

## Perspectives on offender profiling

*Section 6 examines offender profiling and risk assessment both in relation to child sexual assaults, including paedophilia, and violence to women from known men. It introduces two different approaches. The first is to assess the likely characteristics of an unknown assailant, and the second is to assess the likelihood of further offending by one that is known. In the first instance, offender profiling is used in the investigation of crime, while in the second, the aim is to prevent crime. Both aims of offender profiling are becoming increasingly important when the assailant is unknown, because of the death of the victim or some other factor, such as age or mode of the crime or stranger attack. These can apply to children of both sexes and to adult women. When the offender is known to the victimised child or woman, then risk assessment of the likelihood of further offending becomes of particular relevance.*

*Offender profiling in relation to child sexual assault is discussed first. This is followed by the links between violence to women and children within the family and their relevance for risk assessment. Risk assessment factors associated with violence against women in the family are discussed last.*

### Child sexual assault and paedophilia

In some jurisdictions, registration of known sexual offenders after release from prison is mandatory. This is in order to protect the community, specifically the children within it.

Paedophilia manifests itself in a range of criminal behaviour from using the child as an object of pornography to murdering the child. Paedophilia is often an unrecognised, unreported and unaddressed crime, even among police. It underpins and is a common theme in child pornography, child molestation and child prostitution. The paedophile is predominantly male, although there are rare cases of female offenders. Three groups are identified:

- collector/toucher who collects child pornography and will touch children, in any way
- collector/abuser who collects, touches and ultimately abuses children
- collector/abuser/publisher who collects pornographic material, abuses children and publishes pornographic material himself.

In terms of offender profiling, the paedophile exhibits a long-term, persistent pattern of behaviour, the ultimate aim of which is the acquisition of child victims. Various strategies are used. For example, the offender may choose to target single mothers with young children or they may work in settings where access to children is easy, such as residential care or youth work. They may carefully plan a professional career and rise to senior positions in statutory and voluntary agencies and even become acknowledged experts on childcare. These carefully planned personally protective strategies coupled with sophisticated manipulative behaviours in relation to children and their caretakers make recognition of paedophiles very difficult.

There are factors, however, that should alert police officers to the possibility of a paedophile offender:

- convictions for indecency
- movement within the country or even internationally
- usually over 25 years old, sometimes married, but more frequently living alone
- sexual preference for younger persons
- acquaintance with younger persons
- attraction for professions involving children

- skill with victims, particularly young people who are neglected or in government care, who will be at a disadvantage if they attempt to make a complaint and are less likely to be believed than children with parental support
- although the offender may be a stranger, it is more likely he will be known to the victim; research reveals this in 75 per cent of cases
- the offender is skilled in the manipulation of child behaviour, resorting to competition, peer pressure and blackmail
- most offenders have a preferred child age group
- almost all offenders have collections of child pornography, which they will show the child to reduce his or her inhibitions and will produce using children they have attracted and groomed.

The paedophile is a particularly insidious offender, usually operating as part of a 'ring' which at its most basic level is local, but which has national and, ultimately, international, linkage, in that it will subscribe to national and international literature. The internet (or worldwide web), facilitates contact between paedophiles and the transfer of images. Downloading of material can be so quick that it is impossible to trace. When the 'ring' is very carefully bonded it is notoriously difficult to infiltrate, the offence being a way of life for the participants. When it consists of, or includes, highly placed professional men, even if suspicions are aroused, successful investigation is particularly difficult.

The paedophile frequently collects pornography and material, including academic articles, justifying his behaviour. He will also frequently be in possession of letters to and from other paedophiles. These collections serve a number of purposes including provision of sexual fantasy, a means to lower children's inhibitions, blackmail and material for exchange and profit. The collection will often be vast and have been kept for a long period of time, each item of the collection representing an instance of child sexual abuse.

Paedophiles may themselves have been the victims of paedophiles when children. It is, however, important not to overstate this trend so that it is assumed that an abused child will in turn abuse. There are three reasons for this. First, such a suggestion is counter-productive for victims of abuse, who will conclude that their behaviour is predicted for them. Second, the emphasis is on the victimisation of the abuser rather than the victim and finally, it suggests lower sentencing for abusers who were abused.

## Paedophile or child sexual abuser?

In the past decade a discussion has begun on the usefulness of the term paedophilia as it implies men who seek sexual relations with children are abnormal and distinct from 'ordinary' men. However, given the widespread sexual abuse of children by fathers and other male family members, this is a dangerous illusion. So-called ordinary men also may sexually abuse their daughters and her friends and known children through paedophile rings. They also may abuse children from other countries through sex tourism to foreign destinations for the purpose of sexual exploitation of girls and boys, who may be very young.

Children can be targeted for sexual abuse at any age, from infancy upwards. In those Commonwealth countries where research has taken place, the average age of child sexual abuse is pre-teen. Most child sexual abuse takes place in families and is directed at girls, although both girls and boys may be abused or only boys. The widespread sexual victimisation of children and the multiple ways a child can be targeted is leading to a reassessment of the child sexual offender and how the police should investigate him. It should never be assumed that a sexual offender has only one victim even though initially the complaint may be on behalf of only one child. If the child is being assaulted by a family member, her/his siblings may also be victims. Unfortunately, research shows that victims often

erroneously believe they are the only one being abused in their family and a major motive for their silence and endurance of unwanted sex is a belief that cooperation with the abuser will protect sisters and brothers. The investigation of child sexual abuse, whether the victims are known or unknown, should always include a household search for child pornography.

There is an erroneous belief in some parts of the Commonwealth that sex with a young girl will cleanse a man who is HIV positive or who has AIDS. Not only is this belief incorrect, but it is a further inducement to commit sexual crime against a child. Child prostitution is not uncommon in Commonwealth countries and the importance of this needs to be more fully recognised. The focus should not be solely on the girl or boy, but also on the men who seek children to prostitute. For example, approximately one-half of female prostitutes in the UK entered into prostitution when under 16 years of age. Many were in government care or had been sexually abused in their homes when children. Their early inadequate or abusive life experiences create vulnerability and reduce their chances of a better life. Sensitising police officers to new definitions of child abuse to include prostitution is important in identifying so-called ordinary men who use their adult status and power to exploit and abuse children.

## Linking violence to women and children

Domestic violence and child physical and sexual abuse are often linked. The mother of sexually abused girls and boys may be subject to physical and sexual abuse herself. Occasionally mothers are implicated as abusers, but a far more common pattern is a family with multiple victims, rather than multiple abusers. Police investigators should always enter the investigation with an open mind about who is doing what to whom and should not assume that 'everyone knows' what is going on.

Investigating child sexual abuse requires sensitive responses to everyone in the family group; the abused and the non-abusing as well as firm action in relation to the abuser. Child protection policies have traditionally resulted in the removal of the child, who is doubly punished by the abuse and by losing her home. Removing the abuser from the home is a more appropriate response to be carried out by the police.

Police in some jurisdictions also have begun to connect family child sexual abuse with the sexual abuse of unknown children. For example, in the UK when men are arrested for seeking under-age girls for the purpose of prostitution, checks are made on the welfare of children in his family through the social service at-risk register. Police in the UK also have begun to change policies regarding charging under-age girls with prostitution offences, rather the girls are treated as child abuse victims in need of care and protection. Prosecution is beginning to shift to the men who pay for sex with children.

Revealing child sexual abuse can be shocking and damaging to relationships between the non-abusing parent, almost always the mother, and the child. It is essential that the mother be allowed to express and work through her feelings while she is in a crisis state, ie, within the first few days of learning about the abuse, in order to safeguard the relationship between the child and the mother. For a girl to be betrayed by her father or other male relative is a major loss, for this to be compounded by a rupture in the relationship with her mother, is a tragedy. Women may find it easier to reject the child in favour of the abusing husband, especially when there are other children, housing and economic considerations. In order to understand the complexities and to be more helpful to direct and indirect victims of sexual abuse, investigating officers need training based on gendered sociological explanations.

## Violence against women: domestic assault

Researchers at the British Columbia Institute on Family Violence have produced a Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide, known as SARA (Kropp, Hart, Webster, Eaves 1994). This presents a framework for assessing the risk of future violence when men are arrested for assault on their female partners. In using this Guide, it is essential to remember that any man can commit assault against a partner and that women may fear speaking out about their abuse because their partners do not fit profiles like that below. Also, they may not be believed by police officers for the same reason.

The Guide is designed to be used in pre-trial, pre-sentence, and post-sentence risk assessments and decision-making. It is a clinical checklist of risk factors aimed to provide an aide memoire to ensure that relevant information is considered and evaluated. Its authors are cautious, recommending that at this stage, in making decisions about individuals, it should be used by those with considerable forensic knowledge or experience as improper use could either unnecessarily adversely affect outcomes for offenders or victims. However, as a quality control list of potential factors to consider, it can be used for monitoring and review purposes.

These items draw on findings of research studies and mental health practitioner experience. The items are scored, although the authors are keen to point out that at this stage, SARA does not provide an absolute or relative measure of risk. Offenders who are more likely to attack family members and repeat their violence have the following characteristics:

- a history of violence to family members
- a history of violence towards non-intimate partners or non-family members
- violation of court ordered conditions, such as terms of conditional release or community supervision such as bail or probation orders
- unstable intimate relationships
- unemployment, low income and financial stresses or sudden negative changes in employment status
- victim of and/or witness to family violence as a child or adolescent
- recent substance abuse or dependence
- recent suicidal or homicidal thoughts or intent
- recent psychotic and/or manic symptoms
- serious problems with anger, impulsiveness or behavioural instability
- past physical assault on the same or other partners
- past sexual assault or sexual jealousy
- past or current use of weapons and/or credible threats of death on current partner or others, ie, men feared intensely by their partners
- recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault
- extreme minimisation or denial of assault history, particularly noted with attacks on wives where this is associated with an unwillingness to stop the assaults or enter treatment programmes
- attitudes that condone wife assault, for example, a male prerogative, hatred of women, violence as a way of resolving conflicts
- severe violence and/or sexual violence
- violation of civil or criminal court orders to not contact the victim.

The authors of SARA also suggest there are other risk factors that could be taken into account, such as:

- current emotional crisis requiring psychiatric treatment
- history of torturing or disfiguring their partners
- victims or witnesses of political persecution, torture, or violence
- sexual sadism
- easy access to firearms
- stalking, ie, the persistent harassment and intimidation of a past or current partner.

Several jurisdictions have recently passed legislation to prosecute stalkers as they do not always commit crimes of assault or criminal property damage, for example, persistent surveillance or persistent unwanted communications that do not contain obvious threat.

The authors suggest that detailed assessment procedures should include interviews with the alleged offender(s) and the victim(s), other victims, witnesses including children, other professionals such as probation officers, the use of self-report questionnaires, standardised measures of physical, emotional, drug and alcohol abuses, review of all available records such as police reports, criminal records, victim statement, and the use of standardised personality inventories and cognitive functioning tests.

Offender profiling and risk assessment are beginning to receive major attention both to prevent and to investigate violent crimes. These are based on a recognition of repeat victimisation of the same victim or multiple victims. Sexual offenders cause great anguish, permanent psychological damage, and even death to their victims.