

PAEDOPHILES

The term “paedophile” is used differently by different people. For instance, its clinical definition is different to its definition by law enforcement agencies, which is different to the way the general public understands the term. The Australian National Crime Authority defines paedophiles as adults who act on their sexual preference for children – that is, those who prefer and seek sexual activity with children rather than adults, and a child in this context is any person under the age of 18 years. The clinical definition of a paedophile, on the other hand, is someone with a sexual preference for biologically prepubescent children – meaning children who have not reached puberty, which is usually around the age of 13 years.

Paedophiles, in the wider sense of those who act on their sexual preference for children, as opposed to the those with a sexual preference for prepubescent children, cannot be typified by identifiable characteristics, such as age, or class, or profession, or ethnicity or religion or family status. The Australian National Crime Authority, however, has found the following common characteristics of paedophiles:

- overwhelmingly male
- have multiple victims
- are usually but not exclusively extra-familial offenders
- have long-term and persistent pattern of behaviour
- prefer boys
- have sophisticated methods and techniques to access, groom and abuse victims, and
- have a tendency to collect child pornography.

It is important to note the distinction between a paedophile and situational child molesters. Situational child molesters do not exhibit a sexual preference for children but would engage in sexual activities with children when the opportunity arises. Situational child molesters are what I call *opportunist paedophiles*. Why is it important to distinguish between paedophiles and opportunist paedophiles? If you are dealing with a paedophile, you are most likely dealing with a multiple offender – and your investigation must therefore include the detection of further victims and investigation for child pornography. With the opportunist paedophile, you may be dealing with just the single victim and perhaps no child pornography. In other words, one should always assume, when investigating child pornography, that one is dealing with a paedophile and, therefore, your investigation should include the detection of child-victims of sexual abuse. Paedophiles are usually long-term offenders and, according to a 1987 American study of convicted child molesters, reported in Vol 2 of the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, each of the offenders in the study had victimised an average of 76 children by the time of their arrests and convictions. One Australian paedophile, Clarence Osborne, confessed to having abused and recorded in excess of 2000 young boys in a 20-year period. Significantly, not one of the more than 2000 boys ever reported the abuse. Another Australian teacher, William Allen, also boasted in the early 1980s that he had participated in sexual activities with approximately 2000 boys.

What is the reason for the non-reporting of sexual abuse? The reasons are varied and include:

- the non-violent nature of the grooming and seduction techniques used by paedophiles. Contrary to public opinion, paedophiles do not usually rape or physically force child-victims into sexual activities. Rather, the child is coerced and gradually seduced over a period of time into participation. Paedophiles will not hurt a child for fear of terminating their hoped-for long-term relationship. The process not only wears down the inhibitions of the child-victim but also reduces the likelihood that the child will report the sexual abuse. There is also the possibility of the “Stockholm syndrome” – a bond may develop between the child-victim and the paedophile. Some child-victims will accept sexual abuse in return for affection and attention and are therefore unlikely to report or even testify against the offender
- child-victims may not, in fact, see themselves as victims, either because they are too young and innocent to realise that what is happening is abnormal and criminal or because some see what is happening as part of their sexual experimentation and do not feel ashamed of what has happened to them
- more commonly, victims often feel responsible, guilty, embarrassed and ashamed of sexual activity, given that, for most, sexual activity is a very personal and private affair. Paedophiles take advantage of such feelings, as admitted by David Techter, who was the organiser of a US-based pro-paedophile organisation called the Lewis Carroll Collectors Guild. In 1984, NBC TV aired *The Silent Shame*, a TV

programme in which David Techter explained that : “The one child that I first had an affair with for about six months would masturbate me while I was fondling her. If you fondle a child just that one time, he or she may run and tell. But if it is repeated then they accept part of the responsibility because they allowed it to happen again. They take part of the responsibility themselves so they’re guilty too”

- a victim may not report the abuse because of fear of the offender – fear also that, if reported, the adult offender is more likely to be believed than the child-victim, especially if the paedophile enjoys a position of trust, such as a teacher or a priest
- some parents may be reluctant to report such activity, especially in intra-familial abuse cases, to protect the family or avoid additional trauma through the criminal justice process, and
- organisations do not report child sexual abuse to protect the organisations themselves. In Australia, for instance, the New South Wales Royal Commission identified instances in the New South Wales Education Department and the Catholic Church where the welfare of the child has been neglected to protect the organisation. This tendency towards bureaucratic self-preservation has allowed paedophiles to infiltrate organisations and remain in protected positions for years where they can continue to abuse children. It emerged in the case of the Cape Town teacher, John Creasy, for example, that when his sexual abuse of children came to the attention of his principals, he was simply transferred to another school, where he continued with his sexual abuse of children. If I am correct, not one of his school principals reported his sexual

abuse of children to the police. (Dawn Coleman, who successfully prosecuted John Creasy, can correct me if I am wrong!)

What is the implication for investigators of child pornography of all of this? A person in possession of child pornography, especially if it is a large collection, may be a paedophile who acts on his sexual preference for children. The investigation should not end at the child pornography stage since further investigation may reveal that the accused has actually sexually abused children. Many paedophiles like to keep records, often in photographic form, of their victims. When dealing with child pornography created by the offender himself, child-victims who have been sexually abused can and should be identified, not only for prosecution purposes but also for victim-assistance programmes. Given the seriousness of child sexual offences, there must be a committed and multi-coordinated approach to the investigation of child pornography.