Stumbling into sexual crime: the passive perpetrator in accounts by male internet sex

offenders

Abstract

Public reactions to internet child offending remains ambivalent in that, whilst there is vocal condemnation of contact child sex offending, there is less indignation about internet child abuse; this is potentially due to a lack of recognition of this type of offence as sexual offending per se. This ambiguity is reflected by internet sex offenders themselves in their verbalisations of their offending, and this paper presents a qualitative analysis of the accounts offered by individuals convicted of internet-based sexual offences involving the downloading and viewing of images of children (N=7). In particular, this paper presents an analysis of the explanations of offenders for the *commencement* of internet activity and the progression to more illicit online materials. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and analysed using discursive methods, paying close attention to language use and function. The analysis documents the practices that internet child abusers employ in order to manage their identities, distance themselves from the label of sex offender, and/or reduce their personal agency and accountability. Implications of this analysis are discussed with reference to the current minimisation of the downloading of sexually explicit images of children as a sexual crime per se by the public and offenders alike, and the risk assessment and treatment of individuals convicted of these offences.

Introduction

Previous research has focused on sex offender accounts that mitigate the responsibility of internet sex offenders by emphasising the non-contact nature of internet offences and promulgating claims that internet child sexual abuse is a victimless crime (Winder & Gough, 2010). Such findings are compatible with the techniques delineated by Mills (1940), and related work by subsequent authors (Scott & Lyman, 1968; Scully & Marolla, 1984), in which the authors describe how we 'reinterpret' our improper/illegal actions to make them more palatable to others (and potentially to ourselves). In this paper, we focus more closely on offenders' (causal) explanations and attributions for the *commencement* of internet activity and the progression to more illicit online materials, specifically sexual images of children. The offenders have more of a challenge here as not only do they need to downplay personal agency and accountability for their actions, but also distance themselves from the identity of an individual who is sexually attracted to children, the label of child molester or 'paedophile' being the 'hate figure of our time' (Thomas, 2005, p.1).

The label of 'sex offender' itself is a challenging one, and it is unsurprising that over a third of sexual offenders deny outright that they have committed an offence (Hood, Shute, Feilzer & Wilcox, 2002), with many more minimising and attempting to justify or neutralise their offences (Hudson, 2005; Scully & Marolla, 1984). The reason for such high levels of denial, minimisation and justification post-sentencing for sexual offenders can be partly explained through difficulties with the adoption of this identity (OBPU, 2002; Blagden, Winder, Gregson & Thorne, 2011). Certainly, for the individuals, their families and the general public, the label of 'sex offender' becomes their master status (Goffman, 1963), a damaged label which brings them hatred, fear and, at times, death threats, physical assault or even murder (Thomas, 2005). Within a prison setting, individuals convicted of sexual

offences strive to create a 'viable identity' for themselves (Schwaebe, 2005), even within a sex offender only correctional establishment. Internet sex offenders have been shown to distance themselves from this label through neutralisations such as 'I never touched anybody', and the strategies used to distance themselves from other contact (and non-contact) sexual offences in which 'victims are created' are described in a previous paper by two of the authors (Winder & Gough, 2010).

Whilst individuals with offences relating to sexually explicit material involving children (SEM-c) (Elliott, Beech, & Mandeville-Norden, 2013) arguably commence their identity repair work from an easier position than other (contact) sexual offenders, the literature does not unequivocally demonstrate that such individuals constitute a separate group of offenders (see Beech, Elliott, Birgden & Findlater, 2008 for a comprehensive review of research in this area). A previous study indicated that 85% of internet sex offenders had previous contact offences (Bourke & Hernandez, 2009), although, surprisingly, only 24% of the participants had a documented history of previous contact offences; the remainder self-reported contact offences during treatment, and in some cases after undergoing polygraph testing. Thus a proportion of internet sex offenders also report, or have a history of, previous contact sexual offences; this is supported by the findings of a meta-analysis conducted by Seto, Hanson and Babchishin (2011), who reported that approximately one in eight online offenders (12%) have an officially recorded contact sexual offence history at the time of their index internet offence. This proportion is substantially higher when self-report data is considered, with just over half (55%) of online offenders admitting a previous contact sexual offence (n=523). Additional corroboration of this overlap is provided by a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children analysis of 284 cases reported in local and national news in the UK; the data was collected over a six month period in 2010 and relates to people convicted or cautioned for the possession, making or distribution of indecent images of

children. The findings indicated that, in a third of these cases, offenders had also been guilty of grooming children, or had committed sexual assaults on children either previously, or during the same court case (NSPCC, 2011).

The picture is complex since contact sexual offenders may access sexually explicit material of children as an adjunct, stimulus or blueprint for their offending. Previous qualitative research has facilitated in-depth examination of the use of SEM-C, including examination of the significance of the subjective meanings given to child pornography by internet sex offenders (Quayle & Taylor, 2002) and how 'thinking' (fantasies) related to 'doing' (committing a contact offence) for a child sex offender (Wilson & Jones, 2008). However, it may also be the case, that accessing SEM-C is conducted as a replacement for sexual offending (Quayle & Taylor, 2002). Thus, it is important to ascertain if there is a sub-group of offenders who predominantly commit sexual offences online, and a useful starting point to examine this has been the creation of typologies of internet offenders (Krone, 2004; Sullivan & Beech, 2004), which demarcate sub-groups of internet sex offenders by factors such as the use individuals make of SEM-C, the level of networking between individuals, and whether abuse is direct or indirect. Other distinctions have been suggested, such as active versus passive distributors of images (see Seto, 2013). Such typologies help us understand the different behaviours involved with these offences, encourage us to explore the differing psychological profiles of sub-groups, and may inform criminal justice practice, such as the ongoing development of sentencing guidelines (Seto, 2013). It is recognised, however, that typologies of internet sex offenders are difficult to define, given the necessity of distinguishing between the actions, intent and effects of the behaviours of offenders (see Aslan, 2011 for a discussion of typologies); however, they are a crucial step in developing treatment pathways and understanding the risk of internet sex offenders.

Research to date has also examined psychological differences between internet sex offenders and other sex offenders, with data from the meta-analysis by Babchishin, Hanson and Hermann (2011) examining the characteristics of online offenders indicating that internet offenders had higher victim empathy, greater sexual deviancy and lower social desirability in their responding than offline offenders, in addition to less emotional identification with children and fewer cognitive distortions. This meta-analysis, whilst extremely useful, was not able to differentiate between different types of internet offenders, nor was it able to separate out internet-only offenders from internet offenders who had also committed contact offences (or indeed non-contact sexual offences such as voyeurism, exhibitionism or telephone scatalogia), although it did allow comparisons with normative groups, which is an important starting point in understanding the differences between types of offenders.

Our analysis does not concern different offender types of psychological profiles; instead, we focus on how offenders explain their entry into illegal internet activity, a novel focus which we hope will offer important insights for treatment. This paper also represents a detailed analysis of the ways in which internet child abusers manage identity work in interview settings; the latter being the medium in which risk assessments are conducted prior to parole and release, and consequently an important context in which offenders' risk will be determined. In accounting for actions and constructing identities, accountability is a key concern (Potter, 1996), especially when accounting for controversial activities, where agency (choice, personal responsibility) is likely to be downplayed, as in the case of sexual offences. In addition, the study demonstrates an under-utilised method of discursive analysis (see Edwards & Potter, 1992), and showcases the benefits of close attention to language use and function in accounting for (illegal) actions and constructing identities in difficult circumstances.

Method

Participants

The sample pool comprised 36 adult males convicted as their index offence of the possession and/or distribution of indecent photographs/pseudo-photographs of a child (contravening s.160 Criminal Justice Act, 1988 and s.1 Protection of Children Act, 1978, respectively) who were currently serving sentences at a UK prison. From this initial sample pool, seven participants remained following dropouts and refusals, an ostensibly modest but sufficient sample size for qualitative research where intensive rather than extensive analysis is prioritised across a range of methodologies (e.g. Smith, 2008), including discursive research (e.g. Sneijder & Te Molder, 2005). Whilst our sample is modest and situated within a specialist sex offender prison, we feel that the analysis which follows will nonetheless generate insights useful to other researchers and practitioners working with this hard to reach offending group, and will stimulate debate about patterns of meaning making across and within sex offender groups

Participants were all white British, aged between 30 and 60, and had spent 1-3 years in prison prior to the interviews for their current offence (see table one).

INSERT TABLE ONE BELOW

Data Collection

Access to participants was granted following ethical approval by Her Majesty's Prison Service and a UK University. Potential participants initially received a letter explaining that the research sought to understand internet-related sexual offending, and detailing the ethical procedures that would be followed. Consenting individuals were met by the first author for a briefing about the research, and were reminded, *inter alia*, about circumstances that would override confidentiality i.e. if participants disclosed an offence which they or someone else had not been charged with, or any other information relating to the security of the prison or the harm of self or others.

All participants were interviewed on a one-to-one basis by the first author in a dedicated interview room within the prison, offering a private and respectful environment for participants to 'tell their stories' (Waldram, 2007, p.963). The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed using a simplified version of the scheme developed by Gail Jefferson Jefferson's transcription conveyed various features of the delivery of talk to capture the subtlety of their delivery (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013) in order to discover and describe orderly practices of talk-in-interaction, allowing interaction features to be appreciated (Potter & Hepburn, 2005) (see Appendix for transcription notation).

Interviews

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 1.5-3 hours. The interview schedule was developed through consultation with colleagues and structured into five broad sections:

[1] Information about home and family environment, personal information (such as occupation and age),

[2] Description of offence and related feelings, actions and moral/legal issues, information about detection and conviction;

[3] Impact of actions on other areas of their lives;

[4] Other offences, sex offender 'identity' and feelings about incarceration, information about treatment, and attitudes to other individuals convicted of sexual offences;

[5] Future plans and coping outside prison.

The analysis focused on issues that emerged across these topics.

Mode of Analysis

The analysis was informed by discursive psychology (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996), an approach that treats language as action. In contrast to traditional psychological approaches which view language as a transparent medium, discursive psychologists are interested in the ways that accounts are put together to achieve particular versions of reality. Thus we are not focused on the 'truth' of talk rather on way that accounts are built up to perform particular 'work'. Initially the transcripts were coded by five members of a research team. Subsequently further coding was conducted independently by all three authors until we felt that we had reached agreement over key discourse patterns within the dataset. This coding was subsequently refined based on emergent patterns of accountability in the data. In particular, we became interested in the ways in which participants accounted for their internet activities, noticing that the nature of offences was hardly specified and that several mitigating

factors were cited using particular discursive formulations. Specifically, we went through the data and identified the various ways in which participants framed their initial and subsequent internet activity.

As indicated above, participants were recruited because they belonged to the category of 'internet sex offender' and were invited to take part in the study with the 'task understanding' (Potter & Hepburn, 2005) that they would be discussing their 'internet sex offending' and, more specifically, how they ended up in prison convicted of a sexual offence, what it means to them to be convicted for sexual offences over the internet, their views and feelings towards their offence, and, the effect that this has had on them and their family. The label of internet sex offender, combined with their incarceration and interviewing in a prison, already marks out participants' identities as troublesome, but our analysis highlights the sophisticated negotiation of this identity. All descriptions perform actions and are open to being discounted as a product of their stake or interest in the version of reality that is being worked up (Potter, 1996). 'Stake' is thus an issue for participants as it refers to features of an individual, or group, which need to be attended to. For example, if a meat eater argues that meat is necessary for a healthy body, one might consider their position (stake) on that topic to be problematic due to their investment in the topic. Their argument could easily be discredited on such grounds. Therefore, the 'dilemma of stake' is particularly relevant where delicate issues of identity are raised to the fore (Edwards, 1996), as with the interviews with internet offenders that are presented in this paper. Turns of talk are designed in ways that facilitate the production of fact (where accounts are worked up as 'true'), and accountability (where accounts are oriented towards issues of choice/agency, blame, responsibility). Below a number of resources drawn on to work up factual presentations and attend to accountability found in previous research are described:

- Stake inoculation – identities are worked up in a way that wards off any unwanted

issues of stake (Potter, 1996).

- Stake confession – typically applies when issues of stake are unavoidable due to difficulties in inoculating against them. Thus 'confessing' presents the author as displaying honesty and objectivity (Potter, 1996).

- Footing – footing shifts (e.g. presenting an account as impersonal or generalised to the wider public) allows the speaker to work up the appearance of neutrality (Goffman, 1981).

- Extreme case formulations and minimizations (Pomerantz, 1986) – one way of legitimising claims is to draw upon extreme cases (e.g. 'everybody') in order to strengthen the case. Conversely to minimize (e.g. '*just* normal adult porn') works in a similar way to downgrade the construction.

- Three-part lists – Jefferson (1990) noted that lists are employed to perform a range of interactional tasks, notably to summarise some class of things as something general – it builds up a construction.

Line numbering is routinely inserted in discursive data extracts in order to facilitate attention to the sequential nature of interaction and hence analysis (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

Results

We found that participant narratives largely downplayed individual choice and agency. For example, stressful life events were implicated in initial forays onto the internet, while computer-generated links and 'pop-ups' were foregrounded over individual preferences while online. When participants did display personal investment, it was in relation to searching for, acquiring and archiving images rather than specifying preferred content or describing sexual engagement with the material. Finally, participants invariably invoked an obsession repertoire to help explain – and mitigate – the progression to illicit images, highlighting personal and

social costs and a chain of events beyond conscious control. These three inter-related patterns are now discussed.

1. *'That's what triggered me'*: Constructing precursors to internet offending

2. *'Level 5[1] pictures were popping up'*: Accounting for offending behaviour

3. *' 'It became an obsession'*: Acknowledgment of a problem

1. *'That's what triggered me'*: Constructing precursors to internet offending

While some interviewees cited opportunities to offend borne from specific circumstances (e.g. unemployment), most drew attention to stressful life events and so constructed their offending as a form of coping with difficulties. In order to illustrate how accountability is managed in these accounts, it is worth considering a detailed extract from Participant 2 (P2), who links his wife's post-natal depression (and consequent sexual unavailability), financial difficulties and work stress to his solo forays on the internet and, ultimately, to his offending.

Just preceding this extract, the interviewer asks about the participant's typical evening. The participant initiates his response with "it changed really", after his son was born. He proceeds with a detailed account of various activities that his ex-wife used to do together, building up a harmonious relationship narrative before returning to his opening construction of a changed status in their joint activities due to his son's birth, detailing a separation of their activities.

Extract 1 taken from interview 2

1	P2	So we never used to (.)she had a little bit of (.) post-
2		natal depression as well but that's n:o: I'm not saying

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[1] Level 5 pictures are images of children which involve acts of sadism and/or bestiality following the Sentencing Advisory Panel's need to have images classified in terms of severity of abuse, following the 2002 Regina v. Oliver legal case.

3		that's an <u>excuse</u> in any way but that affects our
4		relationship with regards to spending time <u>together</u>=
5	Int	=yea:ah
6	P2	because things became <u>ha:ard</u> (1)
7	Int	yeah
11	P2	she wasn't <u>working</u> (.) money was (.) erm (.) <u>tight</u> that
12		was a major factor problem for us money cos she er gave
13		up work for a year
14	Int	hmm:m=
15`	P2	=because she had post-natal depression looking after me
16		(.) me son
17	Int	hmm
18	P2	erm so we just found we just did less and less things
19		less and less things together
20	Int	hmm
16	P2	than what we did <u>before</u> ehm (1) wasn't too bad I wouldn't
17		say it was a major <u>issue</u> it was (.) <u>ha:ard</u>
18	Int	did you did you find things like er of an evening you'd
19		would be going be staying up <u>late</u> and she'd be (.) off to
20		bed or (.)was it kind of <u>split</u> different things different
21		lives but also even when you were both in the house were
22		you
23	P2	yeah it was what happened she mainly sort of sit
24		down<u>stairs</u> ehmm (.) watching telly [unclear] or vice-
25		versa some nights she'd go upstairs she would go to bed

26		like eight o'clock she was tired like I'd be down<u>stairs</u>
27		watching television and stuff n (.) or I would have a
28		mate round from next door playing the play station things
29		like that
29	Int	hmm
30	P2	so it was doing more the (.) more the things I did when I
31		was <u>younger</u>
31	Int	yeaH
32	P2	with my mates and things rather than being in a
33		relationship so
34	Int	yeah
35	P2	erm (1)it it did sort of trigger off erm at the time
36		going on the internet cos she was obviously a lot of time
37		downstairs I was upstairs I was and I was <u>bored </u>the
38		nights [I] didn't want to go out and ehm it had it just
39		basically started off just loo I we'd both looked at
40		normal porn anyway
42	Int	right
43	P2	for <u>years</u> just normal adult porn
44	Int	yeah
45	P2	erm (.) something me and my ex-wife had always <u>done</u>
46	Int	mmm
47	P2	y'know er wasn't a <u>massive</u> thing in us lives but it was
48		something that we'd always done
49	Int	yea:ahh

50	P2	was just because(.)obviously (.) our sex life was non-
51		existent
52	Int	right
53	P2	at the time as well which is which looking back I was
54		very selfish not to recognise but obviously I
55		should have been more understanding obviously she I mean
56		she'd just had a baby
57	Int	yeah
58	P2	she has post-natal depression but I couldn't I couldn't
59		see that
60		I was being very selfish
61	Int	yeah
62		wrapped up in my own little world
63	Int	yeah
64	P2	erm I wanted to have sex
65	Int	yeah yeah
66	P2	you understand that because she didn't
67	Int	yeah, yeah
68	P2	ehm, perhaps that's what triggered me to start going on
69		the computer
70	Int	right
71	P2	looking into the porn on my own which I haven't done
72		before it was always between us (caugh) together like
73		magazines dvds [unclear] comes to that as well
74	Int	yeah

75	P2	so it's sort of the first time that I really mentally
76		used
77	Int	right and do you think (.) so it is almost do you think
78		(1) it was <u>that</u> kind of er need for an <u>outlet</u> or do you
79		think it was partly (.) <u>resenting</u> her not wanting <u>sex</u> and
80		thinking well I'm going to <u>get</u> some sort of satisfaction
81		<u>somewhere</u>
82	P2	I think it was a mixture of both it's I said at the time
83		I was very selfish
84	Int	hmm
85	P2	I know I was selfish looking back I should be more
86		understanding (caugh)I've always been one that's needed a
87		lot of (1) benefit a lot of er atten not attention but
88		<u>affection</u>
89	Int	right yeah
90	P2	I've always wanted that ever since ever since a <u>kid</u> any
91		relationship that I got into that the affection side of
92		it breaks down the relationship completely breaks down
93	Int	right yes
94	P2	cos I always try to give affection if I don't get it back
95		yes I walk away
96	Int	yes yes
97	P2	because I need that affe::ct<u>ion</u> ermm (.)

The influence of his partner's post natal depression (PND) is minimized (Pomerantz, 1986) ('a little bit') and then discounted, working as a form of 'stake inoculation' (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992) designed to deter any charges of using PND to his advantage i.e. deflecting responsibility for his subsequent offending. The disjunction 'but' nonetheless signals the relevance of PND, while the use of 'obviously' is designed to imply a consensual understanding i.e. anyone would think that an illness such as PND will inevitably undermine interpersonal intimacy. Financial problems are then cited as 'a major factor', and linked to his wife's PND, which necessitated time off work. These difficult circumstances are then directly linked to estrangement between partner and self ('So we just found…'), a situation then contrasted with life before PND.

In response to the interviewer's questions designed to explore the estrangement further, P2 outlines a number of scenarios (lines 30-33) culminating in a formulation of himself as embodying a lifestyle akin to his younger, single existence. The difficulties cited are then explicitly connected to the onset of internet activity: the psychological term 'trigger' positions P2 as a victim of circumstances beyond his control, subject to powerful debilitating forces which rendered him isolated and bored. Note the use of 'obviously' (line 36) again, which seems to suggest taken-for-granted knowledge of his partner's depression-induced unavailability ('downstairs'), reinforced with an extreme case formulation 'a lot of time' (Pomerantz, 1986). In fact his partner is again implicated in the ensuing events with his own feelings associated with her intransigence ('I was bored the nights [I] didn't want to go out').

His lack of culpability is reinforced with a passive formulation ''It had, it just basically started off', as if he did not exercise any choice in the matter. The passive nature of this formulation is 'brought off' through way that the footing (Goffman, 1981) employed with this claim displays an absence of stake (or agency) in the claim (Potter, 1996). The situation is then normalised with reference to a former interest in 'normal porn', shared with

his wife ('we would both') over time ('for years'; 'had always done') and therefore something normal and legitimate, minimized (Pomerantz, 1986) as 'just normal adult porn'. The significance of this engagement with pornography is then down-graded ('It wasn't a massive thing') possibly to avoid the critique of being insensitive, before returning to the present, specifically the unavailability of his wife for sexual gratification. This situation is both treated as an 'obvious' fact - which anyone would understand – and as dire (sex life as 'non-existent'), an extreme formulation (Pomerantz, 1986). His acknowledgment that he was "selfish" (lines 53-63) is a form of 'stake confession' (Potter, 1996) which attends to his own culpability in this matter potentially rendering the interviewer to view his account as 'honest' and 'objective'. His sexual needs are then clearly asserted (I wanted to have sex), a desire which is rendered reasonable by the subsequent appeal addressed to the interviewer: 'You understand that', and contrasted with his partner's 'obvious' lack of interest in sexual intimacy. The term 'triggered' (line 34) is employed again 'tentatively' to justify his foray into watching porn alone. Again, P2 attends to issues of stake through detailing how pornography had previously been a joint occupation with his wife. The interviewer invokes the exploratory notions of this as either an "outlet" (line 78) or "resentment" (line 79) leading to seeking "satisfaction somewhere" (line 81). Whilst P2 accepts this construction, he also links his behaviour to being "selfish" (lines 83 and 85). However, of relevance to his version of events is his formulation of the need for "affection" (lines 88-97) (corrected from the less sympathy inducing 'attention') which is hearable as a criticism of the situation with his ex-wife and her unavailability at this point.

The extremity of the pressures faced is emphasised, with spiralling debt, constant arguments and overworking highlighted. Idioms such as 'vicious cycle' and extreme case constructs such as 'everything coming together' portray an impossibly iniquitous situation, which renders P2 'depressed, very alone and isolated', a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990)

which reinforces the personal suffering reported. It is under these very taxing conditions that the internet is presented with the recycled term from the interviewer (line 78) as 'an outlet', a temporary escape from real-life problems, which are again cited (e.g. lack of funds for other outlets such as drinking). The benefits of internet activity are construed as innocuous and minimized (Pomerantz, 1986) – 'just something to cheer myself up, just make me happy' – as if describing an innocent leisure time pursuit. This construction of initial harmless activity helps to frame the subsequent descent into serious and offensive activities as unintentional and unplanned. Passive formulations continue to punctuate the account ('So I come to find') as well as minimizations (Pomerantz, 1986; 'just wanted an outlet'). Extra-marital affairs are mentioned as another 'outlet', albeit a less gratifying one which generated boredom and dissatisfaction. That the affairs were unhappy is then treated as accountable, explained in terms of disaffection ('just sex…no affection or anything') which again, in part, places 'blame' towards his ex-wife as it picks up on the loss of affection from her. The use of 'dunno' works to play down the speaker's interest in events, implying that he wasn't paying particular attention to what was going on (Potter, 1996), again underlining a lack of purpose or direction in his internet activities. So, in attending to the detail of the account, we can see that great efforts absolve or mitigate responsibility through use of stake management, listing, extreme case formulations and so on.

As well as prevailing circumstances, some interviewees also invoked past experiences when accounting for the initiation of internet offending. Just preceding this extract, the interviewer asks for more details about the participant's first offence (also an internet offence) and this one; the participant talks about the ages of children he is looking at on the internet and the interviewer asks about the particular appeal of the age group in question (post pubescent 11-14). The participant's reply invokes an 'aesthetic aspect' and then continues as below:

Extract 2 taken from interview 3

1	P3	Erm and the other thing which came to light only fairly
2		recently really was (.) when I was doing (.) SOTP er cos
3		I didn't have an answer to that question really
4	Int	Erm
5	P3	erm was looking at things that had happened in my life
6		before (.) and I was <u>sexually active</u> from quite a young
7		age mm I had some sexual abuse when I was very young
8		which I didn't have any <u>negative</u> (.) thoughts or feelings
9		or it wasn't a negative experience for me <u>at all</u> erm and
10		I only remember (.) parts of it
11	Int	mm
12	P3	I was about seven erm but it definitely happened cos I've
13		spoke to my parents and (.) you know described the
14		location and stuff and that was essentially (.)myself and
15		erm a friend of the family and his daughter so he
16		basically got us to do stuff
17	Int	right
18	P3	And that's well what happened there but I lost my
19		virginity when I was <u>twelve</u> to an older <u>girl</u>
20	Int	Hmm
21	P3	And I think a lot of my (.) <u>interest</u> a lot of my sexual
22		interest is based around that because it when I started

23		putting stuff together again I realised that a lot of the
24		images (.) my ideal if you like
25	Int	hmm
26	P3	that I was looking for was very much (.) <u>that girl</u> that I
27		lost my virginity with
28	Int	right
29	P3	erm and that never really I'd never had a connection of
30		that before so that was really interesting that's come
31		out there was a connection there

[lines omitted]

32	P3	and it was fine for a while and then I moved to England
33		very quickly after I got into a relationship I moved
34		jobs and I had quite a lot of sort of stressful events
36		happening quite quickly
37	Int	hmm
38	P3	And (.) the other thing that was highlighted from sort of
39		my time here was that my coping (.)was horrendous I just
40		didn't cope with things
41	Int	hmm
42	P3	Up to the point where I even denied things were happening
43		to myself
44	Int	right
45	P3	Really really sort of convinced myself that it wasn't
46		happening erm and used sort of the offending in a way as
47		a <u>release</u> for all this stress and all this anxiety

48	Int	hmm
49	P3	You know, quite clearly not the thing to do
50	Int	no
51	P3	It wasn't solving anything
52	Int	No, no (laughing)
53	P3	But at the time it seemed to be rational for me to do
54		that, it was so distorted by that point
55	Int	hmm
56	P3	Erm and I got caught if you like because I was doing it
57		downloading images at work

P3 cites an occasion of sexual abuse with another child orchestrated by a friend of the family when he was about seven, an account which is corroborated with reference to his parents (cf Dickerson, 1997: 'It's not just me who's saying this'). He then cites another sexual episode, this time when he was 12, relating to losing his virginity to an older girl. So, on both occasions the speaker is positioned as a young, innocent party subjected to the desires of more senior figures. He then explicitly links his predilection for sexual images of children, here rendered vaguely as 'interest' before being repaired to 'sexual interest', to this latter experience with the mature female: his offending behaviour is never explicitly documented, a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. The focus on childhood experiences, and some of the language used ('I'd never had a connection of that before'; 'when I started putting stuff together'), are presumably informed by treatment sessions in prison. Nonetheless, attention then moves to more contemporaneous events. As with the previous extract, salient stressful life events are emphasised ('a lot'; 'happening quite quickly'). Direct reference is then made to what he has learned from psychological treatment in prison, this time pertaining to

inadequate strategies to cope with the stressful life events, described using an extreme case formulation ('horrendous') (Pomerantz, 1986) and a bottom line, factual statement ('I just didn't cope…') (see Potter, 1996). The shift in footing (Goffman, 1981), from the invocation of psychological help ('the other thing that was highlighted') to the personal ('I didn't cope'), works to display an awareness of his lack of coping abilities. More psychological terms are deployed ('denial'; 'release'; 'anxiety'), and as with P2 the offending is similarly construed as an escape from difficult circumstances, this time boredom at work, issues with socialising and lack of control at home. This type of treatment-informed account is clearly recipient-designed (Sacks, 1995), meaning that is designed with the psychologist/interviewer in mind for this particular setting (an interview about internet sex-offending) and working up a shared understanding (e.g. 'clearly not the thing to do'). Obviously being positioned as pathological (not coping; in denial etc.) is not pleasant so P3 moves from the individual to the situational ('at the time it seemed to be rational'), shifting attention away from personal deficiencies to context-bound, understandable practices. So, here we see a range of strategies employed to manage accountability, including invoking proximal and distal experiences, using psychological jargon, maximising victim status and minimising intentionality. These discourse devices featured in all interviews when participants were accounting for the onset of their offending. Now we turn to accounts presented in relation to the nature and extent of illegal internet activities.

2. 'Level 5 pictures were popping up': Accounting for offending behaviour

As with the explanations concerning the genesis of offending behaviours, talk about initial and subsequent encounters with sexual images of children was frequently designed to downplay or mitigate intentionality and accountability. For example, early encounters were often constructed as accidental:

Extract 3 taken from interview 2

1	P2	At first just looking at normal adult pornography
2	Int	Hmm
3	P2	Which I'd looked at before but after a period of time I
4		started finding that (.) quite(.)sort of (1)boring as
5		well
5	Int	Hmm
6	P3	Very sort of rigid and things like it was all the same
7		and I was just like it just not (.) just not doing
8		anything for me
8	Int	Hmm
9	P2	Erm (.) it was just <u>purely</u> by chance how I actually got
10		started looking at sort of you know (.) I don't like
11		calling it child pornography (.)[because child
12		pornography you class as a <u>happy</u> thing because class
13		pornography like as something that's happy] so I don't
14		always like to the term child pornography it's (sighs)
15		I don't know what else to class really y'know it's
16		looking at indecent <u>images</u> of children
17	Int	yes

[Lines omitted]

18	P2	because (1) ahHH the majority of the th pictures I
19		downloaded weren't weren't from at the time I thought
20		weren't illegal websites I never actually physically went

21   into any(1)erm pornography or as I say child pornography

22   websites

Directly prior to this extract the talk was focused on how the internet offending had started, the participant documented a series of unsatisfactory affairs which resulted in him turning to the computer, then the interviewer asked what he stared looking at on the computer. The 'at first…but' is a classic opening for a narrative of progression/development (Jefferson, 2004), which functions to establish initial innocence or neutrality before presenting the escalation into taboo territory. The activity is first minimized (Pomerantz, 1986) and normalised ('*just* looking at *normal* adult pornography'), and set in a temporal context ('which I'd looked at before') i.e. not a one-off sudden engagement. The disjunction 'but' signals a transition into a different, and possibly controversial, area. The subsequent dissatisfaction with this material is emphasised in a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990) - 'boring…rigid…all the same' – which then acts as a rationale for moving on to other content. In then explaining first encounters with illicit images, 'chance' is the favoured construct. This explanation is embellished with 'just', which grants a factual gloss, and 'purely', an extreme case formulation (Jefferson, 1990) which emphasises the point. The use of 'actually' reinforces the factual status of the account – the way things really were – while the passive construction 'I got started' downgrades agency (as opposed to, say, 'I started').. Next P2 displays through pauses, philosophising and sighs, a consideration of producing a more preferable term than 'child pornography'. The work he does here demonstrates a sensitivity to constructing child pornography as a problematic term that could be construed as akin to adult pornography: he settles on "indecent <u>images</u> of children".

He then moves to develop this position by establishing the legality of the websites visited, although again this is carefully worded to avoid potential critique: not all images are included ('the majority'), as if including all would be incredulous; and the claim is qualified by 'at the time I thought', a softening preface which acknowledges the possibility that he may have been wrong in this belief. It also works up his position as naïve rather than malicious 'at the time', a position strengthened by the next claim that he 'never physically went into any pornography' – emphasised by classic extreme case formulations ('never'; 'any') and the use of 'physically', which underlines the reality and factuality of the situation. So, early internet activity is described using formulations which individually and collectively position the speaker as stumbling upon illicit images by accident rather than design, as part of a quest to escape boredom.

In terms of describing the progression to more offensive and illegal images, similar discourse patterns can be observed:

Extract 4 taken from interview 7

1	P7	and when I went on the internet I went on there <u>purposely</u>
2		for for research work in fact erm but obviously there was
3		a lot of erm stuff in The Sun about the porn on there and
4		I got into the porn and slowly drifted off into the umm
5		younger and younger and younger until I was (.) .hh erm
6		accessing child (1) er (1) pornography I s'pose but
7		it it's not one of those sorts of things where you go
8		through a category and choose where you want to go you
9		sort of find (.) umm so you you come across <u>anything</u>
10		if you know what I mean

11	Int	yes
12	P7	rather than specifics so umm it got worse and worse and
13		worse the more I went through the more deeper I was going
14		the worse the pictures became and=
15	Int	=worse in what sense
16	P7	Umm(.)well first of all it was just nudist sites and
17		then it actually got to level 5 pictures were popping up
18		from time to time as well um though I wasn't purposefully
19		looking for level 4 or level 5 or like that I was just
20		finding them and I've always been a a bit of a
21		hoarder and I collect and I'm actually a professional
22		archivist on the outside (.) of electronic images
23		(laughs) strangely enough
24	Int	Right
25	P7	So I tend to keep them and I did have one <u>hell</u> of a
26		collection
27	Int	Right
28	P7	which obviously I was jailed for

Prior to this extract the participant had been discussing how he was a loner who obtained

sexual gratification through images in response to an initial question about his offence. P7

frames his initial engagement with the internet as work- rather than crime-related,

emphasised by 'purposely' and presented as truth ('in fact'). The subsequent use of the

discourse marker 'but' signals a disjunction, and this is followed by 'obviously', which is

designed to preface and soften any subsequent reference to taboo behaviour by implying a

shared understanding of the situation. Media coverage documenting the extent of internet pornography is then mentioned as a factor which he links to his accessing pornographic images online and potentially as an encouragement and normalising of a drive to look into this area. Although the first person pronoun is used ('and I got into the porn') the metaphor of 'drifting' (line 4) works to diminish agency, while the repetition of 'younger' suggests a relentless, powerful propulsion into ever more dangerous waters. The pause and hedging ("I s'pose") in line 6 surrounding the saying of 'child pornography' indicates the difficulty of enunciating the taboo activity. This admission is then followed by another discourse marker ('but') then a footing shift (Goffman, 1981) ('you'), which work to downgrade agency ('not… where you go through a category and choose') – implying that anyone in this position would fall into this trap. Indeed, the discursive work throughout the extract reinforces this impression of constrained choice – 'sort of find' (line 9) images is repaired to 'come across' images (line 9), and randomness is introduced with 'anything… rather than specifics' (lines 10-12) i.e. there was no deliberate pursuit of particular offensive images.

P8 then employs a progression narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 1983) to structure the deterioration ('it got worse and worse'), with the externalising 'it' separating the self from the activity ('it actually got to level 5 pictures were popping up'). The innocence of initial activity is legitimised with the minimization (Pomerantz, 1986) 'just', and the use of legal jargon (level 5 images) is recipient-designed, creating a shared framework between offender and the psychologist-interviewer. So, these extreme images appeared ('popping up') without any prompts from the individual – he wasn't 'purposefully looking for them… just finding them' (lines 18-20) which underlines the point about his lack of criminal motivation. The intentional 'I' is again removed from the equation, with the subject caught up in a potent, escalating process beyond his control ('just finding them'). His status as a 'hoarder' is then emphasised and subsequently upgraded to 'professional archivist' (lines 20-21), therefore

providing a respectable gloss to his activities and highlighting process (i.e collecting) over content (the extreme images). At this point the 'I' is animated and the extent of the collection is accentuated ('one hell of a collection'), signalling a strong identification with image acquisition (rather than engaging with the images sexually, say).

So, interviewees typically explained their ultimate offences in terms of a progression (or descent) from more 'normal' pornographic images to illegal sexual images of children. There is often strategic vagueness (Potter, 1996) around agency and ownership of the initial activities, with the external 'it' often preferred (P1: '…it sort of progressed': 645; 'And it came up, there was um some soft-core images of teenage girls' [P3]). Progression narratives also remove personal choice (e.g. 'I didn't plan to do it, it just evolved without me really thinking about it': P5: lines 80-1), with unsolicited 'pop-ups' universally invoked.

3. 'It became an obsession': Acknowledgment of a problem

While telling their stories of progression/descent, several interviewees also drew upon a psycho-medical discourse which although displays current awareness of the problematic nature of the behaviours informed by treatment regimes, nonetheless serves to attenuate personal choice and responsibility: 'fixation' (P2); 'obsession' (P6; P5); 'addicted'(P3). A drug analogy was popularly deployed:

Extract 5 taken from interview 1

1	P1	'cos we'd gotten <u>rid</u> of them each time
2	Int	Oh yes
3	P1	and I sort of like used so many <u>excuses</u> um for
4		this last time period of offending that (.) that I
5		think she just .hh (1) do whatever
6	Int	yes

7   P1   y'know

8   Int: yeah

9   P1   basically um because I know I got one and I didn't have

10   an internet connection so then it was all then and in

11   my mind it was (.) well I need an internet connection? I

12   need it for wor::k

13   Int   mm

14   P1   and then I don't think she was sure I needed it for work

15   but I convinced her that I did or whether she was

16   completely aware of what could go on

17   Int   mm

18   P1   I don't know um (.) she does say she didn't trust me

19   (laughs) but y'know then fair enough ermm so yeah I'd

20   got I'd (1) I think first I got by buying some old

21   computers which convinced her that (.) well that were work

22   and I fix 'em and sell 'em (.) which I did and then I said

23   (.) we::ll I need a computer for work and I got a computer

24   for work well I need an internet connection now y'know

25   over a period of months y'know

26   Int   mm:m

27   P1   um (.) then I finally did that and then then I started

28   buying and selling adult pornography on ebay

29   Int   right

30   P1   and um I just amassed hundreds of adult DVDs I

31   wasn't even watched 'em

[lines omitted]

32   P1   but yeah that was the that was the start

33   Int   mm

34   P1   that was the slope y'know

35   Int   mm

36   P1   but I feel that (.) that that may have been the

37   start of it all again

38   Int   mm

39   P1   so I started <u>amassing</u> that pornography

[lines omitted]

40   P1   and then this one night I went in and then joined in so

41   it [chat room] was all a bit further a bit further a bit

42   further

43   Int   mm

44   P1   Y'know keep this adrenaline feeling 'cos that was great

45   Int   mm

46   P1   y'know it was <u>arousal</u>

After documenting his third offence, the participant started to discuss how he orchestrated an argument with his partner in order to use the computer and how her trusting him with computers had been a big issue for them. P1 presents a narrative that echoes those of addicts. For example, P1 describes in detail how he broke down his partner's resistance to his use of both computers and the internet (lines 1-25) through a campaign of excuses (line 3) and plausible justifications (lines11-12). However, also of interest in this narrative of manipulation is the way that he simultaneously frames this as an exercise in self-delusion ("in

<u>my mind</u>") of his "<u>need</u>" (line11 and 12). His 'desire' for the computer and internet are clearly linked to his internet sex offending through the discussion about his wife's mistrust (lines 14-19). Immediately after this discussion of regaining access to the internet, P1's first activity is to buy and sell porn. The addictive nature of his behaviour is fleshed out with the construction of amassing hundreds of adult DVDs that he didn't "even" watch. Furthermore, terms such as "the slope" towards "the start of it all" (lines 35-38) denote a force that was beyond his control. Whilst discussing his use of chat rooms, P1 also uses repetition, "a bit further a bit further" to denote a sense of lack of control resulting in "this adrenaline feeling" and "arousal".

Extract 6 taken from interview 5

1	P5	but (.) not only that it affects you inside as well
2		affects your daily life everything as well that's what I
3		found anyway
4	Int	ho how?
5	P5	it I became <u>secret</u> mm <u>withdrawn</u> em I had I had a family
6		which I neglected and I neglected the house as well all I
7		wanted interested in was the <u>internet</u> that's it that was
8		my <u>whole focus my whole life</u> everything else was second
9		nature
10	Int	and you (.) do you (.) built your day around being able
11		to <u>view </u>the internet
12	P5	yes because mm at that time I was with a firm that
13		allowed me to have free access to the Internet er from 6
14		o'clock in the evening to 8 o'clock in the morning

15	Int	hmm
16	P5	and any every other time I would have to pay for it but
17		that was free so I'd be on at them times and before I
18		knew it all day I was on the computer like copying songs
19		filing something like this and viewing pictures

Directly before this extract P5 discussed internet offending in terms of its secret nature and how one could offend for years without being discovered. P5 generalises such activity with the use of 'you' (line 1) and a three part list with a completer (Jefferson, 1990) "it affects you inside as well affects your daily life everything as well", before switching footing to his personal stance (lines 2-3). The pursuit of internet images is portrayed as all-consuming via several extreme case formulations ('all I wanted'; 'my whole focus'; 'all day'). Although the 'I' is prominent in this account, suggesting some level of choice and responsibility, individual will is implicitly subdued via a compulsive, controlling force which led to illicit internet images 'before I knew it'.

Most interviewees identify themselves as serial collectors across a range of largely innocuous materials (not just illicit child images), a strategy which foregrounds acquisitional tendencies over the illegal paedophilic content of just one of their collections. So, an indiscriminate collecting mentality is presented where 'everything' is retained, including innocuous items such as family photographs and model cars. When asked to explain this collecting zeal, the response is framed in terms of 'need' rather than choice, implying a compulsion at work beyond individual control.

Discussion

The current study has highlighted the extraordinary nature of the accounts of online sexual offenders when recounting their offences, accounts in which the sexual nature of their offences is rarely specified, with participants strongly downplaying individual choice and agency in accounting for how they came into possession of the indecent images of children. A discursive approach to the analysis of this interview data demonstrates how the men employ a range of strategies to manage their accountability at all 'stages' of the process of becoming engaged in internet sex offending. Whilst it is not surprising that these men might attempt to justify their actions, the prevalence of such accounting practices is rather worrying.

Whilst explaining their engagement in such activities one can see that the men do make some attempts to acknowledge the problematic aspects of their behaviour (e.g. P2 in extract 1 and P3 in extract 2) but they also convey a sense of being propelled into such activities. Their version of reality works up a lack of agency in gaining access to images, and their discussion of the blurring of boundaries surrounding the legality of them alerts us to the wide scale availability and ease at which one can dismiss such activities as harmless. The position that such activities reflect a 'harmless' part of sexual offending is indefensible given that studies examining unreported contact offences, such as the study by Bourke and Hernandez (2009), indicate that the majority of internet sex offenders will also admit to hands-on offences when they engage with treatment programmes which encourage openness about previous illegal behaviours. However, it is not just the crossover with contact offences that makes the assertion that such activities are harmless untenable – there is a plethora of reasons as to why this behaviour is problematic. These include: the concern that SEM-C images fuel fantasies and shape the future deviant behaviour of sexual offenders; and that the thirst for sexually explicit material involving children promotes further abuse to meet the demand for more 'fresh' images and to cater for the market for these images (Beech et al, 2008). Moreover, there is also the traumatic impact on individuals who become aware of the

permanent images of their abuse available to everyone with access to a computer in just a few clicks (personal communication, Detective Chief Inspector Gerald Milano, 14th January 2013).

The overlap between internet sex offences and other sexual offences is further augmented by the appearance of relevant information in the accounts of our participants pertaining to the dynamic risk factors mapped out by the Structured Assessment of Risk and Need (SARN; Thornton, 2002) (a risk assessment measure used to direct treatment needs by the UK prison service), namely: poor management of emotions, lack of emotionally intimate relationship, sexual preoccupation, other offence related sexual interests, poor problem solving, and inadequacy. As such, we should be concerned about the potential for reoffending, particularly when the sentences for offenders may be too short for the individuals to have time to undertake the core sex offender treatment programme, SOTP, and furthermore given there is no treatment programme specifically for internet sex offenders available in prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2013). This 'opportunity' to avoid treatment may collude with internet sex offenders' attempts to distance themselves from being those individuals who commit sexual crimes against children and fits with the accounts and explanations offered by our participants of how they ended up being convicted of an internet sex offence. That their accounts were offered to a researcher, rather than a clinician, at a time and location in which we might expect offenders to take more responsibility for their actions, gives us some insight into how such individuals may seek to portray themselves when released.

The importance of making sense of people's accounts of their behaviours in downloading images of children for sexual purposes relates to the risk management and treatment of such individuals; we need to understand the risks such individuals pose to children (or other adults) in terms of their likelihood of committing further sexual offences,

either contact or non-contact. Moreover, better understanding of the reasons for offending helps to inform treatment of such individuals, and in particular may contribute to changes in treatment regimes, such as the Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP), Becoming New Me (Sex Offender Treatment Programme for individuals with intellectual disability) and the internet-SOTP (i-SOTP), all current UK programmes. Treatment programmes are organised around the notion of offenders taking responsibility for their actions; these programmes aim to shift the locus of control for individuals from an external 'this just happened to me, I am a pawn of fate' to the stance that individuals can and do affect what happens to them and that they have control over their actions and decisions to offend, and consequently can recognise and manage their own risks. Unpacking the accounts offered by internet sex offenders in explaining the commencement of their behaviours, particularly where this is accompanied by the denial that individuals are not sexually attracted to children, could be seen as a crucial part of this unravelling process.

Additional limitations of this study are that the sample is constrained to internet sex offenders serving custodial sentences who are being interviewed within a prison setting, and in particular the potentially skewed sample of those who agreed to take part in the research. Since a prime challenge for qualitative research is around generalisability, it is important to acknowledge these limitations, and to examine connections between the data and extant literature. The findings of the present study are consistent with issues highlighted by other researchers, including Taylor and Quayle (2003), Carich and Calder (2003) and Bourke and Hernandez (2009). The latter outline a number of possible explanations internet sex offenders may offer to make sense of their illegal behaviours, including being lured by pop-ups into 'following the metaphoric White Rabbit down the rabbit-hole' (ibid, p. 184), working through their own child sexual abuse, or as a coping strategy to relieve anxiety. The present analysis goes further by highlighting the complex discursive practices offenders draw upon

and how these function to accomplish specific goals and identities, especially concerning accountability.

A further criticism may be levelled at the interviewer for her role in leading the interviewee (see extract 1, lines 77-81). However, whilst admittedly leading, the interviewer is perhaps trying to 'check out' her understanding of the conversation and the meaning-making of the participant at this point. Support for this could be the tentative way that the questions are repaired (Sacks, 1992) evidenced by the pauses and restarting of her attempts at formulating the question. Interviews actively produce knowledge through the interaction between interviewer and interviewee relationship, interviewing is seen as "intersubjective and social , involving interviewer and interviewee as co-constructors of knowledge" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009 p.18). At times, when questioning, the interviewer "should be curious, sensitive to what is said – as well as to what is not said – and critical of his or her own presuppositions and hypotheses during the interview" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009 p.31). The task of the interviewer is a tricky balance at times and the production of data often goes beyond the "mechanical following of rules and rests upon the interviewer's skills and situated judgement in posing of questions" (Kvale & Brinkmann, p.82). It is also important to note that the interviewer's questions were incorporated in the extracts presented, and analysed.

Further research in this area might explore the role of gendered constructions in the ways in which male offenders make sense of, and explain, their socially unacceptable actions, since our data highlighted problematic references to women e.g. sexual unavailability as a starting point for illegal internet activity. Certainly, one of the SARN dynamic risk domains for sexual recidivism in adult male offenders focuses on attitudes to women and relationships, and includes a risk factor concerned with sexual entitlement, namely 'if a man desires sex, he is entitled to have it' (Craig, Browne & Beech, 2008, p.103); the results of the current study demonstrate how this might belief might be presented in discourse. Additional risk factors in

this attitude domain include a belief that 'women are deceptive, corruptive or exploitative' (ibid, p.103). Thus, in terms of future research, it would be interesting to analyse the discourse of females who have been convicted of sexual offences and explore any scripts around entitlement, or beliefs about men, so that any communalities, or disparities, can be explored. This would not only add to the nascent evidence base about female sexual offending but also illuminate our current understanding of the 'work' that beliefs and attitudes may perform in facilitating sexual offending by either gender.

Conclusion

Internet sex offenders have 'work' to do in managing their identity, most particularly explaining their searching and looking behaviours regarding pictures of young children for sexual purposes, and negotiating the reasonable assumption that they are paedophilic in their sexual interests. Whilst the participants in this study did not deny their offences, they all sought to normalise and rationalise them, situating their behaviour in the arena of chance and addiction. If allowed to go unchecked, this will inhibit the offenders understanding and accepting their deviant preferences and risk, potentially exacerbating their likelihood of committing contact offences, if such opportunities arise.

Appendix: Transcription notation

The form of notation used in the thesis is a simplified version of the transcription notation developed by Gail Jefferson.

- Extended square brackets mark overlap between utterances, e.g.:

    A: [men   overlapping utterances

    B: [yeah

- An equals sign at the end of a speaker's utterance and at the start of the next utterance indicates the absence of a discernable gap, e.g.:

    A: like I said before=

    B: =when you mentioned

- Numbers in brackets indicate pause times to the nearest second. A full stop in brackets indicates a pause which is noticeable but too short to measure, e.g.:

    A: he meant (2) that he felt (.) ill

- One or more colons indicate an extension of the proceeding vowel sound, e.g.:

    B: I was very anxious:s about it

- Underlining indicates that words are uttered with added emphasis and words in capitals are uttered louder than the surrounding text, e.g.:

A: I <u>sent</u> him to see a doctor but he WOULD NOT go

Rounded brackets indicate material in the brackets is either inaudible or there is doubt about its accuracy. 'Unclear' is written in brackets if no guess has been made at the utterance, otherwise the words in brackets are an attempt at discerning what was heard, e.g.:

B: when I went (unclear) to see him he was (sat) down on the floor

Laughing is indicated by the word 'laughter' in bracket, e.g.:

B: I can't say why (laughing)

A question mark is used to indicate rising intonation, often when there is a question, e.g.:

A: what did he say that for?

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Table 1: Participant information

Participant	Marital status	Children	Occupation	Previous conviction for downloading images of children	Previous convictions for sexual (contact) offences
1	married	yes	IT consultant	yes (2)	none reported
2	married	yes	Salesperson	no	none reported
3	married	none	Health and safety consultant	yes (1)	none reported
4	married	yes	IT consultant	no	none reported
5	divorced	yes	Unemployed	yes (1)	yes (3 indecent assaults on minors)
6	single	none	Warehouse labourer	no	yes (indecent assault on minor)
7	single	none	Journalist	yes (3, another case pending)	none reported