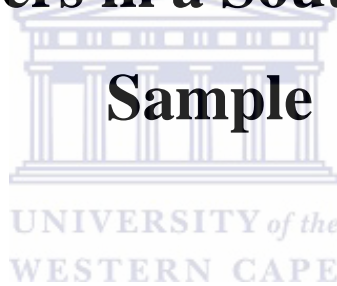


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**Cognitive Distortions of Child Sex
Offenders in a South African
Sample**



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A minithesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
MPsych Degree, Department of Psychology,
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Cognitive Distortions of Child Sex Offenders in a South African Sample

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Abstract

Cognitive Distortions of Child Sex Offenders in a South African Sample

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There are many misconceptions about child sexual abuse, which are exacerbated by the silence around this issue. There is also a dearth of studies on child sex offenders in South Africa, which adds to the silence around child sexual abuse. This study focused on the cognitive distortions of child sex offenders in a South African sample. Child sex offenders are a heterogeneous group but share some similarities. Firstly, the majority of child sex offenders are male. Secondly, their sexual attraction to children seems to be influenced to some degree by their thoughts around child sex offending, and the world in general. Data was collected by means of direct observation of rehabilitation groups and in-depth interviews with four child sex offenders. The data that emerged from the collection process was compared to the thematic networks of the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions; i.e. uncontrollability, dangerous world, entitlement, children as sexual beings, and nature of harm. This study validated the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions. Within the cognitive distortions, a distinction was made between the content (i.e. what was reported) and the operations or processes (i.e. how it was reported). The operations of denial, minimisation and rationalisation were focused on. Feminist theorists argue for a more contextual approach to the study of child sex offenders. This study attempted to do this and thus took a feminist stance. Both the content and operations of cognitive distortions evident in child sex offenders seem to be evident in victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. Furthermore, individual use of these cognitive distortions can be seen collectively in society. Society (i.e. people in general) tend to use the same cognitive distortions for similar reasons to what individuals use them; i.e. to protect against anxiety. It is hoped that this study will add to the literature on the thinking patterns of child sex offenders particularly within the South African context, and be useful in treating sex offenders. It is also hoped that victims or survivors of child sexual abuse can be further assisted in their treatment through the knowledge gained by studying child sex offenders.

November 2007

Declaration

I declare that *Cognitive Distortions of Child Sex Offenders in a South African Sample* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Jillian Butterworth

November 2007

Signed:



Acknowledgments

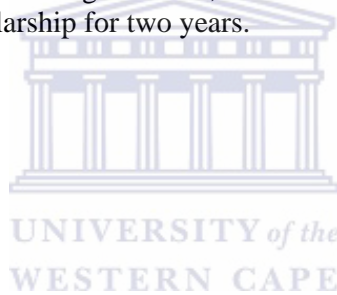
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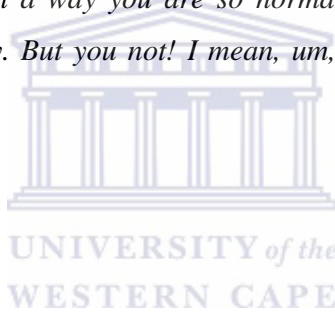
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It is complex. In a way you are so normal. And that is the picture you portray towards society. But you not! I mean, um, it's like somebody, in a way, with a split personality.



Participant A

Chapter 1

Introduction

Writing about child sexual abuse breaks the silence that facilitates its perpetuation (Breckenridge & Carmody, 1992). This served as the motivation for the present study. However, the emphasis in this study was on the perpetrators of child sexual abuse (child sex offenders) and not on the victims or survivors of child sexual abuse. Studies of child sex offenders add not only to the literature, but are important in developing treatment programs. Improved treatment programs mean fewer victims. In addition, a better understanding of child sex offenders can assist in the treatment of victims or survivors of child sexual abuse as they try to understand the abuse. In South Africa, there is an absence of studies on child sex offenders, which adds to the silence around child sexual abuse. Furthermore, there are many misconceptions about sexual offences, sexual offence victims, and sex offenders in South African society. According to Burt (1980), psychological literature on rape emphasises the significance of prejudicial, stereotyped or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists, in creating a societal climate that is hostile to rape victims, who are mostly female. This view can be extended to the psychological literature on, and beliefs about, child sex offenders and their victims; creating a climate that is hostile to child sexual abuse victims and survivors. The more knowledge that is gained regarding child sexual abuse, the easier it is to challenge and dispel false beliefs and myths around child sexual abuse.

The importance of cognitive distortions has been highlighted in much of the research on child sex offenders (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, 1984; Hartley, 1998; Murphy, 1990; Ward, Gannon & Keown, 2005). Generally, cognitive distortions are defined as abuse supportive or offence endorsing statements made by child sex offenders; for example, “children enjoy sex with adults”. It is thought that they play a significant role in the initiation and the maintenance of sex offending behaviours (Ward et al., 2005). Of concern, are studies that have found that these abuse supportive statements made by child sex offenders do not differ significantly from a number of beliefs and attitudes measured in community controls (Collings & McArthur, 2000). These findings support the feminist view that child sex offending is not simply the product of individual beliefs and attitudes, but is influenced by culturally derived myths and stereotypes which sanction sexual abuse and assist offenders to avoid the consequences of their actions (Collings & McArthur, 2000).

In the present study, the role of cognitive distortions in child sex offending, as reported by child sex offenders, is explored and compared to the academic literature. However, it is important to include prevalence statistics to acquaint the reader with the frequency of child sexual abuse, as well as provide definitions of terms used in this study, that can be operationalised in various ways.

1.1 Prevalence

In the Foreword of Salter’s book, *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists & Other Sex Offenders* (2003), de Becker provides statistics of the prevalence of child sex

offending relevant to the United States population. The statistics that de Becker provides are the following:

- (i) One in three girls and one in six boys will have sexual contact with an adult.
- (ii) The most common age at which sexual abuse begins is three.
- (iii) The average child molester victimizes between 50 and 150 children before he is ever arrested (Salter, 2003, Foreword, pp. ix – xiv).

Studies on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in South Africa are limited. Collings (1997), in his South African study with a sample of 640 female university students, found that 34.8% of the sample had experienced contact sexual abuse before the age of eighteen years. This study also reported that 93% of the perpetrators were male. In an earlier study on male university students, the reported prevalence rate was 28.9% (Collings, 1991).

In South Africa, crime statistics for child sexual abuse are unavailable. Child sexual abuse is not considered a categorical crime. Instead, statistics for child sexual abuse are either included in rape and indecent assault statistics (with adult victims) or neglect and ill treatment of children statistics (with neglect and physical abuse victims). According to Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN, 2002), the number of reported rapes of people under the age of eighteen years has been consistently around 25,000 per annum for several years. The National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO, undated, cited in Vogelmann & Eagle, 1991) estimates that approximately one in twenty rapes are reported to the police. The reasons for under-reporting include: the acceptance of rape as normal; lack of confidence in the police; shame experienced in reporting sexual assaults; financial dependence on perpetrators; fear of retribution by the perpetrator; and difficulty in obtaining convictions (Vogelmann & Eagle, 1991). Child sexual abuse encompasses not only

rape in its strict definition of non-consensual penetration of the vagina by the penis, but any act in which the child is used for the adult's sexual gratification (Cossins, 2000); including but not limited to genital touching, anal sex, oral-genital stimulation, pornography and exhibitionism. For similar reasons, child sexual abuse, like rape, is under-reported. Therefore, the true extent of child sexual abuse in South Africa, or worldwide, is unknown.

Similarly, the number of men who sexually abuse children is also unknown. Child sex offenders are a heterogeneous group who report different reasons for offending. They do not differ from other members in the community except for their offending behaviour and therefore they often go unnoticed (Herman, 1988). Furthermore, the conviction rates of sex offenders in South Africa are low. In 2000, the overall total conviction rates for rape were around seven percent; a nine percent conviction rate for sexual offences against children and a five percent conviction rate for sexual offences against adults (RAPCAN, 2007).

1.2 Definitions

In the present study, "children" will refer to persons under the age of sixteen years. Although the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen years unless national laws recognise maturity earlier, the age of sexual consent for heterosexual girls and heterosexual boys in South Africa (Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957) is sixteen years old. The age of consent is regarded the age at which a person has the cognitive capacity to make a decision of whether they want to have sex with some one else, as well as

understand the implications of the sexual contact or relationship. In other words, they are able to give informed consent.

A “child sex offender” refers to a person who engages in contact or non-contact sexual activities with a child for the purposes of obtaining sexual gratification (Cossins, 2000). The focus in the present study is on males as the majority of sex offenders are male (Finkelhor, 1984) and the sample that was accessed was a male sample. The more common term *paedophile* will not be used for two reasons. Firstly, paedophilia is a diagnosis found in the Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th ed. Text Revised (DSM-IV TR). By its location in the DSM-IV TR, it implies that the person has a mental illness, relieving the child sex offender of some of the responsibility for his actions (Cossins, 2000). However, the literature on child sex offending highlights that paedophilia is not a mental illness and only a small percentage of men who sexually offend against children have a psychiatric illness (Herman, 1988). Secondly, the term *paedophile* has a number of social connotations attached to it; i.e. the idea of an old man stalking little children unbeknown to him. This stereotypical view of child sex offenders needs to be avoided. Most child sex offenders are remarkably normal (Herman, 1988).

Cognitive distortions will be defined in terms of the definition used by Ward et al. (2005) and Murphy (1990). In Ward et al.’s (2005) definition, cognitive distortions are “offense endorsing statements made by sex offenders” (p. 326). Murphy (1990) expands on this definition and defines cognitive distortions as the attitudes and beliefs which offenders use to deny, minimise and rationalise their behaviour. This definition incorporates both the content and operations of

cognitive distortions. Cognitive content refers to what is reported; the actual statements made by child sex offenders, which are reflective of their attitudes and beliefs. Cognitive operations or processes refer to the use of denial, minimisation and rationalisation (Murphy, 1990; Ward, Fon, Hudson, & McCormack, 1998).

“Society” will be defined as “a community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, organizations” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 1995, p. 1128). Thus, the plural “societies” would be more appropriate in the present study. However, the focus is not on a particular society but rather on “people in general” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 1995, p. 1128). Society is influenced by culture, religion, politics, literature and the environment in which we live, and in turn, influences individual thinking and socialisation. I am aware that by referring to “society”, there is an element of generalisation and stereotyping, which is what this study attempts to avoid. However, parallels are drawn between the individual and the collective; i.e. society.

1.3 Outline of the Study

This introduction aimed to state the motivation for the present study and to orientate the reader to the topic of child sexual abuse, particularly the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the definitions used in the present study.

In the second chapter, the literature on child sex offenders and their cognitive distortions is reviewed. The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions served as the model for this study (Ward et al., 2005). However, in this study, a distinction is made between the content and operations (also referred to as

processes) of cognitive distortions, as this affects the choice of methodology. The social use of cognitive distortions is reflected on, including the influence of the psychological literature on this topic. The harmful effects of child sexual abuse are discussed, as this is regarded as the main reason that child sex offending is socially undesirable (Cossins, 2000). Chapter two ends with a review of feminist theory, which includes radical feminism, post-modern feminism and an example of sociological feminism.

The methodology chapter (chapter three) covers: (i) the aim of the study; (ii) the use of feminist methodology; (iii) participants; (iv) data collection; (v) data analysis; and (vi) ethical considerations. The aim of the present study was to explore whether, and how, child sex offenders in this South African sample would express the five thematic networks endorsed by the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions, and reported in the literature (Ward et al., 2005).

In the results and discussion chapter (chapter four), each thematic network of the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions is discussed separately and in detail; i.e. *uncontrollability*, *dangerous world*, *entitlement*, *children as sexual beings*, and *nature of harm*. Under each heading the cognitive content and processes, of the participants, are reported on, resulting in the validation of the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions.

Chapter five provides a conclusive summary of the results and discussion section. It also provides limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter is an examination of the literature reviewed in light of the present study. It begins with an analysis of the research of cognitive distortions of child sex offenders, particularly the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions (Ward et al., 2005). Parallels are drawn between the uses of cognitive distortions as reported by child sex offenders and found in the psychological literature. Similarly, parallels are drawn between the individual use and the collective, social use of cognitive distortions. As the focus is on social influences and gender, a feminist theoretical framework seemed natural.

2.1 Cognitive Distortions of Child Sex Offenders

Distorted or maladaptive thinking is widely acknowledged as an important variable in both the initiation and maintenance of sex offending (Ward et al., 1998). This distorted or maladaptive thinking is referred to as cognitive distortions. These cognitive distortions are self-statements made by offenders that allow them to misconstrue the nature of their sexual offending (Murphy, 1990) and provide offenders with an interpretive framework that allows them to justify, rationalise, and essentially excuse their maladaptive behaviours to themselves and others (Howitt, 1995).

Ward (2000) proposed that cognitive distortions of sex offenders are the result of underlying causal implicit theories that they have about themselves, their victims, and the world. Implicit theories are used to explain and evaluate

behaviour, mental states, and make predictions on which behaviour is based. Implicit theories develop during childhood and are a class of schemata that affect the way that information is attended to, perceived, and interpreted. Therefore, they can lead sex offenders to attend to and interpret the world in offence congruent ways (Ward, 2000). Sex offenders, and people in general, using these implicit theories, test for consistencies in their surroundings and then develop predictions about the world that are relatively coherent and contain interrelated beliefs and concepts (Ward & Keenan, 1999). Given that these implicit theories are based on subjective experiences and perceptions, they are relatively fixed and resistant to change (Ward & Keenan, 1999).

2.1.1 The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions

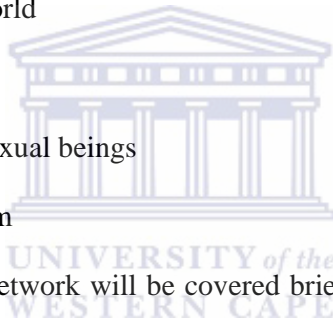
In order to explain the complexity of cognitive distortions, Ward et al. (2005) have developed the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions. This model proposes that cognitive distortions cluster together in thematic networks. Thematic networks are judgments about beliefs, values and actions. These judgments cover all types of cognitive distortions evident in sex offenders including content (i.e. asserting characteristics to people, the offender, the world) and operations (i.e. denial, rationalisation, minimisation). Cognitive distortions of child sex offenders reflect their thoughts about children, the world and themselves that facilitate and maintain the sexual offending. The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions (Ward et al., 2005) proposes that all people make judgments, or acts of reasoning, about the meaning of observed events in the world; goals to pursue for satisfaction; and the meaning behind action, one's own

and others. These judgments interact with each other in complex ways to influence behaviour. Therefore, behaviour results from a person's acquired knowledge of the world, i.e. beliefs they have formed, as well as their motivating values. When a person's beliefs or values are distorted in some way, this can result in irrational actions such as sex offending. The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions highlights how beliefs and their associated values serve as the base for sex offending, and how all offence endorsing statements reflect different combinations of these beliefs, values and actions (Ward et al., 2005).

Beliefs, conclusions, values and actions interact dynamically and their content reflects a person's cultural, ecological and personal environment (Ward et al, 2005). The individual is viewed in context, and the content of his cognitions is influenced by his culture and environment; which will be referred to as society in this study. The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions (Ward et al., 2005) includes three levels of analysis: (a) the micro-level, (b) the meso-level, and (c) the macro-level. The micro-level focuses on the individual offender's beliefs, values, or actions. The meso-level focuses on the relationship between the individual's plans or goals and the surrounding environment in which these plans are carried out. This meso-level appears to coincide with Mihailides, Devilly and Ward's (2004) implicit motivation, which will be discussed below. The macro-level focuses on the broader relationship between the offender and his personal, cultural, and social environment. Each of the three levels is the result of judgments of various kinds: what is considered true (beliefs), what is seen as worthwhile or desirable (values), and what the person decides is the best way to act (actions).

The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions is an extension of previous work done by Ward et al. (1998) and Ward and Keenan (1999). Ward and Keenan (1999) derived a set of five implicit theories that account for most of the specific cognitive distortions generated by child sex offenders. Ward et al. (1998) developed a descriptive Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions (MDC) in child sex offenders. According to Ward et al. (2005), there are five thematic networks that can be found in child sex offenders; the first three are general to all sex offenders, the last two are exclusive to child sex offenders. The five thematic networks are:

1. Uncontrollability
2. Dangerous world
3. Entitlement
4. Children as sexual beings
5. Nature of harm



Each thematic network will be covered briefly here and further explained in the results section. However, it is important to note that under each thematic network, the focus is not only on the implicit belief, but also on the values or goals pursued and on the resulting actions of the sex offender.

The thematic network categorised as *uncontrollability* refers to sex offenders' reports that their thoughts, feelings and behaviours are uncontrollable and that powerful internal or external forces drive their behaviour, e.g. sexual desire, or alcohol (Ward et al., 2005). *Dangerous world* includes the sex offender's view of the world and people, as hostile and rejecting, and his subsequent attraction to children because they are safer objects, or to harm children as an act of revenge (Ward et al., 2005). In the thematic network

entitlement, the offender regards himself as superior to others and believes that this superiority entitles him to assert his needs over other people's needs, including sexual needs (Ward et al., 2005). *Children as sexual beings* includes the view that children wish to engage in sexual activities with adults and that sex is beneficial for children. Furthermore, within this thematic network, child sex offenders claim that children's agency should be respected and they should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding sex (Ward et al., 2005). This thematic network overlaps with the *nature of harm* thematic network, in which child sex offenders report that having sex with children is not harmful and actually beneficial to children (Ward et al., 2005).

Marziano, Ward, Beech and Pattison (2006) conducted a qualitative analysis of interviews with 22 child sex offenders and found strong evidence for the five implicit theories in child sex offenders that account for the majority of their cognitive distortions. They found no evidence of another type of implicit theory. The most dominant cognitive distortions generated by their participants were related to the implicit theory of *children as sexual beings*, followed by *uncontrollability*, *dangerous world*, *nature of harm* and *entitlement*.

Earlier work by Hanson, Gizzarelli and Scott (1994) using the Hanson Sex Attitudes Questionnaire, found that incest offenders (compared to 'male batterers' and a community control) were the most likely to see children as sexually attractive and wanting to engage in sex, minimised the harm that sexual abuse causes, and endorsed attitudes supportive of male sexual entitlement. Contrary to what they expected, there were no differences between incest offenders and controls with regards to attitudes toward affairs, sexual frustration, and confusion

between sex and affection. This older study supports the five implicit beliefs endorsed by Ward and Keenan (1999).

2.1.2 Entrenched Beliefs and Situational Beliefs

Ward et al. (2005) distinguished between entrenched beliefs and situational beliefs or conclusions, drawn at the time of offending. Entrenched beliefs are part of the person's stable belief system, and do not change; for example, a child sex offender may view all children as wanting to engage in sexual contact with adults. Situational beliefs, on the other hand, arise in specific contexts. For example, the child sex offender may not view children as sexual beings, but under the influence of alcohol when a child sits on his lap, he may perceive the child to be promiscuous and seeking sex with him. Blumenthal, Gudjonsson and Burns (1998) referred to these entrenched beliefs as cognitive distortions and situational beliefs as blame attribution in sex offenders. They argued that both might be viewed as different means of justifying an offence. However, blame attribution relates to an individual's perception of the specific circumstances of the offence, while cognitive distortions relate to more global attitudes and beliefs about the acceptability of sex offending behaviour in general.

2.1.3 The Sexual Offender Self-Esteem Hypothesis

Several researchers have questioned whether child sex offenders do hold distorted beliefs or whether they report them in order to avoid legal consequences or to ward off social disapproval. Mihailides et al. (2004) have developed the *sexual offender self-esteem hypothesis*, which holds that sex offenders are

motivated to use cognitive distortions to protect their self-esteem, to protect the self from social disapproval, and to avoid cognitive dissonance (Mihailides et al., 2004; Strong, Greene & Kordinak, 2002; Ward, Hudson, Johnston, & Marshall, 1997). According to Mihailides et al. (2004), the belief elements were well covered and provided structural foundations for the implicit theories of Ward (2000) and Ward and Keenan (1999). However, they argued that the motivational components of the theory have been neglected. Mihailides et al. (2004) highlighted the role of implicit motivation by mapping motivational constructs onto sex offenders' implicit beliefs. Using the semantic-motivation hypothesis of sex offender implicit theories, they proposed that cognitive distortions occur at the nexus between motivation and cognition. Put differently, motivational content is informative of process-level constructs such as denial, minimisation, rationalisation, self-deception, and impression management. Furthermore, they viewed the mental processes used in sex offending as learned and thus capable of being "unlearned". The three implicit theories covered in the Mihailides et al. (2004) research were: *children as sexual beings*, *uncontrollability* and *entitlement*. They proposed that the two theories not covered (*nature of harm* and *dangerous world*) include additional motivations, such as attachment and intimacy. The results provided evidence for the existence of stronger implicit associations in sex offenders compared to nonsexual offenders on all three implicit theories. Again, these results were consistent with Ward's belief-desire view of sexual offending (Mihailides et al., 2004).

2.1.4 The Cognitive Distortion Hypothesis, Social Desirability Hypothesis and Treatment Effect Hypothesis

Gannon and Polaschek (2005) have argued that child sex offenders do not possess cognitive distortions. They stated that non-offenders assume that child sex offenders hold beliefs that are essentially different to their own, in order to comprehend how child sex offenders perform these acts. When child sex offenders talk about their offending, they often support this view by making offence supportive statements. These offence supportive statements may be expressions of an enduring belief system that supports the sexual abuse of children, or they may simply be temporary post-offence justifications that all people use to respond to the criticism of others when social norms have been violated (Gannon & Polaschek, 2005). Gannon and Polaschek (2005) proposed three pervasive hypotheses in the research of child sex offenders: the *cognitive distortion hypothesis*, *social desirability hypothesis* and the *treatment effect hypothesis*. According to them, these hypotheses are erroneous and serve to meet the needs of the researcher. The *cognitive distortion hypothesis* refers to the belief that offence supportive statements reflect child sex offenders' distorted beliefs or cognitive distortions. Abel et al. (1984) hypothesised that child sex offenders cope with the consequential self-evaluative anxiety and maintain their sexually abusive behaviour by developing a range of stable beliefs about the appropriateness of sex with children. However Gannon and Polaschek (2005) reported that there is no empirical evidence to support this claim. Even when child sex offenders total scores on cognitive distortion questionnaires are more offence supportive than controls, most child sex offenders disagree with most cognitive distortion items in

these questionnaires (Gannon & Polaschek, 2005). Thus distorted cognition seems to be about disagreeing slightly less than non-offenders, not about agreement. It is a matter of degree.

Gannon and Polaschek (2005) have argued that if child sex offenders do not appear to endorse cognitive distortions, researchers often explain this as an attempt to deliberately hide their cognitive distortions from others. This is known as the *social desirability hypothesis*. This hypothesis claims that child sex offenders have an awareness that their cognitive distortions are unacceptable to non-offenders and thus present themselves as if they share the same beliefs as non-offenders with regard to child sex offending, in order to avoid social disapproval (Blumenthal et al., 1999; Gannon & Polaschek, 2005; Horley, 2000). Thus, if child sex offenders reject cognitive distortions prior to treatment, it is explained by means of the *social desirability hypothesis*. However, if they reject cognitive distortions post treatment, it is explained as a result of successful treatment; i.e. the child sex offenders have discarded their cognitive distortions and have become more self-aware and reflective. Gannon and Polaschek (2005) referred to this as the *treatment effect hypothesis*.

Gannon and Polaschek (2005) compared response times of semantic processing and found that the results did not support the *cognitive distortion hypothesis*. They also found that untreated child sex offenders' endorsements of distorted beliefs could not be distinguished statistically from the responses of students or nonsexual offenders. The similarity in processing response times for the untreated child sex offenders, non-sexual offender controls, and students, suggested that these groups were using similar strategies to reject the cognitive

distortion items. Treated child sex offenders' cognitive distortion scores were lower than all other groups but their response times were faster. This is inconsistent with the hypothesised mechanism for how treatment effects change through engendering more reflective and honest thinking (Gannon & Polaschek, 2005). They hypothesised that familiarity with the correct thinking might make child sex offenders who had received treatment respond quickly regardless of whether they believed what they were reporting. These results supported Gannon's later conclusions (Gannon, 2006) that low endorsements of cognitive distortions by untreated child sex offenders were not necessarily dishonest responses.

Gannon (2006) attempted to test both the *cognitive distortion hypothesis* and the *social desirability hypothesis*. There were two parts to the study. The first part involved the completion of cognitive distortion questionnaires by child sex offenders, resulting in the finding that they generally disagreed with cognitive distortion items. In the second part of the study, the *social desirability hypothesis* was tested. She hypothesised that if child sex offenders did hold distorted socially undesirable cognitions that they were hiding, if attached to a pseudo-lie detector, they would be more honest and disclose more agreement with the items. Unexpectedly, the child sex offenders in the pseudo-lie detector condition did not show greater cognitive distortion item agreement, despite being reasonably convinced that dishonesty could be detected. According to Gannon (2006), these findings cast doubt on both hypotheses, i.e. the *cognitive distortion hypothesis* and the *social desirability hypothesis*.

However, in another study, Gannon, Keown and Polaschek (2007) using the same pseudo-lie detector control, with a sample of extrafamilial child sex offenders, found that these extrafamilial child sex offenders consciously minimised their reporting of cognitive distortions. When attached to the pseudo-lie detector, they reported more agreement with cognitive distortion measures and less impression management. The difference in the results between the Gannon (2006) and Gannon et al. (2007) studies was explained as a result of participants, as well as the mode of responding. Gannon's (2006) sample included intrafamilial child sex offenders and child sex offenders who had received treatment. Gannon et al.'s (2007) sample included only extrafamilial child sex offenders who had not received treatment, and therefore, they were expected to hold more cognitive distortions. Furthermore, it was hypothesised that extrafamilial child sex offenders tend to develop more enduring cognitive distortions because they have more experiences in which to strengthen these distortions. Despite these findings, Gannon et al. (2007) found that agreement and disagreement of cognitive distortions was one of degree, stating that child sex offenders "cognitive distortions somehow represent a lower level of inhibition against offending rather than a disinhibitor per se" (p. 19).

2.1.5 Cognitive Content and Cognitive Processes

Social cognition researchers have made a distinction between the content or cognitive products of cognitions and the processes that generate them (Ward et al., 1998). In the literature, the terms cognitive processes and cognitive operations are conceptualised similarly. The cognitive processes underlying the initiation,

maintenance, and justification of sex offending are as important as the cognitive content in understanding sex offending and the development of successful treatment programs. Offenders may selectively search for information within their social world that is consistent with their pre-existing beliefs, ignoring inconsistent information (Ward et al., 1998). Thus an offender may selectively attend to information, focusing on the salient behaviours of the victim that are consistent with his stereotypical beliefs and attitudes. Biased attention toward these behaviours will influence subsequent judgments. When behaviours are ambiguous, sex offenders interpret them in a manner that is consistent with their beliefs. For example, if a child sex offender believes children want sexual contact with an adult, innocent behaviours such as dancing or displaying affection may be misinterpreted as indicating willingness for sexual contact (Ward et al., 1998).

The Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions (Ward et al., 1998) consists of four sets of categories: offence chain, cognitive operations (processes), cognitive content, and meta-variables. Cognitive operations are defined as “the methods by which information content is relayed” (p. 140), that is, how the offender presents the information regarding his offending, offences, and victims. Ward et al. (1998) identified the following seven categories of cognitive operations: describing, explaining, interpreting, evaluating, denying, minimising, and planning. In the present study, the focus is on three operations or processes; two from the Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions, i.e. denying and minimising, and a third cognitive operation as defined by Murphy (1990), i.e. rationalising or justifying. It appears that this third operation incorporates the other operations identified by Ward et al. (1998), that is, through the process of justifying or rationalising his sex offending,

the child sex offender describes, explains, interprets, evaluates and plans his behaviours.

Salter (1988) referred to different types of denial; asserting that denial is not a binary state, where the child sex offender is either in a state of denial or not. Denial may take many forms. Forms of denial in sex offenders' accounts, identified by Ward et al. (1998), include: denying any sexual contact; denying memory of the contact; admitting sexual contact occurred but claiming that the victim consented or was unharmed by the experience; and finally, by evading the issue or changing the subject in order not to discuss the offence. Minimising involves purposefully misrepresenting information by admitting to less serious or less frequent offending behaviour, or by providing only a partial account of the offence (Ward et al., 1998). Offenders may minimise the frequency and extent of the abuse, their intentions, or the impact on the victim (Ward et al., 1998). From the above, it appears that the two constructs overlap somewhat. This may be as a result of the way that the researcher interprets the method in which the information is relayed.

The cognitive operation of rationalising or justifying refers to methods of explaining the behaviour in a way that makes it less abhorrent and reprehensible (Murphy, 1990). Murphy (1990) offered a social learning model of cognitive factors in sex offenders, adapted from Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. According to this model, the three major cognitive processes used to avoid negative self evaluation in the process of sex offending are: (i) making offensive behaviours socially and ethically acceptable; (ii) misconstruing the consequences of the behaviour; and (iii) devaluing or blaming the victim. Justification of, or

rationalising, these behaviours plays a significant role as child sex offenders try to avoid negative feelings about their behaviour. These justifications and rationalisations eventually become automatic over time, and assist the offender in avoiding guilt feelings (Murphy, 1990). This avoidance of guilt feelings has been referred to as an empathy deficit in the literature.

2.1.6 Empathy Deficits

Marshall, Hamilton and Fernandez (2001) studied cognitive distortions and empathy deficits in child sex offenders. Their study was based on earlier work by Fernandez, Marshall, Lightbody and O'Sullivan (1999) which suggested that empathy deficits in child sex offenders are not pervasive but rather centred on the offenders' own victim(s). Fernandez et al. (1999) distinguished between cognitive empathy (recognition of distress in another) and emotional empathy (feelings of concern or compassion). From this perspective, a lack of empathy results from a distorted view of the responses displayed by victims during and after the abuse. In the model of empathic processes (Marshall, Hudson, Jones & Fernandez, 1995, as cited in Marshall et al., 2001), recognition of another person's distress is a needed precursor to an empathic emotional response that, in turn, activates ameliorative action. Thus, if child sex offenders do not recognise the victim's distress, they will not experience the emotional responses that might otherwise occur when faced with a distressed victim. In their study, they found that child sex offenders, compared to other subjects, displayed greater cognitive empathy deficits toward child victims of sexual abuse, and their greatest cognitive empathy deficits were toward their own victim(s).

According to Gilgan and Connor (1989), personal accounts of child sex offenders suggested that during the sexual act, perpetrators objectified the child. This objectification may account for their lack of empathy. They found that perpetrators were unable to see their victims as anything but sources of pleasure because they were so focused on their own sexual needs. In their study, ten out of the fourteen men they interviewed reported that they did not see the children and adolescents as people during the sexual acts.

2.1.7 Methods of Evaluating Cognitive Distortions

Burn and Brown (2005) highlighted the difficulties faced in the study of cognitive distortions of child sex offenders. According to them, the two major difficulties are the inability to generalise results of studies, as the samples used are usually biased, and the effects of the social desirability hypothesis. One of the most contentious issues within the literature is the dependence on self-rating scales (Burn & Brown, 2005). Two popular self-rating cognition scales used with child sex offenders are the Abel and Becker Cognitions Scale, developed by Abel et al. (1984) and published in Salter (1988), and the Child Molester Scale, developed by McGrath, Cann and Konopasky (1998). The Abel and Becker Cognitions Scale is a questionnaire consisting of 29 items, taken from actual statements made by offenders. For example, item twelve states: Sometime in the future, our society will realise that sex between a child and an adult is all right. The respondent marks his level of agreement on a five-point likert-type scale, with one indicating *strongly agree* and five, *strongly disagree*. Burn and Brown (2005) argued that by using an odd number of responses, individuals might opt for a

neutral response (i.e. 3). The scale is not formally scored but used clinically (Salter, 1988). However, it only allows for fixed responses and does not allow for additional information. Additional information should be gained in a clinical interview. Salter (1988) regarded the scale as a good measure but did not comment on its validity and reliability.

Tierney and McCabe (2001) commented on the clinical utility and validity of both the Abel and Becker Cognitions Scale and the Child Molester Scale. They questioned the clinical utility of some of the items in both scales. They also questioned the construct validity of both scales. They hypothesised that child sex offenders' responses to these measures may not be particularly different from other groups, but their behaviours may be. Furthermore, these cognition scales are transparent and respondents are easily able to determine what the socially desirable responses are (Blumenthal et al., 1999). According to Nunes, Firestone and Baldwin (2007), these cognition scales are limited to consciously accessible thoughts and therefore, susceptible to presentation bias. When dysfunctional beliefs and attitudes are measured psychometrically, the focus is on the content of these cognitions rather than the processes that underlie the initiation, maintenance and justification of child sex offending (Burn & Brown, 2005; Ward et al. 1998). Ward et al. (1998) argued that cognition scales assume that thoughts are static, when in fact thoughts, emotions and behaviours change throughout the offence chain. The difference between entrenched beliefs and situational beliefs may also be ignored when using these cognition scales. Burn and Brown (2005) contended that it is these criticisms that have led to a more flexible and useful approach to the study of cognitive distortions of child sex offenders; i.e. qualitative methods.

They stated that qualitative methods have added to theory development in this field by providing a richer understanding of the cognitions of child sex offenders. Quantitative methods focus on the measurement and content of these cognitive distortions assuming that they are discussed and experienced in the same way for each sex offender (Burn & Brown, 2005; Ward et al., 1997). Thus, the use of qualitative methods may add to our understanding of the processes involved in child sex offending and the way that cognitive distortions differ personally between child sex offenders.

2.2 Social Use of Cognitive Distortions

The operations or processes of cognitive distortions are referred to as defense mechanisms in most psychological literature. The DSM-IV TR (APA, 2000, p.807) defines defense mechanisms as “automatic psychological processes” that protect the individual against both anxiety and the awareness of internal or external dangers or stressors. Defense mechanisms have three things in common: they protect the individual from anxiety, they operate unconsciously, and they distort reality (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 1994). All people make use of defense mechanisms, however some defense mechanisms are considered more mature and adaptive. For example, humour and sublimation are considered to be at a high adaptive level, whereas denial and rationalisation are placed under the disavowal level in the DSM IV TR (APA, 2000, p. 808-809). Thus, they are maladaptive because they keep unacceptable impulses, ideas, feelings, or responsibility out of conscious awareness, sometimes with a faulty attribution of these impulses, ideas, feelings or responsibility to external causes (APA, 2000, p. 809). Sex offenders,

who explain their behaviour as a result of external factors, rather than internal causes, are less likely to take responsibility. It appears that maladjusted defense mechanisms can be found in some child sex offenders, and probably to varying degrees in all child sex offenders.

Both the content and processes of cognitive distortions used individually are used collectively by society (Herman, 2001). They are used by society for the same reasons that they are used individually. In other words, they serve to protect society against anxiety and the awareness of external dangers. Similarly, they operate mostly at an unconscious level, and they distort reality. Denial is not only an individual phenomenon but also a social phenomenon of consciousness (Herman, 2001). This can be extended to minimisation and rationalisation, processes used by individuals and society to minimise and rationalise child sexual abuse.

Denial of child sexual abuse has been further exacerbated by the psychological literature. Masson (2003) was paramount in highlighting Freud's denial of child sexual abuse and the resulting exacerbation of the myth that the child wanted the sexual contact, i.e. child sexual abuse is often a "phantasy" of the child as he/she attempts to resolve the Oedipus complex (in boys) and the Electra complex (in girls). However, this was not Freud's original position. He originally believed his patients' accounts of early childhood sexual trauma. After psychoanalysis with eighteen "hysterical" patients, he presented his paper *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, in which he stated "I therefore put forward the thesis that at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience" (Freud, 1896, in Masson, 2003, p. 271). In this paper he was

convinced of the reality of these early sexual experiences and their harmful consequences. He presented this paper in 1896 to colleagues at the Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in Vienna. Although in the presentation, he was aware that there would be doubt and some resistance to his theory, he was clearly not prepared for the ostracising that this paper brought him. In 1905, he retracted his “seduction theory” claiming that the memories of his patients were only fantasies (Masson, 2003).

In the history of psychology, children’s reports of sexual abuse have often been denied. In cases where it was impossible to deny that sexual abuse occurred, children were blamed for the sexual abuse. They have been called “seducers” and it was implied that they enjoyed or benefited from the abuse. Salter (2003) provided a comprehensive account of this denial and victim blaming by Karl Abrahams, Laretta Bender, and others. It is important to take heed of the fact that these were professionals who have shaped psychology and psychiatry, and whose opinions and comments were, and still are, regarded as authoritative. Salter (2003) highlighted how in the history of psychology, there have been many theories that denied that sexual abuse occurred, that discounted the responsibility of the offender, that blamed the mother and/or child when it did occur, and that minimised the impact of the sexual abuse on the child.

Breckenridge and Berreen (1992) described minimising child sexual abuse through the process of mother-blame. Some of the mother-blame mythology was an offshoot of family systems theories, where incest was seen as a symptom of family pathology, with each member of the family responsible for the problem. Therefore, the incest was secondary to family pathology, and was sometimes

reframed as the family loving each other too much (Salter, 2003). The child sexual abuse was minimised and restructuring the family became the focus, which was regarded as the real problem. The perpetrator was not wholly responsible for his actions but shared this responsibility with other family members, including the victim. Theories and ideas about mothers colluding or at least knowing about the incest to a certain degree removed the responsibility from the child sex offender (Breckenridge & Berreen, 1992). Mothers were blamed for not fulfilling their wifely duties or because they in some way tacitly allowed the abuse to occur, through their unconscious collusion or as a result of certain personality traits (Breckenridge & Berreen, 1992). As Breckenridge and Berreen (1992) pointed out, these theories could not explain extrafamilial child sexual abuse and ignored the power differences within the family.

More recently, other professionals have minimised the harm of child sexual abuse. Rind, Tromovitch, and Bauserman (1998) questioned whether “child sexual abuse” is an appropriate term to use, as it implies that the violation of social norms necessarily means causing harm. Rind and Tromovitch (1997) concluded that the reactions and outcomes for boys to child sexual abuse are more likely to be neutral or positive, than negative. Furthermore, they questioned the generalisability of clinical samples on which most child sexual abuse studies have been conducted, but did not question why it is so prevalent amongst these clinical samples. Rind et al. (1998) doubted the validity of previous studies indicating the negative effects of child sexual abuse, on the basis of sampling errors and other confounding variables e.g. family environment. They perceived these other variables as the possible causes of adult psychopathology and not the child sexual

abuse. In their 1998 meta-analysis, they stated that the “willingness” of children should be taken into account in the study of child sexual abuse. They viewed “child sexual abuse” as an over-inclusive definition, stating that in order to achieve scientific validity in studies, a distinction should be made between “willing sexual experiences accompanied by positive reactions and coerced sexual experiences with negative reactions” (p.47). They concluded: (i) that men and women experience child sexual abuse differently; (ii) lasting negative effects are not prevalent; and (iii) when negative effects do occur, they are temporary. Therefore, Rind et al. (1998) argued that a willing sexual experience should be termed “adult-child sex”, a value neutral term and not child sexual abuse, implying that harm was done. In addition, they contended that it is important to separate between children and adolescents, as adolescents are more likely to be sexual, know whether they want the sexual encounter, and are able to resist it if it is unwanted. Rind et al.’s (1998) views have been supported by others; e.g. Judith Levine in her book *Harmful to Minors* and Mirkin in his article *The Pattern of Sexual Politics* (Salter, 2003). In this article, Mirkin (1999) compared the predicament of paedophiles as a subordinate group who are being “oppressed”, to the oppressive history of women, “black people” and homosexuals. His arguments mirrored Rind et al. (1998) in that he also stated that children should be separated from adolescents because adolescents were more able to make their own decisions regarding sex. Furthermore, Mirkin (1999) argued that children were not always passive victims and that they were never blamed for their role in the abuse even if they were “hustlers”. He denied the innocence and vulnerability of children. He

stated that research was moulded to fit the dominant paradigm, and that research reflecting the harmfulness of child sexual abuse was an example of this.

According to Salter (2003), Bruce Rind and Robert Bauserman, prior to their 1998 meta-analysis, published articles in *Paidika: The Journal of Pedophilia*. Salter (2003) gives the intended purpose of this journal in its first 1987 issue, and it is worth reproducing it here.

The starting point of *Paidika* is necessarily our consciousness of ourselves as paedophiles ... We intend to demonstrate that paedophilia has been, and remains, a legitimate and productive part of the totality of human experience (*Paidika*, 1987, p. 2-3, cited in Salter, 2003, p. 64).

The denial, minimisation and rationalisation of child sexual abuse found in the psychological literature can also be found in society, sometimes in subtle ways. According to Finkelhor (1984), there are certain identifiable characteristics of society that could incline adult men to interact sexually with children. These characteristics include the emphasis that men place on youth, smallness, and submissiveness in sexual partners and their tendency to eroticise all their affectionate relationships. In a study by Segal and Stermac (Stermac, Segal & Gillis, 1990), non-offender groups considered children as having some responsibility and deriving some benefit from sexual contact with an adult, when the child did not actively resist or when there was no disrobing. Social factors and beliefs about what constitutes sexual offending greatly influence the general acceptability of these behaviours (Stermac et al., 1990). Frosch (1993) suggested that both a patriarchal organization of society and the microcosmic patterns of relationship and desire, characteristic of masculine sexual socialisation influence men to sexually offend against children. He explained sex as the only form of intimacy allowable to many men. Thus, all intimacy turns into sex as emotion and

nurture, being the qualities of the mother, the other, and women in general, are so feared that power is used instead. He claimed that this is the result of sexual socialisation in our gendered society.

2.3 Child Sexual Development

Although in this section the focus is on child sexual development, the physical, cognitive and social development of children should be kept in mind when discussing their sexual development. It is also important to bear in mind that when children's sexual development is considered, it is done through an adult understanding of sex and sexuality. Furthermore, if as Frosch (1993) states, sexuality is influenced by socialisation and culture, then it is viewed through the dominant masculine lens of what sexuality is (Ussher, 1991).

There are two broad schools of thought when it comes to theories of sexual development: those that emphasise innate biology, i.e. sexual development is primarily a biological process; and those that emphasise sexuality as a social construct, i.e. sexuality is strongly influenced by the wider society. Little research has been done on child sexual development because of the ethical implications. Alfred Kinsey is probably the most well known researcher on sexual development. According to Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1948), boys are capable of experiencing orgasm from the age of five months and girls from the age of four months. It is important to bear in mind that some of the information for their research was obtained through interviews with child sex offenders. As the literature has demonstrated, child sex offenders are susceptible to cognitive distortions and empathy deficits. Therefore it is possible that these child sex

offenders may have interpreted the children as experiencing sexual pleasure when they were not. Furthermore, Kinsey et al. (1948) stated that boys who reached orgasm at these young ages were “uninhibited” and “had definitely become aggressive in seeking sexual contacts” (p. 177). These comments resemble the cognitive distortions that child sex offenders sometimes offer to excuse their sex offending. It can be assumed that Kinsey et al. (1948) were unaware of the cognitive distortions of child sex offenders.

Although Kinsey et al. (1948) regarded erections in boys and lubrication in girls to be sexual responses, they stated that child explorative sex play appeared to be driven by curiosity and lacked erotic content. Most researchers and clinicians agree that children are generally curious about their bodies and those of others, and sometimes engage in explorative sex play. This explorative sex play tends to differ from adult goal driven sexual behaviour (Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, 2007). The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (2007) explain erections in boys and lubrication in girls not as responses to erotic stimulation, but rather as natural responses to touch, friction, or the need to urinate. In other words, they are physical reflex responses, sometimes called the reflexive sexual response (Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, 2007). This reflexive sexual response continues into adulthood and can be seen in men on awakening and needing to urinate and in the many reports by men and women who have been sexually violated and felt that their bodies *betrayed* them, by physiologically responding to the perpetrator. However, some children do get pleasure out of being sexually stimulated. This is

often a significant contributing factor to the self-blame evident in survivors of child sexual abuse (Herman, 2001).

During puberty, children go through a rapid transitional phase from childhood to adolescence. Puberty normally occurs between the ages of eleven and fifteen years (Louw, 1991). Louw (1991) refers to sexuality as a developmental task of adolescence. It is during adolescence when sexual identity is formed. It is also at this time when adolescents start developing sexual attraction towards others and respond physiologically in sexually aroused ways (Louw, 1991). Furthermore, this sexual development is greatly influenced by culture, religion and society's values and norms (Louw, 1991). Therefore, sexual development differs for each adolescent.

Bancroft (2001), speaking at the Kinsey Institute's Sexual Development Conference, described children as sexual beings but in ways that adults and science do not understand. At the same conference, Finkelhor (2001), warned that to study and talk about childhood sexuality should be done with caution because these are conceptual and research issues. There is a very valid concern in labelling children as sexual, because as was mentioned earlier, sexuality is defined through a masculine lens. Women are often described as sexual stimuli for men and thus blamed for their own rapes (Ussher, 1991). If children are regarded as sexual beings, then they too may be seen as sexual stimuli, carrying even more of the responsibility than they do currently. Thus it seems that the focus should not be on whether children enjoy sexual contact but on their ability to give consent and on the possible harmful consequences of child sexual abuse.

According to Gilgan (1995), children cannot give consent to any sexual activities because of their status as children and lack of understanding of the nature and consequences of these sexual activities. Thus, even if a child *consents* to a sexual encounter, it is considered child sexual abuse. For someone to genuinely consent, two conditions must prevail: the person must know what they are consenting to and they must have an unaffected option in either direction; in other words, to say “yes” or “no” (Finkelhor, 1984). Children by virtue of being children and inexperienced in sexual matters, cannot know what they are consenting to, nor do they have true freedom to say “no” because of their lack of authority in society (Finkelhor, 1984). They may have to refuse someone who controls their access to resources and who has the power to punish them (Finkelhor, 1984). Feminist theorists highlight the coercion present in all child sexual abuse as a result of the child being in a less authoritative and powerful position (Breckenridge 1992; Finkelhor; 1984; Herman, 2001; Salter, 2003). It is as a result of the power imbalance between adults and children that children are easily coerced and cannot give informed consent.

2.4 The Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Contrary to the views that child sexual abuse is not harmful (Mirkin, 1999; Rind et al., 1998), there are many theories and studies that regard child sexual abuse as detrimental. Victims of child sexual abuse are vulnerable to psychological problems because of severe traumatisation (Cole & Putnam, 1992; Herman, 2001; Kamphuis, De Ruiter, Janssen & Spiering, 2005). Child sexual abuse is a known risk factor for a host of adult psychopathology, including severe

personality disorders (Cole & Putnam, 1992; Herman, 2001; Kamphuis, De Ruiters, Janssen & Spiering, 2005). About two thirds of sexually abused children develop psychological symptoms, with a fifth of these cases exhibiting clinically significant long term problems that persist into adulthood (Carr, 1999). Some of the adverse consequences reported include later sexual dysfunction, self-blame and self-denigration, relationship problems, delinquency, drug abuse, self-harm, suicide, depression, anxiety, somatic presentations, and the possibility of becoming a sex offender (Carr, 1999). Herman (2001) explains the potential harm of childhood sexual abuse. She provides an understanding of the links between Borderline Personality Disorder and Dissociative Identity Disorder and child sexual abuse; both psychological disorders that adversely affect interpersonal relationships. According to Herman (2001), children who are sexually abused also make use of defense mechanisms, i.e. make use of the processes of cognitive distortions, in order to psychologically protect themselves and ward off the danger of the external world. As they are unable to change their reality, they alter it in their minds (Herman, 2001). One way of trying to make sense of the abuse is by attributing it to their own “inner badness”, in order to maintain hope in people and preserve attachments to others, including the abuser (Herman, 2001). This explains why child and adult survivors of sexual abuse often blame themselves for the abuse. Children, using their immature defense mechanisms, may block the abuse from conscious awareness and memory, i.e. denial, or it may be “minimized, rationalized, and excused” (Herman, 2001, p.102). Bass and Davis (1998) refer to denial, minimisation, rationalisation and forgetting as the basic methods that survivors of child sexual abuse use to cope with their sexual abuse.

Therefore, it appears that the same cognitive processes used by child sex offenders are used by victims of child sexual abuse, as well as endorsed by the academic literature and society.

Assuming that there are victims who find the experience as positive, the vast majority describe the experience as negative (Finkelhor, 1979). Finkelhor (1979) compared this idea to slavery; he stated that if we were to assume that there were a minority of people who claimed to experience slavery as more positive than freedom, *consensual* slavery would still not be allowed because it involves the oppression and abuse of people. In the same manner, *consensual* child sexual abuse cannot be allowed because it involves the coercion and abuse of children.

2.4 Feminist Theory

Cognitive distortions of child sex offenders are often explained as intrapsychic phenomena in the literature; i.e. they develop as a result of internal psychic processes. However, feminist discourse on child sexual abuse emphasises gender and power, as it is influenced by culture and society. Thus, a feminist approach entails the exploration of cognitive distortions of child sex offenders within a social context. However, there is disagreement in the feminist literature as to the relationship between gender and power, and child sexual abuse (Purvis & Ward, 2005). Purvis and Ward (2005) provided a comparison and critique of radical feminism, post-modern feminism and sociological feminism.

Radical feminism focuses on patriarchy and masculinity. Breckenridge (1992) highlighted the centrality of gender in child sexual abuse. Radical

feminists propose that men have social power over women and children, and that sexual offending is a result of this power imbalance. According to the radical feminists, patriarchy must be demolished (Kiguwa, 2004) in order to reduce sexual offending. Purvis and Ward (2005) criticised the radical feminists assumption that all men have power over all women. They argued that there are women who are more powerful than men, and that not all men have equal power. More power is given to some men than others based on class, race, education and so forth (Purvis and Ward, 2005). However, it could be argued that in patriarchal societies, the overall power does lie with men. Furthermore, Purvis and Ward (2005) critiqued the radical feminists in their view that all men have the potential to sexually abuse children, stating, “only a small minority of men sexually abuse children” (p. 303). Unfortunately, this statement is not necessarily true. It is unknown how many men sexually abuse children and the statistics of child sexual abuse imply that it is not a small minority of men. It seems that only a small minority are exposed and even a smaller minority convicted (RAPCAN, 2007). Purvis and Ward (2005) also queried the clinical utility of radical feminism, arguing that it cannot be used in the psychological treatment of child sex offenders. However, it could be argued that by understanding the nature of patriarchy and its influence in child sex offending, child sex offenders could be educated with regards to this influence and its negative effects on their own behaviour. Furthermore, radical feminists seem to focus on preventative methods rather treatment.

Post-modern feminists challenged the notion that gender is fixed and experienced in a comparable way for all men or for all women (Purvis & Ward,

2005). Instead, gender is seen as relational, masculinity and femininity constituting each other. The focus is on the subjectivity of gender and what it means for each individual person (Kiguwa, 2004). According to post-modern feminists, gender is socially constructed through the use of discursive practices (Kiguwa, 2004). Furthermore, they are more concerned with studying the effects of child sexual abuse than with seeking a universal cause (Purvis & Ward, 2005). Post-modern feminists have rejected the idea of a universal gender experience (Kiguwa, 2004), and highlighted the complexity of power and gender (Purvis & Ward, 2005). Power, like gender, is not fixed, but relational. It is the depth and understanding that post-modern feminists strive for, that is critiqued by Purvis and Ward (2005). Purvis and Ward (2005) claimed that as post-modern feminists reject the notion of a universal truth and emphasise multiple perspectives, they have not added to the theory on the search for causes of child sexual abuse, and thus treatment programs.

Finally, Ward and Purvis (2005) explained and critiqued sociological feminism, using Cossins power/powerlessness theory as an example. Cossins (2000) asserted that child sex offending is a method in which some men may alleviate their feelings of powerlessness and establish their masculinity (gender) and power. She highlighted that gender is socially constructed and both power and gender are dynamic constructs. According to Cossins (2000) men will experience both instances of power and powerlessness through their position in a social hierarchy where they are both subordinate (e.g., economically or politically) and dominant (e.g., in comparison to racial minorities, women and children). Sexuality is central to the construction of masculinity and thus certain sexual

practices serve to create and maintain power relations between men, and between men and women. In order to experience power, Cossins (2000) argued that a man must repeatedly engage in certain social practices that prove his masculinity, of which the primary features are power and sexuality. She stated that through child sex offending, these masculinities could be reproduced and confirmed in environments in which the characteristics of less powerful objects are desirable. These characteristics are often those of children, such as willingness, obedience, and being small. Thus, through child sex offending, some men accomplish masculinity and overcome the experiences of powerlessness they may experience as a result of their relationships with other men. Therefore, for some men, child sex offending may be a practice through which power is obtained and masculinity is achieved. Gender may be experienced as a common element that shapes experiences, identities, expression of emotions, and thought processes but can differ qualitatively as experienced in various social and material contexts (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Purvis and Ward (2005) criticised the “incongruencies” in Cossins’ theory, stating that her theory might be applicable to a particular type of child sex offender (i.e. the self-focused offender). In addition, they questioned the concept that child sexual abuse is linked to normative masculine sexuality, again stating that the majority of males do not offend. According to Cossins (2000), a distinction should be made between abnormal behaviour and socially undesirable behaviour. She argued that child sexual abuse is not abnormal, if it was, it would occur less. Rather, she contended that it is socially undesirable.

Gender, masculinity and power are prominent themes in all feminist theories. However, the way that they are understood differs amongst the theories

and theorists. In the present study, all three theories are drawn on to interpret the cognitive distortions of child sex offenders, as the focus of this study is on gender, masculinity and power. Feminism means different things to different women and has come to take many forms in different places. Women are a heterogeneous group, like men. However, all feminist theories assume sexual abuse to be inherent to a system of male supremacy (Herman, 1988). Many feminist theorists and researchers regard child sexual abuse as an act of violence because it involves the dynamics of coercion and power, particularly male power. In early feminist consciousness-raising attempts, sexual offending was defined as an aggressive act rather than a sexual act. This was done to counteract the widespread belief that the victim enjoyed the sexual part of the abuse (Herman, 1988). However, men who engage in sexual offending do so, not only because it is permitted, but also because it is rewarding to them (Herman, 1988). The sexual component to sexual abuse cannot be ignored (Finkelhor, 1984). According to Finkelhor (1984), all sexual behaviour is loaded with nonsexual motivation; e.g. the need for love and affection, the need for confirmation of masculinity and femininity, and so forth. The child sex offender chooses a sexual act and sexualises the child, implying an erotic component (Finkelhor, 1984). Feminist theories sometimes ignore the sexual component of child sex offending. Similarly, psychological formulations remove the sexual component and reinterpret the act as one of trying to meet ordinary human needs; for example, some theories claim that sex offenders need to sexually assault women and children to feel accepted or validated, ignoring the sexual pleasure that these men obtain (Herman, 1988).

2.5 Summary

Although there is some disagreement regarding the reasons for reporting cognitive distortions, generally, there is consensus that child sex offenders do hold distorted beliefs. These distorted beliefs and the implicit values attached to them, which influence behaviours, can be categorised in various ways. The Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions (Ward et al., 2005) offers a method of categorising these beliefs, as well as viewing them in a broader context. Furthermore, cognitive distortions have been divided into content and the processes that affect the way that information and stimuli, internal and external, are attended to. Both the content and the processes of cognitive distortions used by individuals are also utilised by society. Feminist theorists focus on the influence of gender and power in the study of child sexual abuse, but differ with regard to their explanations of this influence. Although some researchers have denied the harmful consequences of child sexual abuse, most researchers and clinicians agree that child sexual abuse is socially undesirable and harmful. Furthermore, there is consensus amongst feminists that children cannot consent to sex because of their lack of authority in society. Over and above this, little is understood about child sexual development.

Quantitative methods of analysing cognitive distortions have been favoured but lack the ability to report on the processes, i.e. self-reporting methods and semantic processing methods tend to measure only the content of cognitive distortions. Qualitative methods allow for a richer collection of data but are open to subjective interpretation. In the present study, the subjectivity of the researcher has been embraced, as the methodology used is a feminist one.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter highlights the methodology employed in this study. Firstly the aim of the research is discussed, followed by an elaboration of the chosen methodology; i.e. feminism. The procedure utilised is outlined next, indicating the participants, data collection methods and data analysis. Finally, ethical considerations for research of this nature are discussed.

3.1 Aim

There were two aims to this study. The first aim was to explore whether child sex offenders in this South African sample would express the five thematic networks endorsed by the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions (Ward et al., 2005), and reported in the literature (Marziano et al., 2006; Hanson et al., 1994). In other words, the aim was to validate the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions. The second aim was to examine how these men reported these thematic networks by examining the cognitive processes that they employed and focusing specifically on denial, minimisation and rationalisation (Ward et al. 2005; Murphy, 1990; Ward et al., 1997).

3.2 Feminist Methodology

Feminist research is concerned with gender and incorporates reflexive research practices (Banister et al., 1994, as cited in Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). Thus, it is concerned with both the content and the process of research (Eagle,

Hayes & Sibanda, 1999). Ontologically, any human experience can be studied and all experiences are valid (Kelly, 1999). However, feminist researchers are dedicated to the study of gender relations and the oppression inherent in a system that provides men with social power over women (Kiguwa, 2004). Epistemologically, knowledge is gained through speaking to people and giving them a voice (Kelly, 1999). Feminist researchers agree that research is subjective and knowledge is political. They are aware of the power relations evident in all research (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006).

Feminist research focuses on issues that are important to women and seeks to increase an understanding of women's experiences (Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 1999). It usually includes women as a sample. However, in this study the sample was male. A feminist approach was chosen because child sexual abuse requires a gendered analysis, as most child sex offenders are men (Finkelhor, 1984). Furthermore, child sexual abuse affects the lives of all women, whether they are survivors of child sexual abuse or not. It is our children (as mothers) that are possible victims; and our fathers, uncles, brothers, lovers and sons (as relationally-constituted subjects) that are possible perpetrators. Secondly, feminist research is action orientated (Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 1999). It is hoped that this research will assist clinicians who work with both perpetrators and survivors of child sexual abuse. An understanding of child sex offenders may assist in the treatment of survivors as they seek to find meaning of their past abuse. Thirdly, the subjectivity of the researcher is embraced (Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 1999). The researcher's subjectivity influences every aspect of the research (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). Feminist research argues that data analysis does not escape the

influence of the researcher's worldview. Furthermore, the researcher guides the research from the choice of the research question to the interpretation of results. Power relations as a result of the identity of the researcher are often evident and were inherent in this study. Finally, I have chosen a qualitative method of analysing the data. Qualitative research is mainly concerned with the role of interpretation and the researcher (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning of human experience rather than trying to explain and predict behaviour, based on statistical methods. Furthermore, it is also recognised that meaning and behaviour occur within particular social and historical contexts. This applies to both the researcher and the participants (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006).

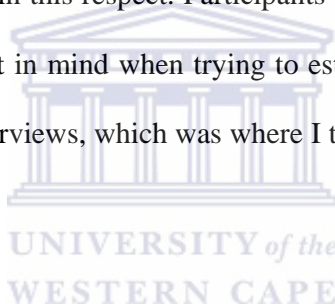
3.3 Participants

The targeted group for this research was child sex offenders. Child sex offenders are a special population and I was concerned about access to a sample.

3.3.1 Negotiating Access

A social worker specialising in working with sex offenders assisted with access to the sample of child sex offenders. She regarded research as an important adjunct to the work she was doing. There were two conditions: a letter in my personal capacity stating that I would adhere to the Health Professions Council of South Africa's regulations with regard to research, and that she would be provided with a copy of the completed document.

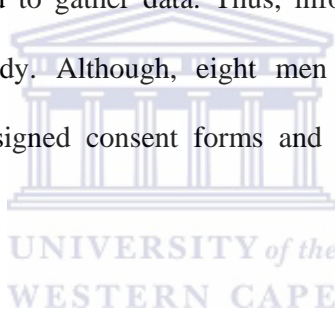
Access to the child sex offenders was more difficult. Child sex offenders have to be comfortable with the label before they will embark on becoming participants in a study with this label. Reactions to the research were varied. Some of the men were positive and expressed an interest in the research. However, this interest did not guarantee participation. Others were hostile and uncomfortable with being studied as child sex offenders. Those that denied allegations against them reported no interest in the research. Generally, I found that they were distrustful and although ensured that the information would be used only for research purposes, they were concerned that it could be used against them. Rapport was important in this respect. Participants' fear of social disapproval and rejection should be kept in mind when trying to establish rapport. Thus, the final sample for in-depth interviews, which was where I thought most of the data would emerge, was small.



3.3.2 The Final Sample

The child sex offenders who made up the final sample attended weekly rehabilitation group sessions. There were six rehabilitation groups in operation at the time of this study. There were two female social workers and two male facilitators involved in the rehabilitation program. The social workers facilitated groups on their own, the two male facilitators worked together. The groups generally consisted of four to twelve members. Members were educated around paedophilia as well as child development. The groups took the form of a discussion. The role of cognitive distortions in the initiation and maintenance of child sex offending was explained to the child sex offenders when they started the

rehabilitation program. In the groups, members were expected to challenge each other's cognitive distortions and offer support and advice to each other. Members were from different socio economic backgrounds and were of different ethnicities; the only similarity is that they were male and "paedophiles". Most of the members had been ordered to attend the groups as part of a suspended sentence. Others attended at the request of family members and others of their own accord. Some of the men had physically molested children, others had been found in possession of child pornography and some of the men denied all allegations. The rehabilitation groups that I attended were used both to gain access to a sample for in-depth interviews and to gather data. Thus, information from the groups has been used in this study. Although, eight men agreed to undergo in-depth interviews, only four signed consent forms and took part in this part of the research.



3.4 Data Collection

Data was collected using two methods: direct observation and interviews.

3.4.1 Direct Observation

I attended two groups as an observer to experience the process and increase my understanding of child sex offenders. I then attended six groups as a participant observer. In these groups the research was discussed. Facilitators and co-facilitators were present. Two of these groups were used as pilot studies, where potential questions were asked in the group and members provided feedback on

the questions. In the pilot study groups, I was introduced by the social worker and then she left the groups in order to minimise her influence.

3.4.2 Interviews

When the individual interviews began, several potential participants who were initially interested declined to take part in the research. The final sample of in-depth interviews included four child sex offenders. The interviews were semi-structured; an interview schedule is attached as Appendix A. Semi-structured interviews ensured that the five thematic networks would be covered in the interview, but also allowed for the participants to describe their offending in their own words. The aim was to obtain thick and rich descriptions of their thoughts and behaviours (Denzin, 1989; Patton, 1990), which would reveal any cognitive distortions that they may have around their child sex offending. Under each thematic network, I devised questions that related to that thematic network. The social worker that facilitated the rehabilitation program perused the interview schedule and made appropriate additions.

Rapport had been established with the participants in the groups that I attended. Interviews ranged in length. For participants A, B, C and D the total interview times were 168, 125, 56 and 299 minutes respectively, resulting in a total of 10 hours and 48 minutes. I am aware of the selection bias inherent in this recruitment procedure. The four participants who agreed to participate are likely to represent a particular subgroup of sex offenders and may have different characteristics from those who did not agree to participate, particularly around motivation and level of rehabilitation. Furthermore, the men attending these

rehabilitation groups may also not be representative of child sex offenders in the community. Men who are caught for sex offending behaviours may differ from those who manage to offend without ever being caught. However, it would have been impossible to obtain a random sample of child sex offenders in the community.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was recorded verbatim on a digital voice recorder. Interviews were then transcribed and edited to remove any identifying information. The data was analysed using a Thematic Content Analysis Approach (Denzin, 1989; Mouton, 2001; Patton, 1990; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Thematic Content Analysis is often applied to texts to make interpretations regarding themes, similarities and dissimilarities (Mouton, 2001). In this study the bulk of the text was the transcribed interviews and the aim was to validate the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions. This approach involved coding the data into categories. A top-down approach was used (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999); i.e. the data was placed under previously decided categories. The five thematic networks defined in the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions were used as the categories; i.e. *uncontrollability, dangerous world, entitlement, children as sexual beings and nature of harm*. The units of analysis ranged from single word responses, e.g. definitions of words, to whole chunks of texts e.g. in the form of free association, when respondents were able to share their narratives. The data under each heading was then interpreted. Where appropriate participants verbatim responses were quoted, to add to the credibility of the study.

The Thematic Content Analysis method was deemed most appropriate because the aim of the study was to explore whether and how the participants reported these thematic networks. Furthermore, Thematic Content Analysis entails an elaboration and interpretation of the text, which was the intention of this study (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). The presence of both cognitive content and operations of cognitive distortions was elaborated on, and interpreted. These interpretations were compared to the psychological literature and feminist theories of child sexual abuse.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Western Cape's ethics committee. In addition, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the social worker that facilitated the rehabilitation program. When the child sex offenders enrolled for these rehabilitation groups, they gave consent to participate in any research; this was part of the contract signed with the social worker. However, I requested their personal consent for this study.

Participants were informed about the study in groups and individually and that it was part of the completion of a master's degree. They were aware that participation was voluntary and that it would not affect their suspended sentences or further treatment in any way. They had the option of withdrawing at any time without any consequences. Counselling as a result of the study was available from the social worker that facilitated the program. Although the child sex offenders on the program were encouraged to discuss the harm that they had caused, I expected that the individual interviews might trigger aspects of their offending that they had

not thought of before. A consent form, signed by participants, was used to ensure that these ethical principles had been adhered to. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix B.

The participants' identities were kept anonymous and codes were used to designate the individual participants. The researcher conducted all the interviews and transcriptions. All identifying information, e.g. names and places, was removed from the interview transcriptions. Participants were asked only to share information for which there could not be any further legal incrimination.

As child sexual abuse is an emotive and sensitive topic, I approached the interviews in an open and honest manner, sharing with participants my understanding of child sexual abuse and answering questions they asked. Interviews took the form of a dialogue. I tried to suspend all moral judgments, but my beliefs on the harmfulness of child sexual abuse were clear. I was genuinely curious and fascinated by what they shared and respected the fact that they had volunteered to take part in the research.

3.7 Summary

The present study explored cognitive distortions of this South African sample of child sex offenders. The aim was to explore both the content and operations (processes) of the five thematic networks endorsed by the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions. The methodology chosen was feminist for the following reasons: feminist research is concerned with gender and power relations; it involves the study of people's experiences and subjective meanings attached to those experiences; and it is action orientated. Furthermore, it is also

concerned with the content and the process of research and this seemed to parallel the aim of the research, seeking the content and processes of cognitive distortions.

The targeted group for this research was male child sex offenders. A social worker specialising in working with sex offenders assisted with access to the sample. It is therefore acknowledged that the sample may have been biased. Data was collected through direct observation of groups and in-depth interviews with four volunteers. The data was analysed qualitatively, using a Thematic Content Analysis approach. The five thematic networks defined in the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions were used as the categories; i.e. *uncontrollability*, *dangerous world*, *entitlement*, *children as sexual beings* and *nature of harm* (Ward et al., 2005).

Ethical considerations were adhered to in the form of informed consent, participation was voluntary and without any adverse effects on their treatment, and if necessary, counselling was available. Participants' identities have been kept anonymous and codes were used to designate the individual participants. The researcher conducted the interviews, transcribed and analysed the data. The following chapter presents the results and discussion of this analysis.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

This chapter provides the results of the present study. It begins with a descriptive analysis of the four participants, followed by a description of the interaction between the researcher and participants, under the heading of reflexivity. The bulk of the chapter is an interpretation of the data as it was categorised according to the five thematic networks in the order of the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Participants

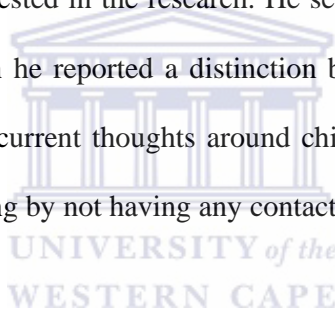
The final sample was made up of four men who attended the rehabilitation groups. A descriptive analysis of each participant follows to acquaint the reader with each of the participants.

4.1.1 Participant A

Participant A was a single, 45-year-old man who was unsure about his sexual orientation. He had never experienced an adult intimate or sexual relationship. He was sexually attracted to boys between the ages of six and twelve years old. He first realised his attraction to younger boys during adolescence. He had a teaching diploma, and worked as a teacher and gymnastics coach. He was convicted on the charges of three indecent assaults and one charge of attempted indecent assault. He described a long history of sexual offending but did not give

an estimate of how many children he had sexually abused. He served one year out of his eight-year jail sentence in prison, and for the remaining seven years he had a suspended sentence and was court ordered to attend the rehabilitation groups. He had been attending rehabilitation groups for four years at the time of the interviews. He admitted that had he not been incarcerated, he would still be offending.

Participant A established rapport easily. He was talkative and appeared to approach the interviews in an open and honest manner. He had a good sense of humour and was easy to talk to. I found him very charming. He came across as confident and was interested in the research. He seemed to be fairly rehabilitated in the manner in which he reported a distinction between his thoughts when he was offending and his current thoughts around child sex offending. He reported that he avoided offending by not having any contact with children.



4.1.2 Participant B

Participant B was a heterosexual, married, 38 year old man who molested his two daughters, both fourteen years old but from different mothers. He reported that he was not sexually attracted to children and adolescents and that he had only molested his daughters. He was married to one of his daughter's mothers and lived with his wife, one daughter and son. The other daughter was the product of an affair but she spent weekends at his home. His highest level of education was grade eleven and he had worked as a machine operator at the same company for twenty years. He was a devout Christian. At a community level, he was involved in church activities and sports groups with youth. He had never had a charge

against him but reported that his wife insisted that he attend the groups after she discovered that he was molesting his daughters. He had been attending groups for close to two years.

Participant B came across as soft spoken and eager to please. He demonstrated a respect for “authority” and it is thought that this may have affected his responses in the interviews. He often repeated phrases; the reason for this was unknown. He established rapport well and appeared to be motivated to participate in the research. However, there also seemed to be a significant gap between his ideal self and his current self, as he often referred to how he was working on aspects of himself and hoped to change.

4.1.3 Participant C

Participant C was a heterosexual, single, 38 year old man. He was charged with two counts of child pornography: one at home and one at work. He denied ever molesting any children but admitted that if he was not caught when he was, that he almost certainly would have offended. He was attracted to girls between the ages of eight and eleven years old. He had been attending groups for six months as part of his suspended sentence but had never been incarcerated. He was unemployed but had previously worked in the computer industry. He had a bachelor of social sciences degree.

Participant C was a very anxious man who made poor eye contact and constantly shook his leg and fidgeted with his hands. He had been on Valium for one year but reported that he was anxious as a child. He approached the interview

in an honest and open manner, although he later told me that he found the interview very difficult.

4.1.4 Participant D

Participant D was a heterosexual, married, 61 year old man, who had two adult daughters. He denied molesting his own children but admitted to physically molesting 24 and watching (“taking in their sexiness”) 15 children. The watching entailed voyeurism and following children around shopping centres. He was sexually attracted to girls between the ages of ten and fourteen years old, but had molested younger children aged eight and nine. He realised that he was sexually attracted to children at a very young age and reported to have first molested a five-year-old girl at the age of ten years old. He also reported a history of being sexually abused by a Catholic priest at the age of thirteen. He physically molested children until age 37, when he had a “nervous breakdown”. He reported that after the “nervous breakdown”, he stopped physically molesting children but continued with the voyeurism until age 47. He had been attending groups for six years out of his own free will. He had never been convicted of sexually abusing a child but had been caught for voyeurism twice. The one incident led to him being physically assaulted by the father and brothers of the girl he had been watching. The other incident led to verbal abuse by security and police officers. He described both incidents as deeply shameful, but they did not stop him from offending, he said they only made him more careful.

At the time of the interviews, he was retired but had worked for the South African Defence Force during the period of Apartheid and he shared some horrific

details of what his job entailed. He reported a history of depression and a diagnosis of Schizophrenia, Paranoid Type. He ascribed the Schizophrenia to the “triple” life that he lead prior to his “nervous breakdown”; one as a paedophile, one as a normal father and husband, and one as a government agent during the Apartheid era.

4.2 Reflexivity

The interaction between the different participants and myself varied. Taking a Feminist stance I was aware of the power dynamics that would play out between the participants and myself. I realised that as the researcher, I would have a certain degree of power, having the authority to report on what I chose to. I hoped that semi-structured interviews would allow the power to be shared between the participants and myself, giving them a voice of their own. Although I was aware that there would be power dynamics around being a female researcher with male participants, I under-estimated the extent of this. There was one overt experience in a group where this was highlighted. One evening, in a pilot study group, one of the participants complimented me on my clothing. I thanked him for the compliment and tried to continue the group. However, he continued to compliment me on my hair, the skirt I was wearing, and so forth. I felt that this was inappropriate, particularly under the circumstances we were in, and I reflected this to him. He then turned to the group and said that he could probably go to jail for what he had said, that women misinterpret what men say, and that I would probably complain that he was sexually harassing me. I was particularly aware of his body language; he was sitting with his legs wide apart, his crotch directly

facing me. I felt like he was sexually harassing me. I wondered if this complimenting was done on purpose, either in a way to prove a point, i.e. he was innocent and allegations against him were misinterpretations or if he blatantly wanted to denigrate me in front of the group. I later discovered that this was his second time he had been court ordered to attend the groups. The first time was for charges of molesting three of his daughters. His wife divorced him and he had remarried. He was in the group the second time for molesting his daughter (aged three) from the second wife.

On the advice of the social worker, I kept personal process notes of my responses and feelings after each interaction. On reading my process notes, I realised that I often felt like I had very little power. I often felt like I had been *abused* after an interview, and particularly after the groups. Other researchers have described feeling *exposed* or *vulnerable* (Banister, et al., 1994, as cited in Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 1999) as a result of the increased intimacy in feminist research (Banister, et al., 1994, as cited in Eagle, Hayes & Sibanda, 1999). In the present study, it was exacerbated by the nature of the data.

Comments made in the group like “you will never understand us” took away my power and knowledge. Anger was a significant emotion in the groups. It seemed that most of the men were angry that they had been caught and had to face the consequences. Many complained that their lives had changed; they had to move from their homes, they had lost their jobs and some of them, their families. However, this anger was directed externally, sometimes at me, and not at themselves.

Interaction with the four participants who were individually interviewed also varied. Participant A was charming by nature and I enjoyed his company. I thought from his reports that he was fairly rehabilitated. In retrospect, I think that my own need to believe in rehabilitation was strong. I wanted to know that rehabilitation was possible and that child sex offenders could feel remorse. In this field of study, I think it is important for any researcher to be vigilant of what they hope they will find. Participant B was a *coloured* man and I was a *white* researcher, therefore the dynamics were different. The other three participants were *white* men. He verbalised his respect for people with knowledge and how “clever” psychologists were. Clearly, he saw me as being in a position of authority: white, educated, middle class and the researcher. He also sometimes changed his answers in response to my comments. Participant C appeared scared of women and thus had excessive difficulty with the interview. He laughed inappropriately at times, which I interpreted as anxiety. The interview with him was more structured as he did not readily offer information. Participant D held most of the power in the interviews. He started the first interview in the following way: “I’ve got an idea of what cognitive distortions are, but tell me what your interpretation is?” This was his way of informing me that he had the knowledge and power, and I was there to learn.

I will now discuss the five thematic networks separately. Under each thematic network the responses of the participants and my interpretations will be discussed.

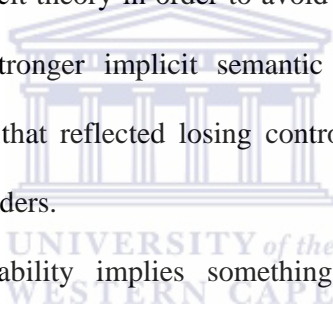
4.3 The Five Thematic Networks

Overall, all four participants endorsed all five thematic networks to some extent, except for participant B who did not report on the *dangerous world* thematic network. The content was easily accessible but the processes of cognitive distortions were more difficult to ascertain. As mentioned previously, the thematic networks are reported on in the order of the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions.

4.3.1 Uncontrollability

Within this thematic network, offenders believe that their worlds are chaotic and uncontrollable (Ward et al., 2005). Their behaviours are controlled by overwhelming internal or external forces; such as sexual desire, the sexual attractiveness of children, drugs, alcohol, stress, or others' dominating behaviour (Neidigh & Krop, 1992; Ward et al., 2005). In this study, the four participants denied using any substances at the time of offending. As Salter (2003) explains, alcohol releases inhibitions and decreases judgment concerning sexual interests the person already has; it does not create sexual interests that were not there before. They all referred to the sexual attractiveness of children, but that will be covered under *children as sexual beings*. All four did not recall having any particular stressors at the time of offending which could have influenced their decisions to offend. In fact they described “stress” as following the sexual offending as a result of possible consequences e.g. being caught. This will be covered under the heading of *dangerous world*.

The main value associated with these beliefs is autonomy (Ward et al., 2005). Actions that stem from this thematic network demonstrate an inability to regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. The offender justifies his actions by claiming that he had no choice and was forced to commit sexual acts by strong desires, impulses, or other people (Ward et al., 2005). According to Mihailides et al.'s (2004) *sexual offender self-esteem hypothesis*, child sex offenders are implicitly motivated to use this implicit theory to avoid something aversive. By seeing sexuality as uncontrollable, sex offenders can avoid responsibility for their behaviour and thus avoid cognitive dissonance and self-esteem loss. Alternatively, they may use this implicit theory in order to avoid social disapproval. Mihailides et al. (2004) found stronger implicit semantic associations between sexual concepts and concepts that reflected losing control in sex offenders, than in a sample of non-sex offenders.



This uncontrollability implies something that is unmanageable and irrepressible. All four offenders referred to strong sexual desires and impulses that were uncontrollable at the time of offending. They also referred to the acts as impulsive. However, at the same time they all admitted to planning and excessive fantasising, which seemed to negate impulsivity. Grooming patterns of child sex offenders have been cited in much literature, as well as the planning and fantasising around the actual event. Participant A reported that the grooming and fantasising before the molestation could last for months, and would “carry him through this time”.

Interviewer: And before you're about to pull down a child's pants, ... what are you thinking? ...

A: I don't think that you think so much. The sexual instinct is very strong and you sort of like shut out the rest. Um, you'll deal with that later, sort of like. ... If the situation is

right, if the grooming, you in that pattern and everything. As [social worker's name removed] always says there is no stopping. You got to give yourself a 'klap' ('smack') or something but it's like you drawn in, just there is no way you can get out of it. Very impulsive.

However, he later compared paedophiles to chameleons, and referred to excessive planning and preparation.

A: ... In a way you will prepare yourself beforehand. It's not like you get into a situation and now all of the sudden you go into all the different changes or whatever. You will prepare. You do your homework well. In a way sort of like, prepare yourself to become the chameleon, in that way. But also, a paedophile is not somebody that just falls into something and now oh, here's a situation. I don't know maybe some of them work like that but I think most of them, you wait for the right situation and you push, push, push. And you groom and you do all the things that you want before. I mean you spend so much time on the preparation. Basically your whole life is preparation, preparation, preparation, ja.

For participant D, the actual molestation would be fantasised about afterwards for months. He would also go back to the same places several times, planning and hoping to see the same victim, he called them "regulars". To me, this demonstrated a lack of fear of being caught. Although his grooming practices were relatively brief, from a matter of a few minutes to an hour, he had planned the molestation. When offending, he would disguise himself, sometimes wearing fake moustaches or beards. This again negates impulsivity. He explained that excitement plays a significant role.

D: ... You have the perverse personality, which enables you to molest a child. But when you find, when you molest a child for the first time, you find how exciting it is. And, and that sort of let's you a, molest more children after that.

His explanation was two-fold: a “perverse personality” driven by the excitement of molesting. The excitement appeared to be the implicit motivation and the “perverse personality” allowed him to continue molesting without a sense of guilt or remorse. He justified his sexual offending in this way. It alleviated him of some of the responsibility because it was a flaw in his personality, which he could not control.

Participant B also reported that his act was impulsive but provided a number of reasons for molesting his daughters. Firstly, he ascribed it to an uncontrollable sexual impulse and then to an opportunity that presented itself; his daughter’s leg was hanging out of the bed when he went to tuck her in and he thought, “there is an opportunity here”. In the second interview, he said that he realised that another reason for molesting his daughters was because he was curious to see if they could reach a climax. He also explained it as not being educated in children’s development. At another time, he claimed that pornography had led to the offending, because he was sexually aroused and it was too late at night to “go out of the house” and look for a woman. His goal appeared to be sexual satisfaction, at any cost. He stated that at the time of offending his sexual impulses were uncontrollable, but he had learned to control them in the rehabilitation program.

B: ... In fact every time when you go do this, there is something here [points to the back of his head] that says it is wrong. But there is then, it is almost like two voices. You know that you gonna get satisfaction out of this, but the other one still tells you it’s wrong. Um, I would say it’s, um, ja, satisfaction at the end wins. You see, and it made you feel good, ja, and my wife is not particularly the one that, how can I say now, she is not much for sex. You see um, that’s another secret, because she also was molested. ... And that is how it, that’s how it started.

Although he said that he did not blame his wife's "unavailability", he implied that it played a role, thus sharing the responsibility with her. Throughout his explanations, he did not take responsibility for the offending.

- Interviewer: Do you think so though? I mean earlier you said you know the satisfaction, you know, you've been told that it is wrong, it's wrong ...
- B: Ja, it's wrong.
- Interviewer: And then there's this satisfaction that you just go and do it. I mean you thinking it is wrong but you still do it.
- B: Impulse. ... You can't control it, impulse. That's the word I was looking for earlier, impulse. But now I know better.

However, he then explained that the molestation started before 'you enter the room' and he was triggered by pornography.

- B: ... Okay, um, stop signs doesn't come, or let me see, let me say it this way, um, a red light doesn't go on when you in the room. Before that, the same as molesting, doesn't start in the room, it starts before that. When you, when I sit alone, watching late at night, watching tv, a lot of things goes through your mind. That, that is where it start. ... That's why they say your triggers, talking about the triggers, my trigger was porno, pornography, that's it. ... Um, that was my, that was my trigger, that is what led me to do what I have done. ...

I wondered if what B was reporting was anxiety, lack of reflection or blame attribution. He appeared to be attributing blame to any factor that he could. He did not have a constant explanation but reported different reasons for offending depending on the current situation and what was being discussed. He also contradicted himself at times. This appeared to be a classic example of rationalisation, and perhaps might explain for why some researchers have denied the existence of cognitive distortions, and instead called them post-offence transient excuses (Gannon & Polaschek, 2005). He seemed to be trying to avoid self-esteem loss or my disapproval. As mentioned earlier, Participant B was eager

to please. This eagerness was interpreted as a need to be accepted. Possibly he was trying to please me with his responses and thus avoid rejection.

Participant C described child pornography as satisfying his sexual needs, his loneliness and desire for excitement. He considered these needs and desires as uncontrollable. He reported that he got involved in child pornography through Spam mail that was sent to him, which had a child pornography website attached. He had been using adult pornography for some time and was curious to see what the child pornography entailed, but became obsessed with it. Consequently, it was someone else who got him involved, and his *adult* needs were fulfilled through the child pornography. He explained that paedophilia is a male behavioural pattern because “men have a higher sex drive than women, and I think that women are generally um, more emotional”.

- Interviewer: ... What do you think your attraction to kids is about?
C: Um, [Long pause]. Um, their um, vulnerability, their um, bodies.
Interviewer: So you think it is sexual. What in you made you a paedophile and not one of your brothers?
C: You see, now, that's a tough question. [Laughs]
Interviewer: It is a tough one.
C: Um, I think that it was um, my loneliness, um my desire for, for excitement.

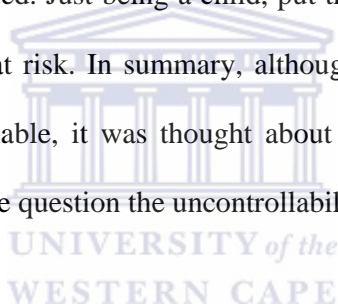
Like participant D, he referred to excitement. Excitement played a significant role for these child sex offenders as they found their sexual offending exciting and pleasurable. Sometimes, it seemed to me that they were using the words “exciting” and “impulsive” interchangeably. Participant C laughed inappropriately at times. I interpreted this as anxiety. However, it could also have been a way of minimising the seriousness of what was being discussed. He also described paedophilia as an illness, similar to alcoholism because “you are out of

control”. Paedophilia has been compared to alcoholism in the literature because of its similarities to addiction in a number of ways. The child sex offender develops a sophisticated defensive structure to protect and preserve his addiction (Herman, 1988). They tend not to acknowledge their behaviours, and if they do, they will blame others for it. Participant C was an alcoholic and described feeling out of control in other areas of his life. He experienced the child pornography as satisfying his sexual needs, as well as a sense of control over a “vulnerable” child. Ironically, he also experienced it as uncontrollable in the sense that he could not stop himself and was downloading child pornography at work to an extent that it was affecting the company’s network. Paradoxically, it gave him a sense of control even though it was driven by uncontrollability.

It appeared that these child sex offenders planned and fantasised excessively, and when the opportunity arose, they experienced themselves as out of control, driven by sexual impulse. This may be representative of Ward et al.’s (2005) distinction between entrenched beliefs and situational beliefs or Blumenthal et al.’s (1998) cognitive distortions versus blame attribution in sex offenders.

The child sex offenders in this study reported that a possible explanation for men being the perpetrators of child sexual abuse could be that men have higher sex drives than women. The belief that men have higher sex drives than women maintains women as the object of man’s desire, who themselves, may not desire (Ussher, 1991). If women enjoy sex and admit to this, they are considered promiscuous and deserving of sexual assaults. Men who have high sex drives are considered as uncontrollable and not responsible for their actions. It appeared that

they viewed a man's sex drive as uncontrollable because of its intensity. In this thematic network, the motivation was around sexual satisfaction, and the explanations were a way of rationalising behaviours. Assuming that these men did have higher sex drives than women that were uncontrollable, they focused their sexual desires towards children and not towards other women or men. Furthermore, these child sex offenders were able to obtain sexual satisfaction in other ways, admittedly mostly masturbation to fantasies of sex with children. However, two of the participants obtained sexual satisfaction from adult relationships at one time or another. Other people were blamed including the children who were abused. Just being a child, put the child at risk, and just being male put the offender at risk. In summary, although they explained their sexual offending as uncontrollable, it was thought about before, fantasised about, and planned, which made me question the uncontrollability they had reported.



4.3.2 Dangerous world

In the *dangerous world* thematic network, the offender views the world and people as hostile, aggressive and rejecting (Ward et al., 2005). He thinks that others are untrustworthy and may be out to harm him. He withdraws to safety, e.g. by forming a relationship with a child seen as innocent and accepting, or to attack first, or seek revenge when hurt by other people (Ward et al., 2005). The primary value judgments associated with these types of beliefs are safety, trust, and justice. The offender may justify his actions by arguing he was inflicting a deserved punishment, or that he was attracted to the loving, accepting nature of children (Ward et al., 2005). The four participants in this study did not report inflicting a

deserved punishment on their victims. Instead the innocence and vulnerability of children was seen as attractive. Children were seen as more accepting and adults often as intimidating. Within the groups, the child sex offenders described their victims in “loving” terms. Even children who had reported them were described in positive terms. Instead the child sex offenders blamed the parents, teachers or other adults who took action. Perhaps child sex offenders, who are revengeful and seeking justice, receive and serve longer sentences, or their full sentence. I also wondered if it was not more socially acceptable to report appealing to the loving nature of children than it is to report wanting to hurt or “teach a child a lesson”.

According to the cognitive behavioural theories, people develop cognitive schemas, which include implicit beliefs and cognitive distortions, during childhood. Childhood is the time when we try to understand and interpret the world, develop our beliefs, which goals to pursue and behaviours to engage in (Ward et al., 2005). During adolescence these implicit beliefs are then directed towards sexuality. As our families of origin usually have a profound influence on the way in which we view and interpret the world, I was curious about the way the participants viewed their childhoods and early significant relationships. Although I agreed with Mihailides et al. (2005) that these behaviours are learned, I am not blaming mothers and fathers for poor attachment, being poor role models or inferring a causal link. Rather the focus is on the way the child sex offenders in this sample experienced their childhoods and whether there was a possibility that they had developed a *dangerous world* implicit belief. I am also aware that human development does not stop at the end of childhood and that adult experiences can reorganise our way of thinking. In retrospect, I realised that I neglected to pay

enough attention to the way that society may have affected their development of implicit beliefs, and although it is alluded to in the interviews, I wished I had probed more about systems other than the family of origin.

All four participants reported a history of physical abuse as children. Although they described what I would have termed physical abuse as ordinary punishment for misbehaving, their descriptions entailed being hit with objects e.g. a belt or stick, or being hit inappropriately, e.g. being punched. Two of the participants, A and B, described especially strict fathers but also described them as loving. They described having very good relationships with both parents and siblings. Participant A admitted to his father being physically abusive towards his mother. He also reported being “different” at school and at times teachers had bullied him. Participant B reported a “perfect” childhood, and being popular at school due to academic and sport success. Participant C described an estranged relationship with his father and had recently started a relationship with his father, through text messaging on his cell phone. He said that his mother often threatened suicide. He came from a family of six siblings and felt that it was difficult for his mother to give all her children the necessary attention. Participant D reported a conflictual relationship with his late father. It appeared that the relationship deteriorated after D was caught molesting a five-year-old girl, at the age of ten. His relationship with his mother was strained and he had poor relationships with his siblings.

It is possible that some child sex offenders, as a result of their childhood histories, have developed views of the world as hostile. However, there is the age-old argument, that many people have difficult childhoods and do not turn to child

sex offending. However, it is noticeable that these participants viewed children as less intimidating than adults. Participant B was sexually attracted to both women and children and did not seem to differentiate between them. Therefore, he did not report on this thematic network.

Participant D was the only participant who explicitly stated that he viewed the world as hostile. As previously mentioned, he reported a diagnosis of Schizophrenia. From the three interviews, it was clear that he felt rejected by others and was distrustful. He often referred to being rejected by his father. He described a work environment of hostility and suspiciousness. He reported an incident that people, at the sports club that he belongs to, were patronising and hostile towards him. He also reported that he had few friends and that he did not allow people outside of his family to visit his home. He admitted to being suspicious, and that some of his paranoia was unfounded. Although he linked most of his paranoia to his previous occupation, he linked some of the paranoia to the sex offending. On the two occasions that he was caught for voyeurism, he reported that he was hurt by the lack of empathy and comments made e.g. “he should cut his penis off”. He admitted that because of his sexual offending behaviour, the world became a dangerous place, because if he were caught, he would be punished. He could not trust anyone. He did not want people close to him in case they found out about his sexual offending. I wondered why participant D had volunteered to take part in the study. He did not appear to be suspicious of me. In fact out of all the participants, he was the one who volunteered the most information and was the most explicit in his descriptions. He asked me what the research would be used for, even though I had previously explained it to him. He

said that he hoped it would reach the public because they needed to know about child sex offenders. At times, it felt like he was bragging about his endeavours. After interviews with him, I often felt drained. It seemed like he was exposing himself to me, and that he thought that I was enjoying it.

Participant A also reported that through his sexual offending behaviours, he placed himself under a tremendous amount of stress and the world become an unsafe place, where if he was caught, he would possibly be punished and rejected.

A: ... but ja, I suppose being an offender um, and working with a hidden agenda there is always stress on you, to be caught out or making the wrong move and things like that, ja. Ja. But the most stress I would say was after I was caught and from there on to prison.

He described rejection as one of his biggest fears, something that he would be unable to cope with. He described being more comfortable with children than adults, and that he genuinely enjoyed their company, but took the relationship too far, i.e. sexually.

A: The thing is at that stage, I wasn't so much sexually attracted to them. But I was attracted to them, ja, but at that stage it wasn't sexual.

Interviewer: So what was it?

A: I just think, I just felt comfortable with them, nobody rejected me. They got on very well with me, I got on very well with them. I suppose it was just a case of no confrontation. It is easy. It is easy to work with children. It is easy to communicate with children. It is easy to get them on your side.

Participants A and C made comments regarding the intimidating nature of adult sexual relationships, that would indicate beliefs of this thematic network. This supports the offenders' *dangerous world* belief that others are intimidating and rejecting (Ward et al., 2005). Rejection was a strong theme for three of the participants. Children were easier to engage with than adults, however the child

sex offenders projected a mature sexuality onto the children. Participant C was explicit in describing a feeling of having power and control over a child, which he could not find elsewhere. According to Cossins (2000), child sexual offending is a method by which some men alleviate experiences of powerlessness and establish their masculinity (gender) and power. Men experience both instances of power and powerlessness, and through child sex offending these masculinities can be confirmed in environments in which the characteristics of less powerful objects are desirable. Participant C seemed to experience feelings of powerlessness around women and perhaps other men, and feelings of power when he watched child pornography. He reported being sexually attracted to them being cute, underage, and vulnerable. This seemed to confirm Cossins (2000) power/powerless theory.

- Interviewer: And do you think it is only sexual?
C: Um. [Long pause] No, not really, um, there was um, um, like a power thing, um, yes.
Interviewer: Is there something about being more powerful than a child?
C: Yes.
Interviewer: And can you put that into words.
C: [Long pause and laughs]
Interviewer: I know it is difficult, very difficult.
C: Um. Power thing, um. [Long pause]. Um, [Long pause] just knowing that um, that I have control, um.

In response to feeling powerless and rejected by others, he experienced a need to control something, to experience power and feel competent. When he described his needs that the child pornography met, he stated that he would not be able to have the same needs met by a woman.

- C: Um, I think that it was um, my loneliness, um my desire for, for excitement
Interviewer: Did you think that you wouldn't be able to find that with a woman?
C: No.

Interviewer: No, you wouldn't be able to find it with a woman?
C: No.

In the interviews, the child sex offenders were asked to define some words. When participant C was asked to define words, he described a child as a "picanin", a woman as "quite intimidating" and sex as "intimidating as well".

In conclusion, the child sex offenders in this study reported being attracted to the loving and accepting nature of children, but on further probing, this *loving* involved more than just being accepted. It involved the child's vulnerability, no fear of rejection, and power and control; experiences that they felt unable to attain with adults. Although they felt safer with children, it was as a result of feeling powerful, more in control and I would imagine more masculine. This power and control is also significant in the next thematic network discussed, *entitlement*.

4.3.3 Entitlement

Entitlement refers to the offender regarding himself as superior to others because of his social role or personal attributes (Ward et al., 2005). The offender believes that this superiority (whether real or imagined) entitles him to assert his needs over other people's needs and expects complete gratification of his needs (Ward et al., 2005). This is extended to his sexual self, and he thinks that he should be able to have sex with whomever, and whenever he wants. The values related to such beliefs focus on status and autonomy. Actions that arise from this thematic network reflect beliefs that the victim deserved the abuse, or that the offender had a right to his behaviour (Ward et al., 2005).

An egocentric inclination towards self-deceptive positivity is the underlying motivation implied by this thematic network (Mihailides et al., 2004;

Strong et al., 2002). In the semantic associations study by Mihailides et al. (2004), they proposed that sexual entitlement cognitive distortions would be reflected in the implicit semantic associations between first person concepts ('mine' concepts) and sexual concepts; partial support was found. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in this study between sexual offenders and nonsexual offenders. The partial support comes from the significant difference between the other control groups (a group of male university students and a group of female university students), and the offender groups (both sexual and nonsexual). Although they provided an alternative possible explanation for this as a result of age differences and sexual maturation; they hypothesised that offenders in general (sexual and nonsexual) may hold distorted views that have a foundation in implicit egocentrism and that this effect generalises to other areas, including sexuality. They argued that by excessively entitling the self, offenders could deny responsibility for the effects of their choices on others. If offenders felt entitled to their actions and to satisfying their needs, they were able to deny or minimise any harm caused by these actions, thus reducing perceived responsibility. The entitled sexual self provides a method of experiencing the self as competent, effective and powerful.

All four participants referred to power and control resting with the offender in the case of child sex offending, which led to an experience of the sexual self as competent and powerful. However, none of them expressed explicitly that they had a right to molest the victim. Nevertheless, the sexual offending acts centred on the child sex offenders needs, and satisfying his needs, regardless of the victims needs.

D reported that his sole purpose and enjoyment was “pleasuring the child”, but his argument is flawed. If he solely had the child’s pleasure in mind why did he go from child to child, and parking lot to parking lot, when he could not find a child to molest? He called this “predatory work”. Furthermore, it could be argued that in the case of voyeurism, the child was unaware of the act and could not have derived any pleasure from it. Therefore, it was clear that his sole purpose was to satisfy his own needs. He also described how children “just knew what he wanted” and would for example, expose themselves to him. At the time of the interviews, he still believed that children could determine his needs and wanted to satisfy them.

Interviewer: Tell me how they displayed themselves to you?

D: Alright, let me give you an example of, of. Um, once, what I do, is I park, I park the car, the car that I were driving a, a, sometimes, when I saw a. Alright, this particular one was a child and, and a brother and the mother was sitting outside of the house. When I went to park there, and, and this child had a short dress on. And she sat and she was displaying her panties, and I stayed there.

Interviewer: How old was this child?

D: She was about nine, nine or ten. Um, the mother got up and went into the house and, and the brother went somewhere else. And she moved to the veranda. And I moved my car level with the veranda and I was looking down on the veranda like this. And, and obviously she must have noticed that. And she started sitting in such a way that I could clearly see her panties. And then. [Clears throat]. Excuse me, after a while she took them off. And, and she sat there. I never said a word to her. I, I didn’t make any motions with my hands or anything like that, but she knew um, this is what I want. I don’t know how. Up to this day, I don’t know how some of the children realised what I wanted....

He explained that he did not use violence to abuse his victims because he had the ability of “seducing a young child” and that people who did use violence probably did not have the same ability. He explained that at the time of offending,

he had very little guilt and said that his only fear of being caught was that he could lose his “top security clearance”. In his later days of offending, he realised that it could have had adverse effects on his family. However, he did not mention the potential harm or feelings of the children he had abused. It appeared that he also objectified these children. Sometimes in movie houses, he would not even have seen what they looked like. He also reported that he often did not even talk to them. I inferred that he felt that he had a right to molest them because they were there.

Interviewer: So it was all about you, not really about the child?
D: Ja. I, I, didn't care, not care, I didn't know about the damage I was doing. I didn't know that what I was doing was going to affect them for the rest of their lives.

Participant B described a feeling of satisfaction, which he could not articulate. Although he admitted to masturbating, he described the satisfaction as in his head. It appeared that in some way he experienced a feeling of competency, effectiveness and power.

Interviewer: And then ... would you touch them and then go masturbate or would you fantasise about it afterwards, what did you actually get from touching them?

B: Um, satisfaction, not in the form of masturbating but up here [points to temple], it's up here. And sometimes masturbating, ja, sometimes. I have to be honest with that. Sometimes.

Interviewer: The satisfaction up here, what is that?

B: Um ... It is extremely difficult. Even for me to put it in words, it is difficult. Um, how can I say now, like a natural high, you know. Coming from work putting your feet up, that feeling that you get. Or taking a cold shower, that feeling that you get. It's something like that you see. But it's difficult. It is difficult to put it in words. But once you've, once you've done with it, ah, you wouldn't then think about having sex. You can just go sleep. It is the same things as, after having sex.

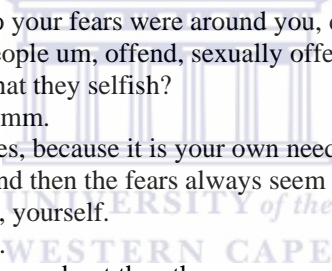
Although he denied viewing men as superior to women and children, he explained that men are more prominent in society than women. He said that this was the way things had always been and “it is the way that it is going to be”. He blamed his brother for his sexist views and stated that he would like to change them. Again, this felt like it was to satisfy me. He also attributed molesting his daughters to curiosity; he wanted to see if they would climax. This crossed an interpersonal father-daughter boundary, yet he implied that he had the right to his curiosity.

Participant A was able to describe being selfish and pushing “boundaries” and defined a sense of entitlement as a result of being in authority. He explained that with children, the adult was in charge and it was an “easy way to get what you want”. As an adult and their coach, he was “superior” to them. He was also aware that only his needs were being met and that the child was an object to satisfy these needs. Child sexual abuse may be the seeking of the least threatening object, the most controllable of objects, an object that can be silenced, forced and made into anything (Frosch, 1993). It appeared from the interviews that children were viewed as the least threatening objects, the easiest to manipulate and control. This control gave the child sex offender a sense of power and superiority, and thus fed the entitled sexual self.

Participant C reported that at the time of offending, he was lonely, he was not sexually active with an adult, and he thought that the children wanted to pose for the pictures. He also admitted that he was attracted to their vulnerability and felt a sense of control that he was unable to experience in other areas of his life. According to Ussher (1991), pornography presents women as sexual objects and

dehumanises them; they are represented, as sexual commodities to be used and discarded at will. This can be extended to child pornography, where children are represented as awaiting sexual contact from adults, to be used and discarded. It is all about the viewer's gaze, it is all about his needs and how he wishes to interpret the pictures.

Furthermore, the child sex offenders in this study were concerned only with what would happen to them should they be caught engaging in these behaviours. They admitted to very little guilt at the time of offending. Although this overlaps with *nature of harm*, this lack of remorse implied a sense of entitlement.

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- Interviewer: So your fears were around you, do you think that when people um, offend, sexually offend, that they selfish?
B: That they selfish?
Interviewer: Mmm.
B: Yes, because it is your own needs involved. That's it.
Interviewer: And then the fears always seem to be only around you?
B: Ja, yourself.
Interviewer: Ja.
B: Never about the other person, yourself.
Interviewer: Do you think of yourself as a selfish person?
B: No. No, I don't think of myself as a selfish person.

Although he did not see himself as selfish, he had selfishly used his daughters for his personal gratification. Herman (1981) referred to this selfish use of the child for personal gratification, as *the sexual entitlement model*. The sexual offender believes that satisfying his own impulses is more important than the negative consequences for the child victim (Hanson et al., 1994). The *sexual entitlement model* supports the position of (incest) offenders as narcissistic, uninhibited men who believe that their sexual impulses must be fulfilled. This egocentric belief system prevents them from developing proper self-control when they are sexually aroused and the opportunity affords itself. Instead, they are

likely to seek out occasions to sexually offend, particularly if they think that children are willing participants and are not harmed by the abuse. Although male sexual entitlement is psychologically related to narcissistic and antisocial personality disorders, it has support in some traditional cultural values (Hanson et al., 1994). It also has support in the westernised culture.

4.3.4 Children as sexual beings

According to Ward et al. (2005), in this thematic network, offenders view children as active seekers of sex and believe that children wish to have sex with adults (Ward et al., 2005). The values evident in these views are that children both need and desire sexual pleasure, sex is beneficial for children, and that children should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding sex (Ward et al., 2005). Actions that arise from this thematic network involve “educating”, seducing, grooming, and engaging in sexually exploitative practices towards children (Ward et al., 2005). According to the Mihailides et al. (2004), this thematic network is implicitly motivated by human sexuality. Their research found evidence that child sex offenders infuse children with adult sexuality (Mihailides et al., 2004).

In this study, three of the participants admitted to seeing children as sexual beings and thought that children enjoyed sex. However, they also reported an understanding that even if children did enjoy sex, it was unacceptable for adults to engage in sex with children. This may have been a result of their rehabilitation, but it could have been a socially desirable response not necessarily believed. However, they stated that at the time of offending they thought that it was acceptable, to varying degrees. Participants A and D both realised their sexual

attraction to children before and during adolescence. Participants B and C denied this, and both described the onset of their sexual interest in children at the age of 36 years. This may have indicated categories of child sex offenders with different ages of onset.

B denied viewing children and teenagers as sexual beings, but commented that “they are out there”.

Interviewer: ... are you attracted to, to like fourteen-year-old girls?
Or was it just your daughters?
B: No, I'm not attracted. It was just them, it was just them that I molested. Well, they are there, they are out there, and I would be a fool to say that I'm not, that I can't see them. But I would look at them with a different eye. You see, even the way that they dress now today, I still look at them with a different mind.

When he said, “I would be a fool to say that I'm not” I wondered what he was going to say because he then changed direction. One of the reasons that he cited for molesting his daughters was out of curiosity, to see if they could climax from foreplay, determining their level of sexual pleasure. Yet he admitted that he got “more enjoyment” out of his offending.

B: ... and I've, after our last session that we had, our meeting, I've went back and think about the whole situation and it came to me that, why I did it. Another reason why I did it because um, I actually wanted to see whether they could masturbate, reach a climax. I think that was it, that was it.
Interviewer: Tell me more about that, I am not understanding you.
B: Um, being a man and I've got a wife. And the sexual foreplay, without having sex, or intercourse, penetration, can reach a climax, all right, in that way, I think that was it, that was it for me.
Interviewer: So you were curious to see if your daughters would do the same?
B: Ja. From foreplay, ja.
Interviewer: But they were sleeping?
B: Yes, well I thought they were sleeping. And then I went into the room and touched them.
Interviewer: Okay.

- B: I first touch their breasts, and then down between their legs. That was um, and then, I was quite nervous hey? And then put my hands under their panties. They never woke up so that is why I continued, thinking they were asleep. And to my knowledge still they were asleep, until everything came out.
- Interviewer: So was there any response from them, did they climax?
- B: Wow, that is difficult, I can't say yes or no. I think I found more enjoyment out of it than them.

Participant A admitted to viewing children as sexually attractive, but that this sexuality was different to adult sexuality. At the time of offending he described being sexually attracted to the children he abused and to a certain type of child. He did not refer to them as initiating the contact, or even wanting it. In fact, he described situations in which it was clear that the children did not want or enjoy the sexual contact. His grooming practices took place over months involving special treatment, which the children enjoyed, but his actual sexual offending would involve just one incident. He explained this as not having the opportunity of a second attempt. This is contrary to participant D, who preferred his “regulars”. The way participant A explained that after he had finished with a child, he would move onto the next one, gave me the impression that he disposed of them as if they were damaged or used.

C enjoyed masturbation as a child and therefore thought that children were sexual beings, as he was, but again in a way that differed to adults.

- Interviewer: ... Do you think that children are sexual beings, let me ask that first?
- C: [Pause] Ja, I do.
- Interviewer: ... Do you think that it is the same as adults or do you think that it is different?
- C: Um, I think that it is different um, in the sense that they don't understand what they are doing and they um, they vulnerable to, to adults.
- Interviewer: ... Do you think that they enjoy sex? [Long pause]. ...
- C: Well, I was just thinking to myself, when I was a child I enjoyed sex, when I was like 12.

- Interviewer: Was that when you had sex play or did you have sex with somebody?
- C: No, no, I never had sex with somebody at 12, I just used to masturbate.
- Interviewer: So you enjoyed it at 12 and how does it differ from the age of 12 to now? ...
- C: Well, an adult's [stutters] sexuality is um, it's um, mature, it's um, it's two people understanding each other and having sex. Um, with a child, I think that um, um, they don't understand the sexuality part of it, for them there may be sexual enjoyment but they don't understand the sexuality of it.

Later in the interview, he explained that part of the attraction of child pornography is “just girls just being cute, underage” and the excitement of it being “illicit” and “illegal”. For participant C the fact that the children were underage, vulnerable and did not understand their sexuality was a part of the sexual attraction. When I asked him about feeling guilty, his response was “um, there was um, there wasn't that much guilt, actually”. Although he reported that the children “looked happy” to him and he thought that they wanted to pose for the pictures; he later contradicted himself, and stated that knowing it was wrong was part of the appeal.

Participant D still viewed children as sexual beings who enjoyed sex and climaxed from sexual activities with adults. He said that he always asked the child if they were enjoying it, and that they always said “yes”. He said that if they were not enjoying it, he would have stopped because he got his pleasure out of them reaching a climax, and enjoying the abuse. However, he has also reported that sometimes he molested children without even talking to them e.g. in movie houses. I assumed that he did not always ask them if they were enjoying it, as he professed. He reported that he preferred children who had some understanding of what was happening. This was his way of rationalising that what he was doing

was acceptable, he felt that if the children understood, then they were participating willingly.

D: Um, something between ten and fourteen. The younger ones were too, I, I, I needed children that understood what they were doing. What I found with molesting young girls is that when I came across a child who, who was a big child but very young in age, and I found that they were very ignorant of, of what was happening to them, and I left it cause it wasn't, it didn't give me any kicks. Their participation and their enjoyment gave me the biggest high that I could get.

Participant D used sexuality and sex as synonyms in the interviews. However, there is more to sexuality than sex. Sexuality is a psychological entity, not just a set of biological urges and behaviours (Frosch, 1993). It is connected to and incorporates our identity, socialisation and culture. Hence, it develops over time and differs in children and adults. Participant D saw himself as a paedophile and different from other adults. He was able to reflect that the sexual attractiveness of children is in the eye of the child sex offender, it was his gaze that infused sexuality onto children and that this sexuality might not have been visible to other adults or even to the children themselves.

D: The something else that you talk about is in me. Um, it is what I see. You know they say a paedophile, you can line up a hundred children, and he will identify the vulnerable child. But when I came there, I was very friendly and I targeted the young, the one girl that I found to be the most sexy, or the most vulnerable amongst, amongst the lot. Vulnerability didn't come in the form of being um, sexy themselves. No, no, no, not sexy. They are sexy when, that which I look at, but they don't, they don't realise that they sexy. They don't know that they giving off a sexual a, message you know. And any adult, any normal adult wouldn't see the sexiness in them but the paedophile sees it. And I as a paedophile saw the sex in them, the sexual attraction in them. And, and I would choose out one of them, and, and that one which I like. And then become friendly with her, talk to her about school, about anything. And, and the more friendly, I would afterwards put my hands on

them and then go over to molestation if they allowed me to do it.

Initially when D reported that he masturbated children to a climax, I questioned whether children could climax. As mentioned in the literature review, we have limited knowledge of children's sexual development and this is a sensitive topic. Furthermore, the fact that child sex offenders sometimes misread signals and distress may mean that participant D was misinterpreting the reactions of his victims. He molested children between the ages of 10 and 14, but sometimes younger. The younger children "didn't really know what, what was happening. But they found it to be nice. And because it was nice, they persevered until they climaxed and then it was finished". He also said that many children would not touch him but that "some children were fascinated by it, by my penis, they were absolutely fascinated by it. And others who didn't like it ...". It appeared to me that the children that he had described were curious rather than sexually aroused.

Participant D reported that a Catholic priest molested him at the age of thirteen. He said that they were a group of boys who were molested in turn. He said that he enjoyed the molestation because it gave him a sense of belonging. He did not report that it was sexually satisfying, rather it met his other nonsexual needs; i.e. his need to belong to a "family". However, when he was older, he went back to the school where he was molested to look for the priest who had molested him. He reported to be unsure of why he had done this but said that he did not want this priest to molest other children. Possibly, he sought revenge, as he described himself as someone who was driven by revenge. The priest had moved

overseas and he never got to confront him. There was a contradiction in his report of enjoying the sexual abuse.

He also reported that he was very “sexual” as a child and started offending at the age of ten years old. He explained how it became more difficult for him to find children, as he got older.

D: I was very young looking until I lost my hair. And then after that, it became more and more difficult. Then it was an older person grooming a young child. When I was young, it was almost a young person having relationships with another young person. And then, seemingly they saw me as a young person and they accepted it. But when I got older I found that I got a lot of more misses than, than I found children to molest. I was this older person that you talking about and that they, they were taught to be scared of.

Although all the participants have been educated regarding children’s development, they spoke about the age of consent being an age that a person is better able to handle a partner or a situation. They did not refer to children’s cognitive capacity to make informed decisions or about protecting children from harm. The implicit value attached to this thematic network is that children should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding sex, yet all four participants reported that they thought that the age of consent should be raised to older than sixteen years old. This is paradoxical because the oldest child reportedly molested amongst them is fourteen years old. Again, this may be a result of rehabilitation or providing the socially desirable answer.

A: Ja, um, I mean in the life that we living now, and what is it the 21st century, with all the bombardment of sexual things and everything, I would say, it is difficult but I wouldn’t make a difference between boys and girls. I would say 18, if, that’s my opinion, for both, 18 years. But, ja. I know that girls are more advanced at that age, I do know, but not all of them. Um, but, ja, the same with boys as well. I would say 18 if you could say that.

- C: Um, I think it should be 18. ... Um, because you more mature and um, you, you can, you can handle your partner.
- D: Sixteen is even a little bit low as far as I am concerned. ... Ja, a sixteen year old girl is still very much a child.

Participant B gave a contradictory answer to the age of consent. He first answered, "I always thought it was when you are married". I found this answer ironic as he had molested his two daughters and explained earlier in the interview that he was unfaithful to his wife. He then said twenty years old, corrected himself to say over the age of twenty and then, it seemed unconsciously, he stated that because of all the information available, children should be able to make the decision from an early age. He then said twenty-one and finally settled on eighteen years old; stating that the person must know what to do and what is expected of them. The process of denial appeared evident to me.

In response to whether children enjoyed sex, the reactions were mixed.

- A: Can I talk on my childhood? [Ja, please]. Okay, I mean from a very young age, we went through all of this the doctor-doctor play and everything. But in a way, if I can put myself back. It was giggling and it was funny and it was nice and it was hiding under the bed and things like that. And it's part of growing up. And kids do enjoy it. But then also I mean, up to a point. And I mean later on through my early teens and later teens also, I mean, experimenting with boys and um, at the moment it was nice but afterwards so what, sort of like thing. It's not, there's no affectionate feeling. It's just wank here and wank there, get it over and done with. But in a way kids enjoy it, um, but as they develop, I mean. They sort of like grow out of this stage and go onto the next. That's how it carries on. I don't know, I suppose it is not all of them. But then as I say, when sex is sort of like forced down or awakened by another party that's not in the same category or same age group, ja, I have never had the experience myself, but now I was the doer. So, um, but once again as I say if I can recall the experiences on the faces, no thank you sir, this is not what I'm enjoying, this is not what I want.

- B: I can't answer that. I don't know, I don't know. Cause you never hear, you never hear children talk about it. So, you never hear children talking about it.
- D: Ja. I, I asked them that, in actual fact. That was part of my, what I was doing, to ask them if they were enjoying it. Because it made me feel okay, that I was, that what I was doing, was okay because they were saying to me they enjoyed it.
- D: Yes, absolutely, ja. Because she took her panties off at one time and then started to expose herself without her panties on. So she knew, she knew, but what she didn't know, because one, one time, she came out with a group of friends and stood by my car. And I got out, and she stood right next to me, and I put my hand down her panties and I molested her. And she said to me 'what are you doing? It's very nice'. So she didn't know about that, and, and I, because she said that, I was absolutely in a high. And, and, but I never had the opportunity of doing it again. The opportunity never afforded itself but she carried on exposing herself. Until that time that she stopped.

Participant D's last comment introduced a new angle to the abuse in that he made the victim responsible, because he implied that she was in control of the situation and it stopped when she stopped it. When child sex offenders make children the gatekeepers of the sexual abuse, it removes the responsibility from them and places it on the child. By so doing, he has denied his own role and responsibility in the act.

In summary, it was clear that these child sex offenders regarded children as sexual beings who enjoyed sex even if they did not understand it. The fact that they could not consent or that it may have been harmful was not something they had thought about prior to rehabilitation.

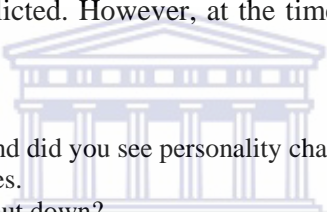
4.5.5 Nature of harm

This thematic network overlaps with the previous one, *children as sexual beings*. In this thematic network, offenders do not see the harm in having sex with children and view sex as beneficial to children (Ward et al., 2005). Value judgments claim that sex is naturally good and will not harm children (Ward et al., 2005). By minimising the possible harmful consequences for the child, the child sex offender feels less responsible for his actions. Actions are similar to those outlined for the *children as sexual beings* thematic network. Offenders justify their actions by denying the frequency, or description of events, arguing that it was educational or consensual, or that the victim is being untruthful (Ward et al., 2005).

In this study, the child sex offenders denied that they were aware of the implications of their sexual offending and of any harm that they had inflicted, at the time of offending. The four participants said that at the time of offending, they were not aware that there were harmful consequences for the victims, they only learned about these in the rehabilitation groups. They also all reported very little guilt. The fact that these child sex offenders did not know what they were doing was harmful was difficult to grasp. Participant A reported that he saw shock on the faces of the boys that he had molested, but he was able to block it out (denial). Participant B reported that he thought his daughters were asleep therefore he did not think that it would be harmful (rationalisation). Participant C reported that the girls in the pornographic pictures looked happy and therefore he did not think it was harmful (denial and rationalisation). Participant D suggested that the children got more pleasure out of the act than he did, and his gains were secondary to their

enjoyment, therefore it could not have been damaging (rationalisation and minimisation of harm). The damaging effects of child sexual abuse have been well documented by many researchers, clinicians and survivors, and disputed by others, e.g. Rind et al. (1998). However, all four participants reported that at one stage or another they had wanted to stop abusing children. If they thought it was not harmful, why would they want to have stopped it? They stated for the reason that they were fearful of punishment and social disapproval. Their fears of being caught were egocentric with little regard or empathy for the victims.

Participant A reported that as a result of the rehabilitation, he was able to see the harm he had inflicted. However, at the time of offending, he was able to deny any harm.

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- Interviewer: And did you see personality changes in any of them?
A: Yes.
Interviewer: Shut down?
A: Yes. Which was very frightening for me. I mean I could see this child just absolutely unhappy. He was such a lively um, brilliant child and all of the sudden just the moment it sees me it is like glass. Ja, that's very, very shocking actually.
Interviewer: But it is not enough to stop you at the time?
A: No. No. No, or you might just go onto your next victim, just leave that one.

He called the victim 'it' twice, indicating that he objectified his victims. Participant A reported to have blocked out the faces of shock and horror but he could not deny that his offending seemed to have had adverse effects on his victims. He described an incident with a young boy whom he molested. After being molested, the boy went and put on all the clothes that he had with him. He was staying with participant A for the weekend. Participant A said that the child sat with layers of clothes on, as a way of saying, "please don't touch me again".

This is clearly not the positive reaction referred to by Rind et al. (2005), and others who deny the harmful consequences of child sexual abuse.

Participant B described the act of child offending as “a hideous crime” and reported that he thought that it was worse than murdering someone, however when it came to discussing his own daughters, he displayed difficulty accepting that there had been harm done. Moreover, he thought that there were advantages to being abused. The daughter who did not live with him started exhibiting behavioural and emotional difficulties after six months of the abuse.

- Interviewer: Do you think your daughters will be, and I know they got different moms but do you think they will carry the burden of being molested all their lives as well? Like your wife does?
- B: Um, for sure I can't answer that. For sure, I can't answer that. But what I can say is unlike my wife, my daughter is acting out, you see and the other one. They acting out, they are talking. And I think that's a little bit better. Maybe on some scale that is a little bit better than my wife suppressing everything. So maybe in terms of that, they will, they will never forget it, but I don't think they would, they would hang onto it, everyday of their life, or every minute of the day. You see because um, my wife now is a nursing sister. Okay, and she have trained herself and studied through that, and that is what I am hoping that it will also do the same, you see. Through the molesting and me being their father, through the molesting, they will achieve what they wanna be.

He had difficulty answering the questions around harm, and denied long-term harm. I must have felt like I was pushing him or bullying him because I apologised for asking the question.

- Interviewer: Do you think that children are harmed from early sexual experiences?
- B: Are harmed?
- Interviewer: Mmm.
- B: I've, ja, if you don't know anything like children, they don't know, um, abuse, then it would be abuse, and it for the future, yes they are, definitely.
- Interviewer: Do you know of any harm to um, to your daughters, I know we spoke about how she reacted initially she withdrew, we spoke about it last time. But do you look at

- them now and think there is any harm done? What do you see?
- B: I am trying, um, I am still trying to see if there is anything. But, how can I say now, of all the um, what did you say now?
- Interviewer: Must I repeat, it is a difficult question.
- B: It is, ja.
- Interviewer: I am sorry. Ja, you were saying that you are trying to see the harm that your ...
- B: No, the acting out, the acting out, that is about the only thing you can see now. Okay, and the only evidence that you know there is something wrong. But otherwise, they won't, I am still waiting for the day for them, maybe to come to me and tell me that 'you have done wrong, you have hurt us'. Either of them, you see, I am preparing myself for that day as well. Cause I know, I know I have hurt them.

Within this thematic network, some child sex offenders compare paedophilia to homosexuality. They state that much like homosexuality was unacceptable in the past because it was thought to be “abnormal”, it is a matter of time before society will accept paedophilia as natural. When participant C was asked whether he thought that the laws would change with regard to paedophilia, he answered “no” because “adults view paedophilia in a very poor light”, “it is considered socially unnormal” and that “adults want to protect their children”. He did not give any consideration to the fact that it may be harmful for children. Although, when he was asked directly whether child sexual abuse may be harmful, he admitted that children could be harmed psychologically from early sexual experiences, he referred to members of the group that had been molested. When asked directly about child pornography, he thought that the children might have been “confused, and a little bit um, um, well, confused and um, scared”. He denied knowing that some children on pornography sites are drugged.

- Interviewer: Okay and what do you think has been the biggest impact on your thinking, in the groups?

- C: I think that [group member name], one of the guys there, when I first joined the group, he said that they just children and they get airbrushed, so any bruises um, or things like that um, get airbrushed away, and that struck me as like a horrible thought that these children are being abused.
- Interviewer: Did you not think of sexual abuse of children as violence before?
- C: No, because um, because um, because, the airbrushing and the posing, and smiles on their faces and that sort of thing. So, it didn't seem like they were having a hard time.
- Interviewer: So in your heart and your head, did you honestly believe that those kids wanted to be doing that?
- C: No, I knew, I knew in my heart of hearts that um, that um, it was wrong. But as I said before the excitement ...

It appeared that C did know that these children were being violated in some way. He minimised the harm being done by telling himself that they looked happy. However, he admitted that he knew that it was wrong. Therefore, it appeared that his use of rationalising was done consciously.

Participant D reported that he never penetrated any child, except once with his finger, when he was fourteen years old. He also stated that one of his victims asked for penetration but he said "no", because she was too small and it would hurt her. "Um, I sort of had in the back of my mind, that I could hurt somebody. And that I didn't want to do". This was a way of minimising the harm, because he did not physically hurt anyone. As mentioned previously, he repeatedly spoke about how he did not use force or violence, and that he could of, but he didn't. He said that he should of used violence because he was trained to but didn't want to; his "modus operandi" was being friendly. Therefore, he had rationalised that by not penetrating them and not physically hurting them, he did not cause any harm.

- Interviewer: Do you not think that they were scared? (This was asked whilst discussing that the children did not stop him when he was molesting them in the movie houses)

D: Yes, yes, quite honestly. I think, I think there were occasions and a, definitely occasions where the girls were so innocent that they didn't really know what was happening. But not one single child, not one, when I started masturbating, asked me to stop. Not one of them. Because what I did before the time, to touch them, and, and to put my hand on them. [Clears throat] I don't know. ...

He didn't answer the question of whether they may have been too scared to stop him. Instead, he answered that some victims may have been too innocent to know what was happening. He made it clear that because he did not physically hurt any of these children, no serious harm was inflicted.

D: One thing, one thing about my, let me just say this again, about my molestation, I don't know why I wasn't violent. Let's forget about first now that they call it violent. I don't know why I was turned off by their refusal. I sexually turned off completely the moment they refused me. Um, it wasn't like I had to have it and I had to do anything in my means to have it. A, I went as far as grooming. A, making them comfortable which was very important. And, and, if, like I wouldn't just put my hands between their legs just like that because obviously they gonna get a hell of a fright if they don't know what I am doing. Um, I would put my hand on their legs and rub my hand up and down and go nearer and nearer.

It was interesting that he said that "it wasn't like I had to have it" because in other interviews he spoke about rushing from one car park to the next searching for a victim, and becoming frustrated when he did not find a victim after a day of searching. He also mentioned that he could identify with people who had kidnapped children because they had become so frustrated. He further justified his actions by saying that some of the children wanted the sexual contact and "would help him".

D: Yes, they knew eventually what and, and I swear to you, a couple of the girls had jackets and stuff and they put the things over their laps. Um, and some would sit on that side of the seat and they would move nearer to me. Um, they knew what I was going to do. And, and, and against the

girls who said no, who got up and moved away, um, they came and they sort of helped me you could almost say. I didn't have to force my hand on them or anything like that. ... Um, they could've identified the fact that I was going to masturbate them and, and known what was going to happen. And not objected to it because maybe they used to mastur-, they were used to being, they used to masturbate themselves and knowing now okay, here's a guy that is going to masturbate me.

When asked if it is harmful for adults to have sex with children, he answered, "yes, yes absolutely", but then again explained how harmful it could be if it was violent sex at an early age, he explained his harm differently.

D: Um, my, my type of sex, my a, a, molestation that I did, would be that, that an adult is the only person that can give her any sexual satisfaction. And, and she would go for older people. I've seen it a lot where women go for older men and so on. Um, and, and it can be because of the experiences that they had as children. Some children come completely normal out of the thing. They, they, they get married, they have children and they go on. And, and I have spoken to adults who have been molested and there, they fine. Their lives are okay and they doing all right. But as a child you are, especially if you take a child who knows nothing about sex, and you come and you molest her and you get it right only because she was innocent and she didn't know what you were doing. Then you, then you causing a lot of damage to that child. Because the natural progression of her learning about sex is completely broken.

He thought that he may have "spoilt" a child for someone inexperienced, and that she would think that only an "adult" could give her sexual satisfaction. He implied that his harm was that he had given her a sexually satisfying experience and she would have difficulty finding that again. However, he did mention that if the child was innocent and inexperienced, then there might be harm. He reported being turned off by these innocent children and finding older ones who knew better. He implied that some children have explicit sexual knowledge and that those children are not harmed by the sexual abuse. However, he did not question where this knowledge may have come from, possibly previous

sexual abuse. Furthermore, he stated that not all people are harmed, as he knew people who have been molested and they seemed “fine” to him. He reported that a part of rehabilitation is realising the “terrible harm” that has been done and avoiding all children. However, this acceptance was difficult for him. He said that he had to be told “over and over” that child sex offending caused harm; it was difficult for him to accept because “the child said it was okay”.

These child sex offenders’ concerns were around the consequences of being caught: social disapproval, rejection, being shamed and possibly legal implications. They all admitted to knowing that it was wrong, but that was a part of the excitement. They also all appeared confused that some feminist theorists had classified child sex offending as violent and not sexual.

Interviewer: So then you know now, sex offending has been classified as violence.

B: Ja, especially rape.

Interviewer: Especially rape, but also child sexual abuse has been classified as violence against children, and I am wondering if you agree with that.

B: I don’t understand it. Why are they classified as, or how did they come to as violence?

Interviewer: Cause they are saying it is not sexual. They saying that it is ...

B: It is not consensual.

Interviewer: It is not consensual absolutely that is the first thing, it can’t be because children can’t consent to sex. But besides that, that it is men abusing their power, men showing their power in ways that are violent, even when it’s soft abusing or whatever you wanna call it, um, it’s a way of a man being violent towards children and women.

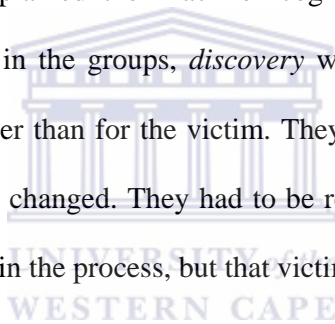
B: So.

Interviewer: Do you not see sex offending as violence?

B: Well if there’s, ja, you now explained to me, different degrees maybe. You see, but okay, I see what you saying, in a violent sort of way, they um, what they actually doing they putting a block there in that child, so in future that child, some of them never develop, emotional or any other one, then they don’t develop any further. And that’s, that what it is, some of them maybe end up in prostitution. ... Ja, I think I still have to come to terms with that then, maybe see where, where that

comes from, as violence. Because um, take anyone, maybe someone out on the street, if you, if you mention the word violence, and then the thinking around that is going to be maybe with an object, or extending your hand or foot, something like that, a gun, anything like that. But now you get soft violence or sexual violence, without an object. ... Ja, that I still got to understand.

Similarly to the Marshall et al. (2001) study on empathy deficits (see the literature review for a full discussion), these four participants showed a lack of empathy for their own victims in particular. They were unable to see the distress that they had caused and thus could not respond with compassion and concern. Denial, minimisation and rationalisation were clearly evident in the way that these child sex offenders explained their lack of cognitive empathy and emotional empathy. Furthermore, in the groups, *discovery* was considered more traumatic for the child sex offender than for the victim. They discussed what they had lost and how their lives had changed. They had to be reminded by the facilitator that there had been a victim in the process, but that victim was not them.



Chapter 5

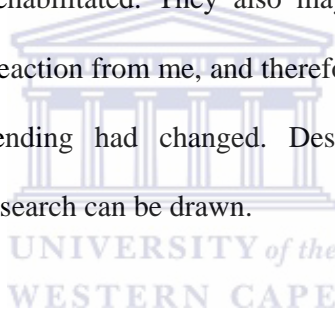
Conclusive Summary

5.1 Limitations of the study

The results of this study, as with other studies of child sex offenders, might not be generalisable. Firstly, the sample size was small, as it was made up of only four participants. Secondly, the sample could have been biased and thus may not represent child sex offenders in the community. Although there were men who attended the rehabilitation program out of their own accord, they were the minority. Most of the men that attended the rehabilitation program had been court ordered to attend, others attended on the insistence of family members, often with the threat of being reported if they did not. Therefore, they might have differed characteristically from men who did not get caught offending. Thirdly, these child sex offenders were in the process of rehabilitation, a program designed to challenge their cognitive distortions about sex offending, and thus they might not have represented child sex offenders who have not had treatment. Finally, the men who volunteered for in-depth interviews may not have been representative of the men who were attending the groups overall, and thus there might have been further representation bias. However, it would be impossible to access a sample of child sex offenders from the community.

The process of rehabilitation may have limited the study even further. It was possible that these child sex offenders had been equipped with the correct responses and may not have believed what they reported. For example, in the case of the age of consent, all four participants claimed that they thought it was too low

and should be at least eighteen years old. As mentioned in the literature review and results section, this may be as a result of rehabilitation or it may be an example of providing the socially desirable response. Due to the nature of child sex offending and people's reactions to it, I often wondered how honest child sex offenders were with others. However, in the groups they appeared to be uncensored in what they said. In the interviews, it also appeared to me that they were being candid. However, when reporting on a cognitive distortion, they sometimes reported that it had changed as a result of the rehabilitation. I was concerned that they might be worried about the social worker's reaction, if they did not report to be rehabilitated. They also may have been apprehensive of rejection or a negative reaction from me, and therefore reported that their thoughts around child sex offending had changed. Despite these drawbacks, some conclusions from this research can be drawn.



5.2 Conclusive Summary of the Results

Sexual violence towards women and children has been a historical phenomenon, and it is not unique to any one culture or historical period (Stermac et al., 1990). However, it was only in the 1980s that attention was given to sexual assault and possible contributing factors (Stermac et al., 1990). Although various contributing factors have been identified, there is not a single theory that is able to account for why people sexually offend, particularly against children. The literature alludes to the need to develop an understanding of the context in which child sex offending occurs. Empirical evidence has shown that child sexual abuse is an overwhelmingly male activity; with the majority of child sex offenders being

male irrespective of the sex of the child they abuse (Finkelhor, 1984). They are a heterogeneous group with few similarities. However, they exhibit similar cognitive distortions with regard to the way in which they perceive child sexual abuse.

In the present study, all four participants who partook in the in-depth interviews endorsed all five thematic networks to some extent, except for participant B who did not report on the *dangerous world* thematic network. Thus, the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions (Ward et al., 2005) was validated in this study.

Within the *uncontrollability* thematic network, child sex offenders regard their behaviours as uncontrollable and do not feel responsible for the offending as they blame it on drugs, alcohol, stress, other people, the sexual attractiveness of children, or an unmanageable sexual desire (Neidigh & Krop, 1992; Ward et al., 2005). In this study, all four participants who were interviewed individually denied using any substances at the time of offending. Furthermore, they denied having had identifiable stressors that may have led to the offending. However, they tended to blame other people for their sexual offending, including the victim. Participant A mainly referred to an uncontrollable sexual desire. Participant B had several explanations for his sex offending: impulse; an uncontrollable sex drive; an opportunity that presented itself; his wife's disinterest in sex; curiosity; lack of education in child development; and pornography. Participant C reported that if he had not been sent the mail with the child pornography website attached to it, he would not have got involved in child pornography. His sex offending was maintained by his uncontrollable adult sexual needs that were being satisfied.

Participant D reported that his victims wanted to be sexually abused and his “perverse personality” allowed for the maintenance of the sex offending without any guilt. All four offenders referred to the sexual attractiveness of children and strong sexual desires and impulses that were uncontrollable at the time of offending. They also referred to the acts as impulsive. Although they described these acts as impulsive, the grooming, planning and fantasising seemed to negate impulsivity. By seeing sexuality as uncontrollable, sex offenders can avoid responsibility for their behaviour (Mihailides, 2004). Within the groups and with the four participants, the child sex offenders expressed a belief that men have higher sex drives than women, and that this might account for the fact that most sex offenders are men. This belief was extremely entrenched and I heard it often in the time that I spent collecting data. It appeared that these child sex offenders planned and fantasised excessively, and when the opportunity arose, they experienced themselves as “out of control”, driven by uncontrollable sexual impulses, which they explained as characteristic of men.

In the *dangerous world* thematic network, the offender views the world and people as hostile and rejecting (Ward et al., 2005). Behaviours are explained either as seeking a safe relationship with an accepting child, or as seeking revenge. The four participants in this study did not report inflicting a deserved punishment on their victims, but rather referred to the loving and accepting nature of children. This was also reported in the groups. Generally, children were described in positive terms and were seen as accepting, loving and safe. Even in cases where the children had reported the child sex offenders, they were still seen as virtuous. Instead it was the adults who the children had reported the abuse to

who were seen in a negative light. However, the children were *blamed* for being sexually attractive or initiating the abuse. This maintenance of a positive view of the child may be evidence of a separate cognitive distortion; i.e. the child sex offenders could be maintaining the belief that the victim still continued to want the abuse but had been stopped by those in authority. Participant D reported this belief explicitly. With regards to their childhood histories, the only similarity that I found was that they were exposed to physical abuse. However, they described this “physical abuse” as normal “hidings” for misbehaving. Participant D was the only participant who explicitly stated that he viewed the world as hostile. He had a diagnosis of Schizophrenia, paranoid type. However he linked some of his paranoia to the child sex offending behaviours and the fear of being caught. Similarly, participant A reported that his sexual offending made his world a dangerous place, also due to a fear of being caught. All four participants were concerned about being caught and what the consequences would be for themselves. In conclusion, the men in this study reported being attracted to the loving and accepting nature of children. However, the attraction to these children involved the child’s vulnerability and being a less powerful object.

Entitlement refers to the sexual offender regarding himself as superior to others and thus entitled to satisfy his sexual needs when and with whom he chooses (Ward et al., 2005). Although in this thematic network, the four offenders did not explicitly state that they, as child sex offenders had a right to their offending behaviours or that the victims deserved what they got, there was a sense of sexual entitlement. All four participants referred to feeling powerful and competent after the sex offending. Furthermore, the sexual offending acts centred

on the child sex offenders' needs, and satisfying these needs, regardless of the victims needs. Participant B described this feeling of satisfaction and although he could not articulate it, he pointed to his head. He described his sex offending as satisfying his sexual needs but also a feeling of achievement and mental satisfaction. Participant D stated that the children somehow knew what his needs were and that they wanted to satisfy these needs. He also spoke about an ability to seduce young children, which he was proud of. Participant A described his entitlement as being in authority and knew that it was easier to get his needs satisfied with children. He knew that his needs took priority and that the children did not enjoy the abuse. He objectified his victims, and would move onto the next victim after he was "done with that one". Participant C also experienced a feeling of power and competence as a result of feeling that he was in control.

According to Ward et al. (2005), in the *children as sexual beings* thematic network, offenders view children as active seekers of sex and believe that children wish to have sex with adults (Ward et al., 2005). Sex is seen as beneficial for children and they often argue that children's autonomy should be respected; that is they should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding sex. In the groups this thematic network was evident. The child sex offenders discussed children having explicit knowledge about sex and children initiating the sexual contact. In one of the groups, the members discussed how difficult it was to refuse children seeking sexual contact. It seemed apparent to me that they were misinterpreting behaviours. Even if we were to assume that there were some children who initiated sexual activities with adult men (often these are children who are acting out previous sexual abuse), these child sex offenders described most children as

behaving in this manner. The frequency with which children tried to initiate sexual contact appeared to be very high. In this study, three of the participants who had individual interviews admitted to seeing children as sexual beings and thought that children enjoyed sex. However, they also reported an understanding that even if children did enjoy sex, it was unacceptable for adults to engage in sex with children. It was difficult to ascertain whether they believed this or were providing the “correct” answer. However, they stated that at the time of offending they thought that it was acceptable, to varying degrees. Participant B denied viewing children and teenagers as sexual beings, but commented that sexual children and adolescents were in society, but he viewed them differently since his rehabilitation. Participant C explained that part of the attraction of child pornography was the girls being “cute” and “underage”. Furthermore, he described their vulnerability as being sexually attractive. Participant D viewed children as sexual beings that were capable of climaxing to the sexual abuse. He reported that all his victims enjoyed what he was doing or he would have stopped. He also reported that he preferred children who had some understanding of what was happening. This was his way of rationalising that what he had done was acceptable. All participants reported that they thought that the age of consent should be raised to older than sixteen years old. This is interesting in two respects. Firstly, the oldest child reportedly molested amongst them is fourteen years old. Secondly, the issue of consent did not seem to apply to them anyway. Participant A raped his victims, without asking for consent. Participant B molested his children while they were sleeping. Participant C looked at children that he could not gain consent from. Finally, participant D reported that he did ask for consent

but then contradicted himself, saying that he had sometimes not even spoken to the child. I found this response contradictory and thought that it represented the socially desirable hypothesis referred to in the literature. Furthermore, participant D made the child responsible. He reported that he stopped abusing “regulars” when they stopped the abuse. He reported that many of the children knew what was going to happen and had explicit sexual knowledge, therefore they could make their own decisions of whether they wanted to engage in the abuse or not. He blamed adults for making children think that they should not be engaging in sexual activities with other adults. I wondered if child sex offenders would give children the same responsibility in other areas of life. For example, participant D would bring his gun to the interviews and groups and I wondered if he thought children were responsible enough to handle guns. We cannot assume that children are capable of making decisions around sex if we assume that they do not have the cognitive capacity to make decisions around other aspects of adult life. In summary, it was clear that these child sex offenders regarded children as sexual beings who enjoyed sex even if they did not understand it. The fact that they could not consent or that it may have been harmful was not something they had taken cognisance of.

In the *nature of harm* thematic network, which overlaps with *children as sexual beings*, offenders do not see the harm in having sex with children and view sex as beneficial to children (Ward et al., 2005). By minimising the possible harmful consequences for the child, the child sex offender feels less responsible for his actions. In this study, the child sex offenders in both the groups and individual interviews denied that they were aware of the implications of their

sexual offending and any harm that they had inflicted, at the time of offending. In one of the groups, a child sex offender had sexually abused a child that he was fostering, after the child's mother had died. The child was nine years old and wearing nappies as a result of the sex offending. He told the group how much he loved this child and that all he wanted to do was show him love. He was still "in love" with his victim and could not see the obvious harm he had done, which was physically evident. The four participants interviewed individually reported that at the time of offending, they were not aware that there were harmful consequences for the victims, they only learned about these in the rehabilitation groups. They also all reported very little guilt and expressed very little empathy for their victims. Their ability to deny, minimise and rationalise the harm that they were inflicting was evidently very powerful. However, all four participants reported that at one stage or another that they wanted to stop abusing children. This implied that they knew that they were doing harm. However, they were more concerned with harm to themselves. Many men in the group felt unfairly treated and that having to attend the groups was a severe punishment that did not fit their crime.

In general, similar cognitive distortions were evident in both the groups and in the individual interviews. However, in the groups there were two particularly strong emotions evident to me. They were apathy and anger. It must be noted that there were motivated men within these groups who did want to be rehabilitated. The men who were apathetic to the rehabilitation process were forced to attend the groups and did not think that there was any value in them. These men presented with high levels of denial: denial of the abuse; denial that it

was sexual; and denial that it had caused any harm. The men who exhibited anger, seemed to be more likely to admit that they had sexually molested a child, but less likely to take responsibility for it or to understand that it was unacceptable for an adult to engage in sexual practices with children. The rationalisations and excuses from these men included that the child initiated the abuse and knew what he/she was doing. They were also angry at society for being punished for something that they felt they were not responsible for.

The aim of this study was to explore whether the child sex offenders in this South African sample would express the five thematic networks proposed by the Judgment Model of Cognitive Distortions, as well as how they reported these distorted cognitions. A further interest that developed during the literature review and data collection was to report on the similarities between the cognitive distortions of child sex offenders and the general public. In reviewing the literature and collecting the data, I noticed that there were many parallels between what child sex offenders said and what was reported in the literature. Of particular significance was the way that child sexual abuse had been denied, minimised and rationalised in the history of psychology. Thus, it appeared that we are all subject to the use of cognitive distortions, individually and collectively.

The radical feminist perspective holds that violence towards women and children is implicitly condoned in patriarchal societies. The emphasis on youthfulness, petiteness and sexual submissiveness as sexually attractive qualities may influence men to seek out these characteristics in their sexual partners. Furthermore, the lack of serious consequences for child sex offending, i.e. the low conviction rates (RAPCAN, 2007) also implies that child sex offending is not a

serious crime. Gender is central in child sex offending and we cannot ignore the power imbalance between men and women, and between adults and children. Men are often the authority figures in many households. In general, men have more power than women, across many cultures within South Africa.

According to Purvis and Ward (2005), the post-modern feminists do not add to the theory because they focus on depth and meaning. I do not agree with this statement. Perhaps more in-depth qualitative studies may add richly to the literature on the thinking patterns of child sex offenders. Child sex offending has different meanings for the men who perform these acts but similarities can be drawn.

Cossins (2000) power/powerlessness theory was useful in understanding child sex offenders' explanations of feeling in control, powerful and satisfied. This was particularly evident in the thematic networks of dangerous world and entitlement. Cossins (2000) asserted that child sex offending is a method in which some men may alleviate their feelings of powerlessness and establish their masculinity. Furthermore, she stated that child sexual abuse is not abnormal but rather it is socially undesirable because of the harm implicit in the abuse. However, Cossins (2000) stated that even if men are implicitly motivated to sexually offend, they should explicitly choose not to offend.

Gender and power were prominent themes in this research. However, a criticism of the feminist theories is that they deny the sexual aspect of child sex offending. Although power and gender are prominent, it is evident that these child sex offenders experienced the child sex offending as pleasurable, both physically and mentally. They were able to deny their guilt and minimise any harm as a

result of the sexual abuse. However, the potential harm of child sexual abuse cannot be ignored. Rind et al. (1998) argued that the consequences of child sexual abuse are not necessarily negative, and when there are adverse effects they are usually temporary. However, there is no way of determining which children will be more resilient to child sexual abuse. As Freud stated in his paper *The Aetiology of Hysteria* (1896), it is not everyone who comes into contact with the Tuberculosis bacterium that will develop full-blown tuberculosis; but in order to get tuberculosis, a person must have had contact with the bacterium. Therefore, I am in agreement that there are people who have been sexually abused and not traumatised by it, but there are those who do find it traumatic. I also question the use of defense mechanisms and cognitive distortions of someone who romanticises their own child sexual abuse. As shown in the literature (Bass & Davis, 1988; Herman, 2001), they are subject to using the same cognitive distortions as child sex offenders.

As the literature has shown, in ambiguous situations child sex offenders will interpret the situation consistently with their own beliefs. He will “see the sex” in children that others do not. Participant D expressed that the sexual attractiveness of children is in the eye of the child sex offender, it is his gaze that infuses sexuality onto children and that this sexuality may not be visible to other adults or even to the children themselves.

These child sex offenders impressed me as exceedingly *normal*. Sometimes we would stand in the corridor and discuss how things were going in their lives, their work, their hobbies, and so forth. If you did not know about their sex offending or did not ask direct questions regarding their cognitions, they

would appear to be like anyone else in the community. It seems that there is a continuum and they may fall towards the one extreme.

I hoped that this study would add to the literature and assist those who deal and work with child sex offenders and survivors of child sexual abuse. The overall aim of studying child sex offenders is to reduce child sexual abuse. Put differently, by knowing more about child sex offenders, we are able to develop more effective treatment programs thus reducing the number of future victims, as well as improve our treatment of survivors of child sexual abuse. The study of cognitive distortions is important because it is directly linked to treatment, i.e. challenging these cognitive distortions. In treatment, it appeared that some of these cognitive distortions were capable of being modified. In the present study, the child sex offenders referred to cognitive distortions that had been modified through their rehabilitation. Thus, it is an area that provides some hope in the rehabilitation of child sex offenders. I have found the study very beneficial to myself in my attempt to understand child sex offending.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Studies

This study was an exploration into the cognitive distortions of child sex offenders. Although the literature is critical of the validity of cognition scales, I would recommend using them in a future study, in conjunction with in-depth interviews and direct observation, providing a combined methodology of quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

As a lack of empathy was prominent, perhaps a study linked to cognitive distortions which focuses on empathy deficits of child sex offenders, may be particularly helpful in ascertaining cognitive processes. There are measures used

for the study of empathy deficits that could be employed, for example the use of ambiguous vignettes. Furthermore, a South African study comparing “myths”, i.e. cognitive distortions, in both child sex offenders and a community control, using the cognition scales would be interesting.

It is highly recommended that people who wish to work with survivors of child sexual abuse acquaint themselves with the literature regarding child sex offenders and embark on research in this area.



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APPENDIX A – Interview Schedule

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name or Initial: _____

Age: _____

Level of education: _____

Occupation: _____

Family Genogram:

REASON FOR ATTENDING THERAPY

Can you please tell me again why you are in these rehabilitation groups?

THEMATIC NETWORKS

1. Uncontrollability

- 1.1 At the time of offending did you make use of alcohol or drugs?
- 1.2 At the time of offending, what were the main stressors in your life?
- 1.3 What have you identified as the precipitating events / triggers?
- 1.4 Could you have done anything to have changed the situation? If so, what?

2. Dangerous world

- 2.1 Where do you feel safe?
- 2.2 What was your relationship like with your mother?
- 2.3 What was your relationship like with your father?
- 2.4 What was your first sexual experience like? (Who, how old, positive or negative?)
- 2.5 Have you had an intimate relationship before? How long? If the relationship ended, what was the reason?
- 2.6 Have you ever had an experience where people were out to get you? If so, did you take revenge?
- 2.7 Have you ever been bullied?
- 2.8 Have you ever been in a physical fight before? (How many, causes and reasons given?)

3. Entitlement

- 3.1 How would you describe yourself?
- 3.2 Are there any people in the community, church, school, and so forth, that look up to?
- 3.3 Have you ever thought that you have special talents or abilities that went unnoticed?
- 3.4 Do you get angry when other people do not do what you need them to do or what you want them to do?
- 3.5 Do you often feel that people cannot meet your needs? (Not sexual – ordinary basic needs)

4. Children as sexual beings

- 4.1 At what age do you think people should be allowed to consent to sex?
- 4.2 Do you think that children enjoy sex? If so, how do you think that they make sense of the experience?
- 4.3 Do you have an understanding of children's cognitive development? (And other areas of child development – physical, emotional, moral)
- 4.4 Do you think that the laws will change with regard to sex with children?
- 4.5 Do you think that the laws should change and that we should respect children's decision around sex?

5. Nature of harm

- 5.1 Do you think that children can be damaged from early sexual experiences?
- 5.2 Do you know of any harm to your victims?
- 5.3 According to you, were there any discrepancies in the victim's statement? If so, what were they?

GROOMING BEHAVIOURS

How did the offender groom his victims?

LEVEL OF REHABILITATION

Would you say that the group has beneficial for you?

If you could provide a short summary, what would you say had the biggest impact on your way of thinking?

What do you understand by the terms denial, rationalisation and minimisation?

DEFINITION OF WORDS: Please state the first words or thoughts that come to mind when I say the following words.

Child	Woman	Man
Sex	Sexual being	Power
Consensual sex	Nonconsensual sex	Intimacy
Love	Revenge	Domination
Anger	Submission	Innocent
Child sex offender	Victim	



APPENDIX B



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

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Ethical Consent Form

Title of Project : Cognitive Distortions in a South African Group of Child Sex Offenders
Name of Student : Jillian Butterworth
Student Number : 264 1553
Address of Researcher : P O Box 22062, Fish Hoek, 7975
Telephone of Researcher : (021) 959 2283
Email Address : jae_butter@hotmail.com
Purpose of Study : Completion of Masters in Psychology
Institution : University of the Western Cape
Department : Psychology

Dear Participant,

This letter serves as confirmation that your participation in the above study is voluntary and informed (i.e. you have been told what the research is about and to what use the information will be put). Your confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed. Please read the following statements carefully, and if you agree to be a participant in this study, sign below.

1. I confirm and acknowledge that I have been fully briefed on the above study and was given the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary.
3. I understand that my participation in the study is anonymous and that confidentiality is guaranteed.
4. I am free to withdraw from the study at anytime, without giving reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.
5. I give my informed consent to participate in the study.

Name of Participant:

Date:

(Please note that your name will not be used anywhere except here. You may, if you so desire, give a pseudo-name.)

Name of Student:

Signature:

Date:

Signed at