The Development of the Children, Internet, and Sex Cognitions (CISC) Scale

UNDERSTANDING THE COGNITIONS OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY OFFENDERS

Danielle Kettleborough
Co-author: Dr Hannah Merdian
University of Lincoln
OUTLINE

- Literature
  o CPOs ("Child Pornography" Offenders – common terminology)
    ✷ CSEMOs (Child Sexual Exploitation Material Offenders)
  o CSOs (Contact Sex Offenders)

- Development of the CISC; Expert Survey
  o Children, Internet, and Sex Cognitions Scale

- Results
  o Themes & Items

- Applications
LITERATURE

- Cognitive Distortions develop from Implicit Theories (IT)
  - Ward & Keenan’s 5 schemas at forefront of research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN AS SEXUAL OBJECTS</th>
<th>ENTITLEMENT</th>
<th>DANGEROUS WORLD</th>
<th>UNCONTROLLABILITY</th>
<th>NATURE OF HARM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“She is flirting and teasing me, so she wants to do it”</td>
<td>“A person should have sex whenever it is needed”</td>
<td>“Sex between children and adults is very loving”</td>
<td>“Many men sexually assault children at times of stress”</td>
<td>“Sex between an adult and child isn’t harmful”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can these be applied to CPOs?
LITERATURE

- CPO Typologies (Merdian et al., 2011)
  - “contact-driven” and “fantasy-driven” (Briggs et al., 2011)
    - Possible differing cognitions among subgroups

- CPOs have fewer cognitive distortions than CSOs
  - Scales for CSOs
    - Internet Behaviours and Attitudes Questionnaire (IBAQ; O’Brien & Webster, 2007)
    - Children and Sexual Activities (C&SA; Howitt & Sheldon, 2007)
      - NOT VALIDATED
  - No scale for CPOs
CISC DEVELOPMENT
CHILDREN, INTERNET, AND SEX COGNITIONS (CISC)

STAGE 1: DEVELOPMENT

- Method
  - Expert Survey
    - 16 Professionals
  - Thematic Analysis
    - Braun & Clarke (2006)
    - Item development
  - Sorting Task
    - MSc Forensic Psychology Students

STAGE 2: VALIDATION

- Validation
- Applying scale to CPOs, CSOs, and nonforensic

Interested in participating?

EMAIL: dkettleborough@students.lincoln.ac.uk
Expert knowledge on CPOs

- 16 professionals, recruited through social networking
  - Experience with CPOs (average 6.5 yrs)
    - Psychology, probation, social work, psychiatry and research
- Expert Survey
  - “Explore the thinking patterns of child pornography offenders”
  - “Describe the thinking patterns of CPOs”
  - Can Implicit Theories be applied to CPOs?
Can you apply Ward & Keenan’s Schemas to CPOs?

- Mixed agreement
- Not for “children as sexual objects” and “nature of harm”
- Intuitively see overlaps
Thematic analysis

- 118 data extracts — form differing themes
- Data transformed into items for the scale

DATA EXTRACT:

“generally wanting to make themselves feel better”

CISC ITEM:

“Many men use child pornography because it helps make themselves feel better”
• Sorting task
  o Participants
    ▪ 16 MSc Forensic Psychology Students
  o Method
    ▪ 118 items sorted into themes
    ▪ Items removed → 108 items
  o Interrater reliability
    ▪ Fleiss Kappa
    ▪ Average score of 0.65 → “substantial” strength of agreement
“[CPOs] do not perceive the activities they view as essentially ‘real’, or the children in the images as ‘real’ people”

No connection made

Child pornography is a fantasy world

PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN

9 items
"[CPOs] view the 'child in the image' as sexually sophisticated, based on their performance (as an 'actor')" 

"'on screen' children are sexually sophisticated... not children en masse"

The children in the images of CP are performing, just like any other actors
CHILDREN AS SEXUAL BEINGS

Likened to “children as sexual objects”

"children are enjoying the sexual behaviour"

"kids really want sex"

"kids are seductive"

Children want sex

PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN

9 items
NON SEXUAL

"they enjoy the act of collecting more than the images themselves"

"sexual interest in children is secondary"

"enjoyment from managing the servers"

Most men who look at CP are not sexually aroused by the material
Likened to “uncontrollability”
"many aspects of their [CPOs] lives + behaviour felt out of control e.g. describing internet sexual behaviour as an 'addiction’”

Many men cannot stop themselves from committing CP offences due to an addiction
"Viewing images is a way of increasing feelings of wellbeing, a 'soothing' strategy"

"overcome intimacy deficits"

CP helps alleviate feelings associated with negative self-beliefs

15 items
Likened to “nature of harm”
"it does not cause any harm"
"the children in the images were not harmed"
MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Likened to “nature of harm”
Society to be blamed
"using a moral disengagement questionnaire"

It is society’s reaction, rather than the sexual abuse itself, which causes the distress a child feels

LEVEL OF HARM

3 items
“A large proportion of non-contact offenders are ‘voyeurs’ or ‘browsers’ of illicit pornography”

Enjoyment from observation aspect and secrecy

CPOs are just “browsers”
"most collections would include a wide range of odd material"

"general interest in extreme behaviour rather than pedophilia per se"

Many men have a general preoccupation with internet pornography, it is not refined to CP

6 items
**SCALE**

- *Children, Internet, and Sex Cognitions (CISC)*
  - 108 items

For the statements which follow, please write the number in the box provided that best indicates your opinion – to what degree do you agree with the statement, using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Disagree</td>
<td>Slightly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Watching child pornography is not harmful to the child
2. Child pornography is okay because you are watching the abuse "second hand"
3. Viewing child pornography is not abusive
4. Child pornography offenders are fantasists
CONCLUSIONS

- Ward and Keenan’s 5 implicit schemas
  - Small overlaps, but not applicable to CPOs
  - Implicit schemas do not capture diverse range of cognitions

- Suggests CPOs are a distinct group of sexual offenders

- Supports differing typologies of CPOs
  - Diverse range of cognitions
  - Contact-driven and fantasy-driven
FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- **Do CPOs hold fewer, or different, cognitive distortions?**
  - Present study suggests *different*
  - CISC allows for testing of above hypothesis
  - CISC help enhance understanding of CPOs

- **Assessment and treatment**
  - CISC provides rich data allowing for enriched case formulations
  - Captures general cognitions
  - Pathways to offending
  - Risk identification and management

- **Currently at Stage 2: Validation of CISC**
REFERENCES


THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

Any Questions?

dkettleborough@students.lincoln.ac.uk