myths' are held by a group of individuals, the chances of gang rapes are much higher. Indeed, US national data on rape and sexual assault estimates that 1 of out 10 cases involve multiple perpetrators (Greenfield, 1996).

The use of alcohol in some societies is used as an excuse for rape and sexual assault. It is used to explain a lack of responsibility both for the perpetrator's actions and for the victim's alleged compliance. Indeed, Grubin and Gunn (1990) observed a high prevalence of alcohol use among rapists in the UK; 58% of men convicted for rape had been drinking prior to the offence and 37% were considered to be dependent on alcohol.

Myths are often associated with socially and culturally accepted views, held by traditional societies (World Health Organisation, 2003). For example, the myth that only females of 'low moral character' get raped and that those who engage in prostitution and drug taking bring rape upon themselves. In fact, any individual can be a victim of rape regardless of their behaviour and the majority of sexual workers and drug abusers are vulnerable individuals, some of whom were abused in their childhood (Briere, 1992; Felitti et al., 1998). Therefore, anger, power and sexuality are the basic elements of any act of sexual violence, but the underlying motivations and methods of committing sexual assault vary dramatically from offender to offender, based on their beliefs and values.

### *PROFILES OF RAPISTS*

As identified by Ainsworth (2000, 2002), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have attempted a profile categorisation of rapists based on their behaviour at the time of the offence. Hazelwood and Burgess (1987) used a classification, based on



sexuality, power and anger, developed by Groth (1977; 1979) for these profiles as follows:

- **Selfish/pseudo-unselfish:** the *selfish rapist* shows no regard for the victim and is often threatening and abusive. He is confident of dominating the victim and carrying out an assault to suit their own sexual fantasies and self gratification, regardless of the victim's suffering or protest. The victim's resistance has little effect on the behaviour of the offender. By contrast, the *pseudo-unselfish rapist* lacks the confidence to dominate and tries to reassure and compliment the victim and may even apologise for the assault. The behaviour of the pseudo-unselfish offender is related to the fantasy of victim compliance and is therefore affected by the way the victim behaves. Hence, victim resistance may end the assault in these cases.
- **Power assertive/power reassurance:** The *power assertive rapist* is confident in his actions and may view the sexual assault as an expression of manhood. The style is to befriend the victim in a non-threatening way and then to force her into sexual intercourse. The victim may have been compliant with the initial intimacy but unable to fend off the forceful sexual attack that follows. This profile is typical of 'date rapes'. By contrast, the *power reassurance rapist* is sexually insecure and thus carefully selects a vulnerable victim and the time and place of the sexual offence. Pseudo-unselfish behaviour may be shown and after the assault, the offender may ask to be forgiven and permission to contact the victim at a later date. Sometimes, power reassurance offenders take items from the victim to keep together with records of their conquests.
- **Anger-excitement/Anger-retaliatory:** the *anger excited rapist* takes pleasure from the suffering and fear of their victim and may purposely inflict pain as a part of forcing the victim into sexual intercourse. To gain confidence, the intended sexual assault is planned and rehearsed, including the use of weapons and other items to subdue the victim. However, the selection of the victim is more related to chance than careful selection. Extreme physical force and torture are common features of the anger excited offender, sometimes over a long period of time and the victim's death may be a consequence. The degradation and humiliation of the helpless victim seems to be the primary objective and this may involve abduction of the victim. By contrast, the *anger-retaliatory rapist* commits rape as an expression of inner rage or hostility towards women or other men. The sexual attack is usually unplanned and impulsive and may involve extreme physical violence over a short period of time. Sometimes the victim is a previous boy/girlfriend or spouse. In other circumstances, a victim may trigger the sexual assault because he or she looks like a previous boy/girlfriend or spouse. The rejection, breakdown and separation in previous relationships heighten feelings of insecurity and jealousy in the offender.

Overall, in comparison with other sex offenders, men who rape adult victims tend to be younger and are more likely to use aggressive force rather than coercion to overcome victim resistance. With respect to their backgrounds, rapists are more likely to have experienced a long-term relationship and less likely to have been sexually abused themselves, compared to child molesters (Hudson & Ward, 1997). The victim to perpetrator pattern seems to be particularly relevant to child molesters with 56% to 57% reporting adverse sexual experiences in childhood as compared to between 5% and 23% of rapists (Dobash, Carnie & Waterhouse, 1994; Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995; Seghorn et al., 1987; Pithers et al., 1988).

## CHILD MOLESTERS

Findings from offender surveys also give the impression that many child sexual assaults go unreported. On average men convicted of sex offences against children claim five more undetected sexual assaults, over a period of up to 6 years, for which they were never apprehended or caught (Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995; Groth, Hobson & Gary, 1982).

### *CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDERS WHO SEXUAL ABUSE CHILDREN*

The most basic categorisation of 'contact' sex offenders is to use the *age of the victim* to distinguish between those individuals who victimise adults, often referred to as 'rapists', and those individuals who perpetrate sex offences on children (under 18 years), who are most often referred to as '*paedophiles*'. However, sex offenders who have a primary interest in children may target specific age groups. Paedophile is the term used for sex offenders who target prepubescent children, some even target very young children under three years ('*nepiophilia*'). The paedophile group generally find secondary sexual characteristics, such as pubic hair, unattractive and undesirable. By contrast, '*hebephiles*', are individuals who target adolescents and teenagers with developing secondary sexual characteristics. This also symbolises to them sexual innocence and inexperience (Powell, 2007). The hebephile group are also more likely to commit sexual offences against adults as well as children, especially when the adult victim appears vulnerable and/or inexperienced. Indeed, Elliott, Browne and Kilcoyne's (1995) survey of convicted sex offenders who targeted children (under 18 years) found that 7% had also offended against adults.

The *age of the offender* is also an important consideration because of the legal implications and how the case will be managed in terms of sentence and intervention. For decades, the average age of convicted child molesters has been approximately 40 years (Fitch, 1962; Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995), although there is growing evidence for adolescent and teenage offenders committing peer and sibling abuse. Indeed, perpetrators aged 17 and younger account for one third of all

allegations of sexual abuse (Glasgow, Horne, Calam & Cox, 1994; Watkins & Bentovim, 1992). Official crime statistics illustrate that approximately 23% of all sexual offences committed in England and Wales involve perpetrators aged 21 and younger but most receive community sentences (Masson & Erooga, 1999). Likewise, studies of criminal convictions in the USA report up to 20% of rapes and 30% to 50% of child sexual abuse are committed by juvenile perpetrators (Davis & Leitenberg, 1987). Nevertheless, perpetrators younger than 20 are only represented in 5% of child protection cases (US Department of Justice, 2006).

A third categorisation that is usually applied relates to the *gender of the victim*; that is females only, males only or both females and males. Victim surveys show that girls are between two and three times more likely to be sexually abused than boys (Finkelhor, 1994; Pinheiro, 2006) and this has been confirmed by reports from sex offender surveys; 58% claimed they targeted girls, 14% preferred boys and 28% targeted both boys and girls (Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995). A history of sexual abuse in childhood appears to influence age and gender preferences of paedophiles and appears to increase the chances of sex offences against boys (Browne, 1994; Pithers et al., 1988). Retrospective studies have also revealed that 60% to 80% of sex offenders with a history of childhood victimisation began molesting children as adolescents and teenagers (Groth et al., 1982) and it has been estimated that these individuals perpetrate 50% of the sex crimes against boys and up to 20% of offences against girls (Rogers & Terry, 1984).

A fourth important category is the *relationship context between perpetrator and victim* (Faller, 1990): Firstly, 'incest' or intrafamilial abuse, where a child is in some way used sexually by a family member. Incest offenders are usually fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles and siblings and are referred to as '*intrafamilial abusers*'. Secondly, 'acquaintance' cases where the offender is known to the victim but not an immediate family member such as a baby-sitter, teacher or other persons in a professional caring capacity, friend of the family and mother's boyfriends. These are referred to as '*extrafamilial abusers*'. Thirdly, a group of child sex offenders who are also classed as extrafamilial but comprise of those individuals who are '*strangers to the victim*'.

In the child sex offender survey by Elliott, Browne and Kilcoyne (1995) it was found that approximately one third of convicted offenders were intrafamilial, one third were extrafamilial acquaintances and known to the child, and one third were strangers. However, one in three offenders in a parental role sexually abused both their own and other children. This suggests that at least one third of 'incest' perpetrators could be regarded as paedophiles with a primary 'fixated' sexual interest in children and not merely 'situational' sex offenders as suggested by Howells (1981).

Unlike other forms of child maltreatment, biological parents are also less likely to commit sexual abuse on their children than other adults. According to the American Humane Association (McDonald et al., 2005), cases of child sexual abuse

represented 7% of all child maltreatment referrals in 2003. Biological parents were alleged perpetrators in only 3% of these cases. The parents' male partners were thought to be responsible for 11% of cases, other relatives 30%, foster carers 6%, child carers 23% and teachers 11%. In the other cases, the perpetrators were unknown, many of which involved a sex offender who was a stranger to the child victim.

A recent review of research on violence against children in the community by the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children estimates that between 21% and 34% of sexual assaults on children are committed by strangers (Pinheiro, 2006). The review confirms previous findings that the majority of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by some in a position of trust. For example, a recent report (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004) claimed that approximately 4% of US Catholic priests had been accused of abusing 10,700 children between 1950 and 2002. The majority of their victims were boys.

The relationship between perpetrator and victim will affect the frequency and duration of the abuse, and strategies used to engage the victim in the abuse (Faller, 1990). For example, those who are family or acquainted with the victim are more likely to employ psychological strategies such as coercion and bribery, whereas strangers are more likely to rely on physical force and surprise as a means of overcoming their victims. Partly for this reason, intrafamilial and extrafamilial abusers have fewer victims than strangers to the victim. Hence, proximity in the relationship context will also influence disclosure of abuse. Close relationships are less likely to be disclosed than those that are more distant or involving a stranger.

A fifth category concerns the *type of child sex offender*, where the perpetrator is classified into one of two (or more) typologies which are related to theories of motivation for the offence. For example, Cohen, Seghorn and Calmus' (1969) described three types of child molesters in terms of their sexual motivation to abuse. Firstly, the *paedophile-fixated* offender is described as having arrested psychosocial and psychosexual development. This individual is characterised by an inability to sustain long-term relationships with adults and has an exclusive preference for children both socially and sexually. Secondly, the *paedophile-regressed* offender is described, by contrast, as *not* being preoccupied with children and able to engage in adult relationships. This person regresses into sexual activity with children in times of stress and anxiety or family breakdown. Thirdly, the *paedophile-aggressive* offender mixes sex and aggressive motives and is driven to commit sadistically violent offences to gain sexual satisfaction.

There are similarities between the various typologies and distinctions that have been put forward since Cohen et al. (1969). For example; *fixated* versus *regressed*, (Groth, 1978); *preferential* versus *situational* (Howells, 1981); or *high* versus *low fixation* (Knight & Prentky, 1990) and high deviancy versus low deviancy (Beech, 1998). However, Fisher and Beech (1994) claim that nearly a third of the men who would be identified as regressed or situational perpetrators in other classifications

(and would be treated as low risk) were found in the Beech (1998) classification system to be classified as High Deviancy (and therefore high risk with associated resistance to treatment). Nevertheless, assessing risk in known perpetrators of child sexual abuse and helping them with relapse prevention cannot be accomplished without first identifying specific characteristics associated with the offence (Grubin & Wingate, 1996).

### *GROOMING AND THE CONTEXT OF SEX OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN*

'*Grooming*' was a term originally used by Christiansen and Blake (1990) to describe the processes by which fathers perpetrated incestuous relationships with their daughters. However, the term has been generalised since to describe the processes and strategies that all sexual offenders use to initiate and perpetuate the sexual abuse of children. The strategies are employed by the offender to: target particular children and/or parents; create opportunities to engage and interact with child victims in a sexual way, encourage secrecy about the contact; maintain the victims in their victim role and the abusive situation; and further, to prevent disclosure both during the abuse and once the sexual relationship has ceased.

To inform prevention programmes for children a number of child sex offender surveys have been carried out (Budin & Johnson, 1989; Conte & Smith, 1989; Lang & Frenzel, 1988) These studies provided valuable information about the context in which sex offences of children occur and are maintained. For example, Elliott, Browne and Kilcoyne (1995) interviewed 91 convicted child molesters and found the following information:

In *selecting a victim*, the child being pretty was important to 42% of the offenders, and the way the child dressed was cited by 27% of the men. Being young or small were also significant factors for 18% of offenders. Hence, the physical characteristics of the child were important, but not as important as the way the child behaved, one in eight (13%) focused on innocent or trusting children and nearly half (49%) of the offenders reported they were attracted to children who seemed to lack confidence or had low self esteem. Overall, according to the offender's perceptions, the child who was most vulnerable had family problems, was alone, was non confident, curious, pretty, 'provocatively' dressed, trusting and young or small.

*Recruiting a victim* was related to the previous relationship the perpetrator had had with a child.

Offenders who found child victims outside their immediate families had various strategies: 35% of the men frequented places where children were likely to go to such as schools, shopping centres, arcades, amusement/theme parks, playgrounds, parks, beaches, swimming baths, fairs, etc; 33% worked on becoming welcome in the child's home; 14% 'took the chance' when a child approached them, perhaps to ask a question and 18% of the men tried to get more children by having their victims

recruit other children. They did this by offering incentives to or by threatening the victim and by giving bribes and gifts to the children recruited. Just under half the offenders (46%) felt that a 'special relationship' with the child was vital (54% did not).

The *location to abuse children* varied and most offenders used more than one location. The majority said that sexual abuse took place in the offender's home (61%) or in the child's home (49%). However, 44% of the offenders also stated they abused in public places, such as toilets or in tents when children were on outdoor activities, or in secluded parks or woodlands. Less common were offences in the home of friends (13%), in the vicinity of the offender's home (6%) and in a car (4%).

The *strategies used to approach the children* or their families by offenders were also varied. Most often they offered to play games with the children, or teach them a sport or how to play a musical instrument (53%). Many also gave bribes, took them for an outing or gave them a lift home (46%). Some used affection, understanding and love (30%) and some told stories involving lies, magic or treasure hunts (14%). A few offenders simply just asked a child for help (9%). One in five offenders claimed they had gained the trust of the victim's whole family in order to be able to abuse a child. It is highly significant that 48% of the offenders isolated their victims through babysitting. On these occasions, the offenders started by talking about sex (27%) offering to bath or dress the child (20%), and/or using coercion by misrepresenting the abuse as having a different purpose (21%), such as 'it would be good for you to do this for your education' or 'this is what people do who love each other'. Eighty-four per cent of the men said that once they had developed a series of successful strategies, they approached children with that same method every time; 16% were inconsistent in their approaches and changed their strategies over time.

The *first abusive action* with the child often involved one or two immediate sexual acts. Forty per cent of the abusers said that one of the first things they had done with the child was to engage in sexual activity such as sexual touching or genital kissing, 28% slowly desensitised the child into sexual activities and 32% asked the child to do something that would help the offender, such as undressing or lying down.

The *methods used to overcome the victim's reluctance* was mixed; 19% used physical force with the child, 44% of the men used coercion and persuasion, 49% talked about sexual matters, 47% used accidental touch as a ploy and 46% used bribery and gifts in exchange for sexual touches. If the child resisted or was fearful 39% of the offenders were prepared to use threats or violence to control the child as a way of overcoming the child's anxieties. The other offenders (61%) used passive methods of control such as stopping the abuse and then coercing and persuading once again. Therefore, the majority of offenders coerced children by carefully testing the child's reaction to sex, by bringing up sexual matters or having sexual materials around and by subtlety, increasing sexual touching.

One third of the offenders (strangers to the victim) abused a child on only one occasion and then moved on to another victim; two thirds of the offenders encouraged the child's compliance and *maintain the abusive relationship* by using a variety and combination of methods. Thirty-three per cent specifically told the child not to tell; 42% portrayed the abuse as education or as a game, 24% used threats of dire consequences, 24% used anger and the threat of physical force, 20% threatened loss of love or said that the child was to blame.

With reference to the *offender's preparation for the abuse*; immediately prior to offending, 22% of the men used drugs or alcohol, 21% used pornography and 49% used fantasies about previous victims to disinhibit themselves. The other 8% contacted and talked to other offenders. One in five offenders knew where to obtain child prostitutes and illegal child pornography (videos and magazines). One in twelve kept in regular contact with other child sex offenders.

## UNDERSTANDING SEX OFFENDERS

Wolf (1984) and Finkelhor (1986) have been influential in understanding the process of sexual offences against children and the importance of grooming. Wolf (1984) proposed 'cycle of offending' whereby a motivation for sexual interest in children is triggered by sexual fantasies. Once internal inhibitions are overcome, a victim is targeted and the sexual fantasy rehearsed while grooming the victim. The abuse then occurs which reinforces the fantasy or creates a fear of detection. When the fantasy is reinforced, this enhances the possibility of another sexual offence on a child (continuous cycle), which may skip some stages (short circuit cycle). If there is a fear of detection or feeling of guilt about the abuse of a child, then the offender becomes blocked and inhibited (inhibited cycle) and may stop perpetrating child sexual abuse for a period of time (Eldridge, 1998).

Similar to Wolf's ideas, Finkelhor (1984; 1986) proposed a four-stage model explaining how a perpetrator sexually offends against a child. The first two stages require the potential perpetrator to be motivated to have sexual activities with the child and to overcome any internal inhibitions to commit such acts. The third requirement is to overcome external inhibitors or obstacles, such as appropriate parenting, guardianship and protection. Lastly, the perpetrator must overcome the child's resistance and evasive behaviour (see Table 1.1). Work with a child victim and their family addresses the third and fourth aspects of this model but leaves the motivation and disinhibition of the offender intact. This demonstrates the criminogenic need to rehabilitate offenders based on a theoretical understanding of sexual offending. Table 1.1 presents other multifactorial theories that have been put forward (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Hall & Hirshman, 1992; Ward & Siegert, 2002; Malamuth, 1996; Thorhill & Palmer, 2000) since Wolf's and Finkelhor's models had been proposed. Single factor explanations emphasising cognitive

**Table 1.1** Summary of multifactorial theories of sex offending  
(adapted from Ward, Polaschek & Beech, 2006)

Theories/models	Summary
<b>Multifactorial theories</b>	
<b><i>Finkelhor's Precondition Model (1984)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The first multifactorial theory of child sexual abuse has been widely applied to research and practice.</li> <li>● The theory concludes that there are four underlying factors/steps (preconditions) which must be satisfied before child sexual abuse occurs:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation to sexually abuse</i>:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Emotional congruence: the way the offender's emotional needs are met by a child</li> <li>b) Sexual arousal: inappropriate sexual preference and responses to children</li> <li>c) Blockage: inability to meet sexual and emotional needs in adaptive ways</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <i>Overcoming internal inhibitors</i>: disengaging in self-regulatory mechanisms which enable someone to resist the desire and urge to sexually abuse a child</li> <li>3. <i>Overcoming external inhibitors</i>: overcoming external barriers that protects a child from sexual abuse</li> <li>4. <i>Overcoming resistance of the child</i>: employing strategies to gain and maintain access to a child for sexual contact.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b><i>Hall and Hirschman's Quadripartite Model (1992)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accounts for child sexual abuse and rape but the primary focus is to capture the heterogeneity of child molesters.</li> <li>● The theory hypothesises that the following factors lead to sexually abusive behaviour against children:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Physiological sexual arousal (state)</i>: deviant sexual preferences and arousal to children</li> <li>2. <i>Distorted cognition (state)</i>: thinking of children as competent sexual agents who are able to make informed decisions about sexual activities</li> <li>3. <i>Affective Dyscontrol (state)</i>: having problems with the identification and management of emotions. Ward, Hudson and Keenan (1998) called it 'emotional regulation'.</li> <li>4. <i>Problematic personality (trait)</i>: traits and vulnerabilities stemmed from adverse early experiences.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b><i>Malamuth's Confluence Model of Sexual Aggression (1996)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A statistical model of proximate causes of sexual aggression, embedded in a combination of evolutionary, feminist and social learning precepts.</li> </ul>

(continued)



**Table 1.1** (Continued)

Theories/models	Summary
<b>Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated Theory (1990)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developed as a <i>general</i> theory of sexual offending.</li> <li>● The theory attempts to explain the <i>aetiology</i> of sexual offending by looking at attachment and early experience. It is argued that adverse early experience would lead to low self-worth, poor emotional coping and problem solving and social inadequacy, which made individuals vulnerable to victimisation as well as susceptibility to inappropriate sexual behaviour and antisocial behaviour.</li> </ul>
<b>Thornhill and Palmer's Evolutionary Theory and Sexual Offending (2000)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sees rape as a consequence of mating strategies and dismisses the possible influence of culture and psychological needs (e.g. power and control). To increase the chance of their genes being passed on and their offspring surviving, males have evolved to possess intense sexual desires which increased their motivation for sexual activities and seek multiple partners. They assert that rape is likely to be a conditional strategy only employed when circumstances are judged to be favourable by the perpetrator. Factors hypothesised to increase the chances of men using rape under conducive conditions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>A lack of physical and psychological resources</i></li> <li>● <i>Social alienation</i></li> <li>● <i>Limited sexual access to females</i></li> <li>● <i>Unsatisfying romantic relationships</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>● The theory also considers rape as a by-product of adaptations that evolved to establish sexual access to a consenting partner under Symons' (1979) suggestion that the primary adaptations causing rape are men's greater sexual drive and their predilection to engage in impersonal sex.</li> </ul>
<b>Ward and Siegert's Pathways Model (2002)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incorporates Finkelhor's, Hall and Hirschman's, and Marshall and Barbaree's theories into a more comprehensive aetiological theory for child sexual abuse.</li> <li>● The theory denotes that early experiences, biological factors and cultural influence result in vulnerability, which may then lead one to develop <i>deviant sexual preferences, intimacy deficits, inappropriate emotions and/or cognitive distortions</i>. These four problems can be broken down into various components and then organised into different aetiological pathways that culminate in the sexual abuse of a child. The core</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 1.1** (*Continued*)

Theories/models	Summary
	<p>dysfunctional mechanisms combined with circumstantial factors would result in an offence. Currently, the model consists of five major pathways but they are kept as illustrative to allow other possible trajectories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Multiple dysfunctional mechanisms</i></li> <li>2. <i>Deviant sexual scripts</i></li> <li>3. <i>Intimacy deficits</i></li> <li>4. <i>Emotional dysregulation</i></li> <li>5. <i>Antisocial cognitions</i></li> </ol>

distortions, deficient victim empathy, deviant sexual preferences, intimacy deficits and patriarchy have also been put forward to understand the development of sexual offending. Reasons for re-offending have also been highlighted, which include a lack of relapse prevention and self-regulation strategies and poor response to treatment and intervention. For a full description of these theories and explanations, see Ward, Polaschek and Beech (2006) who attempted a unified theory of sexual offending, incorporating aspects of the above ideas (see Figure 1.1).

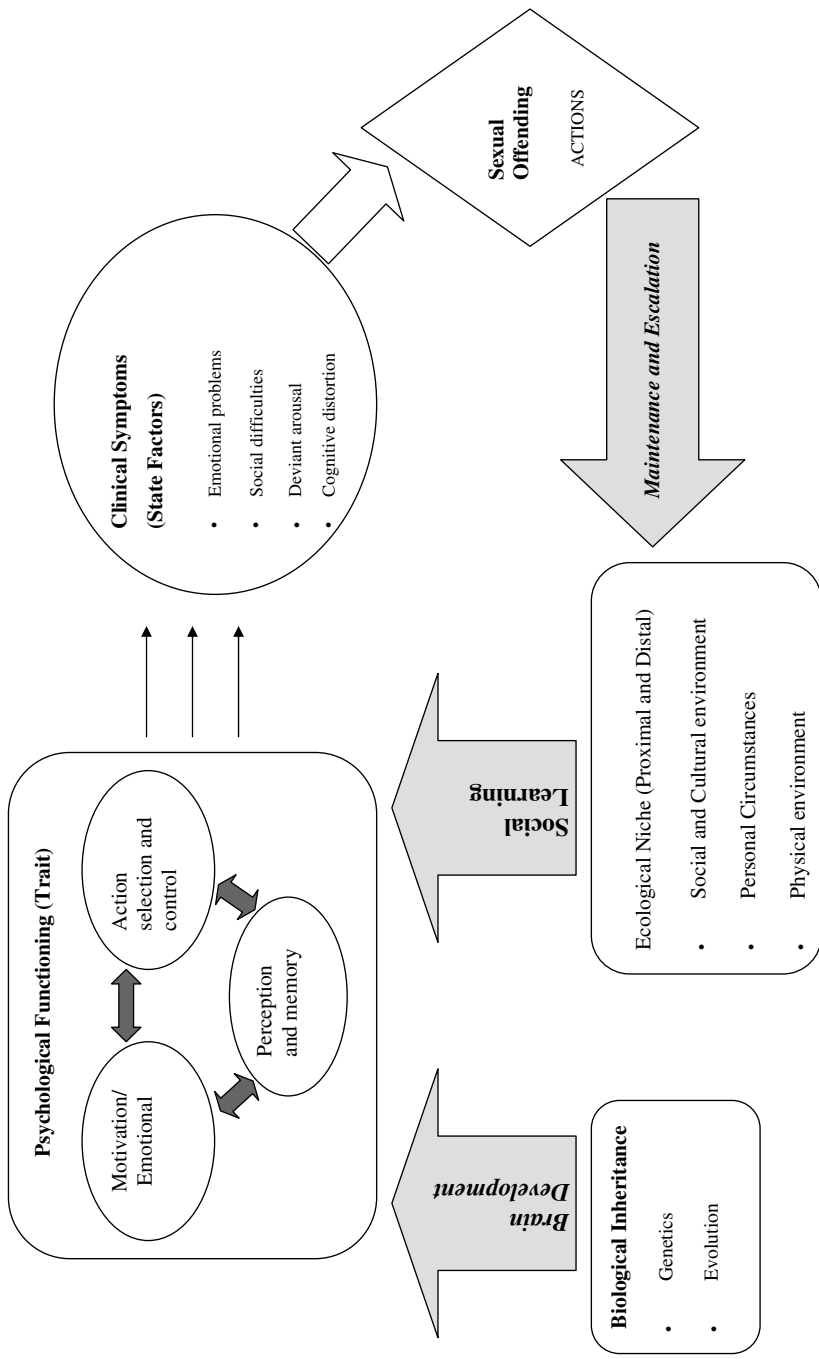
Although this unified theory of sexual offending has been proposed, it is obvious that sex offenders are a heterogeneous group and that exhibitionists, internet offenders, rapists, incestuous offenders and child molesters have different criminogenic needs in terms of risk assessment, management and intervention. Indeed, Fisher and Mair (1998) suggested that a satisfactory classification system for all sex offenders has limited application.

A *mental health need* has been demonstrated by the observation that 58 to 94% of sex offenders in forensic settings have a history of substance misuse, mood and personality disorders but few (less than 2%) show a history of psychosis (Langstrom et al., 2004; Leue, Borchard & Hoyer, 2004; McElroy et al., 1999; Raymond et al., 1999).

An *early intervention need* has been demonstrated by the recognition that at least a third of sex offenders began committing sexual assault during their teenage years (Elliott, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995; Masson & Erooga, 1999) and between 50% and 80% of sex offenders acknowledges a sexual interest in children during adolescence (Abel, Osborn & Twigg, 1993). This is partly related to the fact that many have been sexually abused themselves as children (Browne, 1994).

## TREATMENT PROGRAMMES

All categories of offenders require assessment and treatment (see Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion on treatment programmes). Allam, Middleton and Browne



**Figure 1.1** Unified theory of sexual offending (Permission from Ward, T., Polaschek, D. & Beech, A. (2006) *Theories of Sexual Offending*. Chichester: Wiley)

(1997) provide an example of the six core themes used to treat sex offenders in treatment which are:

- Cycles and cognitive distortion
- Self-esteem, social skills and assertiveness training
- Sexuality
- Role of fantasy in offending
- Victim empathy
- Relapse prevention

In a recent evaluation of the Prison Sex Offender Treatment Programme (Beech, Fisher, Beckett & Scott-Fordham, 1998), it was found that 67% of men attending showed a treatment effect with significant changes in some or all of the main themes targeted. Long term treatment (160 hours) was more effective than short term treatment (80 hours) in creating change, especially for those offenders who showed high deviancy.

Similarly, a recent audit of a community treatment programme (Browne, Foreman & Middleton, 1998) showed that 81% of sex offenders showed some improvement with all those completing a programme (63%) showing significant changes in one or more of the modules. A review of seven other community treatment programmes (Beech, Fisher, Beckett & Fordham, 1996) demonstrates that the above findings are typical.

### *TREATMENT EFFECTIVENESS*

In Canada, Marshall and Barbaree (1988) found that treated offenders had less reconvictions than non-treated offenders both at two years follow-up (5.5% and 12.5% respectively) and four years follow-up (25% and 64% respectively). Other North American studies (Hanson & Bussière, 1998), show a reconviction rate for sexual offences of 13%, with incest offenders lower (4%) than boy victim paedophiles (21%). General recidivist rates in the same meta-analysis of 61 data sets involving 28, 972 child sex offenders found 12.2% for non-sexual violent offences and 36.3% for any offence.

Similarly, in the UK only 10% to 15% of sex offenders were reconvicted within two to four years which is, in fact, lower than most other criminal offences (Lloyd, Mair & Hough, 1994; Marshall, 1997). Nevertheless, reconviction rates for untreated sexual offenders have been found to double (from 11% to 22%) after five years (Fisher, 1994) and some sex offenders have not been re-convicted until twenty years after release from prison (Barker & Morgan, 1993). A review of juvenile offender programmes (Gerhold, Browne & Beckett, 2007) has demonstrated similar levels of effectiveness with an average of 14% sexual offence recidivism (and 44% non-sexual offence recidivism) among young offenders with a

mean follow up period of five and a half years. However, measures of recidivism using reconviction data have been criticised (Friendship, Beech & Browne, 2002). Information directly from the police on alleged offences and high risk behaviours may give a better picture and more than double the actual conviction rates in terms of recidivism (Marshall, Jones, Ward, Johnston & Barbaree, 1991).

It was pointed out that a recent systematic review (Kenworthy, Adams, Bilby, Brokks-Gordon & Fenton, 2003) that only nine randomised controlled trials could be found investigating 'psychological interventions for those who have sexually offended or are at risk of offending'. Out of the nine reviewed studies, one study suggested that cognitive approach resulted in decline of offending after one year. Hence, that there is a lack of strong evidence to support the effectiveness of sex offender treatment programmes.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Treatment drop-out and poor response to treatment are considered the most important indicators for recidivism (Abel, Mittelman, Becker, Rathner & Rouleau, 1988; Browne, Foreman & Middleton, 1998). Indeed, those men who do not complete treatment still pose a significant risk to women and children in the community. There is little doubt that sex offences cannot be completely eradicated but assessment and treatment initiatives should significantly reduce the risk of sexual assault to women and children. Interventions with sex offenders using both assessment and treatment strategies are most effectively implemented within a multi-disciplinary framework, as the protection of women and children from sex offenders is best achieved through professional collaboration. This involves evidence-based practice which makes a clear distinction between risk management, supervision and treatment (see Allam & Browne, 1997). It is these key areas that we consider in this volume.

