The ‘Virtual’ Child: The Unconscious Functions of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM). A Psychoanalytic Narrative Inquiry

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of Doctor of Psychotherapy

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October 2022

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Psychotherapy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Conor, Albie and Clara for their support and tolerance of four years of weekend absences. This involved missing many hurling games, movies, trips to the park and even long conversations and they became accustomed to engaging with me in short intervals during study breaks.

A very heart felt thank you to my academic supervisors, Dr Ray O' Neill and Dr Gerry Moore who guided and supported me with an uncommon blend of expertise and thoroughness delivered with a light touch. They each agreed to supervise this work knowing that they would be opening themselves to potentially disturbing content in an area that neither had chosen to work in. They met me where I was at, within the area of sexual offending and within the Object Relations School of psychoanalysis, neither of which is their natural home. Ray is the only person I know who I could email at 7 am on most Saturday mornings and be confident of receiving a reply by 7:15. We might both need to re-think our priorities! My thanks also to Dr Mary Farrelly for her advice and timely inputs. Gerry gave me my first proper introduction to philosophy and started a deep appreciation of a way of thinking and arguing that has stayed with me. I would like to express my appreciation to all the academic staff of the Doctorate in Psychotherapy in DCU. I learned much from each of them, in terms of content but also professionalism and approach that I hope to carry forward. I wish to thank Dr Heather Wood; her writing has long been a support to me clinically and resonated with my findings in this study.

It would not have been possible to undertake this work without the nine participants who generously and resolutely described experiences that they felt deeply ashamed of. They agreed freely while knowing that it would be uncomfortable, even painful, and I am deeply grateful to each of them. To all in One in Four, thank you for the shared learning, support, humour and care. Without those healthy relationships, I would not have managed to work in this field seven days a week for four years while, though a little tired and emotional, remaining relatively unscathed.

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Abstract

The ‘Virtual’ Child: The Unconscious Functions of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM). A Psychoanalytic Narrative Inquiry. Julie Rosaleen Brown

Nine psychoanalytically interpreted narratives of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM) offenders are provided to illustrate the individual and distinct unconscious functions of the material that shapes and fuels offending. Fluid cycles of projection into, and identification with, the children were apparent. Findings highlighted differences in the intensity and exclusivity of paedophilic sexual preference. The majority of participants, seven of nine, were emphatic that they had no arousal to children offline and each described the intense excitement associated with breaching a societal taboo. This differed for those with a more marked or invariant paedophilic preference, for whom the imagery itself was more central. Anger was a marked trigger and, though participants named this, awareness of the inherent hostility toward the child in the imagery was vigorously defended against. The children were treated as functions rather than persons; as part-objects in psychoanalytic terms. This allowed offenders to disavow their subjectivity and, as a result, their awareness of and culpability for the harm caused. Psychoanalytic understanding of the defensive functions of paraphilia points to the potential of the current illegality warning regarding CSEM to spur rather than deter offending. This relates particularly to those with core complex anxiety due to their need to defy superego/societal authority Altering this warning to emphasise that real children are being hurt in the production of imagery might address the core cognitive distortion, broadly referenced in psychological, anthropological and psychoanalytic scholarship, that the children are not real. Furthermore, this change might dilute the rush, risk and triumph associated with breaking the law and *apparently* evading responsibility. Understanding the potential of the Internet to activate and amplify previously latent paedophilic currents dovetails with neuroscience findings on compulsive pornography use. This also offers an explanation of the burgeoning numbers of mainly men who, prior to their CSEM use, evidenced no sexual attraction to children.

"Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto" "I am a man, I consider nothing human alien to me." (Terence 195/185)

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter orients the reader to the thesis. It outlines the rationale for the study, sets out its aims and objectives and clarifies the positioning of the clinical researcher in relation to the topic. The Internet, a primary location for the sexual abuse of children creates almost unfettered opportunities to view child sexual exploitation material (CSEM). Allied offences associated with the online environment include the commission of contact offences against children linked to the production of imagery, and solicitation of children. In addition, the Internet allows sex offenders to congregate virtually to swap images, elaborate paedophilic fantasies and potentially reinforce previously latent or unconscious paedophilic interest. This study is primarily concerned with the unconscious functions of CSEM, proffering that understanding the individual distinctive motivations and provocations that hew and fuel offending is important for forensic therapeutic work, aimed at reducing risk of recidivism.

The thesis follows a standard monograph layout with six chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion. The findings chapter is the longest; this was a deliberate decision in light of the methodology and the psychoanalytic underpinnings of the study to explore the unconscious dynamics and defences of participants as they engaged with CSEM, and to explore whether psychoanalytic conceptual ideas derived from clinical practice were supported, or otherwise. This required providing depth accounts of participants' narratives, interpreted psychoanalytically.

Text boxes with blue type are inserted at relevant points in the thesis to illustrate the clinical researcher's deliberation and reflexivity. These comments, as well as the reflections and interpretations in the findings chapter, are written in the first person, reflecting the core importance of inter-subjectivity to all aspects of this study. The second deviation from standard formatting is the inclusion in the methodology chapter of a number of examples, which refer to the clinical researcher's experience of data analysis. This work, though normally referenced for the first time in the findings, is used for the purposes of illustration and clarification, to provide a live account to give context to particular theoretical points.

Aims and Objectives

This study aimed to better understand the psychic functioning, relating, and interactions of CSEM users with the children depicted in child abuse imagery. The objectives of the study sought to:

- Contribute to a body of knowledge that endeavours to prevent harm to children by interrupting the cycle of offending.

- Inform therapeutic work with this group of individuals.
- Deepen understanding of the interaction of CSEM with individual's psychic defences.
- Situate findings within the ideas and concepts set out in the relevant psychoanalytic clinical literature.
- Offer depth, context, and individual applicability to the empirically generated criminogenic factors underpinning mainstream interventions with child sex offenders.

1.2 The clinical researcher

At the time of writing, the clinical researcher is the clinical director of an Irish non-governmental organisation that works with adult survivors of child sexual abuse, CSA and their families, and perpetrators of CSA and their families. She has worked clinically in the area of sexual violence for 20 years and specifically in the area of CSA for 12 years. In addition to working clinically with survivors and those who had sexually offended against children, she is responsible for the management and supervision of eight psychotherapists and one mental health social worker and the coordination and development of the relevant psychotherapy programmes. The implications of the clinical researcher's dual role are attended to in the methodology chapter on page 36.

My therapeutic experience and psychoanalytic training undoubtedly influenced this study in key ways. The most overarching example of this is perhaps reflected in the inclusion of and movement between different paradigms as illustrated in the literature review. The prevention programme delivered in the relevant service is an evidence-based risk management programme drawing on standard assessment tools such as the SA07 (Hanson et al., 2007), to measure risk and ensure interventions are tailored to criminogenic factors. In therapeutic work, however, I utilise psychoanalytic theory to offer meaning to the client's behaviour inclusive of unconscious dynamics which aims to deepen insight and tailor an intervention to the individual in that moment. I was aware throughout all aspects of this study, that this day-to-day experience acted like a prism through which much of what I read was refracted. One potential bias may be a tendency to apply salience to the scholarship that I judged had the most clinical relevance and applicability.

Rationale for this Study

Quantitative studies suggest that CSEM offenders, though forming a heterogeneous group, differ from contact offenders in meaningful ways, which may require revision of assessment and treatment models. They generally exhibit high levels of sexual deviance but score low on anti-social traits explaining a relatively low level of recidivism (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Henshaw et al., 2017; Houtepen et al., 2014; Seto & Eke, 2015). Qualitative studies have explored the intent, cognitive distortions, and implicit theories of CSEM offenders. Many use the non-contact nature of the offence and the *apparent* compliance of the children in the imagery to distance themselves from any culpability in regard to harm (Bartels & Merdian, 2016; Merdian et al., 2018; Quayle et al., 2000; Taylor & Quayle, 2003; Winder & Gough, 2010a)

Psychoanalytic theory emphasises the unconscious, defensive functions of paraphilias, including the sexualisation of aggression for those with core complex anxiety, that is, those who struggle to manage and maintain emotional or sexually intimate relationships (Glasser, 1996). The Internet encourages a superficial and callous type of relation to the other as a function rather than an individual; this is called part-object relating and is characteristic of the paranoid/schizoid position in Kleinian theory (Klein, 1946). The scale, versatility and speed of the Internet encourages identification with power and invulnerability, and a blurring of psychic boundaries. A fluid though nevertheless compulsive cycle of identification and projection, of intolerable aspects of the self, weakness or vulnerability, for example, ensues (Sweet, 2014; Wood, 2011, 2013, 2014). Finally, though findings in regard to the relationship between pornography and sex offending remain the subject of academic debate, there is a relationship between CSEM and deviant sexual fantasy; pornography use should be considered in tandem with other risk factors (Mellor & Duff, 2019) especially as technological advances continue to make Internet sex ever more potent (Dekker et al., 2021). At the time of writing, no psychoanalytically oriented research into CSEM was identified in Ireland or internationally. This study sought to begin to address this gap and in so doing provide a psychoanalytic lens to deepen understanding of CSEM and potentially inform therapeutic approaches to risk management.

Methodology

This study sits within the qualitative paradigm which offers a range of methodologies suitable to explore individual experiences in depth, taking account of complexity,

subjectivity, inter-subjectivity, and the co-construction of data within a particular relational and cultural context. The Free Association Narrative Interview Method (FANIM) (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) was selected because it is underpinned by an understanding of the human subject as divided, that is, unconscious of their defences against ubiquitous anxiety. Furthermore, it advocates the necessity to look beyond the obvious and to report beyond the 'tell it like it is' approach to explore what is concealed as much as what is revealed in the narrative. The method diverges from other narrative methods which focus on analysis of the narrative itself as the unconscious follows an emotional rather than a rational logic, so contradictions are more significant and meaningful to explore.

In view of the centrality of understanding the unconscious motivations and meanings of CSEM use, the FANIM was augmented by two core psychoanalytic methods, free association and evenly hovering attention (Freud, 1912b). The Gestalt principle where the parts can only be understood in the context of the whole was central, so each narrative was analysed onto itself, the data was not fractured or separated from the fullness of the participant's account. Interpretation of the nine narratives was informed by: the associations conscious and unconscious of the participants, the clinical researcher's associations and countertransference, psychoanalytic clinical concepts, and empirical knowledge about paedophilia, hebephilia and child sex offenders. The interpretation aimed to provide coherence to the narrative when unconscious aspects were considered.

The analysis of each narrative was presented in two documents; a pen portrait and a pro forma. The first provides a summary of the interview inclusive of the tone, context and clinical researcher's countertransference; this is intended to act as a substitute whole for the reader. The second provides the psychoanalytically informed analysis of the narrative under three headings which correspond to the research questions: the unconscious functions of CSEM, the relation to the child victim, and the Internet.

Discussion

The discussion chapter situates the findings in the context of relevant literature encompassing scholarship from fields of psychoanalysis, anthropology, psychology and neuroscience. The chapter is constructed under headings reflecting the central theory questions: CSEM and paedophilia, the Internet and object relations, and the unconscious functions of CSEM. In addition, the neuroscience of addiction proved to be germane.

The relationship between paedophilia and CSEM defies easy explanation. Respected researchers suggest CSEM as a key diagnostic for paedophilia (Seto, 2017; Seto et al., 2006,

2015; Seto & Eke, 2017) However, a majority of those arrested evidence significant adult and other paraphilic interests in their often, considerable, collections of pornography. The exclusivity and intensity of paedophilic preference as well as whether the individual is fantasy versus contact driven (Merdian et al., 2018), are important considerations.

The boundless and boundary weakening qualities of the Internet with its promise of endless, sanctioned gratification without risk or consequence offers a potent invitation to those wishing to escape the anxiety, responsibilities, limits and tedium of everyday life. Others are treated as objects as opposed to persons, existing to fulfil specific functions before being discarded. This part-object relating (Klein, 1946) proved to be common to all participants as they manically identified with the power of the Internet and interacted with like-minded others to fuel cognitive distortions, and in some cases, project and disavow their paedophilic fantasies and hostile impulses into other CSEM users.

The defensive functions of paraphilias and the interaction of psychic defences with the medium of the Internet is elaborated in the discussion chapter. Psychoanalytic insight into the potential of the Internet to incite an escalation or regression into paedophilia, a 'paedophilic breakdown', (Wood, 2022) offers an explanation of the escalating numbers of CSEM offenders reporting no previous sexual attraction to children. A different but complementary perspective is offered by findings in neuroscience that evidence the similarity in changes in neural circuitry between compulsive pornography use and substance addition (Brand et al., 2014; Brom et al., 2014; Nestler, 2008; Volkow et al., 2011). The imagery itself may be shaping and reinforcing previously latent preferences (Brom et al., 2014)

Conclusion

The final chapter explores the implications of this study for policy, therapeutic intervention and risk management, and theoretical understanding. Yardley's (2000) quality criteria are used for evaluative purposes. The chapter offers a critique of the FAMIM (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) and a reflection on what the clinical researcher, with the benefit of hindsight, might do differently. Finally, recommendations for further research are made.

Participants in this study and others (Howitt & Sheldon, 2007; Quayle et al., 2000; Rimer, 2019; Winder & Gough, 2010) named the permission granting cognitive distortion that the children weren't real. Psychoanalytic insight into the pressure those struggling with core complex anxiety (Glasser, 1996) feel to thwart an inadequately internalised superego explains the appeal and thrill for many of breaching a taboo and breaking the law. Taken together, these points support Rimer's (2019) proposal to change the online warning

connected to CSEM to highlight the humanity, subjectivity and independent existence of the child.

An understanding of the allure of the Internet to the unconscious is vital in illuminating the part-object (Klein, 1946) relation to the child. Furthermore, consideration of the individual, distinctive unconscious functions of CSEM is important to support clients to deepen their awareness and work through what otherwise may continue as a potent motivating force to recidivate.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Internet has become a dominant location for the sexual abuse of children, connected to the production, distribution and viewing of child sexual exploitation material, CSEM. Of the 1.8 billion images uploaded daily to the Internet, 270,000 depict the sexual abuse of children (*International Child Sexual Exploitation Database | INTERPOL*, 2018). On just one peer-to-peer network hundreds of searches for CSEM occur every second (Brennan & Hammond, 2017) while "preteen" was the third most common search term in 3,000,000 Internet pornography searches (Ogas & Gaddam, 2012). The Internet Watch Foundation's Annual Report (2021) found 252,194 reports of a total of 361,062 were found to contain sexual abuse of children.[1] Where imagery of babies, toddlers and children under six were found, they were more likely to contain children being subjected to Category A, that is, penetrative sexual abuse. The difficulties in quantifying the extent of CSEM have been outlined by Wager et al. (2018) who highlight the need to combine data sources such as the number of perpetrators apprehended (yielding the lowest prevalence rate due to undetected offending) with, for example, the number of images (yielding the highest prevalence rate but overestimating the number of victims due to duplicate images and multiple images of the same victim) to move toward a more accurate assessment of scale. Nevertheless, these ever-growing numbers represent harm to countless children, families and society which is unquantifiable. Thus, society is confronted with a political, social, educational and child protection imperative.

This review is based on a search of PsycInfo, PsycBooks, PsycArtices and Acadenic Search Complete databases using the terms ('psycho*' OR 'object relations') AND ('child porn*' OR CSEM OR CSAM) AND ('paedo*' OR 'pedo*) as well as a search of the psychoanalytic archive PEP using the terms Internet AND pedo* OR paedo* in January 2021. Further articles were identified and included by following up on relevant references cited in the original literature search. Research papers and clinical articles were included. Because the study was focussed on adult males who committed the online offence of viewing CSEM, articles were excluded if they focussed on female offenders, juvenile/adolescent offenders, contact offenders only, victims/survivors, consent, murder, psychopathy, intellectual disability or literary works. Only English language publications were included

[1] 182,281 of these reports were found to contain self-generated imagery. While this falls outside the purview of this study it presents parents and child protective services with an imperative to act to further protect children in the online space. Unfortunately, much of this imagery is captured by parasitic websites to add to CSEM collections.

because there was no translation service available, however abstracts of articles published in languages other than English were read to check that no major or novel ideas were missed.

Very broadly speaking, the literature on online child sexual offending can be divided into a bulk of quantitative studies exploring the prevalence, characteristics and associated risk of CSEM users and a considerably smaller number of qualitative inquires exploring individual experiences in depth. The principal findings of the positivist inquiries, accepted here as valid, useful, and necessary, in informing policy and risk management with individual offenders are outlined. The remainder of the review focuses on qualitative empirical findings coupled with clinical and conceptual literature. The relevant psychoanalytic concepts and clinical literature are outlined followed by an exploration of the Internet itself, inclusive of anthropological and psychoanalytic ideas as a particular type of offending environment.

Finally, the somewhat contradictory findings in relation to the relationship between legal pornography, pornography addiction and CSEM offending are outlined. It is the qualitative inquiries coupled with psychoanalytic clinical writing that are particularly germane to explore in the context of this study. Findings will, however, be contextualised with reference to the totality of the literature reviewed.

The Quantitative Perspective on the Characteristics of CSEM Offenders

Many studies comprise statistical analyses of factors discernible from investigatory files, questionnaires and analysis of psychological measures, and reliability studies on new and existing assessments. Current foci include exploring differences and similarities between online and contact offenders as well as differences between categories of online offenders; those who view CSEM are often referred to as child pornography offenders to distinguish them from dual offenders or those who use the Internet as means to solicit children for contact abuse.

Relationship between Paedophilia/ Hebephilia[2] and CSEM offending

Considering the scale, and nature, of the problem the need for evidence-based risk assessment tools and evaluation of programmes targeting criminogenic needs[3] cannot be over-stated. In a non-forensic sample of 8,718 German men 0.1% reported a paedophilic sexual preference, 5% reported some level of sexual interest in prepubescent children while

[2] A term used to describe sexual preference for pubescent/early adolescent individuals

[3] Criminogenic needs are those factors that lead to criminal behaviour

3% reported committing a sexual offence against a child, most commonly online (Dombert et al., 2016). These statistics highlight the complexity, later elaborated on page 80 of the discussion chapter, on the relationship between paedophilia and the commission of sexual offences against children. Ray et al (2014), again looking at a community-based sample, found that 20% of men acknowledged problematic Internet use had accessed CSEM. an elevated percentage relative to the 1% with paedophilic preference of even the 5% who acknowledge a level of non-exclusive sexual interest in children. This raises an important question as to the impact of compulsive pornography use in potentially creating but certainly amplifying paedophilic fantasy and arousal.

CSEM Offenders: Assessing Risk and Motivation

Findings, though not uniform, suggest that CSEM offenders comprise a distinct group requiring revision of risk assessment tools and treatment programmes (Babchishin et al., 2015; Henshaw et al., 2017; Seto & Eke, 2015; Wakeling et al., 2011). A broad consensus suggests that online offenders are typically Caucasian males (Babchishin et al., 2011, 2018) with relatively high educational attainment (Aslan & Edelmann, 2014), fewer criminal offences (Babchishin et al., 2018; Elliott et al., 2009), and less antisocial traits (Babchishin et al., 2018). However, high levels of sexual preoccupation and deviant sexual interests including paedophilia compared to contact offenders are also notable (Blanchard et al., 2007; Henshaw et al., 2017; Seto, 2017; Seto et al., 2006; Seto & Eke, 2015). Krueger at al. (2009) found that 70% of a sample of 60 males convicted of Internet offences against children met the criteria for an Axis 1 disorder (APA, 2013) that pre-dated, and in their view, contributed to the offending. The relatively low recidivism rates of online offenders (Webb et al., 2007), despite the evidence of high sexual preoccupation, is potentially explained by relatively lower rates of anti-sociality (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). It seems that outside of their CSEM use, these offenders are often average citizens who identify with generally pro-social values (Henshaw et al., 2017).

Online offenders are both vast in number and broad in heterogeneity. Meaningful criminogenic differences seem to exist between those who view CSEM and dual offenders and further delineations exist between those who produce CSEM for financial gain as well as those referred to as “sex tourists” (Briggs et al., 2011; Seto et al., 2012). Long et al. (2013) found that dual offenders were more likely to possess imagery characterised as severe on the COPINE Scale (Taylor et al., 2001) depicting more graphic imagery involving children under the age of five. The COPINE scale categorises imagery on a ten-point scale from level one –

indicative, referring to non-sexualised images of children to level ten referring to images depicting sadism/bestiality. A copy of the scale is included as Appendix A on page 128. ECPAT (2018) similarly evidenced a correlation between the decreasing age of the child victim and increasing severity of the imagery.

Houtepen et al (2014) in a literature review on CSEM offenders specifically, highlight that many such offenders evidence difficulties across multiple domains of psychological functioning while the severity of these problems may differ significantly among offenders within the same typology or group. They suggest assessing risk along two continua: one - looking at criminal risk factors such as anti-sociality and impulsivity and two - looking at the centrality of sexual deviance or fantasy. The sexual motivation, as well as being the most intuitive function, is supported in a number of studies (Elliott et al., 2009; Surjadi et al., 2010). Niveau (2010) found that more than half of CSEM users had high sexual preoccupation and indicated sexually compulsive behaviour. The same study found that 78% of the small forensic sample of 36 CSEM offenders were categorised as having a personality disorder, the largest 58.2% met the criteria for a Cluster C disorder characterised as dependent, avoidant or obsessive-compulsive. He posits that for those individuals who struggle to form healthy real-world attachments with the Internet may prove particularly alluring.

Typologies.

Studies have resulted in a number of typologies which, overall, classify CSEM offenders differently according to: (1) their technical actions, for example, downloading or distributing images; (2) their intent, for example, viewing images for masturbatory purposes or grooming a child for a contact offence, and (3) the effects of these actions, reflected, for example, in the COPINE Score (Taylor et al., 2001) where a higher score indicates greater harm to the victim (Aslan, 2011). Researchers have developed a number of overlapping typologies with differing emphases which aim to assist with risk assessment and management of online sex offenders, and with sentencing. For those interested, Aslan (2011) provides a critical evaluation of the typologies listed directly below.

Broadly, online sex offenders are categorised as: fantasy versus contact driven, where those attempting to contact or groom a child online would be considered as higher risk; paedophilic versus generally sexually deviant or antisocial/power driven, where the content of the collection might contain imagery of children almost exclusively compared to a range of other paraphilic content with the former suggesting a more paedophilic orientation, and

sexually or financially motivated, with the latter suggesting general anti-sociality as opposed to a paedophilic orientation. In addition, the levels of social-networking and sophistication of security measures taken to protect anonymity suggest a higher level of risk (Alexy et al., 2005; Krone, 2004; Lanning, 2001; Merdian et al., 2013; Sullivan & Beech, 2004). Functions of offending include sexual arousal (Krone, 2004; Lanning, 2001), collecting/searching, online social relationships and avoidance/escapism (Sheldon & Howitt, 2007; Taylor & Quayle, 2003). For those with a sexual interest in children the sexual function will be paramount though not all users of CSEM acknowledge a sexual preference for children (Elliott et al., 2009). Possession of CSEM could indicate paedophilia or in the case of biastophila (coercion) a preference for extreme forms of pornography (Surjadi et al., 2010). Some CSEM users deny any sexual function/masturbation to the imagery.

Challenges to Therapeutic Risk Management: Escalation and Inaccurate Self-Reports

Fortin and Proulx (2019) were unusual in being allowed access to the hard drives of 40 individuals convicted of CSEM offences. They analysed a selection of images assigning an age to the victim and a COPINE score related to the content of each image. They identified four patterns in CSEM consumptions evolving over time. A "degenerating spiral" represented by 37.5%, indicated lower victim and higher COPINE score; "sexualised adolescent" represented by 20% indicted an increase in age and an increase in COPINE Score; "boy/girl love" represented by 20% indicated a decrease in age and a decrease in COPINE Score and finally, a de-escalation pattern represented by 22.5 % indicated an increase in age and decrease in COPINE Score. Analyses of their sample of 61,244 images illustrated distinct differences is usage among users. The first three categories (80%) point to increasing severity over time characterised by increasing violence, decreasing victim age or both. While the sample size was small this study raises questions as to the functions of CSEM use, habitation and the role of the CSEM in shaping and exacerbating an underlying predisposition toward sexual attraction to children. This point is elaborated in the section on the Internet on page 16, and the discussion chapter on page 83.

Buschman et al (2010) used a polygraph to confirm the truthfulness of self-reports on a Sexual Behaviour Checklist (Buschman, Bogaerts, et al., 2010; Holden, 2000; Sosnowski & Wilcox, 2001; Wilcox, 2000) of 38 men convicted of a first CSEM offence. The polygraph verified results inverted the self-reports on important measures of risk and sexual interest in children. 21 of the 38 admitted to having committed a contact offence involving 37 child victims. While 55% initially denied masturbating to any child related imagery and the others

initially indicted a preference of images 1 – 7 on the COPINE Scale (Taylor et al., 2001) the polygraph evidenced a marked masturbatory preference for images at level 7, 89%, level 8, 84% and level 9, 74%. A similar pattern was evidenced in relation to age preference with the self-report measure which acknowledged a preference for children aged 13 and up. The polygraph procedure evidenced the majority preference for children aged 6 and younger 55% and children aged 7-13, 39%. This is in keeping with findings by Fortin & Proulx (2019) and Sullivan & Sheehan (2010). While the sample size was small and the use of a polygraph falls outside usual therapeutic practice, the results are concerning. Of interest too is a comment by the authors that a number of the participants' therapists did not believe their clients capable of having committed the contact offences they had admitted to during the polygraph procedure.

The findings of this study stayed with me during the interviews and analysis. They perhaps point to the tension inherent in forensic therapeutic work between building a therapeutic alliance while holding the dynamics of offending, such as grooming behaviour, rationalisation and minimisation of the offence in mind on order to make them accessible and meaningful.

The studies named above are, in the main, either meta-analyses or quantitative in nature, seeking generalizability in order to produce scalable and reliable tools and interventions that are targeted to criminogenic needs only, and therefore, affordable. They provide useful, indeed essential, information about groups and populations but say relatively little about the individual. Psychotherapy at least from this clinical researcher's viewpoint is about individual depth and subjectivity where interventions, while being guided by assessments and tools, will necessarily be formulated and tailored in tone and in language to the unique interaction of subjectivities in a particular moment. There are many valuable ways of knowing, qualitative and qualitative methodologies can be complimentary.

The Qualitative and Clinically Informed Perspective on Paraphilia

This section outlines the relevant literature in relation to CSEM but also aims to briefly set out those basic psychoanalytic concepts from the perspective of the object relations tradition of psychoanalysis which are germane to understanding the clinical writing and thinking that underpins the interpretive framework of this study.

Clinical Concepts Core to Understanding this Study

To begin with key concepts, this short section sets out in brief: the paranoid schizoid and depressive positions; splitting; transference and countertransference, and projective identification. Kleinian theory (1946) outlines two positions or phases of functioning based on the early stages of infantile psychic life, paranoid-schizoid and depressive. Each position is characterised by its own distinctive defences and ways of relating to the other. The states are, in certain respects, linear in that achievement of depressive functioning is dependent on the successful negotiation of paranoid-schizoid anxieties, and a nurturing environment. Most normal-neurotic people oscillate between the positions throughout our lives. This movement can be very quick; consider, for example one's experience of a partner during a heated argument compared to the more balanced perspective when the row has been properly resolved. The paranoid – schizoid position, likely active during the argument in the example above, is a deeply divided experience devoid of ambivalence as good and bad must be kept apart. The dominant anxiety is persecutory and the main defence is splitting. The other, from this position, is experienced as a part-object, either totally good or totally bad and as existing to perform a function. In common psychoanalytic terms, to the infant it is the breast, either feeding/good or withholding/bad, but not experienced as part of the whole, the mother. The depressive position (experienced at the resolution of the argument in the simple example above) is heralded by the capacity to tolerate ambivalence toward the (m)other who is experienced as a whole object, an individual with good and bad qualities. Defences are less primitive and include repression and the desire to repair this valued and needed other.

Empirical findings on CSEM offenders exemplify these concepts. Exploring implicit theories of CSEM offenders, Bartels and Merdian (2016) identified 'children as sexual objects' as one such core belief. They employ the concept of objectification to explain the reduction of children to the function of providing sexual gratification and the separation of this function and the child's body from their being. Psychoanalytically, this is an example of the splitting that is characteristic of paranoid-schizoid relating. In a particularly marked example of the potential callousness of the paranoid-schizoid position, one of Quayle and Taylor's participants describing child victims stated "I don't mean to be denigrating but some of the people were ugly …so I would actually sort of chop their head off" (2002, p. 344).

Transference, the emergence, in the therapeutic relationship, of often unconscious, early, repetitive, dynamic patterns and themes provides the opportunity for exploration and working through of unresolved issues in psychoanalytic therapy. Countertransference is the

therapist's transference to the client. As used here, refers to the total response of the therapist, to the client, influenced by conscious and unconscious elements and dynamics as well as the reality of the relationship (Barros et al., 2014; Heimann, 1950). Because his study was concerned with the unconscious functions of CSEM, the researcher's countertransference to each participant was an important source of data, informing and guiding data analysis. Examples of this influence are outlined in the methodology chapter in relation to participants Greg on page 33 and Steve on page 34.

Melanie Klein introduced the term 'projective identification' (1946); the concept has developed and deepened to become a cornerstone in understanding the *unconscious* communication between infant and mother (Bion, 1962) and therapist and client (Joseph, 1987; Segal, 1977). Unconscious, as used in psychoanalysis, implies contents and processes not merely outside of awareness but rather those that are unconscious because one is conflicted or frightened of them or because they are, as yet, unable to be thought, symbolised or spoken. The infant projects or locates raw, unprocessed sense impressions into the mother/caregiver who, if all goes well and she can be a 'good enough' mother, uses her more mature mental apparatus to metabolise and transform this content into something meaningful that can be taken back/re-introjected by her baby. This dynamic is the basis of Bion's (1962) theory of the container/contained and a template of the process performing well. It is, in essence, a two-way street and relies on a level of attunement in the relationship.

The contents of a projection are evacuated and disavowed because they are intolerable and so unable to be thought and put into language. Applying this psychoanalytic concept to CSEM, users would likely project their unconscious i.e. raw and primitive elements and functions of their CSEM use into the imagery itself or into the researcher. These elements would then be discoverable through the narrative itself analysed through a psychoanalytic frame utilising concepts including transference, countertransference, projective identification and container/contained. The researcher's training and years of practice as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist supported this interpretive capacity.

Paraphilias as Defences against Intolerable Anxiety

Moving to paedophila, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM –5 (APA, 2013) defines paedophilic disorder as "a paraphilia involving intense and recurrent sexual urges towards and fantasies about prepubescent children that have either been acted upon or which cause the person with the attraction distress or interpersonal

difficulty". The International Classification of Diseases ICD – 10 (WHO, 2010) defines it as a "sustained, focused, and intense pattern of sexual arousal - as manifested by persistent sexual thoughts, fantasies, urges, or behaviours - involving pre-pubertal children". Paraphilia or paraphilic disorder in the DSM - 5 is defined as "atypical sexual interest which causes distress or impairment to the individual or harm to others".

Psychoanalytic definitions of paedophilia begin from a different place than the psychiatric ones. The latter focus on the behaviour itself as characterising the disorder whereas the former view the behaviour as symptomatic of "intrapsychic and relational difficulties" (Yakeley, 2018, p. 169). Psychoanalysts place paedophilia within the category of paraphilia, formerly perversion, the functions of which form a core understanding of treatment.

Up to the end of the 20th century, psychoanalysts used the term perversion clinically, with no pejorative connotation intended, to describe what is currently termed paraphilic disorder. The terms will be used interchangeably in this section, reflecting the period of the literature reviewed. The defensive function of perversion (against castration anxiety) was noted by Freud (1927) and deepened to a broader defence against psychosis by Glover (1933). It was not until the 1970's that Stoller (1977) conceptualised perversion as originating in early difficulties in the mother-infant relationship.

The concept of the core complex elucidated by Glasser (1996) consolidated and built upon these earlier ideas to provide a fuller basis for thinking about the defensive function of perversion. This complex outlines a manner of psychic functioning marked by the perverse individual's highly ambivalent and fraught attempts to relate to the other. The other (originally the mother) is experienced as intrusive and potentially engulfing. The individual withdraws in terror, but any solace is short-lived as feelings of isolation and loneliness ensue. This disturbance engenders rage which might destroy the other but for the sexual solution; aggression is sexualised, preserving the other while allowing them to survive to suffer humiliation and degradation.

If we consider Glasser's (1996) core complex, outlined above, the individual suffering from a paraphilic disorder would likely experience great difficulty in internalising even good things from the other because any person, if allowed to relate closely, is inevitably experienced as intrusive and potentially annihilating. This insight offers an explanation of the relational and intimacy deficits widely accepted in cognitive-behavioural and relapse prevention models (Harris & Hanson, 2010; L. E. Marshall et al., 2012).

The Appeal of the Internet to the Unconscious

The Internet, gateway to cyberspace etymologically arising from a Greek word kybernan, which means to control or steer, has much to offer those who seek to avoid the anxieties, confines and inherent uncertainties of real life and relationships. As a medium for offending, the characteristics of online environments, and in particular, the interaction of this virtual environment with the psyches of CSEM users has been approached by authors from diverse disciplines. Psychoanalytic, anthropological and psychological perspectives, discussed below, are different, approaching the issue from divergent levels and viewpoints but are potentially mutually enriching.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, it is most relevant to consider the appeal of Internet sex to the unconscious. The virtual environment fosters part-object relating (Klein, 1946). The other as part object is not conceived of or experienced as a whole person with a unique and independent subjectivity. Rather, they exist to perform a function; In the case of CSEM, the most obvious function is sexual gratification, or collecting for example. A more unconscious function is projection where intolerable feelings and disowned aspects of the self can be projected into the image. The natures of such projections are unconscious and individual. The child, like the child in a contact offence, could represent an idealised experience of childhood or may be an object of jealousy or derision for their smallness and vulnerability. Images are malleable, and disposable, even when they meet the specific requirements of the manifest sexual fantasy. Images not in keeping with the fantasy can simply be deleted and forgotten. The other, from a part-object perspective is devoid of a separate subjectivity, so conveniently requires no care or reparation, indeed, like any object of fantasy, cannot be harmed (Glasser, 1987; Sweet, 2014; Wood, 2010, 2014).

The vastness and speed of the online offering encourages a type of manic defensive relation where feelings of vulnerability or dependency can be disavowed. Segal (2018) suggests that such feelings are replaced by triumph and contempt. Cooper's (1997) trifecta, assess, anonymity and affordability coupled with the power, speed, vastness and endless malleability of the Internet is primed to fuel manic defences and a sense of omnipotence. CSEM users relational and intimacy deficits (Harris & Hanson, 2010; L. E. Marshall et al., 2012) can be overcome as 'relationships' are one-way, not with other persons but with an image which can be projected into. The nature and functions of these projections form a core aspect of the findings and discussion in this study.

Part of the complexity presented by the broad heterogeneity of CSEM users is the differences in motivation. Wood (2014) posits that for some men the Internet, existing on the border of the internal and the external, functions as a borderline object (Bollas, 1996) For such men, sexual excitement may be secondary to a masochistic function as they court danger and self-destruction by turning themselves into a paedophile, reviled by society.

Psychoanalyst Alistair Sweet (2014) posits a "mediated self" formed when vulnerable individuals, unconsciously and compulsively, project intolerable parts of the self into computer-based media. The addictive quality of media use is explained as the individual needs to continually engage in this virtual reality to monitor these split-off parts as, after temporary relief, feelings of paranoia and weakened reality testing ensue. The empty signifier (Laclau, 1996) that which has no agreed meaning and, therefore, no constraints, boundaries or limits is apt to describe the online world where fantasies, conscious and unconscious can be realised absolutely and immediately, so shoring up a very fragile ego core with feelings of omnipotence and omniscience.

The Internet can come to assume a corrupt superego promising unending illicit sexual excitement without guilt or consequence. There is a correspondence between the age of the child victim and the presence of additional paraphilas; the younger the child depicted the greater tendency for increased violence in the imagery Wood (2011, 2022) offers an explanation suggesting that the preferred scenario, or conscious sexual fantasy, like the manifest content of a dream, disguises inchoate and primitive residues of early experiences of a disturbing or exciting nature as well as early ideas of bodies and their functions (Horne 2001).

A Catalyst to Egoic Breakdown

Exploring the issue of compulsive cybersex, which they define as use exceeding 11 hours per week, Carnes et al (2009) delineate five types of user of Internet sex: Recreational user; inappropriate user; discovery group; predisposed group, and lifelong sexual compulsive group. The discovery group, that is, those who pre-internet never sought out imagery of children, indeed may attest that they had no prior sexual interest or fantasies about children suggests that the Internet itself may contribute to the creation of paedophilic fantasies or perhaps it is more likely that it uncovers previous latent or repressed fantasy relating to children. Aslan (2011) makes the salient observation, in keeping with the clinical experience of this researcher, that a majority of online CSEM offenders, who minimise their behaviour and its impact, locate themselves within this group.

Wood (2011, 2022) coined the term ‘paedophilic breakdown’ to refer to those individuals for whom the Internet seems to act as a catalyst, or stressor, precipitating the breakdown of ego functioning. Adult oriented sexual fantasy, representative of the achievement of psychic sexual development, and as the consciously available construct, hides and disguises much earlier and more primitive tenets of infantile sexuality fractures. In this conception, the adult sexual fantasy, like the manifest content of a dream,

> “is likely to be over-determined representing a distillation, through condensation and displacement, of key unconscious themes …. As with a dream image, each element of the fantasy is likely to have unconscious determinants. The ‘latent content’ of the sexual fantasy will include representations of highly charged object relationships, residues of childhood experience of both a disturbing and an exciting nature, remnants of childhood theories about bodies and sexuality, and primitive anxieties, wishes and phantasies of sexuality, intimacy and destructiveness” (Wood, 2013, p. 324).

This conception offers explanation both of the vast numbers, of mainly men, who view CSEM, and for a majority of those, of the escalation both in terms of reduction in the child’s age with a corresponding increase in violent and sadistic imagery evidenced in quantitative studies of forensic populations (Fortin & Proulx, 2019; Sheehan & Sullivan, 2010) That is, ego functioning breaks down fuelled by the opportunity to realise and access heretofore vague inchoate raw fantasy elements in graphic technicolour, so intensifying the disorganisation and contributing to weakening of the reality sense.

Cognitive Distortions: Offence-Supporting Beliefs.

As used in this study, the term cognitive distortion encompasses the widest definition of the term to include a belief that supports offending at any point in the cycle including those that may play a causal role and those that act to minimise and rationalise after the fact. This definition has been criticised for confusing cognitive structures, i.e. underlying schema, which act to bias perceptions and inferences, for example, with cognitive products which result from the interaction of schemas with environmental factors. O’Ciardha (2011) provides a clear chronology of the principal ways schemas, a concept which sits within the broader framework of cognitive psychology, have been used to explain cognitive distortions. The judgement model of cognitive distortions (Ward et al., 2006, 2007), which differentiates between belief-based judgements (arising from schemas), value-based judgements, and

cations based judgements, i.e. evaluations after the fact, provides a theoretical framework for interpreting cognitive distortions. The broader definition is, however, more in keeping with the psychotherapy paradigm, with its focus on the complexity, individuality and a holistic approach the unique person. This emphasis differs from the sometimes economical and reductive imperative toward "componential individuals ….and the constituent components of individuals toward which therapeutic treatments are targeted" (Orlinsky, 2006, p. 3)

Bartels and Merdian (2016) used a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) approach to review the body of empirical literature pertaining to the implicit theories of CSEM offenders. Implicit beliefs overlap and act to filter and so bias new information to conform to the nature of the core belief. They identified five such implicit theories of CSEM users. Most relevant to this review, is their assertion as to the interaction of these implicit theories with the overall presumption on the part of CSEM users that the Internet offers unlimited, anonymous opportunities for gratification and is valued as a positive influence. They term this, the reinforcing nature of the Internet.

CSEM offenders use the non-contact, impersonal nature of online offending to distance themselves from the label - sex offender and the creation of and harm to victims (Winder & Gough, 2010). The same authors cite the tendency or cognitive distortion to equate smiling or apparent enjoyment with consent, even concerning abuse imagery depicting very young children. One marked cognitive distortion of a participant in their study alluded to alleviating poverty – paying children to pose sexually was mitigating the harm of starvation and potential death. Another distancing strategy cited the different legal protections and status afforded to children around the globe, so invoking geographical randomness to normalise the behaviour and side-step individual culpability and responsibility.

Rimer (2019) in a qualitative ethnographic study where he spent 17 months attending 100 group session across ten groups comprised of 81 participants, found that the Internet allows CSEM users to hold contradictory beliefs, identifying with American-European norms about children and childhood as innocent, asexual, irrational and needing protection while, conversely, viewing child abuse imagery. This is achieved through the construction of the children online as "not real". It extends previous findings on the psychological processes that offenders use to distance themselves from the children in CSEM imagery (Bartels & Merdian, 2016; Taylor & Quayle, 2003; Winder & Gough, 2010). Rimer (2019) argues that utilisation of the concept of construction (as opposed to cognitive distortion) of children in the online space as not real is suggestive of a more profound detachment not simply to an image but to the child him or herself as not real and therefore, immune to harm.

The Internet as a Social Environment

In what psychoanalytically could be termed a parallel split, offenders used various means to differentiate their offline self from their online persona. They may endeavour to construct such boundaries, by accessing CSEM on particular devices, at certain times in certain spaces. Rimer (2017) suggests that these behaviours enabled users to contain the shame, guilt and risk of offending online. Rimer (2017) references Foucault's (2007) work on the concept of social monitoring and discipline, which offers an explanation for the apparent collapse of norms in relation to children and sex within the online space. Essentially, the expectation that others may be watching is enough to engender compliance with social norms. The Internet is perceived, however wrongly, by users as anonymous and is, therefore, less disciplined, so users transgress social norms and their own moral code.

The Internet is not one space, however, rather it offers users ever expanding and endlessly malleable opportunities to construct spaces in different contexts for differ purposes and crucially, with different norms (Miller & Horst, 2012; Rimer, 2017). Exploring the contribution of virtual paedophile communities and the allied subculture which fosters identifications, shapes attitudes, and validates preferences, Holt et al (2010) undertook a grounded theory analysis of 705 message threads on five publicly accessible support sites for paedophiles. They identified four 'normative orders' defined as "a set of generalized rules and common practices oriented around a common value" by (Herbert, 1998, p. 347). These orders: marginalisation (from mainstream society), sexuality, law, and security converge and interact to form a recognisable paedophile subculture with its own norms, values and rules. Members who conformed to the norms set received support, encouragement, advice and a sense of belonging.

Paedophiles referred to themselves as minor attracted persons and conceived of themselves as a beleaguered, misunderstood and oppressed minority group while they bemoaned the absence of allies within mainstream society. The terms "boy love" and "girl love" used when referring to children in sexualised ways is suggestive of the depth of their cognitive distortions. Sexual preferences, fantasies and stories or real sexual and/or emotional encounters with children were met with interest and encouragement while members cautioned against taking risks and advised on security measures on and offline. Interestingly, paedophiles that physically harmed, coerced or hurt children were referred to with levels of contempt and disdain mirroring that of mainstream society "boy lovers do not 'use' boys" (Holt et al., 2010, p. 15). The researchers suggested that engagement with this

subculture might work against a main thrust of forensic psychotherapy and risk management, which aims to identify and challenge cognitive distortions.

A Psychoanalytic Lens on the Internet Group

Although Freud in 1921, (1955) was writing six decades prior to the launch of the Internet in 1983 his insights into group psychology remain relevant. Outlining the features of groups, Freud (1955) described a regression to a group mind, characterised by the substitution of intense affect and action in place of intellect, excess in place of moderation and a loss of individuality as members approximate to others in the group. He attributed the power of the group to member's identification with the group and their loyalty to a leader, that is, the leader may come to represent the ego-ideal of the individual.

Freud distinguished between groups with or without a leader and Internet chat room and transient groups would fall into the latter category. Members, however, bond or identify over their shared sexual interest in children in a virtual, communal space that validates and normalises paedophilic attraction. The Internet itself with its unlimited power may unconsciously take the place of a leader. Furthermore, Freud (1955) argued that individual's initially weak impulses and thoughts could be intensified by the group when they are given expression and repeated. This echoes and gives further context to the findings of Holt and colleagues (2010) discussed three paragraphs above on page 20, and Bartels and Merdian (2016) finding on the high value offenders bestow on the Internet itself. Despite his acuity of thought, Freud could surely never have imagined the potential of the Internet to reveal, and stage without sanction, enactments of the polymorphously perverse apparently without limit, or, indeed, the potential impact of such enactments on the vulnerable individual's psyche.

Pornography catalyst or prophylactic

Although this literature review was in the main, completed prior to data analysis, the centrality of compulsive use of pornography in the data prompted a return to the empirical literature to better understand the complex and contested relationship between pornography and sexual offending.

Ariely and Loewenstein (2006) suggest that sexual arousal amplifies and extends the range of activities found appealing while at the same time, reducing the relative importance of other moral considerations. They further suggest individuals lack insight into the marked

changes in behaviour linked to different affective states. These findings give context to the exploration of the impact of escalation in pornography use.

In 2019 Porn Hub, one of the largest providers of free pornography rerecorded 42 billion visits cited in Quayle (2020); this is suggestive of the widespread and normalised use of Internet pornography in contemporary society. The academic jury is still deliberating on a definite answer to the question as to whether pornography causes or contributes to an escalation into deviant sexual behaviour such as rape, bestiality and CSEM. The relationship is not straight forward and studies report conflicting findings. There is, however, a stronger agreement that pornography use influences child sexual offenders indicating a correlation between pornography and deviant sexual fantasy (Buschman, Bogaerts, et al., 2010; Sheldon & Howitt, 2008).

Mellor and Duff (2019) provide an excellent systematic review of quantitative studies into the relationship between pornography and sexual offending for interested readers. While acknowledging the absence of uniformity in findings, they found: early exposure to pornography was not a risk factor for sexual offending; pornography use prior to offending was negatively associated with increased severity in the nature of the offence; there is a relationship between pornography use and deviant sexual fantasy for child sex offenders in particular, and the interaction of pornography with individual risk factors is an important consideration particularly marked with high risk sex offenders. Compared with sex offenders in general, more child sex offenders reported being exposed to pornography in early life (D. L. Carter et al., 1987; Kingston et al., 2008; Simons et al., 2002), used pornography prior to offending (D. L. Carter et al., 1987), and during the offence (D. L. Carter et al., 1987; Langevin & Curnoe, 2004).

The findings of Mellor & Duff's (2019) meta-analysis initially jarred with my clinical experience, however a more a more careful reading showed that findings in relation to chid sex offenders did evidence some relationship between pornography use and offending which aligned with the findings of this study.

Kingston and Federoff et al. (2008) found a 233% elevation in risk of recidivism for high risk offenders who used pornography. Marshall conducted a number of studies (W. L. Marshall, 1988, 2000; W. L. Marshall et al., 1991) exploring the relationship between pornography and sexual offences. He suggested that viewer's sexual arousal may become

conditioned to the specific sexual acts depicted. This coupled with attitudinal acceptance to and alignment with the normalisation of violence and aggression, mainly toward women, in pornography may exacerbate and propagate cognitive distortions about sex (W. L. Marshall, 2000). Significant numbers of sex offenders acknowledge an interest in pornography.

Marshall et al. (1991) used phallometric testing, which measures blood flow to the penis as indicating degrees of arousal to different stimuli, to explore the effect viewing explicit consenting and non-consenting sex scenes on a sample of 75 non-offending men. Watching explicit scenes depicting consensual sex did not change subsequent arousal patterns. However, having watched rape scenes, participants evidenced a significantly enhanced subsequent sexual arousal to non-consenting sex.

Marshall (2000) qualified that offenders may use pornography for arousal purposes in order to overcome inhibitions in relation to offending. He also stated that the content of pornography did not match the offending scenario and in cases of rape or CSEM offences may depict consenting adults. This finding is in contradiction to later findings by Eke and Seto (2017) but might be explained by more limited access and options at the time of Marshall's study.

Barron and Kimmel (2000) noted a consistent increase in violence in pornography across media from magazines to videos to internet groups. Users of pornography generally concur on the increasing normalisation of violence in pornography (Barron & Kimmel, 2000; Davis et al., 2018). Bridges & Wosnitzer et al (2010) in a content analysis of pornographic videos found that 88.2% included physical aggression while 47.7% included verbal aggression mainly male to female directed. Vogels and Sullivan (2019) defined rough sex as including among other things biting, bondage, hair pulling and double penetration and found that in a general population survey, exposure to such content was associated with a desire to experience similar sex acts. In a review of 43 studies Rodenhizer and Edwards (2019) found that exposure to sexually explicit and violent media was associated with a more accepting attitude to date rape and possibly related to offending and bystander non-intervention. A meta-analysis conducted by Wright et al. (2016) similarly found a relationship between pornography and increased sexual aggression.

Technological advances and increasingly sophisticated media seem to increase the potency of the impact of pornography. Dekker et al. (2021) measured oxytocin levels in users of virtual reality porn and found the its ability to foster the illusion of sexual contact between the user and the virtual other increased levels of the neuro-peptide. Oxytocin is a hormone which exerts positive effects throughout the body and mind enhancing health and wellness.

Referred to as the "the biology of love" by pioneering researcher, Dr Sue Cater (2020), oxytocin is inextricably linked to mammalian evolution, motherhood, the formation of social bonds, and among many other things, feeling safe. Dr Carter's book (2020), provides an excellent, accessible summary of empirical findings for interested readers. The increase in oxytocin levels in Dekker et al.'s (2021) study may offer physiological evidence to explain the compulsive use of pornography to defend against depression (Wood, 2011) and use of 'sex as coping' (Harris & Hanson, 2010) as oxytocin acts to buffer stress and support feelings of connectedness.

It seems that within a subset of the forensic population, pornography use may exacerbate a more fundamental and pre-existing predisposition to sexually offend (Malamuth, 2018; Malesky et al., 2009; Marshall, 2000; Seto et al., 2001; Wright et al., 2016). Many, however, are able to use pornography without any negative consequence to themselves or to others. This is arguably self-evident because pornography use seems to be almost ubiquitous and notwithstanding the burgeoning numbers of those coming to the attention of authorities for CSEM use, they are nonetheless a minority, 4.2. % of a sample of 1978 Swedish men aged 17-20 years (Seto et al., 2015) and 3.2% of as a sample of 8718 German men (Dombert et al., 2016). It is worth sounding a note of caution in relation to adolescents as using pornography at a younger age correlated with an increase in paraphilic imagery, CSEM and bestiality (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2013).

Pornography and the unconscious

Given the principal medium for consumption of pornography is the Internet, the part-object relation characteristic of the paranoid schizoid position (Klein, 1946) and the breakdown of egoic functioning in vulnerable individuals (Wood, 2011, 2022) described in the subsection on page 17, A Catalyst to Egoic Breakdown, remain germane. John Woods (2013) makes the salient observation that being underage is only one of many ways in which the mostly vulnerable female object, or more accurately part-object, of pornography is being humiliated, subjugated and hurt.

This sexualisation of aggression highlights a much-ignored fact that the content of much pornography would psychoanalytically be understood to be perverse. The defensive functions of paraphilias, formerly called perversion, and the importance of core complex anxiety are outlined on page 15. Even in legal pornography, it is mostly the female, often made to look younger into whom the watcher can project fear, pain, weakness and vulnerability fostering fantasies of omnipotence and triumph (Woods, 2013). For interested

readers, Yakeley (2018) provides an accessible overview of the psychoanalytic perspective on paraphilias and perversion.

Summary and conclusion

The broad heterogeneity of CSEM users has been emphasised though within this, these offenders nevertheless differ from contact offenders demographically in relation to education, social class and ethnicity. More importantly, in relation to risk management they generally evidence higher sexual deviance and sexual preoccupation but lower antisocial traits which may account for their lower rates or recidivism. Few qualitative studies have been conducted but semi-structured interviews and anthropological findings have outlined cognitive distortions, implicit theories and constructions of children online which facilitate distancing and facilitate continued offending. The psychoanalytic perspective on the defensive nature of paraphilic disorder has been outlined along with core object relations concepts which offer meaning to the offending behaviour inclusive of unconscious dynamics.

Findings, from different disciplines, on the nature of the Internet itself and the interaction of this medium with the psyches of CSEM users in shaping cognitions and fuelling potentially manic, part-object relating, are complimentary in offering explanations of this complex interaction. Finally, findings relating to legal pornography, closely linked to the idea of addiction, as a gateway into CSEM, perhaps through habituation to violence, de-sensitisation and for vulnerable individuals, a breakdown into paedophilia are relevant to understand in his study. It is perhaps not unimportant that in the plain language statement, (see Appendix B on page 129), and other documentation related to this study, it has been necessary to qualify that CSEM is child pornography. While necessary, this is not unproblematic in the potentially normalising impact of such language. This is the body of literature which underpins this exploratory study which seeks to understand CSEM use, inclusive of unconscious dynamics, while also linking material to the widely accepted and findings of respected scholars from other disciplines who have studied this phenomenon, sometimes over decades.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter guides the reader through the methodology and method used in the study which seeks to better understand a cohort of child sex offenders in order to inform clinical practice. It begins with theoretical positioning and gradually narrows in focus to the ethical, procedural and experiential aspects of this study. This latter aspect is set out chronologically to align with the clinical researcher's sequence of actions in undertaking the study.

This chapter situates the study within the qualitative paradigm, which offers a range of flexible approaches to explore the complexities of the human individual in a relational context (Dilthey, 1989). The Free Association Narrative Interview Method (FANIM) (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) scaffolded by two core psychoanalytic techniques, free association and free-floating attention, (Freud, 1912) is outlined with examples from the study to illustrate the process. This clinical researcher's reflexive process is written in the first person and inserted in text boxes in blue type in order to give context to decisions taken and interpretations offered, enhance transparency, and contribute to an audit trail.

The human subjects of this research are understood to be, like all human subjects, divided, in that their conscious awareness of their motivations and actions is limited and only part of what it is essential to explore. Anxiety is understood to be ubiquitous and the defences constructed to defend against anxiety operate largely automatically and unconsciously. The design of the study, therefore, holds the need to access and analyse unconscious material as central. Narrative methodology offers several advantages, detailed in the body of this chapter. A free association narrative interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) was employed to collect data while interpretations based on psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse the narratives collected.

Qualitative Paradigm

Philosophy offers the researcher a coherent framework to think about important questions related to epistemology, i.e. about knowledge and knowing. Knowledge and its associated questions sit along a continuum from objective to subjective, realist to relativist. Post the enlightenment period across the17th and 18th centuries, and arising from the primacy of reason in adjudicating all matters of inquiry, objective and realist assumptions dominated in the physical and natural sciences, and continue to do so. This positivist tradition, closely associated with quantitative methods argues that scientific validity depends on neutral

observation, measurement and replicability. Dilthy (1989) argued against that hegemony suggesting such scientific observations failed to understand the inner nature of phenomena.

This study falls towards the subjective, relativist end of the continuum and therefore sits within the qualitative paradigm. Ontologically, no objective, replicable 'truth' is sought or believed to exist. The type of knowledge this study seeks to explicate will be highly subjective, co-constructed between the researcher and the participant, nuanced, meaningful and situated within a particular cultural landscape. While these assertions would considerably weaken any findings when measured against the constructs used to measure rigour in the quantitative tradition, i.e. objectivity and replicability, it is argued here, that they conform to different principles and methodical rigour in relation to hermeneutics (Rennie, 2007) and can nevertheless be evidenced. Trustworthiness is evidenced differently across qualitative methodologies and is inclusive of processes that demonstrate truth value, applicability, consistency, in this instance, trackable variability, and neutrality regarding the data as opposed to the researcher, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These terms have been re-defined within the qualitative frame. Structural coherence[4] (Guba, 1981) as well as a transparent audit trail are two elements that supported rigour by demonstrating consistency and confirmability within this study.

Knowing, as distinct from knowledge, is of core importance in relation to the concept of reflexivity. Researcher critical self-reflection about one's ideas, beliefs, fore – understanding (Heidegger, 1927), assumptions, as well as gender, culture, professional background and so on, are all vital to explore as they influence each aspect of the research from data collection, through to findings (McLeod, 2011). Making these explicit can inform other readers and allow them to situate the findings accordingly. Here, the researcher, like the participant, is understood as unconsciously motivated to 'not know' certain facts which may cause anxiety and disturbance. This dynamic may be magnified in light of the data on child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) central to this study. Attentiveness to this is vital as it has the potential to either deepen, or obstruct data analysis. Reflexivity, here, is similar to countertransference in psychoanalysis, and used for reflection, can deepen insight (Willig, 2008)[5]. The clinical researcher's countertransference was central to data analysis and its use is made explicit in that regard.

[4] Interpretations should provide coherence to the whole of the data, offering an explanation of apparent contradictions.

[5] A more detailed note on the difference between reflexivity and countertransference as used in this study is outlined on page 102 in the conclusion.

All qualitative research rests, to differing degrees on four key pillars: phenomenology, hermeneutics, rhetoric, and social justice (McLeod, 2011). Phenomenology, concerned with the rich description of experience, was fathered by Edmund Husserl, who wished to transcend the 'natural attitude' to describe the true essence of something. His one-time pupil Martin Heidegger extended this concept to endeavour to understand the nature of being itself – what it is like to be in one's everyday life and experience. This way of questioning and exploring or trying to understand, looking beyond the obvious to reveal or bring new meaning to an experience is central to qualitative inquiry. The importance of looking beyond the surface, to explore what is concealed as much as what is revealed in the data is core to psychoanalysis and foundational to the interpretative aspects of this study.

Heuristics, originally a discipline associated with the spiritual interpretation of sacred texts can be applied to the study of any human interaction (Riceour, 2002/1991). Interpretation must be carried out in a transparent manner. This process has implications for how data is analysed, parsed and displayed in the final write up. Interpretation of the text is an essential aspect of offering meaning. Interpretations, however, can only be offered from a particular perspective. There is no "View From Nowhere" Nagel (1986). Interpretation is germane to all qualitative inquiry; however, within this study, the type of interpretation was psychoanalytic. This is in keeping with the centrality of the unconscious, explicated the section - the unconscious and psychoanalytic techniques beginning on page 31.

Rhetoric relates to skill in persuasive arguing. McLeod (2011) argues that quantitative methodology is, in part, dominant because it has a rhetoric structure which supports it, for example, the APA 'scientific' layout style. The qualitative paradigm has recast the evaluative criteria such as validity and replicability fitting to positivist research. Rigour, clarity and ethical treatment of participants, demonstrated through researcher reflexivity, audibility, and the provision of adequate raw data in the report to support interpretations can be persuasive.

Arguments about the role of social justice and the importance of a critical stance in qualitative research contrast with the value-neutral approach core to objective investigation in the quantitative tradition. Poststructuralists such as Bahktin and Foucault have been highly influential in arguing that academic research should challenge power relations. This aspect is particularly important to consider in this area of study. Child sex offenders commit heinous crimes and are vilified by society, sometimes to the degree of being dehumanised as a group. The clinical researcher is a member of this society though holding the view that child protection is contingent on successful therapeutic engagement with this population.

Nevertheless, the clinical researcher is aware of the possibility of being influenced by the prospective readership, and in particular, their attitudes and beliefs about sex offenders. The power differential arguably present between any researcher and participant may well be exaggerated with this population, so requires ethical consideration.

Clinical material reported through case study, originally by Freud but subsequently by psychoanalysts from all schools, has long formed the backbone of psychoanalytic publishing and informed the corpus of analytic thought, theory, practice and technique (Wallerstein, 1999). Such clinical case material, understood within psychoanalysis as a research tool (Hoffman, 2009; Ramzy, 1962, 1963) has been widely critiqued as lacking methodological rigour, been dismissed as unreliable and un-replicable and even caricatured as "self-congratulatory testimonials" (Eagle & Wolitzky, 2011).

Conversely, arguments for the acceptance of the empirical validity of clinical case studies have gained traction over the last two decades (Willemsen et al., 2017). Despite the affinity between psychoanalytic inquiry and clinical case studies, this method was eschewed here for ethical as well as pragmatic reasons. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, it would have been difficult to adequately report and audit findings while preserving anonymity. Furthermore, case study often tracks a phenomenon across a period of time, in psychoanalysis often many years. This study, though seeking to understand the functions of CSEM as having unfolded over time relied on one interview with each participant for data collection. Therefore, a narrative method, congruent with the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalysis, was most suitable. The psychoanalytic ideas and rich conceptualisations of real-life clinical situations derived form case studies, did, however, inform interpretations of the data.

Narrative Methodology

'Psychotherapists encounter narratives of personal experience every day, and we use them to change lives by retelling and constructing new and more fulfilling ones' (Riessman, 1993, p. 2).

Although Riessman is drawing on the work of psychoanalyst Roy Schafer (1992), and referring to therapy rather than research, the quote captures three core elements of the methodology: (i) storytelling is universal; (ii) narratives do not just assist us in making sense of our experience, they are constructed, or more accurately in this context, co-constructed, and can be powerful in actually shaping the experience itself, and (iii) the relationship between the teller and the listener, the interaction of unique subjectivities, in a temporal,

cultural and political context cannot be divorced from the meaning(s) interpreted from the narrative (Riessman, 1993). From a positivist position, aiming for neutral observation and validation via replication, the uniqueness of the narrative, in regard to protagonist's time and place, severely undermines its value as a research tool. From a post-positivist, structuralist position, however, it is precisely these aspects that are celebrated as they attend to the complexity of human experience and relationships. The post-positivist position re-affirms the subjective nature of reality and embraces methodological pluralism as structuralism emphasises the relationship between the individual, culture and other systems.

Narrative methodology represents a broad heterogeneous school of thought, and there are many points of convergence as well as divergence between key theorists. It has been chosen for this study as the writer agrees with Mishler (1986) in relation to the richness of meaning generated by attending to the confluences and contradictions of different elements within a story. These meanings are potentially further deepened by applying a psychoanalytic focus on unconscious dynamics. Boothe et al. (2004) applied a psychoanalytic lens to patient narratives to understand their unconscious, underlying anxieties and wishes. The 'stories told by clients can be understood both as dramatisations of the dynamics of unconscious object relations and as a form of communication with an other' (McLeod, 2011, p. 199).

The narrative approach lends itself to a focus on the personal as well as the social (Carless & Douglas, 2017). This is fitting to this inquiry as the Internet is a particular type of social environment within which participants attached distinct meanings to their experiences of viewing CSEM. Meaning is seen as evolving and changing over time as new experiences are interpreted in the light of past experiences and anticipation of the future (Ricoeur, 1991). It is germane, therefore, to note how participants may structure their story in the very different context of a real-world research interview. Riessman notes that individuals often tell stories of experiences where there is "a breach between the ideal and the real, self and society" (1993, p. 3), an observation very fitting to this topic as participants have committed an offence that transgresses a core societal value, therefore, leaving them potentially exiled from society or living in dread of this eventuality should their offending become known.

Interpretation is essential to understanding narrative because the transition from "world to word" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) is always a representation. It is not possible to access another's experience directly; indeed, it is often difficult to reflect one's own experience accurately, completely and truthfully. Language, metaphorically referred to by Nietzsche as a "prison-house" (Jameson, 1974) is limited. Internal conflicts, and their

associated defences, coupled with the desire to tell an interesting story, and the wish to present oneself in particular light, all influence the story told.

Methodologically, narrative analysis, though characterised by a diversity of methods, tends to address the narrative itself. There is broad agreement that the account should be preserved as opposed to fractured or themed, and the analyst should investigate how the meaning has been constructed. Labov's (1972) widely accepted structure encompassing six elements - abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda, is instructive and implies a chronological sequence to the story. Others, such as Young (2012) advocate an approach exploring consequential sequencing while Michaels (1981), used thematic sequencing. Bauer (1996) similarly argues that the object of analysis is the story itself. The relational context of narrator and researcher is absent from some of these models Moreover, none of these methods are fitting to explore the unconscious, which does not follow these rules in regard to plot, time or motivation for example.

The FANIM was devised by Hollway and Jefferson in 2000 when they used the technique to explore gender difference, anxiety and fear of crime in the UK. A search of all DCU library databases using the term "free association narrative interview" in September 2022 returned 47 results. The topics are broad ranging exploring a range of issues including infant observation (Urwin, 2007), youth self-harm (Reichardt, 2016), domestic violence and drug abuse (Gadd et al., 2019), migration (Sekechi, 2020), countertransference (Dennis, P. K., 2005), and gender identity (Gregor et al., 2015), for example. What they share is the focus on the psychosocial research subject whose inner world is socially constructed and which cannot be understood without insight into their experiences and the unique ways in which their inner world and outer experiences interact.

Hollway and Jefferson's FANIM (2000) has several advantages which make it the most suitable method for this study. Their approach is underpinned by narrative methodology, in particular, the Biographical Interpretive Method used by German biographers (Rosenthal, 1993). Particular emphasis is placed on the core idea of Gestalt- that the parts cannot be understood without reference to the whole system of which they are part. Some qualitative methodologies theme, or code, data under specific categories that separate the statement from the context at several levels. It strips the statement from the narrative, and decontextualises data, for example, by comparing demographic characteristics across subjects without the biographical data that offers meaning. Jefferson and Holloway (2000) write persuasively on the dangers of so doing as it may occlude and even distort vital meaning.

"When we aggregate people, treating diversity as error variable, in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular" (Josselson, 1995, p. 32).

Holloway and Jefferson's FANIM (2000) marries key tenets of the narrative approach with those of psychoanalysis. The concept of the defended subject denotes the individual unconsciously defended against ubiquitous anxiety and therefore unaware of all of their motivations and conflicts. An understanding of this respondent so different from the assumed subject of realist inquiry is the starting point from which this methodology was chosen. While other qualitative methodologies might align with the application of a psychoanalytic lens to the findings they would not have fitted as coherently as the methods for data collection and analysis would not be in keeping with psychoanalytic principles. Moreover, the more mainstream approaches to analysis value coherence in the narrative so would not fit for this research in light of the split subject and the focus on the unconscious. A core difference is the emphasis on coherence within the narrative is eschewed here in favour of exploring contradictions and associative links. These links, while offering meaning, give insights into the unconscious aspects of the communication. Such associations are linked by unconscious emotional resonances rather than rational logic.

The Unconscious and Psychoanalytic Techniques

A brief reference to the unconscious, and in particular, the psychoanalytic methods of 'free association' and 'evenly hovering attention' (Freud, 1912), is necessary. The FANIM is based upon the basic belief in a dynamic unconscious, congruent with the core idea that underpins psychoanalysis. Their interview method takes account of free association and is augmented in this study by the addition at the analysis stage of the use of the allied concept of evenly hovering attention (Freud, 1912). Freud acknowledged the "poets and philosophers before [him]" as discovering the unconscious, but it was he who discovered the "the scientific method by which the unconscious [could] be studied" (Lehrman, 1940)[6].

Two central tenets of the psychoanalytic method which shape the data collection and data analysis in this study are free association and evenly hovering attention. The psychoanalytic unconscious is dynamic, that is, its contents are in constant tension between the force of repression which seeks to keep contents unconscious and phenomena such as dreams, slips of the tongue, elisions, and transference enactments which betray meaning and

[6] This widely cited quote from Freud is reported to have been spoken by him on his 70th birthday. It first appeared in print form in Lehrman. Unfortunately, the page number is unavailable.

significance. Free associations may seem disjointed if one is listening only to the story as they follow emotional rather than cognitive links and logic. Breaks in these links are, therefore, meaningful to interpret as they may point to psychological defences. One of the participants, Greg, for example, stated many times during his interview that he couldn't recall the images he viewed though he knew they were "sick and disgusting". He went on, however, to associate to death, that of his mother and his own social annihilation as he identified himself with other paedophiles online. These associations coupled with the clinical researcher's countertransference, clinical experience and theoretical background supported an interpretation of his data concerned with destruction, death and annihilation. This interpretation, based on the transcript, was later coincidentally affirmed when the content of the imagery viewed by Greg became known to the clinical researcher.

Understanding anxiety, inherent in the human condition, and its associated defences are core to this way of working. Interpretation in psychoanalysis is 'the art of understanding the unconscious meaning of the patient's material' (Sandler, 2018, p. 107) The analyst's free-floating or evenly hovering attention is vital in order to discover something new as any fixed idea or specific wish on the part of the analyst will focus attention on one aspect of the material. Freud cautions against this as "in making the selection if he follows his expectations, he is in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows" (Freud, 1912, p. 112).

Beyond the methods outlined, psychoanalysis is referenced in a vast corpus of clinical, theoretical and philosophical literature. There are many different schools of psychoanalysis, often representing particular theoretical and geographical orthodoxies. Core ideas within different schools of thought are often contradictory. As one can only interpret from a particular position, this clinical researcher acknowledges an affinity with the Object Relations, Independent British tradition. There is no inference that this is superior to other traditions. However, psychoanalytic ideas can take many years to internalise so after extended immersion in the particular language and ideas of object relations it was natural that it was a selection from among its concepts that were used to interpret the data.

Key psychoanalytic concepts are outlined in the literature review. However, in addition to Freud's free association and evenly hovering attention (1912), Bion's (1962) use of the selected fact merits mention here as it described the clinical researcher's state of mind and interpretive process during data analysis in this study. Bion borrowed the term 'selected fact' from a French mathematician Henri Poincare who used this to denote something that offers order and coherence to previously random data. Bion clarified the crucial difference: In

psychoanalysis the selected fact might support a movement from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position as it brings together and offers coherence to seeming unintegrated patient associations. It is not logical but an emotional experience which arises when one is immersed with the patient in their associative material. It arises or 'evolves' from the unconscious when one eschews conscious memory. It involves negative capability (J. Keats, personal communication, 21 December 1817), the ability to not know.

This not knowing and waiting on the selected fact to emerge from each narrative was an important element of data analysis in this study. When the selected fact offered coherence to the whole narrative, my emotional experience could be described as relief or satisfaction. It was then possible to link the narrative to consciously remembered theories and empirical studies.

The unconscious interrelationship between the researcher and the subjects, and the influence of this on data collection and analysis, is acknowledged and situated within the paradigm. The same model of unconscious conflict applies to all parties. Researcher and researched are understood "as anxious defended subjects, whose mental boundaries are porous where unconscious material is concerned" (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 45). For example, this clinical researcher noted a garbled question when analysing the interview with another participant, Steve. This suggested anxiety on her part. While the tone of the interview was candid and cooperative something was happening, unavailable for thinking at the time, but to which the clinical researcher nevertheless responded. On reflection and interpretation of the material, it became apparent that Steve likely sexualised his aggression; this was unconscious, particularly in relation to children and was, therefore, defended against. The live quality of this in the interview was all the more potent because it was unconscious on the part of the participant and it was perhaps this potential aggression that the clinical researcher unconsciously attuned to, increasing her anxiety and interrupting, for a time, her thinking.

Aims and Objectives

As stated in the Chapter One, this study aimed to better understand the psychic functioning, relating, and interactions of CSEM users with the children depicted in child abuse imagery. The objectives of the study sought to:

- Contribute to a body of knowledge that endeavours to prevent harm to children by interrupting the cycle of offending.
- Inform therapeutic work with this group of individuals.
- Deepen understanding of the interaction of CSEM with individual's psychic defences.
- Situate findings within the ideas and concepts set out in the relevant psychoanalytic clinical literature.
- Offer depth, context, and individual applicability to the empirically generated criminogenic factors underpinning mainstream interventions with child sex offenders.

Ethical Considerations and Approval

Broadly speaking, there were two elements to this study that required particular ethical consideration, i.e. attention beyond the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence and justice (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001) that apply to all research. Firstly, it was acknowledged that participants were vulnerable as they were discussing issues of a sexual nature that constituted crimes. Secondly, the clinical researcher had a dual role as a therapist and manager in the service where the research was conducted.

Particular risks included:

- further criminal disclosures that would require a notification to a statutory agency
- the participant's potential feelings of unease or shame arising for describing their offending behaviour
- an arousal response

To address each risk in turn:

- the clinical researcher confirmed with the relevant therapist prior to the interview that all notifications had been made and was clear in emphasising to participants in the plain language statement and informed consent form that a new disclosure would require a second notification
- all participants were engaged in a forensic therapy programme so had experience talking about their offending behaviour. The clinical researcher is an experienced

therapist practiced in offering a safe and emotionally containing space to explore difficult issues. The clinical researcher prioritised the welfare of participants, for example, by choosing not to ask the participant, Billy about the content of his CSEM in case this triggered him as it seemed during the interview that his recovery was based on intellectualisation and was therefore possibly fragile, see page 70 for further context. Also, each participant was offered a debrief immediately after the interview.

Furthermore, participation in research, particularly narrative research has been shown to have therapeutic benefits because, even in relation to trauma, (Gagnon et al., 2015) talking about experiences in a containing environment, coupled with the possibility of helping others can be of benefit and increase self-awareness and insight (Adler & Bachant, 1996; Jorm et al., 2007; Lakeman et al., 2013; Warne & McAndrew, 2010; Winnicott, 2018; Yalom, 1995) In adherence to the principle of autonomy, participants were provided with clear information about the study aims before they consented. Participants were informed that they could withdraw without any negative consequence and were given one week from the date of their interview to withdraw their consent. Finally, inclusion and exclusion criteria were clear, and all findings were reported in a fair and impartial manner in line with the justice principle

Dual Role

The risks in this particular study of the clinical researcher's dual role were threefold:

- Participants may have felt pressured to take part and/or therapists might have felt pressured to recruit.
- The dual role might have encouraged a higher level of socially desirable responding
- The clinical researcher may have been biased toward particular participants or responses that reflected somehow on the prevention programme she manages and so is invested in.

To address each in turn:

- It was emphasised that there was no pressure to recruit and that it was important that participation was voluntary. Furthermore, the relevant organisation has a clear practice ethos that the client's welfare is paramount and as each of the therapists were qualified and experienced and worked within this ethos, the clinical researcher was confident that they would not pressure clients or feel undue pressure themselves.

- The method itself insures against socially desirable responding because by definition one cannot hide what one is unaware or unconscious of.
- This study was concerned with unconscious motivations and defences and, therefore, had no evaluative function related to the programme. The clinical researcher's countertransference and reflexivity was core to the method and was made explicit throughout.

Sampling

Sampling was purposeful and criterion. Individuals, with fluent English, who had engaged in viewing CSEM met the first criterion to participate. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the potential impact of opening up about this behaviour, only those individuals with access to therapeutic support met the second criterion. As the research question was not looking at the impact of therapy on the relationship of sex offenders to victims, the depth or length of therapeutic work was unimportant. Indeed, it was advantageous to get people just beginning to explore their behaviour as well as those completing therapeutic programs. A second advantage of limiting participation to those engaged with services was that the participants were already aware of statutory reporting requirements and the appropriate notifications had been made.

The clinical researcher collected nine narratives. Initially, it was thought that some participants may have needed additional time to tell their stories so the consent form included the possibility of attending for a second, entirely optional, interview. In practice, however, each of the participants gave a rich narrative so it was not necessary to invite anyone back. The researcher used her place of work to recruit participants. The relevant programme had been largely paused for three months in 2021 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This meant recruitment was slower than expected; the clinical researcher, at that point, approached two additional organisations as explained in the reflexive note above on page 40. The potential for this eventuality had been noted in the Ethics Application and the researcher sent an amendment to the Research Ethics Committee before taking this step. As neither organisation provided participants, all of the data arises from those attending one therapeutic risk management programme. Despite this, those who participated were at different stages of the criminal justice process, and at different points in their engagement with the programme. Each interview and the resultant narrative, including the interpersonal dynamic with the clinical researcher was unique, as would be expected.

Data gathering

- Data gathering occurred between February 2021 and December 2021
- Therapists on the clinical team were provided with details of the study and the plain language statement. They were asked to make their clients aware of the study, if they felt it was appropriate i.e. the client, as far as they were aware, had committed a CSEM offence only.
- A second therapist acting as a gatekeeper sent an email to a group of six clients co-facilitated by the clinical researcher asking if they would be interested in engaging in a pilot interview. Two agreed and participated. In October 2021, it was decided to analyse and include these interviews with the consent of those participants, again obtained through a gatekeeper.
- Therapists asked 11 individual and group clients.
  Seven said yes and participated.
  Two declined.
  Another two initially said yes but reconsidered before the interview.
- One potentially suitable candidate was not asked because English was not his first language and although he was fairy fluent his accent was strong making it difficult to understand him in person, so it was felt this would significantly impede transcription.
- Two further candidates who were suitable on paper, in that they had committed a CSEM offence, were not asked because even in therapy their engagement and responses were short, monosyllabic at times, so the relevant therapists felt they would not have the capacity, at that point, to offer a narrative.
- Interviews took place in the in the relevant organisation in a private room that was not a therapy room.
- Participants had been advised that the interviews would take approximately one hour and each was approximately 50 minutes in duration give or take a couple of minutes; this was to allow time to debrief afterwards, while respecting the participant's time.
  .

Individuals are understood to be invested in particular discourses, and far from being neutral, objective narrators of fact, participants tell stories based on their experiences which are re-constructed, in the context of the relationship (conscious and unconscious) with the researcher. The FANIM is narrative in that it seeks stories and strives to avoid the question and answer type format of semi-structured interviewing which Bauer (1996) argues, imposes

on the data production. The approach is informed by the biographical-interpretative method (Rosenthal, 1993) and follows four key principles: '(i) elicit stories, (ii) use open questions, (iii) avoid why questions and (iv) follow respondent's ordering and phrasing' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 36). The researcher, while keeping within the guidelines listed in the last sentence followed Wengraf (2001) in breaking down the central research question into theory questions, which were reworded into interview questions. This exercise was undertaken at the preliminary stage and the three theory headings not only loosely structured the interview, but formed the headings used in the findings. These headings simply break down the theory question into the essential components of CSEM, i.e. the children in the imagery and the core medium of consumption, the Internet. They did not arise from themes generated through the analysis; this conception of the word theme, prevalent in qualitative methodology, is foreign to this study, hence the word theme has been avoided throughout. The questions were not necessarily needed or used with each participant but they provided a guide to ensure narratives in relation to key areas were sought. The process evolved as follows:

1 Central research question: What are the unconscious functions of viewing CSEM?

1 (a) Interview question aimed at producing a narrative - Can you tell me please about your experience of viewing CSEM/child pornography in as much detail as you can? Start wherever feels most natural to you. I won't interrupt and although it may seem odd, I will leave a silence after you finish speaking in case anything further occurs to you. I might take some brief notes. Each participant was asked this opening question.

Participants were only asked the subsequent interview questions if they did not organically make some reference to these aspects in their narrative.

1 (b) Can you talk me through one specific instance or occasion you recall?

1 (c) Can you describe your routine in relation to CSEM?

2. Theory question A: What was the engagement, conscious and unconscious, with the abuse imagery?

2 (a) Can you describe please the types of images you preferred and tell me what drew you to those particular images?

2(b) Can you tell me about any image you found particularly distressing and tell me what was different about that image or occasion?

3. Theory question B: What was the relationship, conscious and unconscious, between the online environment and accessing CSEM?

3(a) What was your awareness of other CSEM users online?

3(b) Could you give an example of any groups or other people connecting with your viewing CSEM?

Finally, the FANIM borrows from clinical work in two key ways. Countertransference, understood by psychoanalysts as the therapist's overall response to the client, is considered a valuable resource that can be “taken as data” (Walkerdine, 1998). Containment, a term coined by Wilfred Bion (1962), refers to the therapist’s capacity to emotionally hold and detoxify or digest what might be overwhelming for the patient is core to making the interview a safe experience. Researcher reflexivity, long familiarity with the area of child sexual offending, and psychoanalytic training was supportive of containment and reflection. This is particularly important when dealing with sensitive topics.

As this clinical researcher sought to elicit unconscious material and depth rather than breadth was important, this type of narrative interview fit well. Specifically, it aims to get beyond descriptive data so minimises question and answer format, which may lead to intellectual answers. The clinical researcher endeavoured to be a good listener while the participant narrated their story. All participants, except Jason, offered a comprehensive narrative to open and the ratio of participant to clinical researcher speech throughout all the interviews was high, as appropriate.

Participants’ meanings and coherence were followed in the ordering and framing of the story. Questions were kept to a minimum but, when necessary, were framed to elicit a particular event, e.g. "tell me about a time when …" and were close to the interview questions outlined three paragraphs above. During the interviews, the clinical researcher adopted a quiet presence, using evenly hovering attention to focus on her experience of listening. The task was to support the narrator to expand on or deepen aspects of their story with as little interference as possible from the clinical researcher. She, therefore, waited until the participant has finished speaking before interjecting.

Some experiences are difficult to narrate. The clinical researcher was aware of this so was thoughtful about the use of language and tone, while being honest about the aims of the research. It was crucial be to be cognisant of the shame that might have made participants reticent to be open about their experiences. After each interview, the clinical researcher noted

her feelings, associations, fantasies, and so on. This was important because participants were given seven days post interview to potentially change their mind, in which case the interview and any accompanying documentation would have been destroyed. This meant there was a gap between the interview and beginning of the analysis. As noted previously, these countertransference responses can inform and offer insights.

In light of the above complexity, two pilot interviews were undertaken and transcribed by the clinical researcher. These participants were recruited when the second facilitator sent an email to participants of a group of six individuals co-facilitated with the clinical researcher, explaining the nature of the study and requesting participants for pilot or practice interviews. There is a reflexive note outlining the context and deliberation on this decision in the next section on data analysis on page 40.

Two people contacted the researcher, readily offering to help. These interviews fulfilled a number of initial functions including:

(i) Testing the narrative questions to ensure thick, story embedded data was collected.

(ii) Ensuring the plain language statement and the informed consent (see Appendices C and D, pages 132 and 134) were accessible.

(iii) Allowing the clinical researcher to practice interview skills

(iv) Facilitating early thoughts about analysis.

It was later decided, with the pilot participants' consents, again obtained through a gatekeeper, to analyse and include theses interviews in the study. The initial analysis focussed more on assessing points (i) – (iv) above, and provided data that was rich in the sense that it told stories embedded in individual experience. The ratio of participant to researcher contributions in each interview was high suggesting that the researcher was relatively unobtrusive and each participant structured their own narrative, so fulfilling the Gestalt principle (Wertheimer, 1938 cited in King 2005). The clinical researcher ascribed part of this success, in terms of participant openness and fluency in relation to a difficult topic, to her past therapeutic history with the participants who volunteered for the pilot interviews. A trusting relationship was already established and these participants had previously discussed their use of CSEM with the clinical researcher within that therapeutic context. It was a relief when later participants, with some individual differences, mirrored this level of openness and candour. This coupled with the FANIM (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) underpinned by

psychoanalytic theory which simultaneously notes what is concealed as much as what is revealed in speech combined to provide rich data for analysis.

Data analysis

Holloway and Jefferson's FANIM (2000) rests on the following core principles: (i) It is essential to go beyond the descriptive as the 'tell it like it is' approach does not take adequate account of inconsistencies and contradictions in the data which often offer vital meaning-making opportunities, (ii) utilise theory, (iii) use reflexivity, (iv) use the whole data to make sense of parts, (v) fragmenting data is problematic, (vi) interpretation of the data can be informed by the text, the free associations of the participant, sociological and cultural knowledge and psychoanalytic principles; (vii) initial interpretative links can inform further interpretations.

In keeping with these principles, the clinical researcher:

1. Listened to each interview many times with evenly hovering attention, noting associations and ideas afterwards. This step precedes the first step outlined by Holloway and Jefferson but is in keeping with psychoanalytic technique.
2. Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcription service and read many times, a process common to qualitative data analysis known as immersion. The decision to use a transcription service was taken partly for reasons of convenience, but in the main because listening, forming and following associations was facilitated by researcher evenly hovering attention, which could have been impeded by typing and potentially fixing the data.
3. Data were interpreted informed by: the information in the transcript, the free associations of the participant as well as the researcher, psychoanalytic theories and conceptual frameworks that offered coherence and meaning the whole data, and empirical knowledge about sex offenders. Contradictions were significant to explore. This process continued until all links that could be made were exhausted.
4. The clinical researcher used the NVivo qualitative data analysis software database to organise, report on and audit data, nothing more. All analysis of data was undertaken by the clinical researcher and recorded in NVivo. Care was taken to set up the database in accordance with the underlying principles of the method. No features or capacities of the software not in keeping with the narrative method were used. All relevant literature was imported in order to note links to literature and to assist with the discussion chapter. Each transcript was imported as a separate case. There was no

descriptive coding and each narrative was explored as a whole. A series of memos were used to note ideas while “see also links” were used to link data to theoretical literature or other empirical studies. The pen portrait and pro forma documents named in point five, directly below, were also memos in NVivo. Finally, a map showing all the links for each participant was designed to provide an audit trail. See Appendix D on page 134 for three examples.

5. Each narrative was summarised in a structured format called a Pro Forma which reported the analysis and interpretation of the data under three headings corresponding to the central research question and supplementary theory questions: (i) The unconscious functions of CSEM; (ii) The relation to the child victim, and (iii) The Internet. In addition, a Pen Portrait of each participant, giving a summary of the interview, tone and countertransference was written to act as a substitute whole for the reader.
6. The nine pen portrait and pro forma documents comprise the findings chapter, which aims to provide an in-depth, psychoanalytically informed perspective on each participant. The presentation of the findings, in this format was vital to attend to the objectives of the study to:

- Contribute to a body of knowledge that endeavours to prevent harm to children by interrupting the cycle of offending.
- Inform therapeutic work with this group of individuals.
- Deepen understanding of the interaction of CSEM with individual’s psychic defences.
- Situate findings within the ideas and concepts set out in the relevant psychoanalytic clinical literature.
- Offer depth, context, and individual applicability to the empirically generated criminogenic factors underpinning mainstream interventions with child sex offenders.

7. Each participant's narrative was analysed individually over the course of approximately four days spanning two weekends. The clinical researcher spent this intervening period spontaneously thinking about and associating to aspects of the narrative while going about normal day-to-day tasks. In this way, the unconscious of the clinical researcher seemed to be engaged with the particular narrative.
8. In order to support rigour in the analysis phase the clinical researcher sent the transcript, the completed pen portrait and pro forma documents to her academic supervisors, both of whom are psychoanalytic psychotherapists. They read each

transcript and noted their associations before reading the relevant pen portrait and pro forma. They were, therefore, able to comment on the faithfulness of the analysis to the data.

9. Key findings were drawn together and linked to relevant literature in the discussion chapter.

This interpretive approach could be critiqued as it differs from the purely descriptive approach which seeks to "say it like it is" and may leave the researcher open to accusations of projecting their own meanings into the narrative. Frosh & Baraitser (2008) critique what they term, "psychoanalytic certainty in interpretation" (p. 346). To evidence trustworthiness, therefore, raw data and a pen portrait of each participant were provided in order to situate interpretations offered and to allow the reader to assess whether they are supported, and to provide alternative interpretations should they so wish. Care was taken in the pro forma document to balance interpretation with raw supporting data. In addition, the map for each participant illustrates the associative links. The researcher's interpretations and their basis in the text are, in this way, transparent and open to examination.

Willig (2008, p. 16) suggests that "qualitative data collection allows participants to challenge the researcher's assumptions about the meaning and relevance of concepts and categories". This was implicit in the FANIM (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) as it was largely unstructured and, therefore, open to participants to lead. It was not so in terms of data analysis, however, as the concepts used only came to light retrospectively and therefore were not subject to revision by the participant.

The most difficult and uncertain aspect of this study was the recruitment of participants. Ethical approval was granted on 4th February 2021. I had hoped to interview nine participants between February and November 2021. I undertook two pilot interviews in February 2021. It was notable that both participants said they wanted to help other people in any way they could, were happy to participate, and would be willing to be contacted again if needed. I had considered these as pilot interviews because the individuals were group clients of mine and I had not planned on interviewing my clients; I wanted to avoid the potential complications of interviewing my clients such as socially desirable responding and the possibility that clients might feel obligated to participate. The concern about socially desirable responding is, to a degree, attenuated by the FANIM as it is by definition impossible to deliberately obscure what one is unaware/ unconscious of.

By May 2021, I had completed only two interviews so on 30th May 2021, I applied to the Research Ethics Committee (REC) for approval to approach additional recruitment sites, neither of which yielded participants. By September 2021, having conducted five interviews, I discussed the situation with my academic supervisors and raised the possibility of using the pilot interviews in the findings, with the participant's permission of course. Initially, I felt deflated, concerned that the inclusion of the pilot interviews might weaken the findings overall. This concern was based on the fact that I had a prior relationship with these individuals, and perhaps more importantly, prior knowledge of their offences which would undoubtedly influence the analysis of the narratives.

Thinking about this prompted a deeper reflection on the strengths and limitations of my study. When I analysed Liam's narrative, for example, I had noted that it would have been helpful to have further information on his experience of childhood sexual abuse. Liam hadn't elaborated on this in his interview. Similarly, I felt the absence of any knowledge of Steve's early family life and relationships to give context when analysing his narrative.

The strength of these absences or gaps in knowledge is that the analysis is of the narrative itself, reliant solely on the story told. In reality, however, the situation was subtler and more fluid. I had differing levels of on-going engagement with individuals mainly through supervising the therapists working with them, or reading and co-signing reports for external agencies. Sometimes, the learning from this supported the interpretations offered in the analysis, for example the content of Greg's CSEM, though not disclosed to me in his interview clearly evidenced the annihilation interpretation central to the analysis offered.

In October 2021, I decided partly due to necessity and not without some reservation, to include the pilot interviews, but to add a reflective note to each pen portrait to give an indication of the degree of relationship, contact or other knowledge available to me, either before or after analysis of the narrative. I hoped, in this way, to aid transparency for the reader and enhance the audit trail evidenced through the maps illustrating a summary of the analytical process for each participant.

Conclusion

The narrative methodological approach, and in particular, the FANIM (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) was well suited to capture the subtle, multi-layered, indexical data sought from participants. The fundamental understanding of the defended human subject i.e. the subject unconsciously defended against ubiquitous anxiety, applied to both researcher and participant was integral to this study. Both parties are understood to lack conscious awareness of some of their motivations, as well as their defences against anxiety, and other threats to the psyche, which operate unconsciously. The access to unconscious experience through the methods of free association and evenly hovering attention were, therefore, key data gathering and analysis methods. Interpretations which aimed to offer coherence to all of the data were informed by the participant narratives, exploring the surface as well as the associative content, the researcher's responses and associations, psychoanalytic concepts, empirical knowledge about paedophilia/hebephilia, and child sex offenders. Reflexivity, personal and epistemological, is both implicit within the study and made explicit at certain points through the inclusion of first-person reflexive comments distinguished by blue type in text boxes.

The scale of child sexual offending, estimated at over 220 million children (Singh et al., 2014) is difficult to comprehend. Many studies provide national prevalence rates, but the Internet knows no borders. Sadly, the images of the children depicted do not age; victims must live with the knowledge that their image remains suspended in time to be exploited for the sexual gratification of countless uses of CSEM, in perpetuity. The need to deepen knowledge, and improve interventions with online offenders cannot be overstated.

Chapter Four: Findings

The following nine accounts of those who have committed the sexual offence against children of viewing CSEM may engender strong feelings. Each participant took part in order to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, and thereby, to help others. Despite my best efforts, a number of the interviews were painful and distressing for participants. I am deeply grateful to each of them for their openness in exploring something so shameful. I hope you can hear the human behind the narrative and listen with an acute but kind ear.

This chapter presents the nine pen portraits and pro forma documents resulting from the analysis of each participant's narrative. As outlined on page 43, the pen portrait summarises the interview, it is intended to give a sense of the overall quality of the interview in terms of the tone, the clinical researcher's countertransference and the salient points. It acts as a substitute whole for the reader. The quote at the beginning of each pen portrait represents something that resonated as metaphorically loud for the each of the participants as they struggled to understand their use of CSEM. The pro forma structures the analysis under the research question as outlined on page 39. The analysis offers coherence to each narrative when unconscious processes are taken into account. Alternative interpretations of this data could be equally valid. Indeed, the clinical researcher's supervisors, on occasion offered their associations. These are included in the section titled New Associations beginning on page 89 of the discussion chapter; the crucial difference is that they represent an association to one aspect of the data, they did not reach the bar of providing overall coherence to the narrative. The full transcript, completed pen portrait and pro forma documents were provided to the supervisors before each meeting; this positioned them to add rigour by confirming the faithfulness of the analysis to the raw data. Finally, the findings are summarised toward the end of this chapter to facilitate discussion in the context of the relevant literature. This clustering of responses is not intended to substitute for the location of individual meaning for each participant solely within their own narrative, likewise the summary headings do not represent themes.

Participants' contributions, in part, reflect the stage of therapy and associated insights that participants had at that point. The analysis and interpretation of their narratives is clinical in that it links to psychoanalytic concepts and broader empirical literature. It is intended to offer rather than confer meaning, and is underpinned by clinical experience.

Steve: Pen portrait.

"Every photograph is a crime scene." (Steve)

Steve, a 53-year-old professional, under-employed at the time of the interview, readily agreed to participate. The interview was scheduled to coincide with a later therapy group as Steve travels a distance to Dublin. On arriving for a 12:30 interview, Steve mentioned in passing that he had been *"travelling since 10 am"* indicating on the surface that he was tired and thirsty but perhaps also establishing that he was doing me a favour that was difficult and about which he felt ambivalent. This interpretation is based on my countertransference which was of being reminded that it was my need that was being met in the interview. While this, of course, was true it differed from my experience in other interviews. Compared to two earlier practice interviews, I felt disturbed at points during this interview, this is apparent in my second question, which is garbled. Steve spoke with fluency, and with the exception of a few moments, no distress was evident. His distress, however, became apparent during the debrief after the interview. The quality of the interview could be described as candid though also somewhat detached. The language and tone used seemed incongruous and to normalise his behaviour as well as the content of the pornography. *"In the early days a typical day would be, get up and do the normal household stuff. And maybe having a cup of tea and a biscuit later on, flip the laptop on, do normal things, emails and bits and bobs. And then start dabbling with porn and that was it".*

Contrary, to the planned interview method, I deliberately avoided narrative questions at certain points, perhaps aware of the power and distortion of fantasy for Steve and reluctant to invite his unconscious aggression. Considering the interview as a whole, Steve's sadism, conscious and acceptable towards his adult step-daughter, thinly disguised towards women depicted in extreme pornography and more unconscious in relation to female children was evident. Speaking about his adult step-daughter, Steve with apparent ease stated, *"no, no my fantasy she wouldn't be enjoying it no. She would have been doing it either because she felt she had to, to pay off a debt or some other reason. It was part of the fantasy that I was taking what I wanted whether she liked it or not".* Referring to CSEM, however, Steve remarked *"but I think because they were children it mattered to me in the CSEM world that the children*

appeared to be either willingly submissive or enjoying themselves or actively participating with the adult".

Also marked was his degree of splitting; Steve referred to his online persona as a *"horrendous paedophile"* and as *"totally fake"* contrasting this to his real offline self which was *"kind, gregarious and brutally honest"*. Steve who is not yet half-way through a therapeutic programme was able on a couple of occasions to name a more reality-oriented view on the harm of CSEM but remains attached to pornography as *"fun"*. Fun, as described by Steve, denotes something that is mutual and harmless.

Pro Forma

Unconscious function of CSEM

Steve entertained the conscious fantasy that, once the children were apparently happy and were not being violently penetrated, no harm was being done. The term *"violently penetrated"* suggests that non-violent penetration of children is possible. CSEM seemed to function to allow "sadism by proxy" (Wood, 2011) as Steve could view imagery while disowning responsibility and conscious knowledge of the harm. Steve acknowledged using pornography and virtual reality pornography at a time when he was *"angry, destructive and wanted to give two fingers to the world"*. He seems somewhat aware of his sadism towards women while simultaneously using the screen of pornography as denoting unreal to distance himself. *"And I suppose the other stuff that you see about the drunk female on the couch who gets interfered with and that sort of thing. I saw some of that and I thought my god, that's awful but also exciting, what would I do? I wouldn't do it myself, I wouldn't dream of it. In my fantasy, what could I do"?* Here Steve is referring to recordings of actual rapes or assaults of women as opposed to the staged scenarios in acted pornography. It is one of the points in the interview when he is acknowledging that this particular pornography, like CSEM, is not pretend. Steve is, even now, unable to acknowledge his aggression towards girls, (little women is the term coming to me) though able to somewhat allow that CSEM is inherently harmful. *"I could kid myself that this happy smiling eight-year-old sat on someone's lap with a penis between her legs, was having a great day".*

Relation to children depicted in imagery

Steve recalled the name of "*teen model Sandra"* and it is interesting that he encountered the images of her some years before his immersion in CSEM. His clear recollection after so many years may point to his latent interest in young girls which he had managed to suppress over a prolonged period (Carnes et al., 2009; Wood, 2013). Steve's relation to the children, and perhaps to me, seems unconsciously hostile evidenced through the graphic sexualised descriptions of the children and his lack of awareness that what he is describing could be upsetting to hear. The children seem to be part-objects, there to fulfil his need for sexual gratification and interchangeable - *"a daughter, niece, blah"*. When asked about his particular preferences, Steve remarked *"I didn't care what was sent, people sent a file and I'd open it up and there was [15:24] it could be teens, it could toddlers, it didn't fuss me"*. When images were not arousing, perhaps because they failed to adequately disguise the aggression, he could *"get rid of "* the picture or video. Other users are also treated as part-objects by Steve, he openly acknowledged misleading and using them in order to get them to share images with him. Steve seemed aware of, and intoxicated by, the power he held in the virtual space to lie and to *"blow people up"*.

Internet as a medium

Steve described a trajectory from legal pornography use to CSEM. Within that trajectory, however, he seemed to have normalised many violent and aggressive acts, gang bangs, rape, morphing photos of his adult stepdaughter as well as watching real rapes of intoxicated women, for example. Indeed, all but the CSEM seemed, at the time of the interview, to be acceptable. Steve described the forbidden as intensely sexually exciting (Fuchs, 2009) as was the novel (Wilson, 2014). The Internet allows endless, unfettered opportunities to explore both. *"I was almost, 'oh' this is interesting, this is exciting. And that was for me what drew me in was, it was exciting because it was wrong, it was naughty, it was something different and something I never experienced"*.

Steve repeatedly defended his use of the imagery of his stepdaughter and showed awareness that he came upon the idea to get back at her and enjoyed holding his power indeed triumph over her. *"Then a buzz, a real excitement of 'aha, aha', I have done something that you don't know and I got this now and it's brilliant, it's only for me, not sharing with anybody else it's just for me. And then I'd be massively turned on and I'd masturbate and I'd feel brilliant afterwards and no guilt".* In this respect, his sadism seemed

to be acceptable to him as he acknowledged both his intense sexual excitement and his lack of associated guilt. The Virtual Reality porn that Steve engaged in through the platform Second Life may have acted as a catalyst and it is notable that I deliberately did not ask for a narrative about this but tried to gauge instead the amount of time spent as this links directly to behavioural models which are more reality-oriented and, therefore, less potentially threatening. Steve mentioned the moderators present in the initial sex chat rooms he used but as this watcher disappeared so did his inhibitions (Rimer, 2017). This resonated in relation to Foucault's (1975) remarks on discipline in society and Wood's (Wood, 2011, 2013) points on the Internet as a corrupt superego promising endless excitement without censure. Steve uses the word *"vast"* a number of times in his interview perhaps identifying with its power.

Liam: Pen portrait

"It's not the sentence you receive on the day in court; it's a life sentence". (Liam)

A pervasive feeling of sadness characterised my experience of this interview. Liam, a 64-year-old retired professional, seemed candid and exuded an air of resignation to his fate, living with a progressive illness, essentially 'in hiding' away from his wife and children, though they maintain a relationship with him. There was no note of complaint, and although Liam seemed to be suffering, he did not give the impression of feeling sorry for himself. Liam took some weeks to agree to do the interview, having received the introductory materials. This caution and careful consideration were evident in the interview as he appeared to choose his words carefully and deliberately, to enhance clarity. Liam used the word *"hindsight"* several times, and it felt like he was speaking from a distance, recalling something now past. Despite evocative and emotive words such as *"horrific"*, "*shame*", "*terror*", and "*disgust*", somehow the harm to children felt remote or split off.

Liam identified a void in his life after he stopped drinking in 2005. He acknowledged replacing his addiction to alcohol with an addiction to pornography and sex chats which gradually escalated to CSEM over approximately three years. Liam had completed a therapeutic programme, while the criminal case against him had also concluded with a suspended sentence. Markedly absent, perhaps in part for these reasons, was intense feeling, sexual or otherwise. This absence seemed to open up a calm, reflective space evident in the timbre and cadence of Liam's voice throughout the interview. Compared with other

interviews, my questions seemed apt and to flow with relative ease as in my countertransference, I perhaps identified with this tenor of calm inquiry.

Time and hindsight were central concepts in interpreting Liam's narrative as, at the time of the interview, his sex drive and diminished considerably, and he had worked through those cognitive distortions, mainly that it was harmless fantasy and separate from the real world, that facilitated his offending. This meant that offending dynamics were perhaps not live in the interview and had to be inferred backwards, arguably leading to less accurate interpretations.

Liam described a gradual escalation in his words or what could psychoanalytically be called a regression into CSEM. A key factor was his designation of the online space as fantasy with the stated consequence that the children were *"fictitious". "I suspect, now honestly I kind of…I don't know; I suspect most of us were talking fantasy. Like someone was saying they were with a, b and c, I tended not to believe them...I always assumed though that this was a fictitious niece, this was just her niche in the market and that she talked about this*". Liam's offending ended when he was caught; it is interesting that his desire to offend ceased when he could no longer maintain the split between fantasy and reality. *"So, if I felt that terror and in joining up the dots as I have since done, that terror was there for those children in those images"*. He, like many users, equated violence with overt physical harm, and despite disclosing being sexually abused over a ten-year period during his childhood, he stated twice during the interview that he had never experienced violence.

Pro Forma

Unconscious functions of CSEM

It is suggested that Liam unconsciously projected his unmetabolised experiences of victimisation into the children depicted on screen or discussed in chat rooms. Liam's preference was for naturist images. *"I looked at the naturist sites. And for a while, it was naturist sites that I continued to look at, which obviously they had family scenes, mum, dad and the kids. And I started getting more and more attracted to that"*. Liam misused the wholesome and benign imagery for sexual purposes, corrupting the innocence depicted[7].

Liam named *"revulsion"* on those occasions he viewed overt violence, children under six or children in distress. Perhaps such imagery did not resonate with repressed aspects of

[7] The wholesome and benign association to naturism is mine. When I discussed Liam with a supervisor, they named a very different association to naturism as intrusive and even abusive in a family dynamic.

his own experience. Despite being sexually abused over a ten-year period, Liam stated that he had never known violence, *"I use the word violence as it is, as in inflicting physical hurting someone as in kicking, punching, stabbing, shooting whatever. Not the sexual abuse"*. The inherent hostility toward the child is disavowed in his own experience and with CSEM that is not overtly sadistic.

Liam's conscious link to his own experience was one of curiosity as to the motivations of his abusers *"So I think…thinking, I was telling myself, why these people were doing that to me, and I thought, well if I go in here and start talking I might find out. But it didn't work that way. I went in, and then I started seeing stuff and talking about it. So there was an awareness as a victim coming into it*". Ultimately, the abuse coming to light when the Gardai (Irish Police Force), perhaps representing parental authority and knowing, instigated the reality principle, and everything fell apart. Liam finally identified with the victim, and this knowing seems to have endured.

Relation to the children depicted in the imagery

Liam blurred boundaries and failed to delineate between adult women and children. *"I think the most beautiful thing in the world [small laugh] is a good looking woman right. And good looking women are good looking children. I suppose the development from that age group. And in my preference, I prefer smaller breasted women than larger breasted women"*. The children were objects to be looked at and enjoyed for their physical attributes. Moreover, the split and part-object relating is evidenced through Liam's swift disconnection from those children displaying the humanising emotion of distress or where the child's age or sex act was other the sought after. *"Well, if I was going for the sake of argument looking for what I wanted and I came across the other stuff, depending on the severity of it, I would get out of it, delete it, go away from it or try and move somewhere else. I definitely did not like it if I came across the children being raped for the sake of argument or being badly abused whether it's obvious they are in distress or crying or whatever, or were too young"*.

This split in relation to the children is paralleled by a split in his experience of self. *"It sort of was two people, there was the me on the computer, and there was the me me or the everyday me that people would know. And I could switch rather easily"*. The pronoun "it" here also suggests distancing from the experience, which was intense at the time but now seems remote.

The Internet as a medium

Interestingly, Liam's first association to CSEM, relatively late in life, was foreign and not consciously enticing. *"I first came across child pornography. I'd say I was in my 50's. I had heard about it in news bulletins, something being reported, I suppose. But paid little attention to it, but I do remember saying to myself (a) I didn't even know it existed, and (b) I have no interest in that. Or why would anybody have any interest in that"*? Liam described his introduction to child abuse material through repeated conversations with a woman on a sex chat line which gradually piqued his interest and escalated the fantasy in terms of a reduction of age.

Liam would have been aroused in the context of the sex chat and, therefore, possibly conditioned to the CSEM (Ariely & Loewenstein, 2006). However, it was a relatively slow progression occurring over two or three years before he *"stumbled upon"* pre-teen imagery on the Internet. Once this happened, however, this imagery became more *"addictive"* and gradually replaced other/ adult pornography. Liam acknowledged finding sex chats about children *"most pleasurable"*, assuming that it was role play and fictitious. His emphatic language about the absolute separation between online and offline spaces evidenced, both the truth, that he is a 'fantasy-driven offender' (Merdian et al., 2018) and the lie that children are not being violated. *"However, this was all online, in the sense that outside of being on a computer or being a computer warrior or whatever they call it, I had absolutely no inclination whatsoever for outside of fantasy and online fantasy or whatever you want to call it. There was no, no in any shape or form interest in ever trying to turn these fantasies into real abuse"*.

Sam: Pen portrait

"[T]his was my own little world and my morals, and my conscience were left outside". (Sam)

Sam, though not a therapy client, was known to me before the interview through sitting in on an assessment the previous year and providing some crisis support over that Christmas. Sam, a 46-year-old professional, was very emotional throughout the interview and broke down several times. As a result of the aforementioned assessment, it had been suggested to Sam that he request an assessment through his GP for ADHD. Sam, at the time of the interview, had received a diagnosis of ADHD and ASD. The speed of Sam's thought pattern and his swift shifts of focus were evident throughout the interview. Though his speech

was not especially fast, Sam was able to name factors that contributed to his offending within the opening sentences of his interview. *"But, it was a lot of built-up anger, pent up frustration, grief. And the online stuff, the addiction to porn and chatting in other groups"*.

Sam's conscious narrative was of a man who had strived to do everything right but who was undermined and dismissed by an impersonal and irrational system. In addition, Sam acknowledged unresolved grief about the sudden accidental death of his teenage daughter some years earlier. These terrible experiences contributed to justified and overwhelming anger, which found expression and release through a high sexual preoccupation with frequent masturbation and addiction to adult pornography and erotic stories, which gradually devolved into CSEM through sex chat groups. *"I started talking to more and more guys, just started talking on Kik, so I ended up on Kik, a couple of groups. And again, it was all adult stuff. And then a couple of younger stuff like 17, 18, started popping up. And I got sucked into that. And it just snowballed from there, and it just came up out of nowhere. I can't even tell you when I started; it just took over"*.

The unconscious currents are glimpsed through Sam's genuine bewilderment at his behaviour. Despite fluency throughout most interview sections, questions about his arousal to children were met with hesitancy and short contradictory answers. It seemed that Sam's sexual attraction to children, despite all evidence to the contrary in his external life and participation in a sex offender programme, perhaps remained unconscious to him. Therefore, other users were essential so Sam could project his unconscious fantasy into them and attribute his desire to the more consciously acceptable. *"And I have since realised that it was the chat and the interaction with others that was the draw. This is what really kills me; there was no sexual, I didn't get off on it, kik stuff like..... So that kind of fed that because people were feeding me, they were telling me I'm this, and I'm that look we can do this and blah, and I was answering them"*. Sam repeatedly struggled to marry this shadow side of himself with the moral and caring behaviour toward others in the offline world even when he was feeling low himself. For example, he named deciding not to take his own life in a collision with a tractor driver out of concern for the other driver, and he described supporting a friend who was struggling with their mental health.

Pro Forma

Unconscious functions of CSEM

CSEM use for Sam occurred as part of a broader engagement with a named addiction to online adult pornography, which continued throughout. Sam emphasised several times that

there was no arousal to the children themselves; it was all about the chat with the other users. It is suggested that Sam unconsciously used the Internet and other users in such a way that he could deny and project his sexual attraction to children. The potential of the power of his unconscious desire and Sam's defence against this was hinted at in his comments about children in general. *"Now, I have never even thought about touching a child. Or…I actually said it to the group there last week; I have always felt uncomfortable around children.... If there was [sic] children out there [pool room at the back of the bar], I would never be out there on my own. I'd always sit in the bar and where I could be seen or whatever because there was no cameras out there"*. Sam further commented with bewilderment at his actions, but this is mixed with relief, and his question is telling. *"It's so hard for me to fathom, how I went from that to what I did..... I'm glad it happened, [Garda raid] I really am. Because where would it have stopped"?*

When Sam was asked to recall one specific occasion, rather than thinking about imagery, he spoke about his reaction when another user identified himself as being from Cork. This offers support to the interpretation that Sam projected and so disavowed his desire into other users. *"I remember one because it actually came up; the guy I was talking to was from Cork, that's one I remember. And I remember he actually shared really young children"*. Sam went on to say this was a *"Bad thing, because as I said to you I was able to…disassociate I think is the word I might have used."* An Irish CSEM user, it seems, was too close to home and offered an inadequate level of separation for the projection.

Relation to children depicted in imagery

Sam stated his preference was for older teenagers; he spoke about sexual arousal to CSEM in relatively halting terms, perhaps indicating discomfort, and only acknowledged arousal in relation to girls over 16 (Buschman, Wilcox, et al., 2010). Sam's engagement in several types of pornography simultaneously may have functioned to obscure his interest in children. He named a dislike for any kind of overt sexual violence in pornographic imagery and stated that he did not like to see young children or children crying. Despite this, however, Sam remained engaged, treating the children as part-objects as he moved on even after registering the humanising of children, through noting their distress, for example.

It seemed that Sam moved on from groups after weeks or a couple of months. Part of the impetus for this was pressure exerted on him to talk about his own children. Here Sam evidenced a split as even when explaining to me that he wouldn't do this, *"it's fine for your*

kids, but not for my kids, we are not talking about my kids, you know what I mean". Sam went on to say he pretended his children were older, though still underage adolescents and shared pictures of his wife's underwear folded up to make it look smaller, indicating that he did engage in sexualised conversation about his children. This, coupled with the nature of the erotic stores involving families, suggests a draw toward incest fantasies. I took some time to allow this thought to form, despite the evidence in the interview, perhaps identifying with Sam's disavowal of this aspect, which remained unconscious to him because it is so disturbing.

Internet as a medium

For Sam, the speed, fragmentation and multiple objects upon which to focus almost simultaneously seemed to mirror his thought processes and so served as a suitable container for his racing mind and overwhelming feelings of anger, anxiety and loss. *" [A]gain it was so fast like the clips were coming up, and I could have Twitter open, I could have, as I said I read a lot of erotica, I could have that open, and I could have regular, I'd have the three of them going, and I'd just be goin and goin and goin and goin".* He found a place of ease and escape from the pain of his real-life experience. *"[I]t was outside of my life shall we say. It gave me; it gave me a little world of my own. I didn't have to answer to anybody. I had no grief, and no pain, no worries and I could just be whatever I wanted to be, talking to".*

Sam used a passive voice when speaking about his chat room experiences, *"[S]omeone brought me into one of these groups for 17, 18, 19-year-olds, that's where it started with the…underage stuff, I was brought into one of them groups. And it just took off from there. And then I was in with them, and then it started to explode.....because what had happened is, you keep seeing the same people, and they keep bringing you into other groups, so you'd leave".* For Sam, the interactions with other users and argued projection into them of his own sadistic fantasies resulted in a spiral into increasingly violent and dominating erotic stories. *"[T]he more dominating my comments were, the more the others sucked it up and the more they wanted to hear".* For Sam fantasy and stories seemed to be more potent than the imagery itself. Sam used terms related to addiction such as *"gateway"* and *"cold turkey*" when referring to his use of the Internet. Despite attempts to stop, he remained enthralled until *"the Guards took that away, they took away the need for me to be in the groups and doing what I was doing".* An outside 'force' was necessary to interrupt the cycle.

Jason: Pen portrait

"[I]t's not me, this is like…not me like, it's just mental". (Jason)

Jason, a 37-year-old professional, presented as anxious and keen to please. In certain respects, his participation repeated a pattern that he articulated where he said yes to things he didn't want to do to avoid conflict because he was *"a people pleaser"*. However, his motivation was more complex; he named wanting to help others, and perhaps a more fundamental wish to address his avoidance of difficult conversations that had contributed to his struggles in relationships. *"Like I have to…can't just avoid things, you got to just do it"*.

Jason's use of CSEM always coincided with a weekly *"ritual"*, two or three nights per week, alcohol and cocaine binge. Reality tended to dawn on waking the following day when Jason described feeling overwhelming shame and guilt. The clearest thread through the narrative was one of addiction: *"I would inhale cigarettes; I would never be able to give them up. The same with alcohol once I started drinking, I'd drink and drink and drink. I have this kind of compulsion to keep doing it"*. Jason described a frantic chasing, though never satiated desire which he enacted simultaneously with alcohol, drugs, adult pornography, CSEM and group 'chats' of different types.

Jason became addicted to legal pornography in his early teens; the fact that he was caught many times and subsequently felt humiliated seemed to link, perhaps unconsciously, sex and humiliation. It was marked that during the interview, Jason seemed most embarrassed about his adolescent use of legal adult pornography. *"Caught in trouble, shouted at, screamed at, ran away once, well tried to, was going to run away and didn't run away because I just…the shame, just the shame, it's horrendous"*. Jason described his search for extreme pornography using the terms *"no limits, anything goes"*. Other named paraphilic interests included bestiality and toilet-based pornography (Glasser, 1996; Stoller, 1977). However, while Jason searched for pornography aligning with those interests it seemed meaningful to him, and he stated repeatedly, that he never searched for children. Jason looked at children though group chats on the Kik App and arguably used the group to project and so partly disavow his paedophilic fantasies.

I felt empathic toward Jason who spoke with fluency about the context of his pornography addiction: his mental health, suffering with chronic physical pain due to an auto-immune condition, the strain of caring for a parent with a debilitating terminal illness, an

absence of emotional and sexual intimacy with his wife, and his need to be anonymous and escape theses burdens.

Jason's paraphilic interests felt distant, named though somehow absent, in the interview where feelings of shame and confusion were more to the fore. Perhaps the interview setting evoked the morning after feeling where actions were recalled with regret and shame, the disinhibiting effects of alcohol, drugs and arousal now dormant until the next cycle. Having said this, Jason presented as genuine and motivated to avoid another cycle. At the time of the interview, relatively early in a therapeutic programme, he named managing this by avoiding all alcohol, drugs and pornography.

Pro Forma

Unconscious Function of CSEM

Jason's use of CSEM fell along a continuum of extreme pornography. His paraphilic interests included paedophilic images, bestiality and toilet-based pornography. Jason stated his preference as follows: *"And it would be girls, so it would be girls, obviously young girls not 18, their ages would be, I would say four, five, six onwards to teenage"*. Jason referred to children with *"grown up men"* a somewhat odd and childlike reference suggesting a possible unconscious identification with the child in the image.

In his adult pornography preferences, the object/other is not physically hurt but is humiliated, a feeling possibly fused for Jason with online sexual experiences based on his adolescent reliance on pornography which he labelled, *"not normal"*. This reference for Jason related to his compulsive use but perhaps also points to the content and his early preferences. At the conscious level, he used CSEM, when disinhibited by alcohol and cocaine to escape from the pain of his everyday life. Paedophilic interests remain split off for Jason accessible only when projected into others in a group.

Jason didn't use the word anger (or any synonyms for anger) in his interview. It may be that anger and aggression are unrecognised, but sexualised and directed at adult others through overt humiliating acts and at children through the implied defilement of sexual abuse. Support for this interpretation lies in Jason's dread and avoidance of any conflict, physical or verbal aggression, rooted in his past overwhelm during alcohol fuelled violent arguments in his home growing up. *"But coming back and causing murder in the house, he hit my dad, my dad hit him back, my dad ran away for a weekend. I remember all this, like none of this ever got talked about in our family"*. Jason gave this background at as context to his offending, perhaps without understanding why.

Relation to the children depicted in the imagery

As stated in the section on the unconscious functions of CSEM, it is suggested that the relation is one of unconscious aggression. Because Jason viewed CSEM only when intoxicated, his cognitive distortions as to the unreal nature of the children were transitory. *"But I totally understand, it is real - it's somebody real at the end of the day there. But it was me consuming media online not physical"*. Jason passed over those images not to his preference. *"I wouldn't have wanted to see boys….I wouldn't have wanted to see babies"* and distanced himself by repeating that he never used any search terms relating to children. Thus, children were treated as part-objects that function to align with his fantasy or they were discarded. On waking the next day, everything was disavowed and discarded when the app was deleted leaving his gallery clean. *"[I]t was all through whatever was shared, I would have seen. And I know in seeing or clicking on an image that classes as downloading. So but I never…I never kept it, like when the app was deleted, you'd look through my photo gallery on my phone, you'd never see anything everything was in the app".*

The Internet as a medium

Jason had started to use 'sex as coping' (Hanson et al., 2007) in early adolescence when he was caught more than once having called sex chat lines. He then became addicted to pornography which consumed much of his thoughts even during school hours*, "I'd be in school thinking going back and look at it, and then get home and look at it. And then when people were asleep I'd look at it*". This pattern engendered deep feelings of shame but was never appropriately addressed by the adults in his life, who alternately became angry and screamed at him, or perhaps unintentionally, humiliated him by openly telling his friends.

Anonymous group chats through the Kik app were an essential aspect of Jason's CSEM use. It is suggested that he needed these groups to project his paedophilic fantasies into. Although Jason would have had to enter a search term to find a such a group he repeatedly stated that he never searched for children, but only viewed what others shared, side-stepping the issue by using a reference to extreme pornography in general. It seemed to be important to Jason to never message an individual in the group and that such groups were transient and anonymous spaces to project into. Jason, once during the interview stated he was *"not initially looking to find that, but came across it"*. The word *'initially'* here is the nearest Jason got to a conscious acknowledgement to his interest in children as it implied more deliberate later searches.

Greg: Pen portrait

"Now the biggest thing I remember thinking back was hating myself, I really did, I hated myself because I knew what I was doing was sick and wrong, but I just couldn't stop doing it". (Greg)

Greg spoke haltingly, particularly early on in the interview, and his voice was low, scarcely more than a whisper throughout. This pointed to the enduring feelings of shame at his past behaviour, driven by rage and self-hatred. He repeatedly used visceral words such as "*sickening"* and "*disgusting"* when referencing the images. Outside of those descriptions, and an acknowledgement that "*worse"* referred to younger children, he shied away from speaking about the content of imagery. The distance travelled over time was evident as Greg acknowledged that *"back then anything was possible"*.

The overall tone of Greg's narrative was, however, one of redemption, he described the arresting guard as having *"saved [his] life"*. Greg described himself as being healthy and happy, *"always working, I'd be working or looking for work"* until the death of his mother which triggered an emotional collapse (Hanson et al., 2007). Greg described a spiral into compulsive alcohol, cannabis and pornography use which *"just degenerated into CSEM and got worse and worse"*. Greg's affect throughout the interview was subtle but seemed to me to be congruent and genuine. He seemed to be deeply ashamed and somewhat aghast at himself when referencing his CSEM use, profoundly grateful to the guard for the humanity and compassion shown to him, and most of all, appreciative of the support his family had offered to him after the disclosure. It seems, perhaps that the kindness he experienced may have allowed him to feel loved and so begin to recover enough to grieve the loss of his mother and get his life back on track *"they all said the same, they said we love you and we are going to stick by you no matter what happens"*.

Greg referred to the children in images as victims and seemed to know at the time that what he was doing was wrong contributing to an over-riding feeling of *"self-hatred and numbness"*. He was nevertheless, able to ignore this knowing and continued to offend, telling himself the thin lie that the children weren't real. The infirmity of this distortion was penetrated by *"moments of clarity"* when young children showing obvious signs of distress disturbed Greg, halting any previous arousal and prompting a wish to stop offending, which would last for a couple of days.

When asked, whether, despite his wish and conviction to not offend again, he might experience a current arousal to CSEM, Greg was emphatic in his response. *"No, no and I'm not just saying it now, I'm 100% sure that it would absolutely turn my stomach..."* This raises an important question, explored in the discussion chapter, as to whether a paedophilic attraction may be transitory.

Pro Forma

Unconscious functions of CSEM

It is suggested that Greg used CSEM for two principal reasons; the first and nearest to his conscious awareness was sexual arousal as an antidote to depression. The second was an enactment of a destructive pattern aimed at self-annihilation (Wood, 2014). Greg used CSEM alongside continued compulsive use of adult pornography, alcohol and cannabis addiction. He acknowledged being aroused to the images while recalling his dominant feelings at the time were anger and self-hatred. "*I was angry at myself for letting it, for giving up really for - shame and anger for giving up and not working. And just letting everything just take over my life…. and I suppose I was angry at the world, I was angry at everyone for mother being gone…anger and shame"*. The self-hatred was linked to a feeling of not coping, giving up work, friends, everything in life and succumbing to a number of addictions. Greg perhaps projected this despised, helpless aspect of himself into the imagery.

Greg described a major depressive episode following the death of his mother. The quote below describes the moment he and his father were notified of his mother's death. *"And when we got there we were just told she was after dying. And I just…I lost it, because we were very close, very, very close, there was only the two of us- three of us there, that just killed me"*. The Freudian slip (1901) here is interesting. This, along with other information such as the fact that prior to his mother's death, Greg had only had one long-term relationship lasting less than one year and his recollection of a persistent nightly childhood dread that one of his parents might die is suggestive of an enmeshed relationship. Without his mother Greg seemed to regress to a state where his ordinary life became overwhelming. Feelings of powerlessness, anger and shame fuelled a destructive spiral with self-annihilation as a possible end. The most conscious element of this was frequent thoughts, and one previous attempt, of suicide.

Relation to the children depicted in the imagery

Greg felt alternately aroused and sickened by the imagery he viewed. The visceral disgust was at himself because while he named a distortion that the children weren't real, this was never complete. Greg described *"moments of clarity"* prompted by a young child's distress where any previous arousal would be interrupted and he would shut down the computer, returning the next day to delete everything before the cycle would begin again a few days later. For Greg degeneration into CSEM, which *"got worse and worse"* was linked to his searches for younger, possibly denoting more helpless, as well as, in this context, more taboo, children. *"So I suppose I'd have to say the younger ages would be drawing me to it, that would have been the worse it got what I'd be looking at, wouldn't be young enough".*

At the time of the interview, Greg repeatedly referred to the children as victims and humanised them by linking them to children in his own family *"I have my own son, I see my sister's kids, my brother's kids, they are someone else's kids, just at the time I didn't realise it, but I do now. And the thoughts of any child going through some of the things I seen in them pictures".* An echo of Greg's past use of the children as part-objects could be heard, however, in his comments about communications with other users, which *"would have been all stuff related".*

The Internet as a medium.

Greg's CSEM use occurred as part of a withdrawal from the losses and challenges of the real world. Prior to his mother's death, Greg stated that he drank socially, occasionally smoked a joint and watched adult pornography, though not to excess. He was unable to recall seeing his first image of CSEM nor could he recall his first reaction to seeing an image of a child. As suggested in the section above on the unconscious functions of CSEM, Greg's paedophilic preferences were regressive, supported by the decreasing victim age, but not exclusive. His offending seemed to occur as a gradual or perhaps not gradual but certainly an escalation of *"an addiction or a dependency"* on adult pornography or 'sex as coping' (Hanson et al., 2007) while disinhibited by alcohol and cannabis.

Greg used chat rooms to source images and get advice on particular browsers, but also named that the engagement was meaningful socially as he was part of a group. *"I would have*

been chatting to them on forums and stuff like that. And I suppose you would have got something from them like that I wasn't getting - a chat with someone, ... a discussion, because during the day in real life I wasn't making any attempt to have any discussion really with anyone. I could just go on there and get talking...I was one of them". Given his level of anger and destructiveness at the time, Greg's alignment of himself with a group so reviled by society may represent the unconscious impulse toward self-annihilation.

David: Pen portrait

David was the first pilot interview I conducted. It was initially a pilot interview because David was a client in a group I co-facilitated and, therefore, his offences as well as other aspects of his history were known to me prior to the interview. While the interpretations are mainly based on the transcript, I found it difficult not to formulate based on other information I was aware of, and difficult to track the exact points at which this may have happened. As a counterpoint to this, my academic supervisors had no knowledge of the participant and were able to comment on the relation of the analysis to the verbatim transcript.

"[W]hy did that initial, initial set of images trigger, trigger my fascination? Those questions probably still have to be answered. I don't know if I'll ever get that answer". (David)

I think perhaps an answer, which David, a 39-year-old mature student, would find very disturbing, is that his orientation was exclusively paedophilic/hebephilic. David did not disclose watching any adult pornography. His preferences are very set and unchanging; *"it was young girls around, slightly prepubescent going into that 10,11,12 age range"*. David had a number of unfinished sentences in his interview, which appeared to be related to trying to find the right words, not to defend his behaviour, but to explain it exactly. He described feeling *"intrigued"* and fascinated by the movie 'Lolita', which triggered his early explorations into CSEM.

This quickly escalated to him spending *"the whole day... apart from getting some food and pretty much from the moment [he] got up to going to bed that night late into the night maybe 2, 3 O'clock in the morning"* as *"the images got more graphic"*. In addition to looking at imagery, David interacted with young girls through a chat/camera function. He had no

awareness of other CSEM users at the time but in his interview acknowledged, such contact *"could have led to a lot more worse[sic] and dangerous things in a way"*. David seemed to have awareness that for him, the girls were more than just images and he had the potential to commit a contact offence. There was a voyeuristic quality to David's offending as he *"wanted to see more"*.

A changing perspective over time was evident through the interview as David re-visited his thoughts at the time and struggled to accommodate these to his current understanding. *"[T]o look back on something and say I enjoyed something that is so wrong....it would be like a normal person coming back and saying that they watched a real scene of somebody getting shot in the head or something like that there and saying I enjoyed watching that, you know it just doesn't sit right"*.

Pro Forma

Unconscious function of CSEM

David perhaps used CSEM as an alternative to offline life. In the online world he could project and disavow rejection *"I never had a relationship in any way"* and uncertainty, and relate to compliant, malleable others. David held the power to reject and dismiss the other at will. He viewed imagery and videos, but also interacted with children online through a chat function where he could direct and interact with a child while remaining safe "*behind a screen, they can't see me".* David's level of exclusive engagement with CSEM coupled with the online interactions with particular children suggests a level of interest beyond the compulsive use of sex.

David perhaps used CSEM as a defence against painful affect, including loneliness while a series of fluid identifications with the children fuelled conscious fantasies of closeness with *"girls ...doing this freely"*. He perhaps introjected the feeling of being wanted and sexually desirable as he unconsciously identified with young girls with a capacity to excite others. The inherent aggression toward the children crucially remained unconscious until David entered a therapeutic programme. It was this aggression; the harm caused that David latterly struggled to understand and marry with his behaviour at the time.

Relation to the children depicted in the imagery

David's relation to the children seemed intense, escalating beyond viewing imagery to engage with children through a one-way chat. The child was a part-object, a vessel to project into or identify with. David while knowing that many others may have been viewing the same

child at the same time, could at one level perhaps introject this capacity of the sexualised object to incite desire in the other. From this split position, however, it was also possible to perhaps deny the reality of other men, the artificial and contrived setting, and believe that the child was there for him.

This denial of other males was apparent also in David's preferences as he was drawn to images of *"a girl by herself or two girls by themselves"* perhaps fostering an illusionary absence of male competition and offering a manic solution where vulnerability, potential rejection, and uncertainty could be disavowed. The limitations to the success of this psychic endeavour are apparent though as *"there was never a gratification, [he] never was satisfied with what [he] [sic] seen"*. This lack of satisfaction could have led David to commit a contact offence, a risk that he was not blind to *"another rabbit hole that could have happened....if one of them said aw well I actually had a contact with a young girl the other day and it was fecking amazing can you imagine my, my response back when I was especially vulnerable at the beginning"*.

The Internet as a medium

The Internet for David seemed to offer a seductive and safe alternative to interacting with others in the offline environment. While rare invitations to socialise were welcome and *"a relief",* they were effortful *"I still had to make sure though that I was presentable going out and meeting these guys because there's other people around as well"*. In addition, these distractions were temporary as *"even though [he] wasn't rushing to get back... [he] knew ....when this is over [he'll] just go back on it [the laptop]"*. David was living overseas during this time, so would have had to be working to support himself. The fact that there was no mention in the interview of his job, or how he managed this while spending so much time online, suggests that only his online life was enlivened; it's as if it this online world existed for him as a reality apart from his day-to-day experience and responsibilities.

David never had the cognitive distortion that the children on the screen weren't real, rather he held the distorted belief that it was *"their own choice if they do it or not. I'm not forcing them to do it"*. The fantasy for David seemed to go beyond the image and the online opportunity to interact with young girls in chat/ 'caming' rooms provided a potent means to enact and realise to an extent, the fantasy of a relationship albeit a part-object one (Klein, 1946).

Chris: Pen portrait

Chris was originally a pilot interview because he had been a client in a group facilitated by the me as the Clinical Researcher and, therefore, he and the nature of his offences were known to me. All interpretations are, however, linked to the interview narrative. I like him, and was aware of a desire, which I did not give in to, to add biographical details which would situate Chris more broadly in his current life context and highlight his notable positive qualities.

"I guess the only thing I would say and I'll always say it is just I'm sorry that this, that I did that you know. I'll take any opportunity I can to say that but I think I've ruined my life, I think I've ruined other people's lives". (Chris)

Overall, the sentiment expressed in the quote above most accurately captures the view of Chris, a 34-year-old professional, on his offences. On reading Chris's, transcript a number of justifications for his behaviour were, however, apparent *"I started very young"* or *"you land on one of these pages and completely by accident just the way the internet is"* for example. This was surprising because the tone of Chris's interview was open and markedly undefended. He seemed to want to answer all questions fully and shared aspects of his experience which made him feel visibly uncomfortable and ashamed.

Chris described his CSEM use over a number of years and seemed to articulate his thoughts and associations connected to that particular time period contemporaneously. Chris seemed also to have a pre-conscious awareness of raw and primitive aspects of his unconscious motivation for viewing CSEM including the inherent hostility toward the child victim. *"In mammal circles they, they kill the children".* These elements combined to provide a written narrative that, stripped of tone and context, could easily be misinterpreted to suggest Chris was more distorted at the time of the interview than was accurate. In fact, it may be that the trust previously established through the therapeutic relationship, enabled Chris to be unguarded and to share aspects of his behaviour that he felt disturbed by, but wanted to understand.

Chris seemed to feel powerful, omnipotent even, in the online environment where he could *"read people's thoughts".* Sexual arousal intensified by a rush of adrenaline alleviated feelings of apathy and emptiness as this rush increased in tandem with breaking the law and the Oedipal taboo, i.e. crossing, in fantasy, the generational sexual boundary.

Pro Forma

Unconscious functions of CSEM

Chris seemed to use CSEM to unconsciously invert formative experiences in his early life when he felt powerless against alpha males. Over the years, this motivation became pre-conscious as he was able to identify with an anthropological article explaining that for many mammals, the new alpha male killed the children of the previous alpha in the pack. *"What happens when an alpha-male dies and a younger male tries to step into the alpha position, what's the first thing he does? And in mammal circles they, they kill the children, they kill the cubs because they don't want that DNA to pass on …so that's a really ancient, ancient thing that comes from single cellular life essentially. That stood out to me that rings a bell"*.

Chris acknowledged feeling *"pure apathy ... I was angry"* and a persistent low mood. He could perhaps project his powerlessness into the children on screen while at the same time using the intense physical excitement, a combination of sexual arousal and adrenaline at transgressing the law, to feel powerful and elated. *"[Y]our heart's beating really, really fast, short- your breath's like restricted because you're excited you know, like electric pulse running up and down your body"*. Of course, these feelings were relatively short-lived *"maybe, 5 or 10 minutes and then it's all gone"* leading to feelings of despair and the compulsion to repeat the experience.

Relation to the children depicted in the imagery.

Chris used children as part-objects in several ways. Images were selected according to particular physical attributes - *"really just size and shape thing and this works really doesn't"*. Given the unconscious functions of his CSEM use, it seems that Chris perhaps projected his feelings of hopelessness and helplessness into the children on screen, their small size, a concrete representation of their powerlessness, relative to the adult/ alpha male. The cycle of projection and identification is fluid, however, and it may also be that Chris who has struggled with his weight over the years, unconsciously seeks to identify with a slim, desirable other.

While he stated his preference was for images described as *"cosy, where you didn't see any distress, you didn't see any violence or bodily harm like mutilation"* Chris nevertheless tested his boundaries and explored his preferences. "*I wonder if I get the hit of*

the drug for watching this one, sometimes if you see violent one, no ok, that's not for me. Ok, delete that you know. Move onto the next". Images not conforming to the desired fantasy were easily discarded. In a more hopeful and reality-based comment, however, which likely reflects the insights gained through a therapeutic programme Chris stated, *"but looking back, I know the ones where there didn't appear to be any harm are probably the most harmful ones where, everything seemed ok, but but there was also [sic] despicable after happening"*. Here the images seem to be connected with real others and empathy with the child victim's possible confusion and distress is apparent. This more conscious identification with the child perhaps counters the earlier projection into the child.

The Internet as a medium

Chris was introduced to pornography at young age and recollected slow downloads of individual images in the early 2000s. The online world seemed to offer a welcome distraction when Chris was finished college and out of work. He linked the marked escalation in his CSEM use to increased bandwidth, concomitant high speed and the *"limitless... stuff"* available online. This vastness of possibility seemed to encourage a type of manic relating where Chris felt powerful. *"I knew the trick you know"*. There was an underlying pride when he described *"the injection of adrenaline"* from navigating the dark web, downloading images and isolating his computer before opening the zip files. *"[S]tart opening things and this was the jackpot you know because if it was any viruses or tracking stuff, they wouldn't be able to get out off the internet onto you at that point, so that was a type of climax"*.

The recognition that this power was illusory was evident when Chris described getting caught. *"[T]here was a knock on the door. It led me to being discovered and the police took all my things"*. At this point in the interview, Chris laughed, perhaps acknowledging the infirmity, of his previous fantasised power that now seemed absurd. Chris used chat rooms and fora for two reasons: to obtain and swap images, and to read to try to understand his CSEM use. *"I started reading posts on forums about why people do it and how you know different people experience it as well and really started thinking about it ...then I started to hear, to read people's thoughts... I wanted to understand it, I suppose, that's why I read them"*.

Billy: Pen portrait

"All this free pornography is breaking us down, taking it all away from us. Leaving us empty with nothing inside of us and we want to fill that void with something. Nothing can fulfil that hole that you have inside you, especially with sex, sex I believe sex in the wrong context with the wrong people I really believe that really empties you out more than anything else". (Billy)

The above quote captures Billy's insight into his sex addiction and his understanding of his CSEM offences as being, in his view, located and explained within this context. Billy, 28 years old in casual employment, was in the initial stage of the programme but was markedly enthusiastic about participating in the study. This may have indicated a desire on his part to align with and be part of something bigger that was apparent in comments about society and pornography, sex education for children, his Christian faith and celibacy. *"I think the fact that I was so over stimulated by sex and by pornography that it made…it's almost like a drug addiction, you listen to the scientists talk about it and doctors talk about it, they say that when you are addicted to pornography and sex that your brain resembles a cocaine or a heroin addict*".

Billy's principle discourse was that of sex addiction. It was fluent and informed and integrated with a Christian discourse on celibacy and relationships. The interaction of these discourses coupled with lengthy and somewhat repetitive and circular arguments seemed to me to unconsciously defend against alternative interpretations of his narrative. I wrote in my notes immediately after the interview "Was this an argument or a narrative"? Billy's description of porn breaking him down and taking away from him consciously refers, I think, to his will power, energy and motivation to progress. Unconsciously, it may refer to a breakdown of ego functioning, a regression from adult, genital sexuality, and an activation of previously unconscious paedophilic elements (Wood, 2013, 2022).

Speaking about the content of pornographic imagery Billy stated, *"And then it went to other off the wall shit. And then it went to that"*, meaning CSEM. I made the deliberate decision not to ask Billy to elaborate on this because it seemed to me that his recovery strategy, at that point, was based on intellectualisation and abstinence, so I was worried about triggering him. Billy responded to later questions about the content of CSEM, aimed at exploring what had helped him have a more reality-oriented view were answered with very general, narcissistic comments about himself, which avoided giving any detail in regard to

the imagery. *"I believe it was me that was different. I believe it was the way that I saw it, I was different. The way my mind comprehended what was going on that was different"*.

Billy described his introduction to pornography, aged eight as follows: *"[It] hit me like a bomb, I never felt such a rush in my life...the whole situation is in burned in my brain"*. The next 20 years of his life were characterised by sex addiction. At the height of his CSEM addiction, Billy masturbated frequently, *"it was multiple times a day, like 6 or 7 times a day sometimes; because it was just so gripping"*. He acknowledged getting a more intense rush from CSEM because it was taboo. *"I needed to view more taboo things in order for me to be aroused by it or to be satisfied by it"*. The second note I made post interview was a question; "how had Billy had named his intense sexual excitement when viewing CSEM images while also denying any particular attraction to children"?

Billy: Pro Forma

Unconscious Functions of CSEM

Power was central to Billy's narrative as he spoke with an unconscious grandiosity about forces of good and evil and the need for fortitude to lead a celibate life and *"transmute"* his abundant sexual energy into working on himself and becoming successful. Succumbing to sexual compulsion, afterwards, represented weakness, engendering feelings of disgust and emptiness; *"now even regular pornography I don't like it, it almost turns my stomach to look at it now"*. The online experience was highly satisfying *"like this rush you got, like your whole body"*. Billy described his CSEM use as a progression or escalation to more taboo pornography when he was *"so overly stimulated by the other things, so overly sexually simulated from all the other things that I had partaken in and looked at on the Internet"* that he needed more extreme imagery to get the same level of arousal.

While this explanation tallies with the broad consensus on the nature of addiction, including finings in neuroscience, which Billy referred to, it conveniently sidestepped the issue of arousal to children. It's almost as if the children were only exciting because of the taboo. Transgressing this core societal taboo perhaps allowed Billy to spend his anger at the society that values success and progression at times when he felt alienated and devalued.

Relation to the children depicted in the imagery

Billy identified with the sexualised child and seemed to unconsciously align his own experience of exposure to pornography, and the impact of this, with the chronic abuse children in the imagery suffered. "*And being exposed to it at this age; and then having issues*

for the rest of their life because of it - because I was exposed at such a young age". His conscious perspective and unconscious projections into children changed when his addictive cycle was dormant. *"It became something that I didn't want anything to do with anymore. I thought it was completely disgusting"*. Billy spoke in similar terms about adult pornography, casual sex and masturbation, his sexual preoccupation perhaps having come to symbolise weakness. Sexualised children, therefore, held no possibility of arousal.

Although Billy gave no hints as to the content of imagery, within this context, it is reasonable to assume that more taboo relates to younger children and more extreme acts. Children were treated as part-objects to provide excitement, pleasure and an adrenaline rush. When Billy did occasionally break down and cry, it was because something in his life was improving, he felt motivated, hopeful and aligned with God. This allowed a more reality-oriented view but it was about his experience, his perspective, rather than any child's distress. Billy stated that his response to CSEM was an alert to him that he had a sex addiction, and although it took many attempts, it was what prompted him to address his behaviour. *"I didn't realise it was a problem until after the first time that I saw CSEM"*.

The Internet

Billy interacted with other CSEM users to swap images, always in a random way. Interaction with other users intensified his excitement at one level, perhaps because of the increased risk, or due to identifications with fellow taboo breakers. At another level, interest in the imagery was normalised, so decreasing feelings of shame or disease. *"[I]t was wrong but it was exciting in a way. And receiving those from other people, how do I put it? It's almost like you know that you are not the only one who does this type of thing. And that's very…that's something that can pull you in even deeper to it when you realise that that there are other people who do this as well"*.

Billy was exercised in his interview about the impact of pornography on society.*" I feel like the fact that pornography is so widely available like legal pornography is so widely available for free is a detriment to society...Like society has been pushing, it's the thing that's draining us the most as far as I'm concerned"*. Billy made several comparisons to pornography and hard drugs and here compared society to the drug pusher. Of course, the pusher is not interested in the welfare of the addicted. This discourse, though not without its merits perhaps distanced Billy from personal responsibility. He offered that real culpability rested only with those with insight into the harm being done. *"[I]t's not completely that*

person's fault as far as I'm concerned unless they are completely evil like they know these things and they still continue to go after that".

Timothy: Pen portrait

"If I saw another young boy or I was along with another young boy, even when I was a child I'd kind of be thinking is there any way that I could manipulate the situation to instigate some sexual contact between us". (Timothy)

Timothy is an articulate 22-year-old, unemployed, college graduate. I had met him twice prior to this research interview, when he was being assessed for the programme related to his offending. Timothy's narrative was marked by an apparent ease and candour as he openly, without apparent hesitancy or shame, acknowledged his sexual preference for young boys. My feeling was of increasing hopelessness as he expressed this, *"[I]f I saw young boys getting changed in a dressing room or even things like that, even when I was a young boy my mind would automatically go there and I'd be aroused by the situation or I'd be thinking of wanting to have sexual contact with them....I was probably around 14 when I really realised it."* My question, "So you never left that entirely, you always had some interest [in adult pornography]"?, as well as my relieved feeling when Timothy described pleasurable sexual encounters with adult peers perhaps represented a desire on my part to dilute his paedophilic preference. Analysis of the interview, however, suggested that such encounters, including the use of adult pornography were, in reality, a prelude, the beginning of the *"slippery slope"* that ended in use of CSEM and fact that for Timothy, *"the preference would obviously be sexual relations with a child".*

Timothy's first encounter with CSEM was at 14 years of age, in the context of *"using a snapchat account for sending explicit pictures of [himself] to other men, mostly older men".* The word "other" men here suggests that Timothy at 14, saw himself as a man and perhaps does not differentiate sexually between men and boys. His distortions, however, were strongly influenced by sexual *arousal "[I]f I was to finish masturbating let's say during the files being downloaded, that maybe one or two had downloaded and the rest were still downloading, I'd always cancel the rest of the downloads straightaway because I'd never think I'm going to be prepared for next time".* Similarly, Timothy's response to the rare occasions when he saw images of young girls was repulsion, *"it was disgusting.....as soon as I saw a young girl, it felt exploitative".* The absence of arousal, post climax, or because he

had no attraction to females brought clarity of thought and a more reality-oriented perspective where generational boundaries were re-established.

Timothy described an early, aged 4, sexual experience with a young boy of the same age, which continued for about two years. He named *"always kind of craving"* to re-live this early, idealised experience. Timothy seemed to project this onto images of young boys in his preferred imagery depicting his conscious fantasy of eager, excited young boys engaging in mutually pleasurable sexual acts. Timothy's experience of conflicted sexual arousal to more brutal imagery or imagery with distressed children points to the existence of the inherent hostility toward the child which, in the main, remains unconscious for Timothy.

Timothy: Pro Forma

Unconscious Functions of CSEM

Timothy disclosed a number of sexual encounters, occurring over a two-year period with a young boy when both children were about four years old. Subsequent to this, Timothy described himself as *"very kind of overly sexualised, I was nearly hyper sexual for a way to put it. And my whole childhood growing up, I know I was always kind of craving to do what I had done when I was younger"*. Timothy consciously linked his CSEM use and his preferences for imagery of young boys performing oral sex on each other to this early experience *"it all kind of seems like it could have stemmed from that because of the similarity in the pornography and in the situation that occurred when I was a child"*.

I noted my distress when Timothy described this content, perhaps because it suggests the corruption of the child's psyche as well as his body and reminded me of the confusion and shame of survivors when they try to understand their body's reaction to early sexual experiences.

Timothy seemed to have disavowed the existence of the adult choreographer of his preferred content. He did not like to see imagery with distressed children, imagery of girls or imagery of toddlers, all of which perhaps posed a challenge to his sense that his (and other young boys) sexual experiences were deeply pleasurable and so not harmful. Timothy used CSEM primarily because of its capacity to arouse him, but perhaps unconsciously to defend his narrative that pleasure negates harm.

The impact of Timothy's early experience was overwhelming to him and left him with an almost constant sexual preoccupation and craving, and in his mind, set his paedophilic sexual preference. More unconscious was his hostility toward the child; This, though much disguised in the description of Timothy's preferred content, nevertheless translated to the interviewer as I noted my distress. This hostility and triumph over the child was less disguised, and so more unsettling to Timothy, when he felt aroused after viewing imagery with distressed children.

Relation to the child victim

It seems that Timothy identified with those young boys, who in his mind, engaged in wholly pleasurable, idealised, mutual sexual experiences. He had no arousal, and therefore, no distortion in regard to young girls. Timothy acknowledged his inner conflict when he saw distressing images *"I'd be upset with myself for kind of…that little battle going on in my head where at one side enjoy not the any of the brutality towards a child, but just the sexual environment of it, the sexual nature of it"*. Timothy later stated that he would *"usually"* move on from this content implied that he did not always do so. In this way, children were treated as part-objects to satisfy his arousal. Indeed, he spoke very casually about the explicit images he sent of himself as a teenage boy; "*I do kind of think about were these men saving these pictures, sending the pictures around because it was a picture of a young boy. But that doesn't really bother me as much. There was never pictures of my face or any identifying features in it really. So it doesn't affect me too much"*. It seemed that once Timothy was not identified, others could use images of his body for masturbatory purposes and there was no harm done. This may reflect the level of his distortion and his belief/need to believe that sex chat rooms and the sharing of CSEM imagery, once the child is not visibly distressed, is not necessarily harmful.

The children on screen were always real to Timothy and served as a substitute for his *"obvious"* preference for sexual contact with a child. Timothy's body boundary (Wood, 2011) had been breached and breaching another child's body was a desirable fantasy, and without intervention, a possibility. A disturbing element of Timothy's narrative was the ease with which he described grooming other children; *"This is something that's to be kept private. So I carried that on, I always knew that if I was going to instigate it with someone else that I'd have to do it on the sly kind of. I'd have to keep it hidden and I'd have to do it in a way that they wouldn't be deterred by it, they wouldn't go and tell their parents or that. Even though*

we were the same age, but I knew not to freak them out for want of a better word". Here again, the unconscious wish to triumph over the child is hinted at.

The Internet as a medium

Timothy made efficient use of the Internet for sexual exploration; *"[W]hen I was 13 or 14, I was still just hypersexual and wanted to completely explore my sexuality and didn't really have that…conscience about sending pictures myself. I was very kind of open about it...I'm going to explore this kind of avenue with my sexuality and see what comes of it"*. While acknowledging that his preference for young boys pre-dated his interaction with older men on the Internet, Timothy expressed his sense that the Internet may have acted like a catalyst and he wondered if he *"hadn't maybe been introduced to it at such a young age, that by the time [he] did start to think that way maybe [he] would have been able to restrain from it"*.

Timothy used the word *"community"* when asked about other CSEM users. His engagement with others, like his engagement with CSEM in general depended on his level of sexual arousal. In addition to swapping images, Timothy engaged in conversations with other young men about their experiences with young boys; these conversations were intended to be sexually arousing. *"[M]aybe we'd talk a little bit, share a bit, a lot of people would share their experiences with me ...like young boys that they were sexualised towards. And we'd kind of connect over that nearly, we'd talk about it a little bit...which kind of made me feel a bit like I wasn't alone in it...And I did feel a little bit more accepted"*. Sadly, Timothy again casually included *"what happened to them when they were younger"* with *"what they did"* so the line between victim and perpetrator was erased. Timothy described the Garda/police raid as *"traumatising"* and commented, that he now feels like he is *"being watched"* when online. As this seemed to relate to an absence of safety even when pursuing innocuous interests, it seems that perhaps finally, the symbolic adult, represented by the police, has intervened to offer a reality-based challenge to the regressive eroticised fantasy world of perpetually sexualised children.

Summary

Participants reported highly personal and idiosyncratic conscious and unconscious reasons for viewing CSEM. The exploration and understanding of these functions may foster increased awareness and reflective capacity, so supporting risk management. As outlined in the section above on the FANIM (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), data was not themed so while the following 11 points cluster responses, and the clinical researcher's analysis into key areas, the meaning for each participant was unique and should be understood in the context of their complete narrative.

(i) Paedophilia is not dichotomous and participants reported varying degrees of intensity and exclusivity in relation to their arousal to children.

(ii) Participants with more exclusive and intense sexual interest in children did not have the cognitive distortion that the children in the imagery were not real.

(iii) CSEM offenders with adult sexual involvements were primarily fantasy driven (Merdian et al., 2018), reported no sexual attraction to children offline, indeed they were adamant that this would be both disturbing and alien to them.

(iv) Analysis suggested that all participants engaged in a fluid, unconscious cycle of projection into the child. Similarly, shifting identifications, conscious and unconscious, with the child were notable.

(v) Participants treated the children as part-objects (Klein, 1946), as functions rather than persons, there to fulfil their needs for sexual gratification or to act as a container for intolerable aspects of themselves that they needed to unconsciously project.

(vi) Participants identified, perhaps manically, with the power of the Internet fostering feelings of invulnerability. Such feelings often contrasted with the pain, tedium and burden of their everyday lives.

(vii) An escalation or regression from the use of legal adult pornography to extreme pornography, depicting additional paraphilic enactments, to CSEM use was typical with the exception of the those with the more exclusive paedophilic preference.

(viii) It may be important to consider the impact of arousal in conjunction with compulsive pornography use on shaping sexual preferences.

(ix) The fantasy-driven CSEM offenders (Merdian et al., 2018) tended, in addition to recalling shock and terror, ultimately named relief that the Gardai had intervened,

interrupting their offending and re-installing the reality principle, bringing them back to their sober senses.

(x) Rage and low mood were common triggers to CSEM offending and the inherent hostility toward the child was vigorously defended against.

(xi) Fantasy-driven offenders (Merdian et al., 2018) referenced breaching the societal taboo as increasing excitement. This contrasted with those with a more marked paedophilic preference where any mention of the taboo was absent.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The findings were reported to illustrate individual depth accounts of CSEM use, interpreted psychoanalytically. Each narrative sat as a distinct unit in the chapter captured though: the pen portrait, which gave a summary of and reflections on the interview and acted as a substitute whole for the reader, and the pro forma, which reported the analysis under the same three headings, reflecting the central research questions. In research with CSEM users, there is an acknowledged paucity of qualitative studies exploring individual experiences in depth, and within the extant studies, as explored in the literature review chapter, data is generally themed. The Free Association Narrative Interview Method (FANIM) (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) was selected because it was the best fit to capture the unconscious dynamics core to this inquiry. In addition, the integrated, individually contextualised participant accounts offer a complementary alternative to the germane qualitative studies.

This chapter aims to expand on key findings, drawing some parallels and differences between participants, which situate them in the context of the relevant literature and the objectives of the study to:

- Contribute to a body of knowledge that endeavours to prevent harm to children by interrupting the cycle of offending.
- Inform therapeutic work with this group of individuals.
- Deepen understanding of the interaction of CSEM with individual s' psychic defences.
- Situate findings within the ideas and concepts set out in the relevant psychoanalytic clinical literature.
- Offer depth, context, and individual applicability to the empirically generated criminogenic factors underpinning mainstream interventions with child sex offenders.

The dominant finding from this study is that each participants' conscious and unconscious meanings are unique, and the differences are clinically fruitful to explore. It is hoped that the findings may resonate with practitioners and act as prompts in their work. Having said this, similarities between participants are notable and are referenced in this chapter, in respect of Kleinian part-object relating, for example.

Given the broad unanimity of quantitative findings on the characteristics of CSEM users, it was unsurprising that the nine participants here fit neatly within those parameters. Eight of the nine had a university-level education, eight were Irish Caucasian, no participants had any previous convictions for other offences, nor did they evidence any apparent

antisocial traits. They all fit within the sexual deviance strand (Blanchard et al., 2007; Henshaw et al., 2017; Seto, 2017; Seto & Eke, 2015).

This first section of the discussion is structured around three inter-connected pillars, which reflect the research questions: CSEM and paedophilia, the Internet and object relations, and unconscious functions of CSEM, all of which locate the findings principally within the psychoanalytic clinical literature, and to a lesser extent, the qualitative findings from related fields of psychology and anthropology. The second section, new associations, sets out new ideas contextualised within additional reading prompted by the data analysis, including, for example, the neuroscience of addiction. The first three pillars were identified through a combination of the literature review and the pilot interviews, while the latter reflects new ideas and literature prompted by the analysis of all the data.

Key questions include: whether and in what circumstances a paedophilic attraction, once consciously experienced, might be transitory; whether the Internet uncovers, activates or contributes to the formation of previously latent paedophilic currents in those evidencing no conscious prior sexual arousal to children; the impact of sexual arousal on shaping choices, and whether applying a psychoanalytic lens may deepen understanding of the individual unconscious dynamics that fuel offending and so support risk management.

CSEM and paedophilia

The link between CSEM use and paedophilia is confounding and contested. Paedophilia, sexual interest in prepubescent children, is one of eight paraphilias listed in the fifth edition and most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (APA, 2013). Quantitative findings suggest that CSEM is considered not just a valid indicator of paedophilia (because individuals likely access pornographic material that aligns with their preferences) but is argued to be a more accurate criterion than a contact offence against a child (Seto et al., 2006, 2015, 2017; Seto & Eke, 2017). Paedophilic disorder, "a paraphilia involving intense and recurrent sexual urges towards and fantasies about prepubescent children that have either been acted upon or which cause the person with the attraction distress or interpersonal difficulty" (APA, 2013, p. 697), accurately describes each of the nine participants. Only two participants, David and Timothy, however, would, in this clinical researcher's opinion, meet the exclusivity criterion regarding their preference, and notably, both evidenced an emotional identification with children (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986; Hanson et al., 2007). This may have significance in terms of risk and may delineate a

more marked and intractable paedophilic orientation compared with those who maintain a sexual interest in adults.

Quayle (2020) presented a summary of research exploring aspects of pornography, paraphilias, aggression and CSEM; despite the comprehensive findings outlined, it was her assertion that current diagnostic models do not adequately explain the fact that CSEM is found alongside a wide variety of other pornographic materials and is collected by men with apparent adult sexual interests, that resonated with the findings of this study. This issue had been identified by Wood (2013), who proffered that the dichotomous conception of paedophilia required revision in light of paedophilic enactments by burgeoning numbers of men with no previous (prior to CSEM use) conscious sexual interest in children and a history of adult sexual involvements.

Wood (2013, 2022) suggests that paedophilic orientation, rather than being dichotomous, sits along a continuum. There are those whose attraction to children is exclusive and immutable, but there are also individuals for whom a paedophilic enactment may represent a temporary regression and breakdown of ego-functioning, which crucially is reversible. Psychoanalysis understands adult sexual functioning as both developmental and operating on a spectrum, relying on the integration of early infantile and childhood currents. These, universally present but differentially active strands may be more or less integrated in different individuals. Vulnerable people, those with unresolved and unmetabolised childhood experiences, including but not limited to physical and sexual abuse, for example, may regress under stress resulting in the exposure of previously unconscious paedophilic elements.

> Clinical experience bears this out. At the time of writing, the clinical researcher has three clients over the age of 70, all of whom committed their first offence against a child through viewing CSEM in the previous two years. They are all reportedly happily married fathers and grandfathers with no criminogenic factors, according to the SA07. They were ashamed but mostly confused and dismayed about their behaviour. In their different ways, they each described the impact of seeing a child abuse image and feeling curious, fascinated, and somehow compelled. Each of the men had experienced sexual abuse in childhood, which they had never disclosed. It seems perhaps that seeing an image of a sexualised child may have activated previously repressed memories and affect, aspects of which they unconsciously enacted through their online activity.

Clinicians are familiar with the many stressors that can trigger sexual offending, including the potential for Internet sex to act as a catalyst (Seto & Karl Hanson, 2011; Wood,

2011, 2022) which indelibly links to the particular qualities of the Internet and how these interact with individual psychic defences, as outlined in the next section. An additional factor is the search for what has been termed the central sexual fantasy, central masturbation fantasy (Laufer, 1976) or the compelling scenario (Wood, 2011). The same writer (Wood, 2022) outlines a psychoanalytic conceptualisation of this conscious fantasy, which like a dream, represents but also disguises more raw and primitive elements, including inchoate childhood ideas about sex and bodies, vestiges of disturbing experiences and object, or likely part-object, relationships and traces of primitive anxieties and aggression. The ability to concretise and externalise sexual fantasy in a virtual context seeming to encourage, indeed sanction, regression and promise limitless pleasure and boundless opportunities for all manner of sexual exploration, seems, in vulnerable individuals, to precipitate a "'paedophilic breakdown', a collapse of ego functioning allowing the emergence of explicitly paedophilic sexual fantasies" (Wood, 2022, p. 232).

Participants described their varying, and for some, temporary and/or context-dependent, attraction to children. Something of the quality of connection and attraction to children differed for David and Timothy, for example. Neither had the cognitive distortion that the children on screen were not real, and both fantasised about sexual contact with a child. David mentioned no interest in adult pornography, while Timothy acknowledged a somewhat artificial use of adult imagery to overcome inhibitions and aid arousal before moving on to his preferred imagery of children as second best to contact with a child.

By contrast, six of the other participants were loud and emphatic that any arousal to children was located exclusively online, and they had no desire for sexual contact with a child. Moreover, this was not described as effortful as such contact would have disgusted, indeed seemed foreign to them. This is in keeping with Merdian et al.'s (2018) categorisation of offenders as fantasy versus contact driven. All other participants described additional paraphilic interests and the compulsive use of pornography reflecting these preferences. These interests, particularly in respect of Steve and Jason, proved to be core to a psychoanalytic interpretation of their narratives. This is in keeping with Seto and Eke's (2017) findings that 87% of their sample of convicted CSEM offenders had pornographic imagery illustrating additional paraphilic interests.

Steve, the most sadistic and, in fantasy, antisocial participant, acknowledged his potential to contact offend against a child, though this seemed like an escalation of generally taboo preferences and the exercise of power rather than an intense attraction to children.

Furthermore, for Steve, the child in question was a stepfamily member, and this, like his online abuse of his adult stepdaughter (Steve had transposed her head into non-consenting pornographic imagery), was arguably influenced by intense family dynamics and his own aggressive undercurrents.

Billy, 28, described two decades of sex addition beginning at the tender age of eight when, after being exposed to pornography in the home, he became highly sexualised. In his narrative, Billy acknowledged intense arousal to children but, like other participants, identified this as exciting because it was taboo. This seemed to be true at the level of conscious awareness and was coherent with their narratives. The influence of the unconscious dynamics shaping their CSEM use is elaborated in the section on the unconscious functions of CSEM.

The Internet and Object Relations

For some compulsive users, the Internet offers an alternative society, seductive in its seeming capacity to promise endless gratification without censure. It sits on the porous boundary between the inside and the outside, between fantasy and action, the real and hyperreal. Several participants in this study misattributed or, at some level, confused these locations and took very serious actions, constituting sexual offences against children, as if acting in fantasy. This was particularly marked for Liam, Sam and Jason. Liam gave support to Jonah Rimer's suggestion about the deterrent nature of online warnings about CSEM, which "should emphasise the humanity and reality of the child as opposed to the illegality by stating, "Children in child abuse images are real. Remember this. Report this or find help here" (2019, p. 170).

> "However, this was all online, in the sense that outside of being on a computer or being a computer warrior or whatever they call it, I had absolutely no inclination whatsoever for outside of fantasy and online fantasy or whatever you want to call it. There was no, no in any shape or form interest in ever turning theses fantasies into real abuse" (Liam)

Wood (2011, 2014) outlined the appeal of the Internet to the unconscious, including activation of manic defences; invitation to part-object relating; fora for the simultaneous expression and projection of sadistic impulses; the illusion of complete control and a means to transgress a superego experienced by those with core complex anxiety (Glasser, 1996) as

threatening and corrupt. These aspects were live for each of the participants in different ways. Steve, for example, spoke about the excitement of crossing a taboo and the triumph he experienced in testing his boundaries. "*I was almost, oh this is interesting, this is exciting. And that was what drew me in was, it was exciting because it was wrong, it was naughty, it was something different and something I never experienced*". (Steve)

All participants treated the children as part-objects, there to conform to idiosyncratic fantasies to fulfil their needs for sexual gratification and were easily, indeed, automatically discarded post-climax or when the child, the scene or the act did not conform to the desired conscious fantasy. Crucially, this Kleinian relating to the part-object, outlined on page 13 of the literature review, fostered the cognitive distortion that no harm was being done. Part-object relating, characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1946), sees functions, not whole other persons with needs, fears and desires of their own. The demand is that the child, conceived of in this way, should desire what the viewer desires. The child is a vessel for the unconscious projections of the viewer; this is discussed further in the section on unconscious functions of CSEM on page 86 of this chapter.

Both Jason and Greg, for example, only used CSEM when disinhibited through the use of alcohol and drugs. Both described shame and a morning-after type dread of realisation as, for them, the cognitive distortion and part-object relating was transient, and sobriety brought a more reality-oriented, depressive (Klein, 1946) awareness of the harm done. "*But I totally understand; it is real - it's somebody real at the end of the day there". But it was me consuming media online, not physical*". (Jason)

Rimer (2017, 2019), writing from an anthropological perspective, came to a similar conclusion that the characteristics of the online environment, specifically the (wrongly) perceived absence of the societal gaze contributing to a less disciplined environment (Foucault, 1975), allowed users to construct children and childhood differently in that space while holding conventional, Euro-American norms about children in the offline environment. This would be termed within psychoanalysis as a split, the impacts of this defensive mode of relating are outlined in the literature review chapter on page 12.

Participants echoed those in other qualitative studies in that they distanced themselves from harm to children engaging with electronic images rather than real others (Quayle et al., 2000; Rimer, 2019; Winder & Gough, 2010a). Wood (2011) noted the different ego and superego rules that govern internal fantasy, permitting, for example, the rehearsal of more violent and aggressive acts or more sexually deviant enactments. She suggests some

individuals apply the implicit rules regulating fantasy as opposed to those governing real-life actions in the online environment. Steve exemplifies this trait.

> "And I suppose the other stuff that you see about the drunk female on the couch who gets interfered with and that sort of thing. I saw some of that and I thought my god, that's awful but also exciting, what would I do? I wouldn't do it myself, I wouldn't dream of it. In my fantasy, what could I do"? (Steve)

Rimer (2017) asserted that as his participants believed they were anonymous in the online environment, which *apparently* lacks the social gaze, so analysed the association between a feeling of security and anonymity. Applying psychoanalytic insight to the manic relating fostered by the Internet, however, locates this inflated sense of safety with the experience of invulnerability and omnipotence that accompanies this type of relating. Several participants described this past belief in a rueful and self-deprecating tone.

While for many, CSEM use is a solitary activity, for some, interaction with others in groups is an essential aspect of the experience. The functions of these shared, discontinuous, amorphous spaces differ widely across individuals. For example, a taboo fantasy shared may heighten arousal or allay anxiety by normalising the experience. Holt et al.'s (2010) study on paedophile subculture resonated particularly in respect of David and Timothy, both of whom were exclusive in relation to their attraction to children and had a high degree of emotional identification (Hanson et al., 2007). While Timothy found reassurance in the fact that he was not alone in his attraction to young boys, David implicitly understood the potential of such online associations to have heightened his risk to commit a contact offence. *"If one of them said aw well I actually had a contact with a young girl the other day and it was fecking amazing can you imagine my, my response back when I was especially vulnerable at the beginning"*. (David)

Though driven by different unconscious motivations, all other participants used groups randomly to swap images and engage in sex chats. They didn't necessarily consciously identify with other users in any meaningful way. Sam, with some dismay, recalled his uncharacteristic behaviour and his increasing sadistic contributions to chats spurred on by the group, "the more dominating my comments were, the more the others sucked it up and the more they wanted to hear". (Sam)

Freud's (1955) remarks on groups, in regard to regression, characterised by more raw

and uncensored communication, the diminution of intellect, a regression to the lowest common denominator of group mind in favour of *re*action and the dominance of intense affect are apt here. Moving to consider the unconscious function of other users, Sam, though quoted above as dominant in his group communications, also unconsciously sought to distance himself from awareness of his sadism and his attraction to children noting his response to a relatively local user compared to those more geographically distant." *I remember one because it actually came up; the guy I was talking to was form Cork, that's one I remember. And I remember he actually shared really young children*". (Sam)

Jason only ever accessed CSEM as part of group chats. It seemed of profound importance to him, and he restated several times that he never searched for CSEM and located his use only within an App, which he deleted after each use. As stated in the findings section, Jason perhaps needed the group to project and so minimise or even deny his sexual attraction to children. The group *mis*used in this way seems to allow participation in a taboo activity while disavowing personal interest and agency. Greg lost in rage, self-loathing and despair, arguably identified with other users in an act of unconscious self-annihilation. In Wood's terms (2014) his engagement was infused with sadomasochistic undercurrents. It is hoped to illustrate here that the meanings and identifications are individual, fluid and essential to understand in therapeutic engagements.

Unconscious Functions of CSEM

Two core aspects of a psychoanalytic understanding of paraphilia are that it is defensive against anxiety and suffused by hostility and aggression (Glasser, 1996; Stoller, 1977). The meeting of sex and aggression is disturbing, and participants unsurprisingly struggled to identify and locate their aggression. Conscious awareness of the inherent hostility toward the child seemed to be particularly important to disguise. "To elaborate and savour paedophilic fantasies, there would need to be a conscious or unconscious hostility towards the child and perhaps a wish to see the child's own sexual development corrupted" (Wood, 2013, p. 136).

Several participants identified anger as motivating their offending. Transgressing a core societal value, sexualising and sexually harming children seemed to offer an intoxicating mix of power, arousal and triumph to participants who felt angry, disenfranchised and somehow impotent in the real world. "*I was angry at myself for letting it, for giving up really*

for -shame and anger for giving up and not working ...I was angry at everyone for mother being gone…anger and shame". (Greg) "*But it was a lot of built-up anger, pent up frustration, grief*". (Sam)

Participants were conscious of their anger with themselves and with society, but with the exception of an inchoate awareness in Chris (who noted the resonance for him of the anthropological article about the alpha make killing the children), the aggression toward the child was unconscious. Other than to say they were *"sick and disgusting"*, Greg did not disclose the nature of his preferred imagery, perhaps because of shame and the long passage of time since he had been in the mindset to access such imagery. The clinical researcher subsequently became aware of the nature of these images; though not overtly physically violent, the hostility toward the child was extreme and disturbing, reflecting his state of mind at the time. All others expressed a preference for children who *appeared* happy, compliant and unharmed. Such imagery gives expression to a profound lie, thinly disguising the corruption of the child's psyche as well as their body.

Part-objects, perhaps conveniently, warrant no consideration and are suitable to their required function as receptacles for disowned and unwanted aspects of the self, weakness, vulnerability, fear or shame, for example. The child may be idealised or denigrated and brutalised, but in a certain respect, this is all secondary to the core issue - the absence of recognition of their personhood and subjectivity. Qualitative researchers have captured and analysed this indifference from several perspectives.

Rimer, (2019) suggested that children and childhood are socially and historically constructed concepts varying according to temporal, geographical and cultural considerations. He argued that the online context, which fosters distancing and cultural othering, allowed CSEM users to construct children online as not real or less real. Bartels and Merdian (2016) outlined five implicit theories, or distorted core beliefs that contribute to offending, one of these, children as sex objects, illustrates both the cognitive distortion about children as potentially suitable, mutual sexual partners for adults, but just as importantly, the objectification and consequent reduction of the child to an object. Crucially, this separates their function - to provide sexual gratification- from their personhood. Scholars, though arriving at their analysis through application of the conceptual frameworks underlying their respective fields of study, psychoanalysis, anthropology and psychology, for example, it is apparent that emphasising the humanity, subjectivity and separate existence of the child is key to risk management and the reduction of offending.

A core question, therefore, is how to achieve this. From an object relations perspective, psychoanalysis offers that people oscillate between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, explained in the literature review chapter page 12, often defensively. Understanding the anxiety, typically concerned with relationships and intimacy, or the inability to contain intense affect, and making this available to the client is an essential aspect of this approach. This clinical researcher would support Rimer's (2019) suggestion to alter the online warnings in relation to CSEM, emphasising that the children are real instead of the action being illegal. This is in keeping with qualitative findings on the different strategies CSEM offenders use to distance themselves from the real child (Bartels & Merdian, 2016; Kettleborough & Merdian, 2017; Leonard, 2010; Quayle et al., 2000; Quayle & Taylor, 2002; Rimer, 2019; Winder & Gough, 2010).

Moreover, applying a psychoanalytic lens that seeks to understand the unconscious meanings of paraphilic enactments would suggest that for some, the illegality warning might encourage rather than deter the behaviour. Similarly, Williams (2005), from a behavioural lens, suggested that warnings, if experienced as an impingement on freedom, might be counterproductive and increase desire for the relevant activity. She suggested that a more neutral message might be more effective acting as a deterrent without provoking a defensive psychological response. Prichard et al. (2022) in a honey pot study of 419 young man aged 18-36 promising 'Barely Legal' pornography, however, found stronger support for deterrence messaging than harm messaging. Deterrence messaging warns of legal consequences and tracking of IP addresses whereas harm messaging emphasises harm to self or the individual in the image. The difference with findings here could be explained by the small number in this qualitative study, or the fact that all participants had committed the offence of viewing CSEM, suggesting a level of deviance, while Prichard and colleagues were looking at a general population of young men who clicked on a Get Fit website. Another possibility is that participants here retrospectively applied the insights of therapy regarding victim empathy so explaining the salience of this concept in their narratives.

Returning to the core complex (Glasser, 1996) the superego, representing the internalised values of society/ parental authority, for the person suffering from core complex anxiety, may be experienced as corrupt, threatening and potentially engulfing. Such individuals feel compelled to challenge authority and thwart the menacing internal object. The law of the land, by contrast, holds a relatively minor threat. Given the incredibly broad heterogeneity of CSEM users and their relative vulnerabilities, core complex anxiety would likely only feature in those individuals with the most deep-seated intra-psychic difficulties.

Altering the warning would, however, support CSEM users along the continuum of severity

New Associations

In the main (and along with many other functions), my academic supervisors contributed to rigour, ensuring that the analysis was faithful to the transcript. They also, at times, added their associations, which naturally reflected their subjectivity and academic orientations. In the following section, I elaborate and attempt to integrate some of these ideas alongside my new associations. This was interesting from a reflexive perspective: when writing on neuroscience and addiction, for example, which arose from my associative process, I found it easy to integrate and situate the ideas with my findings. The associations of my supervisors were new and outside my organic process. Learning about these concepts, the Lacanian ideas on desire, Batille's conception of the limit experience and the difference between animal and human moral development, for example, and applying them to the findings was enjoyable, as learning new ideas tends to be. The degree to which I could fully integrate them is open to question. I was conscious of a compromise between a more integrated position and including rich ideas, which are as valid as my interpretations and which may well resonate more easily or fully with readers. Furthermore, the inclusion of the associations of the only two other people who read the full interview transcripts aligns with a more thorough discursive approach.

A psychoanalytic lens was the primary tool used for data analysis. However, part of this associative process made organic links to concepts from other fields of study or other schools of psychoanalysis. These concepts are explicated here. In order to limit a potentially exponential associative spiral, only those associations that linked directly to participant data are discussed.

The disturbance caused by recognition of the apparent objects of paedophilic desire, sexualised children, is so great that inquiry may end at this point, creating a full stop which fails to apply the conceptual frameworks that apply to, for example, desire in general, which might deepen understanding.

Participants, Billy, Chris and Jason, explicitly described extended cycles of searching, unsatiated or briefly satiated need before the wanting process began again. O' Neill (2015) outlines a Lacanian understanding of desire which designates satisfaction, by definition, as impossible due to the lack or absence at the core of desire, that is, one cannot desire what one already has. While this understanding of lack and desire is both wholly

individual/idiosyncratic and universal, it is pertinent here to ask why, given the plethora and specificity of material available, the immediacy of attainment and the expanse of time devoted to CSEM use, this activity did not adequately satisfy or fulfil their needs. The Lacanian perspective distinguishes between need and desire, both of which represent a lack/absence in the human subject. Need within this conceptual framework is understood as biologically driven and temporarily satiable, whereas desire is always unattainable, the gap an essential constituent of the experience of desire "exceeding anything endeavouring its satisfaction" (O' Neill, 2015, p. 164). It seems perhaps that CSEM may have met a biological/ sexual need for climax or release but nevertheless left desire unmet and arguably more inflamed.

Fonagy (2008) outlined a conceptual model where healthy sex represented a meeting of bodies and minds. He and Target (2007) noted empirically the endemic absence of maternal mirroring of infantile sexual experience and the consequent inherent dysregulation of sexual experience. Writing mainly about a male perspective and experience, healthy sex, he suggests, is pleasurable because it entails the partner accepting and containing something of the enigmatic, alien nature of sexuality, which crucially, can be taken back and reinternalised post-orgasm. In this model, the sexual partner takes up where the mother left off in supporting the regulation of affect and integration of self through adequate, accurate mirroring. Unsatisfying sex lacks this unconscious connection; what is externalised cannot be reinternalised, either because the content is too disturbing or because the other has been unable to metabolise the experience. In this instance, the psychosexual tension remains unresolved. This offers one explanation for the unsatisfying nature of CSEM, and likely, Internet sex in general.

Sweet (2014), writing about what he terms the mediated self, that is, a type of object representation of the self, arising from the repeated projection of aspects of the self into computer-based media, suggests that the process for vulnerable individuals mirrors the early mother-infant projective and introjective cycle. However, fundamental differences lead to regression and decompensation. The Internet though seductive in terms of its power, is wholly inhuman, lacking not just empathy but all affect. There is no interpersonal connection; the individual can manically and omnipotently control the virtual environment, "the machine mother" Irwin 2011, cited in Sweet (2014). However, projections into this machine mother remain unmetabolised, so unavailable for re-introjection leading to impoverishment and the potential breakdown of ego functioning. Although Sweet believes this mediated self may feature more in individuals with severe/psychotic disturbance, his comments on the

unconscious projection of aspects of the self into virtual objects, absent any capacity for containment taken together with Fonagy's (2008), psychosexual model and the findings of this study offer an explanation for the compulsive use of CSEM.

CSEM: A Neuroscience Perspective

An additional and complementary perspective arises within the addiction discourse and scholarship, including findings in neuroscience. Eight participants described an escalation from legal pornography to the use of CSEM. For Jason, CSEM was the endpoint in searches for pornography with "*no limits*", while Liam, Greg, Sam and Chris all named compulsive use of pornography as a precipitating factor to their offending. Billy moved beyond offering escalation as a context to explicitly naming his offending as an addiction. His narrative was peppered with language common to drug addiction; *"you keep looking for your next fix*", for example. Billy showed insight into the impact of pornography addiction on his brain chemistry "*you listen to scientists talk about it and doctors talk about it , they say when you are addicted to pornography and sex that your brain resembles a cocaine or a heroin addict*" (Billy)

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine

> Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviours (*Public Policy Statement: Definition of Addiction*, 2011, p. 1)

Technological advances over the last two decades have led to an expanding empirical base supporting the similarity, at the level of neural circuitry, between the compulsive use of Internet pornography and substance addiction (Love et al., 2015). Dopamine is the neurotransmitter connected to the experience of pleasure. It follows a path through the brain interacting with other brain regions: the amygdala, relating to emotions, the hippocampus, connected to long-term memory, and the frontal cortex, relating to behaviour and executive control functions, linking allied circuits into a reward system. A high is experienced with the release of dopamine in the Nucleus Accumbens region, aptly referred to as the pleasure centre of the brain. Neuroscience has been able to map and explain the cycle of addiction familiar to those who suffer from addictions and the clinicians who treat them. Stages

including intoxication; the shift for impulsive to compulsive behaviour; positive and negative reinforcement; withdrawal; preoccupation, and chronic seeking have all been described in the language of neural circuits, the activation of particular brain regions, increases and decreases in neuro-receptors that interact and are altered, sometimes temporarily, by compulsive pornography use (Volkow et al., 2011).

In the simplest and paired back terms, over time, dopamine levels reduce, leading to reduced reward and increased tolerance, known as desensitisation. More intense stimulation is required to experience the same high. Additional brain regions associated with memory, motivation, self-regulation and executive functioning become impaired (Brand et al., 2014). Reduced grey matter reflects the loss of nerve cells and connections; in the prefrontal cortex, this implies a corresponding loss of capacity to exercise willpower, evaluate the long-term consequences of actions, and weigh long term consequences against short term satisfaction. This is noteworthy as the capacity to manage triggers such as environmental cues, a fundamental capacity to regain behavioural control over Internet use, relies on these same prefrontal processes, which have been depleted.

Sensitisation is essential to consider in regard to CSEM use, particularly for those users who report no sexual attraction to children offline or in fantasy, i.e. outside of the porn stimulus. A protein called DeltaFosB is released with the pleasure-seeking neurotransmitter dopamine. This protein functions to activate processes that physically and chemically alter the brain's reward circuits to recall and repeat the action that triggered the dopamine surge (Nestler, 2008). Human brains evolved to respond to five natural rewards: food, sex, love, friendship and novelty (Wilson, 2014).

Novelty is particularly important to consider as the Internet algorithms are designed to exploit the workings of our reward centre and keep us searching, buying, craving, and in the case of internet porn, masturbating. Porn sites show dozens of thumbnail sketches of hardcore, explicit material per page, and drop-down menus list increasingly varied, obscure, violent and taboo genres to explore. Sensitisation happens when the brain's pleasure centre, through the activation of DeltaFosB, rewires to remember that particular imagery was linked to the dopamine surge that accompanies orgasm. In this way, the imagery itself may be shaping and conditioning content that the individual finds arousing (Brom et al., 2014). This would potentially have significant import to the treatment of a subset of CSEM users for whom arousal to children may be transitory.

One neuroscience study that resonated with the findings of this study, most clearly articulated by Billy, explored the difference between wanting and liking. "*It became*

something that I didn't want anything to do with anymore. I thought it was completely disgusting" (Billy)

Billy and others, including Jason, Liam and Greg, echoed the participants in one of the first studies to use fMRI [8] Imagery comparing the neural response of people with compulsive sexual behaviour to healthy participants to sexually explicit imagery. Voon, Mole, and colleagues (2014) found that the participants with compulsive sexual behaviour indicated a higher arousal (wanting) response but lower liking response to the explicit imagery. The same study showed a mirroring in the neural pathways activated of compulsive Internet pornography and substance abuse.

Foreshadowing this research, but grounding their study in an understanding of the functioning of what they called the 'appetite systems in the brain' which had evolved to increase motivation during times of opportunity, Ariely and Lowenstein (2006) explored the impact of sexual arousal on decision making. Individuals experiencing high sexual arousal were likely to find a broader range of sexual activities and partners exciting. In the non-aroused condition, the mean score for participants asked about possible attraction to a 12-year-old girl was 23; this increased to 46 in the aroused state.

Laier and colleagues (2013) experimented with cards with pornographic images and found that sexual arousal interfered with cognitive functions. Moreover, the hot/cold empathy gap (Gilbert et al., 2002; Loewenstein et al., 1997, 2003), that is, the underestimation of the impact of states of arousal on decision making, suggests that individuals are ill-prepared and misjudge the potential strength of such influences on their behaviour. The findings of neuroscience, charting the neural changes and correlates of addiction across human subjects, compliment the psychoanalytic concepts which illustrate and offer an explanation as to why for some individuals, higher tolerance requiring higher stimulation, correlated with a reduction of grey matter in the Nucleus Accumbens/reward centre, for example, takes the particular form of CSEM.

An allied concept relevant to understanding the potentially addictive nature of pornography is that of supernormal stimuli borrowed from the work of Nobel prize-winning biologist Nikolass Tinbergen. He studied cues that triggered instincts, including aggression, mating and nurturing in several species. Once he identified the relevant, evolutionarily determined cue, he found in a series of experiments that animals automatically exhibited a

[8] Function Magnetic Resonance Imaging measures minute changes in cerebral blood flow, which correlate with neural activities.

preference and responded to exaggerated versions of this trait. For example, male butterflies ignored live females to mate with a brightly painted cardboard version, birds ignored their lightly dappled eggs to sit on luminous dayglow versions, while fish, triggered by the colour red, ignored in-tank threats to respond to passing red double-decker buses on an outside street. Porn, a supernormal stimulus, overtakes the human instinct to mate with another human, entailing shared intimacy, connection, and *risk* in favour of the solitary, and for some vulnerable individuals, the addictive activity of masturbation.

The Cultural Context

Finally, it may be helpful to explore possible meanings of individual's offending behaviour within a cultural/societal context. Chris referenced the anthropological article about alpha males in animal groups killing the offspring of other males. This makes evolutionary sense in terms of success if success is understood as ensuring the survival of one's genetic line. While the clinical researcher interpreted this as a pre-conscious awareness of his hostility towards the child/ren in the imagery, one of the academic supervisors pointed out that Chris dismissed the inherent differences in moral capacity between animals and humans.

The nature of this difference has been of concern to philosophers for two millennia. Aristotle, cited in Ayala (2010), referred to Homo sapiens as Homo moralis, implying that morality is a fundamental and distinguishing attribute of being human. For interested readers, Ayala (2010) provides an incisive account of the evolutionary development of morality in humans, relying on our marked superior intelligence compared to other animals. If we accept, without delineating the philosophical and sociobiological arguments, that humans have a unique capacity for moral reasoning, it is relevant to understand the breach of the core cultural and moral code that child sexual abuse involves.

French philosopher and essayist George Bataille (Fuchs, 2009) wrote about the reinforcing interrelationship between transgression and taboo. A taboo, which could be considered as a core cultural rule, would be unnecessary were it not for individuals' propensities to break such taboos. Breaking a taboo and so courting risk and danger can be tempting. This is perhaps easiest (and less unsettling) to note in children’s excitement at breaking parental rules. Bataille points to the irrationality of this as rationally, what should be pleasurable to us would not potentially expose us to suffering and punishment.

The concept of the limit experience offers one explanation; that point of experience where horror and ecstasy are indistinguishable from one another the point at which the

capacity to name and comprehend experience breaks down resonated with study narratives, particularly those where the addiction discourse was most prominent, Jason, Greg and Billy. They described a frantic search, never quite attaining satisfaction, which makes sense if what they were searching, and not finding, a limit experience; something to ultimately take them out of themselves to disrupt and suspend for a time the burden of selfhood (Baumeister, 1991). Orgasm 'le petit mort' or little death in French arguably approaches a limit experience, as does pain, lack of sleep, mysticism and some forms of religious asceticism. “I would inhale cigarettes, I would never be able to give them up. The same with alcohol; once I started drinking, I'd drink and drink and drink. I have this kind of compulsion to keep doing it” (Jason)

Ethical considerations

Therapeutic work with child sex offenders is clinically and ethically complex. This work often happens in a particular context aimed at managing risk and reducing recidivism. Furthermore, it happens within a particular societal and cultural context, and legislative framework. This clinical researcher works in Ireland, where relevant legislation includes the Children First Act 2015 and the Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Person’s Act 2012 (Ireland, 2012). Psychotherapists are mandated persons with a duty to report all allegations and disclosures of child sex abuse by either a victim/survivor or a perpetrator to the child protection authorities and to report disclosures from offenders to the police. Confidentiality, foundational to ethical therapeutic practice, is eroded from the off.

Glaser (2010) argues that work with offenders compromises traditional ethical codes to such an extent that treatment should be conceived of as a type of punishment. This, he argues, arises because the primary focus of community safety takes precedence over the needs of the forensic client. Levenson and Prescott (2010) refute this position highlighting the intention of interventions as rehabilitative rather than punitive, and suggest that a carefully orchestrated and considered balance is possible. Concomitant with this is the marked countertransference responses sometimes elicited in work with this cohort, including feelings of disgust, ambivalence, anger, punitive or retaliatory fantasies, and among other emotional currents, a feeling of being deceived (Friedrich & Leiper, 2006).

Ethical practise demands meticulous attention to the intersection of one's countertransference with the societal othering of those who commit sexual offences and the particular forensic treatment context where collaborative work is the norm. This attentiveness

is vital to ensure some of the dynamics of offending, the inappropriate use of power, or the evacuation of uncomfortable feelings, for example, are not unconsciously enacted in the therapeutic relationship, so causing further harm.

I have noted my clinical work (and that of colleagues) that feelings of anger and thoughts of punishments seem to be more salient in instances where there is no criminal case against the accused and, therefore, an absence of consequences for the harm caused. Perhaps, the criminal justice system acts a as a container for some therapists to project their retaliatory feelings. The absence of this container may increase the likelihood of disturbance in the countertransference, so requiring additional care and vigilance.

Up to this point, the term unconscious has been used to refer to the psychoanalytic understanding of the concept, that is, that mental contents are unconscious because they are somehow disturbing, so cause conflict and become repressed. Other fields, such as neuroscience, use the term differently, and arguably more simply, to refer to contents that have not reached a threshold of our conscious awareness. Experiments apparently illustrating that the neural pathways related to action, for example, precede the conscious awareness of a decision to take those actions have led philosophers to question the idea of free will. This is important because the allied concepts of moral and criminal responsibility rest on notions of choice and the capacity to have acted differently. Taken to an extreme, this position may suggest that what is experienced as free will is illusory. Such arguments, though academically interesting, seem to this clinical researcher to be removed from our day-to-day common-sense experience and the enduring harm caused to victims of abuse.

It is widely accepted, however, that brain integrity is integral to choice, decision making, and in the forensic area, culpability. A person suffering from Alzheimer's disease or particular brain tumours, for example, would not be held accountable for their behaviour no matter how serious the crime. It may be important to consider to what degree if any, the findings on the brain changes/impairments of the studies in neuroscience discussed in the section on Internet addiction on page 87 should influence ideas of responsibility and accountability. It is notable that although several participants in this study described compulsive use of CSEM, which they seemed to experience as beyond their control, they were all able to stop after the police raid. Indeed, some participants described a feeling of relief mixed with fear and shame. It appears, therefore, that with sufficient motivation, the behaviour is controllable, at least in the short term.

Responsibility is perhaps context-specific, and the resonances and applications differ between clinical and legal settings. Child sexual abuse is a serious crime causing enduring, sometimes life-altering and lifelong impacts on innocent victims. Those who commit such offences know they are breaking the law and, barring rare and exceptional cases, are, in the opinion of their clinical researcher, legally responsible for their actions. It is often the case that those who have committed such offences enter treatment on an involuntary basis if ordered to do so by the Court or motivated by external factors, pressure from child protection authorities or from family after a disclosure, for example. Navigating an individual's environmental, internal, conscious and unconscious, and increasingly, neural precipitants and correlates to their offending behaviour is a complex endeavour. Supporting those who have offended to understand and take responsibility for their behaviour in the context of cognitive distortions that seek to justify and minimise their offending is like walking therapeutic tightrope with the ever-present risk of collusive or retaliatory enactments.

Summary and Conclusion

While the findings chapter presented one interpretation that offered coherence to each narrative, this chapter sought to expand on particular aspects of the findings and situate these within the relevant literature. While, as expected, much of this reflected the scholarship outlined in the literature review, links to new literature and ideas surfaced through the associative process, the fundamental method of this study. Key questions explored: the relationship between paedophilia and CSEM; the appeal of the Internet to the unconscious; the unconscious functions of CSEM; paraphilia as defence, and the neuroscience of compulsive use of Internet pornography.

Many of the ideas expressed from fields of psychoanalysis, psychology and neuroscience complemented one another and offered rich ideas that could support therapeutic understanding and risk management. One core idea expressed in the literature by Rimer (2019) and in this study by the participant Liam was the importance of emphasising the child's humanity, subjectivity, wholeness, and realness. The title of the study, 'The ‘Virtual’ Child’, conceived of before data gathering or reading Rimer’s (2019) study, points to this clinical researcher’s alignment with this position. While this could represent a bias in the analysis, it, hopefully, points to an intuitive and grounded agreement on the importance of understanding and challenging a frequently expressed cognitive distortion about harm to children. The psychoanalytic understanding of the part-object (Klein, 1946) indeed manic (Segal, 2018) relating fuelled by the appeal of the scale, malleability and power of the

Internet to the unconscious was central to data analysis and a lens through which other studies were read.

Each participant described highly individualised and idiosyncratic functions of their CSEM use. While the most relatively straightforward and intuitive function was sexual arousal, this was accompanied by a range of unconscious motivations and functions, apparent through contradictions and shifting identifications and projections, with and into other users or the children themselves. Awareness of the inherent hostility towards the child was vigorously defended against. The findings aimed to present individual narratives in sufficient depth to uncover and contextualise the particular unconscious functions of CSEM use for each participant and link these to relevant psychoanalytic clinically derived concepts.

Findings in neuroscience on the impact of addiction and compulsive pornography use (Brand et al., 2014; Volkow et al., 2011; Voon et al., 2014) dovetailed with the concept of paedophilic breakdown proffered by Wood (2022) offering an explanation as to why for some users the impact of pornography addiction and Internet sex devolves into CSEM use. The Internet seems to have the capacity to condition arousal (Brom et al., 2014; Wilson, 2014). Whether it uncovers a latent/repressed sexual current in vulnerable individuals or contributes to the creation and concentration of sexual interest children is an important consideration. As explored in the section on CSEM and paedophilia, this may have important implications for risk management and the question as to whether paedophilic arousal may be transitory. Tinbergen's (1948) work identifying the supernormal stimulus, research into novelty and sexual arousal at the behavioural and neural levels and the unfortunate exploitation of this by tech companies designing algorithms to maximise profit contribute to understanding the addictive potential and appeal of Internet sex (Wilson, 2014).

Finally, it is arguably impossible to separate scholarship or clinical work in this area from the ethical minefield that permeates the issue. For example, strong countertransference responses (Friedrich & Leiper, 2006) may unconsciously influence the ethical dilemmas involved in balancing the forensic client's best interests with the primary goal of risk management and child protection. Furthermore, philosophers are interpreting advances in neuroscience, exploring volition to question free will. Though these ideas were beyond the scope of this study, the clinical researcher was aware of the potential for the use of the term addiction, for example, to be used as a rationalisation for offending.

This chapter situated interpretations and associations to the data that are relevant and grounded in ideas stretching from ideas in neuroscience to philosophy. This runs contrary to the seductive certainty and clarity offered by the quantitative paradigm. Human subjects are

complex, irrational and often act in opposition to their best interests. In psychotherapy, two (or more in the case of group therapy) unique and flawed subjectivities meet and sometimes, when the conscious and unconscious interconnections and exchange allows, a relationship forms where profound change can happen. This ineffable quality cannot be manufactured and mass-produced; it must be nurtured in the therapeutic encounter. The challenge when providing a therapeutic intervention aimed at risk reduction is to marry the learning from the empirically derived evidence base, which necessarily guides intervention without losing sight of the unique resonance and meaning of enactments of offending behaviour for the individual. In this way, increased complexity and dynamic interpretations, rather than being a barrier, open up and deepen reflective space. Psychoanalytically, thinking occurs in place of action, and particularly in the context of child sexual abuse, thought and pause are immeasurably preferable to action.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter makes explicit the potential implications and contributions of the study findings to clinical practice, theoretical understanding and policy. The study is evaluated against Yardley's (2000) four broad criteria: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and, impact and importance. A critique of the Free Association Narrative Interview Method (FANIM) as it applies to this work is offered. Comments on researcher reflexivity and whether this can be considered under the term countertransference are presented. Countertransference, a fundamental psychoanalytic concept used to uncover and offer meaning, is germane to the critique of the alignment of psychoanalysis with psychosocial studies, a scaffold upon which the FANIM rests. The chapter concludes with a succinct recap of the main points of the thesis.

Psychoanalytic Understanding: A Bridge Between Studies

One of the studies that stayed with the clinical researcher was that of Buschman et al. (2010) who found on use of a polygraph that offenders had under-reported the severity of the imagery viewed, whether they masturbated to the imagery, and for 55 percent of participants, their admission to having committed a contact offence. While the study was based on a relatively small sample of 38 participants the methodology was persuasive and fit with clinical experience. Conversely, the findings on neuroscience and compulsive pornography use degenerating into CSEM led the clinical researcher to question whether such users' needs were best met on an intervention programme for child sex offenders. Essentially, the Buschman study (2010) might imply an increased risk and a higher incidence or intensity of paedophilic orientation while the latter studies raise the question of whether paedophilic attraction is the core clinical and risk management issue.

Exploring the unconscious motivations and defences of CSEM users may offer a point of suture between these positions, particularly when combined with an assessment of empirically generated criminogenic factors (Hanson et al., 2007). The most unconscious or defended against awareness for participants in this study was the hostility or inherent aggression toward the child. A core scaffold of this defence was the denial that the children were real. Classical psychoanalytic texts (Freud, 1927; Glasser, 1996; Glover, 1933; Stoller, 1977) outline the defensive functions of paraphilias in respect of an inadequately internalised superego. The superego, understood as arising when the child accepts the values, prohibitions and norms of their parents acts as a conscience or moral guide. In healthy individuals (and societies) the superego represents an identification with societies moral code. For participants

struggling with a paraphilic disorder, the illegality of the activity, representing at a deeper level transgression of a taboo, offered an intoxicating mix of pleasure and power (sometimes, for those less divorced from reality, followed by shame and anxiety). It may, therefore, be more effective to deliberately highlight the individuality, humanity and subjectivity of the children, per Rimer's (2019) suggestion, while downplaying the illegality of the activity. This might address both conscious and unconscious psychic elements.

Only two of the nine participants acknowledged, albeit to different degrees, the desire for offline sexual contact with a child. Neither participant held the cognitive distortion that children weren't real. These participants had a paedophilic sexual preference and perhaps without intervention, were more likely to contact offend. Crucially, however, neither had antisocial traits outside their CSEM use.

Support was found for the concept of paedophilic breakdown proffered by Wood (Wood, 2011, 2022) which both offers explanation as to the burgeoning numbers of men viewing CSEM, relative to the one percent who acknowledge a sexual preference for children (Dombert et al., 2016). Furthermore, it challenges a binary, immutable idea of paedophilia. With the exception of the two participants, described in the paragraph above, who suggested a more enduring and possibly invariant paedophilic orientation, all others spoke with some level of dismay about their CSEM use. While one of the remaining seven had initially been introduced to the concept of CSEM through a sex chat line, when presumably he would have been aroused, the other six all described an escalation or in Wood's terms a regression into CSEM through compulsive use of increasingly extreme pornography.

Psychoanalysis has a vital contribution to make, illuminating the appeal of Internet sex to the unconscious. This study has offered an insight into the range of unique, unconscious, defensive functions of CSEM. Contributions from the field of neuroscience on addiction (Brand et al., 2014; Brom et al., 2014; Nestler, 2008; Volkow et al., 2011) and earlier studies (Ariely & Loewenstein, 2006) on the impact of sexual arousal offer important insights into the potential of imagery coupled with our in-built responses to novelty to shape preferences. What compulsive pornography users seek is not necessarily what they like (Voon et al., 2014). Vulnerable individuals, that is, those with high sexual preoccupation (Hanson et al., 2007), those sexualised as children (Henshaw et al., 2017; Wood, 2013), those with core complex anxiety (Glasser, 1996) and adolescents (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2013) beware the heady mix of dopamine and Internet sex. The resulting cascade of neurochemical, psychic and behavioural changes that heralds compulsive use of pornography is difficult to halt without external intervention.

All nine participants here only stopped their offending after a police raid. Interestingly, several expressed relief as this had been the shock and reality-check they needed to stop offending. The breakdown of ego defences and a regression to paedophilic fantasies and enactments is, it seems, not an uncommon outcome. Awareness and education, perhaps with a variety of brief case study examples to illustrate the broad heterogeneity of those who begin offending through compulsive use of pornography may be important in terms of primary prevention.

To return to Buschman et al.'s (2010) polygraph study, it may still be vital to keep in mind that those who present for therapy minimise their offences and may have complex attachments, conscious and unconscious, to their narratives. Measures such as the sexual behaviour checklist (Buschman, Bogaerts, et al., 2010; Holden, 2000; Sosnowski & Wilcox, 2001; Wilcox, 2000), administered intermittently would note alteration in responses over time. This would give information at a behavioural level. However, allowing adequate space for clients to elaborate their narrative, listening to the contradictions and reflecting on one's countertransference response potentially offers a deeper, more personalised insight inclusive of unconscious dynamics that fuel offending, so supporting risk management.

Quality

Sensitivity to Context

The literature reviewed during the initial stages of this study included key quantitative and qualitative studies as well as relevant psychoanalytic clinical literature, representing breadth and depth in providing a theoretical context and basis for this study. The clinical researcher is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist with a thorough theoretical and clinical knowledge of the British Independent Object Relations School of psychoanalysis which formed the philosophical underpinning of the study. The FANIM in turn, which draws on Kleinian object relations to explain the defended subject was a suitable and sympathetic method which allowed for the production of rich data. Interpretations, though informed by psychoanalytic clinical theory, were primarily guided by the narratives provided.

The shame associated with sexual offending coupled with the fact that participants were involved in a therapeutic programme related to their offending may have led to socially desirable responding. However, the method, in exploring contradictions and seeking to make sense of the narrative as a whole, mitigates this as the unconscious reveals itself through the

associative process. It was possible to make links between the findings and scholarship from fields of psychology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience and anthropology.

Commitment and rigour

The data gathering and analysis phase of the study took place over an 11-month period between February 2021 and December 2021. Each narrative was analysed over a period of two weekends; however, the narrative was often in the back of the clinical researcher's mind in the intervening time. This allows for revision and deepening of early interpretations to improve coherence. Moreover, as the clinical researcher has worked clinically in the area of sexual abuse for twenty years, the week days punctuating the analysis were spent immersed in relevant clinical or supervisory work.

The clinical researcher sent the full verbatim transcript and her completed analysis to her clinical supervisors, who were in a position to comment on the faithfulness of the analysis to the transcript, adding rigour. This checking does not negate the possibility, indeed probability that each of the supervisors, coming for their subjective position, would have interpreted the transcript differently. It simply offers a layer of transparency to the audit trial. A map for each participant was provided detailing the associative links to the raw data and relevant literature. David's map is included for illustration in Appendix D on page127. The interpretations offered coherence to the complete narrative, and moved well beyond surface or common-sense understandings of the data.

Transparency and coherence

It is perhaps for the reader to judge the clarity of the written presentation. In terms of coherence, there is a strong alignment between the FANIM and the research question and the psychoanalytic philosophical underpinnings to this study. All aspects and stages of the data collection and analysis processes have been detailed. Key decision points, such as the choice to include two pilot interviews in the analysis were clearly set out in detail, see the reflexive note on page 40, for example. Reflexive comments were included in dialogue boxes in order to provide insight into the clinical researcher's deliberation at certain points and to allow the reader to judge potential bias, see the comment on page 63 in respect of Chris, for example.

Impact and importance

The clinical researcher's personal aim in undertaking this study was to support in-depth psychotherapeutic work with CSEM offenders as core to child protection and risk management. This entails marrying an understanding of the unique individual unconscious motivations that aggravate offending with the empirically generated and accepted criminogenic factors validated through quantitative inquiry (Hanson et al., 2007). This study has provided an empirical basis for the rich clinically derived psychoanalytic conceptualisations which offer a crucial and complementary lens to deepen understanding of CSEM offenders.

New learning from the analysis of those narratives describing compulsive pornography use and on-going arousal to a variety of paraphilic imagery, coupled with findings on neuroscience, for example, led the clinical researcher to question whether a subset of CSEM offenders might be misplaced on a programme for child sex offenders. This led to a conversation with an organisation doing allied work in the UK, reassurance that they had noticed a similar pattern, and the decision on the clinical researcher's part to begin to incorporate this pattern of pornography use, alongside other factors when determining client's therapeutic and risk needs.

The unique contribution of this study is the provision of nine detailed psychoanalytically interpreted narratives of CSEM offenders showing both typical and divergent presentation, where a paucity of such data exists. The dawning realisation is that, outside of clinical practice in the agency where the clinical researcher works, this study will have little impact unless it is published and available to other practitioners to read. Therefore, it seems that impact may, in the first instance, be indelibly linked with whether a publication is achieved, a question that cannot yet be answered.

Critique

Two levels of criticism are important to consider: the first relates to the FANIM itself, which sits at what some see as an uneasy conjunction of psychoanalysis and social research in the field of psychosocial research; the second relates to the application of the FAMIM in this study. For interested readers Frosh & Baraitser (2008b) provide a clear, thorough and balanced account. The writers of the aforementioned paper set out the irreducible differences between the Lacanian and Object Relations Schools of psychoanalysis and the respective views of the unconscious arising within those theoretical positions. As the clinical researcher

explained on page 12 of the literature review, this study falls within the British Object Relations tradition, reflecting her training and orientation, therefore, this critique relates to challenges levelled at that position. The second line of criticism, omitted here, concerns language and is more fitting to a Lacanian lens and the psychosocial field.

Many social researchers view the individual subject as socially constituted and embedded. There are, therefore, suspicious of psychoanalysis which both individualises the subject and prioritises the internal, indeed the unconscious psychic experience of the subject. The first criticism, from discursive psychologists and sociologists (and Lacanian psychoanalysts) is whether a permanent or stable unconscious exists and to what extent, if any, this is influenced by the social, the outside as it were. The second principal criticism relates to the top-down, expert interpretative stance which purports a deeper insight into subjects than they, themselves possess (Wetherell, 2005). A third criticism is the distance between the psychoanalytic consulting room and the research interview and the validity of applying the concepts used in one, countertransference, for example, to the other. Each criticism is addressed in turn.

One: It was not the clinical researcher's aim to persuade or conscript readers into the British Object Relations School of psychoanalysis. Affinity with this tradition was acknowledged and the key language, concepts and understandings of psychological processes were explained as simply as possible. Data collection and analysis was coherent and consistent with these underpinnings.

Two: This is an important consideration in relation to power as, although each participant told their story and structured their narrative in their individual way, outside of this they had no input and could not comment on the fit or otherwise of the clinical researcher's interpretations. Indeed, the clinical researcher was aware that some participants may have found the interpretations unsettling or disturbing. A disturbed response doesn't necessarily invalidate an interpretation, however, and in certain respects a marked emotional response is corroborative. Interpretations are more likely wide of the mark when they do not resonate at all and this method did not allow for the inclusion of participant reflections on the analysis.

This is a limitation, but perhaps a necessary one as participants agreed to offer a narrative account, not subject themselves to insights, correct or otherwise, that they did not seek. Several participants asked to be notified when the thesis was available on DORAS the Dublin City University catalogue of theses, so they may yet read the analysis of their accounts. Ethically, however, this seems of a different order to asking participants to read the

accounts as part of the study. Psychoanalytic interpretations are generally offered in a clinical setting and the clinical researcher was prompted to ask whether she would offer the particular interpretations clinically. The answer was in the affirmative, but with the caveat that tone of voice, intent and the therapeutic relationship are fundamental to containment. Furthermore, interpretations in this study (and in the clinical researcher's work in general) are intended to offer rather than confer meaning. Each analysis offers coherence to the narrative as a whole; this does not exclude the possibility of other equally valid interpretations.

Three: Reflexivity and countertransference – are they the same thing? Frosh & Baraitser (2008b) argue no, due to the difference in context between therapy and research whereas Holloway and Jefferson (2000) counter in the affirmative because the researcher is using their own responses and experiences to inform analysis and make sense of the data. Having completed this study, this clinical researcher's view is that they are allied, but different. They are used for different purposes. For example, the clinical researcher's countertransference, moment to moment, in the interview with Steve was core to understanding and interpreting the unconscious intersubjective dynamic between them. This countertransference response outlined in Steve's pen portrait on page 44 aimed to provide the reader with information to give context to decisions made in respect of the direction of the interview. Reflexivity, in this study, refers to the broad engagement of the clinical researcher with the topic of CSEM, within the societal and cultural context in which she works as well as reflections on decisions taken at particular points. Countertransference refers to specific, relationship-embedded, inter-subjective responses to the participant and their narrative.

Research questions and data collected.

On the one hand, it seems fair to describe the data collected as rich and thick. Participants spoke with relative fluency and openness about their engagement with CSEM, and even where they did not, the FANIM and associative analytic process allowed for the uncovering of unconscious strands and influences. On the other hand, two types of further information would, in hindsight, have been helpful. The clinical researcher noted the first as the absence, in some interviews, of any family background and early-life information, which often informs psychoanalytic interpretations. Secondly, an academic supervisor referred several times to the vagueness or absence in regard to the specific material viewed. The clinical researcher understood this as a comment on the sexual fantasy or 'compelling scenario' (Wood, 2011).

Perhaps there is a tension between the decision to ask one single question aimed at producing a narrative (SQUIN) (Wengraf, 2001) and a range of open questions. It would, nevertheless, have been possible to have a follow up question toward the end asking about early life. This would not have interrupted the narrative and might have provided important information helpful to interpretation. Furthermore, participants would likely have been happy to provide this information.

The second point in relation to sexual fantasy is more difficult and would have required asking this question more specifically than "Can you describe please what types of images you preferred and tell me about what drew you to those particular images"? which aimed to illicit this information. The clinical researcher remains unaware, 'unconscious' of her reticence to probe this area further. It may relate to the deeply personal nature or such fantasies, her clinical experience that it takes many months or sometimes years before clients feel comfortable to share this, or a wish on her part to avoid potentially disturbing content. Perhaps, in addition to the deeply personal nature of such fantasies, participants wish to protect their potency.

The significance or otherwise of the compelling scenario to risk management has yet to be determined. This information, treated like the manifest content of a dream, may have allowed the uncovering of latent meanings in relation to defence (Coen, 1981; Wood, 2013). Finally, perhaps because each narrative and the intersubjective experience between the participant and the clinical researcher captured is unique, the analysis is not equally strong across the narratives.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

This study provides a psychoanalytic lens to deepen understanding of CSEM offenders and, at the time of writing, is unique in Ireland and internationally. It provides nine unfractured narratives, complementing the relatively small number of qualitative studies which theme data across participants. Findings complement and align with findings from other fields including psychology, anthropology and neuroscience. It illustrates a psychoanalytic method of data analysis.

It is likely that the fact that all participants were involved in a therapeutic risk management programme influenced their narratives in subtle ways which may not have been identified in the analysis. In addition, the dual position of the clinical researcher may have encouraged socially desirable responding, at least at the conscious level, and had ethical implications, which were outlined on page 36. The interpretive process of offering meaning

to participants' unconscious communication may be difficult for a non-psychoanalytic reader to apprehend and more importantly to apply in their therapeutic work.

Quantitative and qualitative inquiry into exclusivity of paedophilic sexual preference for CSEM offenders, both in relation to online recidivism and contact offending, would be helpful to guide assessments. Further psychoanalytically informed study of the unconscious functions of CSEM, particularly of those still offending would be instructive. Qualitative inquiry more specifically focussed on the central sexual fantasy and its potential malleability towards increased deviance, as implied in the neuroscience pornography discourse, or toward a more benign object relational position would be useful in increasing understanding. Finally, research including a qualitative dimension into the risk management potential of harm messaging with CSEM offenders would be supportive to fully exploit the potential of messaging to prevent harm at an earlier stage.

Summary

Nine psychoanalytically interpreted narratives of CSEM offenders have been presented illustrating the individual, distinctive, unconscious functions of CSEM. These findings give context and depth to quantitative findings in regard to criminogenic risk factors and a qualitative empirical basis to psychoanalytic clinical concepts on the defensive nature of paraphilia. The idea of paedophilic breakdown (Wood, 2011, 2022) particularly resonated with the findings of this study. An understanding of the neuroscience of compulsive pornography use offers a complimentary lens to probe this phenomenon, which defies simple explanation and requires an inter-disciplinary approach. The conjunction of sex with aggression (however unconscious) the resultant enduring harm to the small bodies and inchoate psyches of children and the catalytic effects of the Internet create both investigative urgency and importance.

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Appendix A

COPINE Scale

(Taylor, Holland, & Quayle, 2001)

Level 1 Indicative: Non-erotic and non-sexualized pictures showing children in their underwear, swimming costumes, and so on, from either commercial sources or family albums; pictures of children playing in normal settings, in which the context or organization of pictures by the collector indicates inappropriateness

Level 2 Nudist: Pictures of naked or semi-naked children in appropriate nudist settings, and from legitimate sources

Level 3 Erotica: Surreptitiously taken photographs of children in play areas or other safe environments showing either underwear or varying degrees of nakedness

Level 4 Posing: Deliberately posed pictures of children fully or partially clothed or naked (where the amount, context, and organization suggests sexual interest)

Level 5 Erotic posing: Deliberately posed pictures of fully or partially clothed or naked children in sexualized or provocative poses

Level 6 Explicit erotic posing: Emphasizing genital areas where the child is posing either naked, partially clothed, or fully clothed

Level 7 Explicit sexual activity: Involves touching, mutual and self-masturbation, oral sex, and intercourse by child, not involving an adult

Level 8 Assault: Pictures of children being subjected to a sexual assault, involving digital touching, involving an adult

Level 9 Gross assault: Grossly obscene pictures of sexual assault, involving penetrative sex, masturbation, or oral sex involving an adult

Level 10 Sadistic/bestiality: (a) Pictures showing a child being tied, bound, beaten, whipped, or otherwise subjected to something that implies pain; (b) Pictures where an animal is involved in some form of sexual behaviour with a child

Appendix B

Plain Language Statement

Study title: The 'Virtual' Child: An exploration of online child sex offenders' psychoanalytic locations of the children depicted in Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM).

Principal Researcher: Julie Brown, year three on the doctorate in psychotherapy programme, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health, Dublin City University.

Research Supervisors: Dr Gerard Moore and Dr Ray O' Neill

Purpose of Study: To explore the psychological reasons, both those that you may be aware of and those that you may not be consciously aware of, for viewing child pornography/ CSEM. The learning from this will be used to inform therapy with others in a similar situation to support risk management and so protect children.

While there are many studies on risk management, and the prevalence of online offending, this study seeks to explore the issue from a perspective that explores motivations and meanings that may be outside of conscious awareness.

What will participation involve?

If you chose to participate, your therapist will let me know and confirm the preference for contact, email or phone. You will be contacted accordingly and invited to take part in an interview in the One in Four building, at another location, or via Zoom or telephone at a time convenient to you. This interview should take approximately one hour and it will be recorded on a digitally encrypted recorder. Before we start, the limitations to confidentiality will be explained to you. Once you confirm that you have understood these, and if you agree, you will be asked to sign a form called an Informed Consent Form.

You will be encouraged to speak openly and freely about your use of CSEM. Hearing your perspective in your own words would be most helpful. You may be asked some questions but these will arise in response to what you choose to share in the interview. You may be asked to attend for a second, entirely optional, interview if this would facilitate you in describing your experience more fully. The recording of the interview will be transcribed, word for word, by a specialist transcription service which has total confidentiality and secure data

protection procedures in place. Your account, along with those of others, will be analysed and used in the writing up of my thesis. Your anonymised account may also be used in the publication of an article in a journal that other practitioners who do similar work read.

If you wish to, you can view your transcript by contacting the researcher. If you wish to remove, change or correct something the researcher will, as far as is possible comply with this. You can withdraw your consent up to one week after your interview without any negative consequence. In this instance, the recording, as well as any documentation will be destroyed. After seven days your data is anonymised so it is no longer treated as your personal data. You can request however that no direct quotes will be used, in the thesis or any related article, at any stage prior to the thesis being written up. Information that identifies you is your personal data and can be withdrawn at any time.

Are there any risks to taking part?

If you disclose additional offences not already notified to Tusla, Child and Family Agency and An Garda Siochana, I would have to notify those agencies in compliance with the law.

You could become distressed or triggered by talking about your use of CSEM. It may also be difficult to talk about this due to uncomfortable feelings, for example shame.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

Some people find that it helps to talk through their experience in a safe setting knowing that they are contributing to learning and so might help others. Also, talking about an experience may help to clarify certain points, potentially deepening awareness and understanding. The information you provide may be used to inform therapeutic interventions and support risk management with others who have committed the same or similar offences. This would, hopefully, strengthen child protection going forward, so contributing to the reduction of harm.

Is it confidential and how will my privacy be protected?

Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions. Additional, previously undisclosed, sexual offences or risk to

yourself or others would require a notification. These limitations to confidentiality are, in practice, the same as those that apply in your therapy.

You name will not be used at any stage in the study. You will be assigned a reference number that will be used throughout the study and when the thesis is written up you will be given a pseudonym. Great care will be taken to remove any and all identifying information. While I will also be very careful with the use of direct quotes, it is possible that a quote could contain identifying information unbeknownst to me, therefore anonymity cannot be 100% guaranteed.

The thesis will be available on the DCU library database. The findings will be presented to the team in One in Four as well as to other professionals working in this area. A shorter paper will be submitted to relevant academic journals for publication. If you decide to take part in the study you will be asked, as part of the informed consent, whether you would like to be notified when the study is complete and available in the DCU library. If so, you will be sent an email to let you know.

You do not have to participate in his study nor do you have to explain your reasons for not taking part. There will be no negative consequence or any impact on your therapy in One in Four if you decide not to participate, or to withdraw.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please contact the researcher directly at julie.brown27@mail.dcu.ie or on 0877161015 and I will do my best to answer your query. It is important that you can speak to an independent person so if you need to please the statement in bold below.

Thank you for taking the time to read about this study.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at Office of the Chief Operations Officer, Dublin City University, Dublin 9

Appendix C

Consent Form

The researcher, Julie Brown, has explained what this research is about and why I have been invited to take part. □

- I am eighteen years of age or older. □
- I am engaged in a therapeutic programme related to my use of CSEM. □
- I understand there are limitations to confidentiality and the researcher has explained these to me. Specifically, if I disclose a new offence, or information suggesting a risk to children, not previously notified to Tusla, Child and Family Agency and An Garda Siochana the researcher would have to make this report in accordance with her legal obligations. □
- I understand that I do not have to participate in this study, and I can withdraw my consent without any negative consequence and without having to explain my decision. I understand that if I withdraw my consent within one week of the interview the recording, as well as any documentation will be destroyed. □
- I understand that after seven days my data is anonymised so it is no longer treated as my personal data. I can request however that no direct quotes will be used, in the thesis or any related article, at any stage prior to the thesis being written up. □
- I understand that if I wish to withdraw my consent I can do so by emailing the researcher at julie.brown27@mail.dcu.ie or by calling her on 0877161015. □
- I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to talk to the researcher about my use of CSEM and that this interview will be recorded and transcribed as part of the research. □
- I understand that, in addition to being used to write her thesis, the researcher may use the anonymised information to write an article to be published in an academic journal and use the research findings for the purpose of training. □
- I understand I can request to pause or stop the interview at any time. □
- I understand that I can contact the researcher at a later date if I have questions or concerns about the research. □
- I understand that, separate to this study, I am being asked if my anonymised information can be securely stored to be potentially used in other research for five years. □

- I agree to be contacted about future research within the next five years. Yes □ No □
- I would like to be informed via email when the research is published and available in the DCU library. Y□ N□

Participant's Signature _____

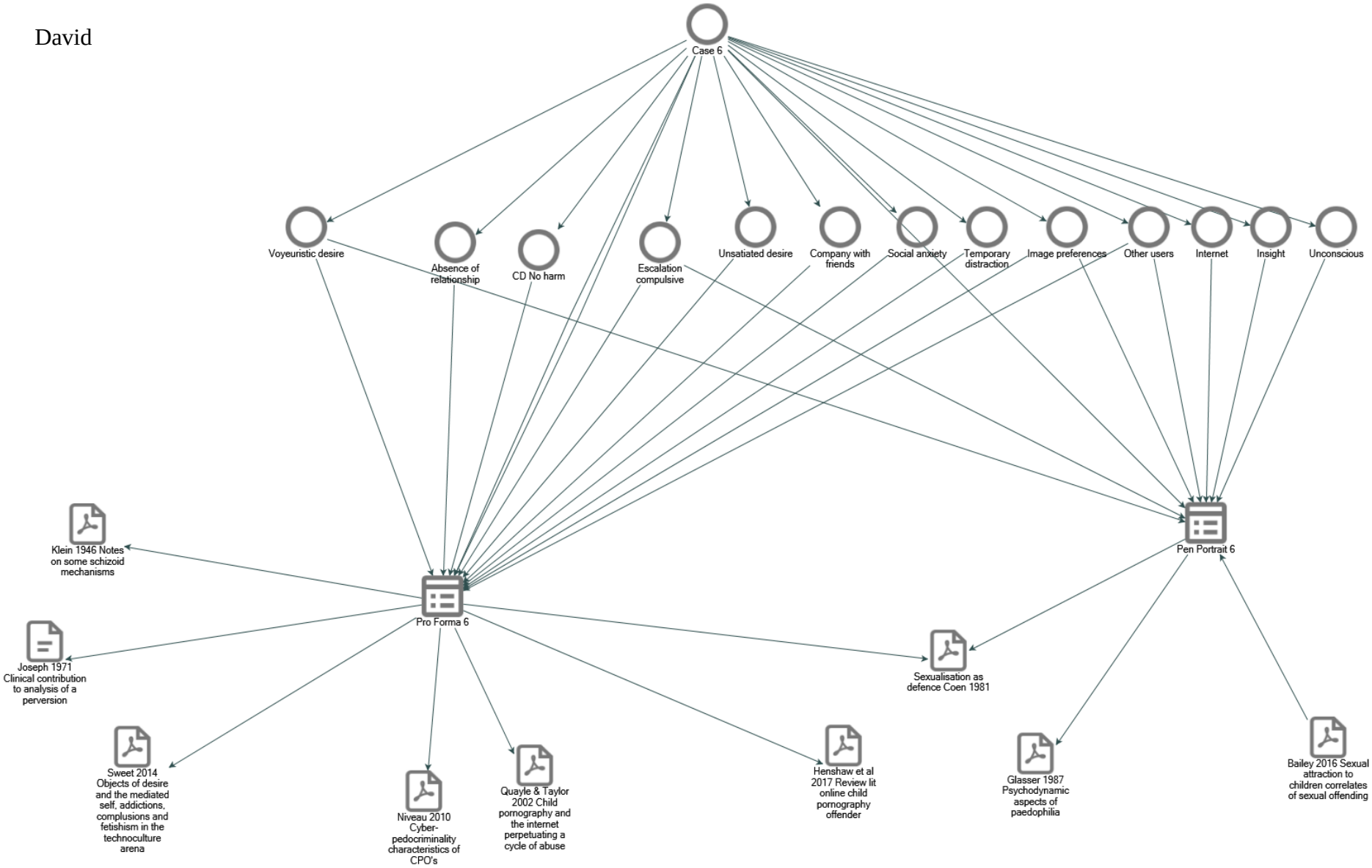
Name (Block Capitals)_____

Witness _____

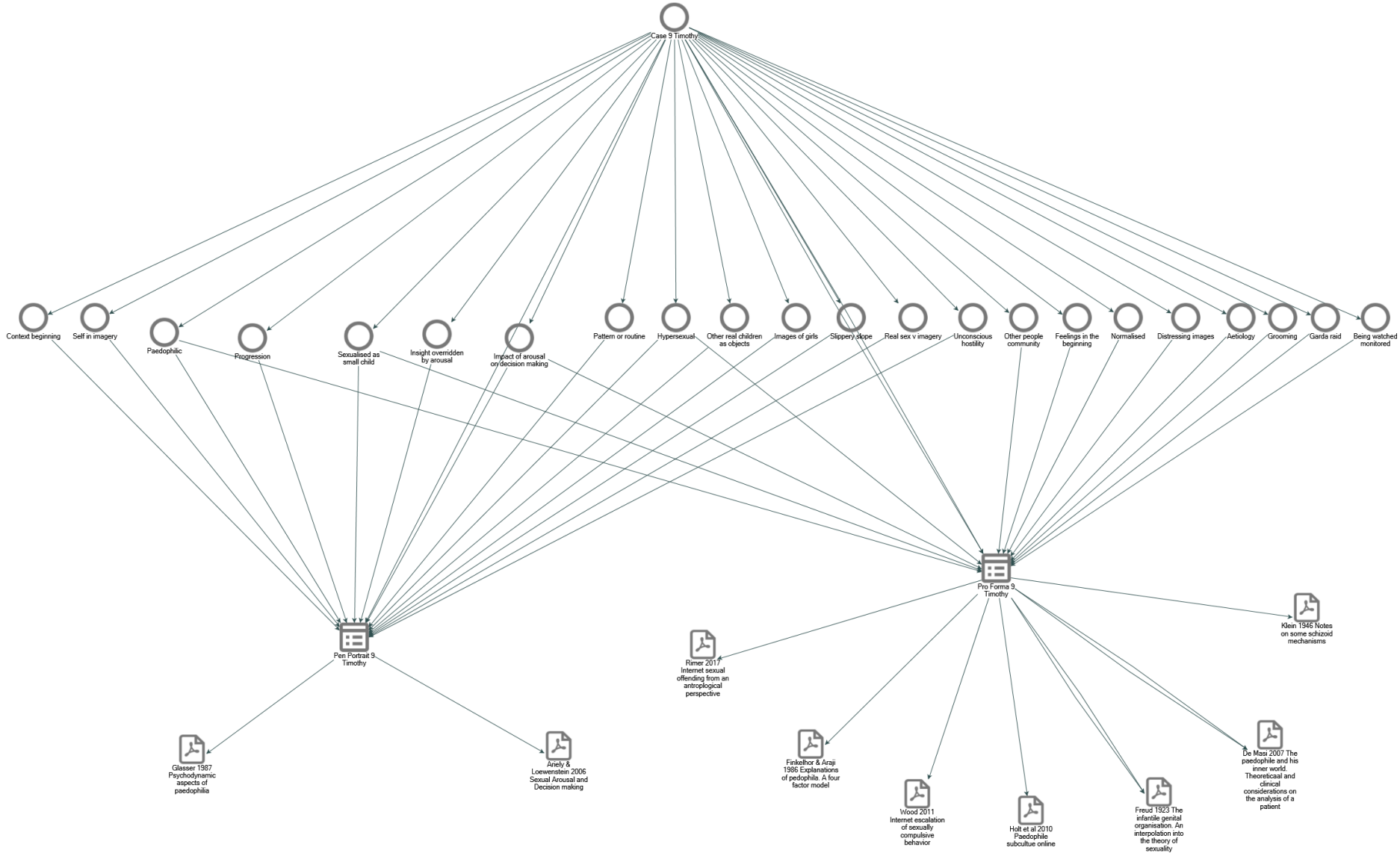
Date: _____

Appendix D

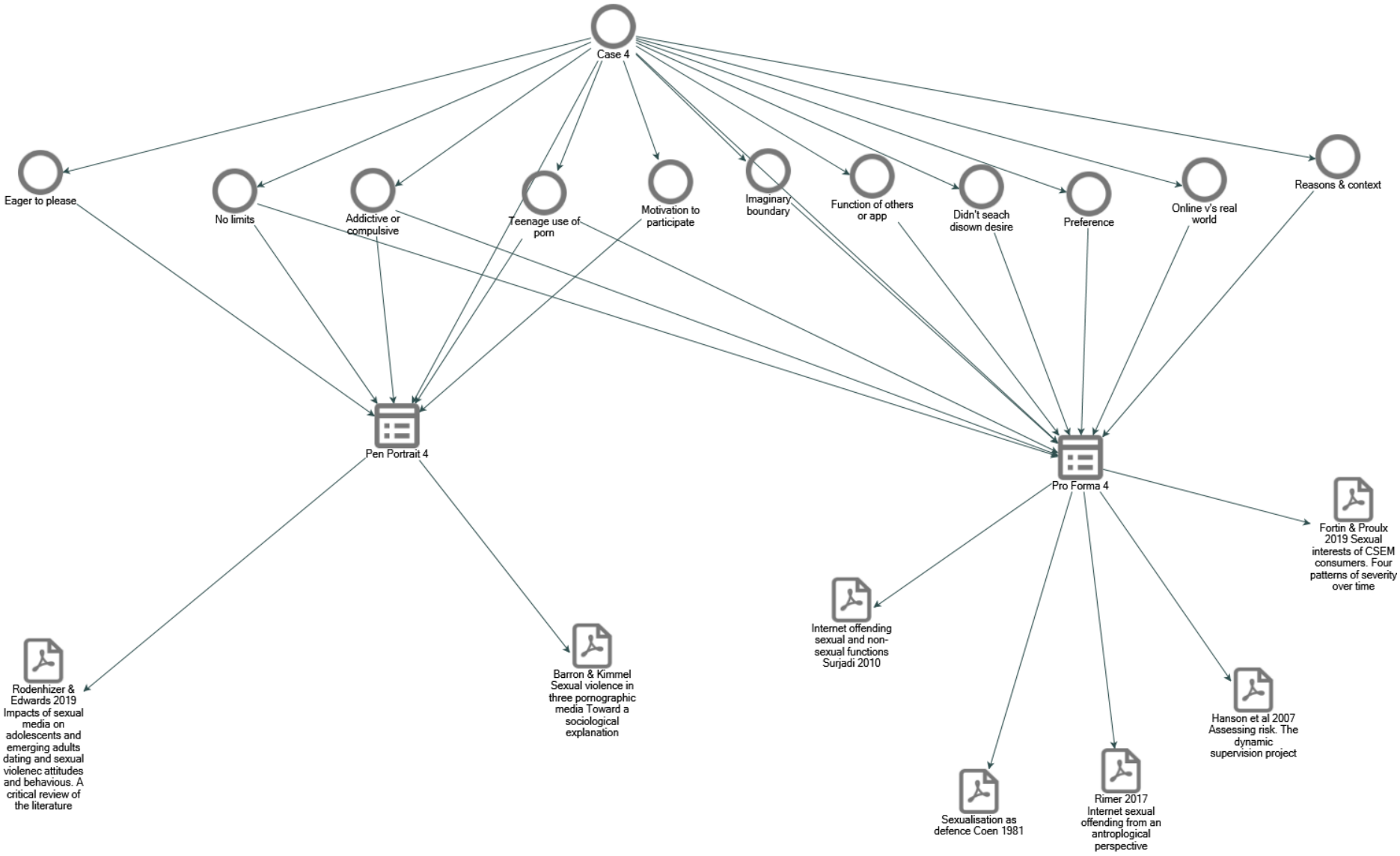
David



Timothy


Case 9 Timothy
Context beginning
Self in imagery
Paedophilic
Progression
Sexualised as small child
Insight overridden by arousal
Impact of arousal on decision making
Pattern or routine
Hypersexual
Other real children as objects
Images of girls
Slippery slope
Real sex v imagery
Unconscious hostility
Other people community
Feelings in the beginning
Normalised
Distressing images
Aetiology
Grooming
Garda raid
Being watched monitored
Pen Portrait 9 Timothy
Pro Forma 9 Timothy
Glasser 1987 Psychodynamic aspects of paedophilia
Ariely & Loewenstein 2006 Sexual Arousal and Decision making
Rimer 2017 Internet sexual offending from an antroplogical perspective
Finkelhor & Araji 1986 Explanations of pedophila. A four factor model
Wood 2011 Internet escalation of sexually compulsive behavior
Holt et al 2010 Paedophile subcultue online
Freud 1923 The infantile genital organisation. An interpolation into the theory of sexuality
De Masi 2007 The paedophile and his inner world. Theoreticaal and clinical considerations on the analysis of a patient
Klein 1946 Notes on some schizoid mechanisms

Jason


Case 4
Eager to please
No limits
Addictive or compulsive
Teenage use of porn
Motivation to participate
Imaginary boundary
Function of others or app
Didn't seach disown desire
Preference
Online v's real world
Reasons & context
Pen Portrait 4
Pro Forma 4
Rodenhizer & Edwards 2019 Impacts of sexual media on adolescents and emerging adults dating and sexual violenec attitudes and behavious. A critical review of the literature
Barron & Kimmel Sexual violence in three pornographic media Toward a sociological explanation
Internet offending sexual and non-sexual functions Surjadi 2010
Fortin & Proulx 2019 Sexual interests of CSEM consumers. Four patterns of severity over time
Hanson et al 2007 Assessing risk. The dynamic supervision project
Sexualisation as defence Coen 1981
Rimer 2017 Internet sexual offending from an antroplogical perspective