

# Child safe schools

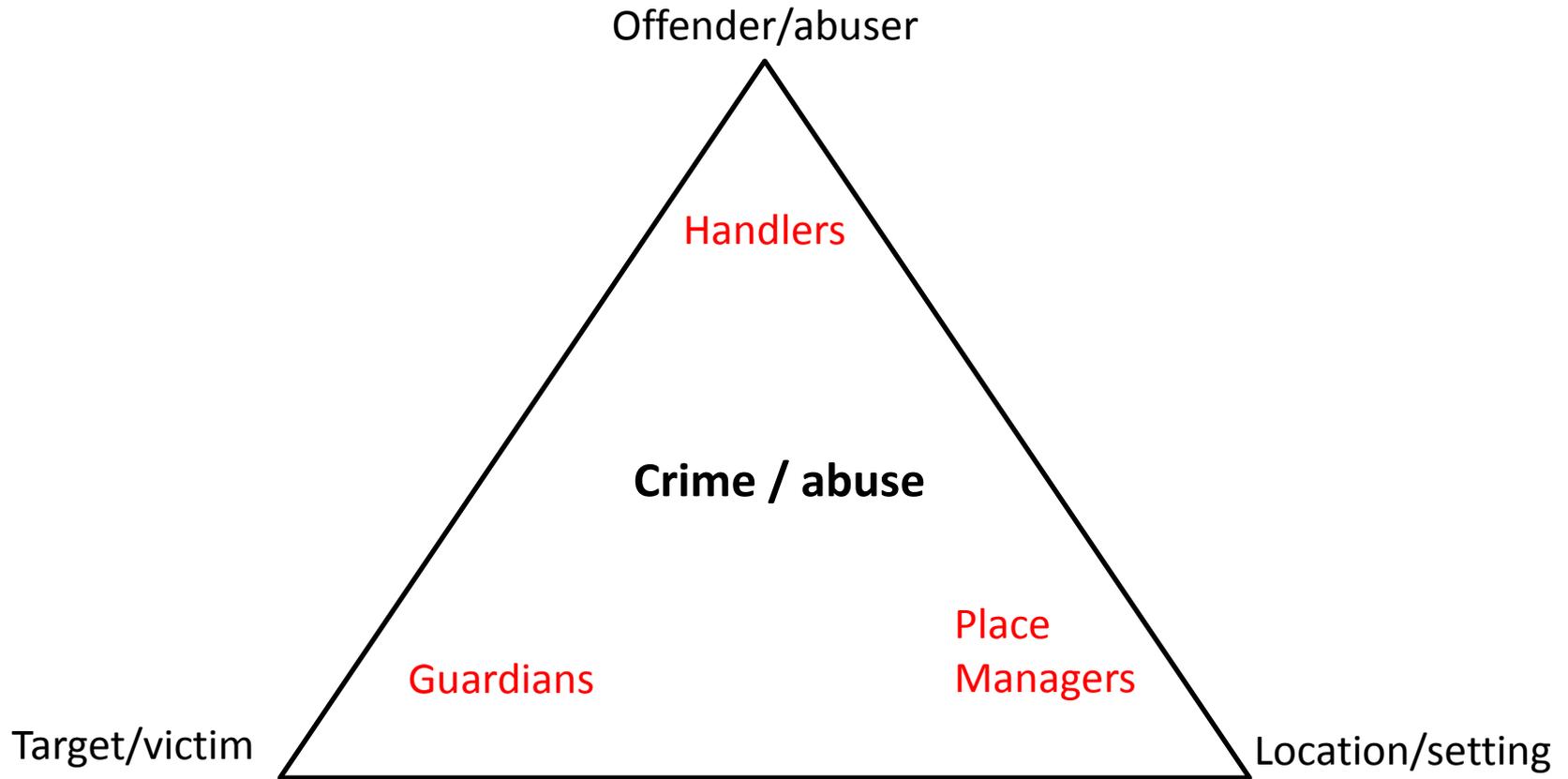
## Can sexual abuse be 'designed out'?

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# Crime/abuse is not just about offenders



# Where does sexual abuse occur?

## **Domestic settings**

- Highest prevalence (Qld data, 70% of first incidents in victim's home)

## **Organisational settings**

- Analogous to familial settings
  - Generally, older males in role of authority and care-taking
  - Role often involves physical (e.g. playing; bathing; dressing) or emotional intimacy (e.g. coaching; counselling; pastoral care)
- Organisation-related abuse may occur away from organisational setting itself (e.g. camps, vehicles, homes)

## **Public settings**

- Low prevalence, but may be especially dangerous (e.g. abduction)

## **'Virtual' settings**

- Production, distribution & possession/use of Internet child pornography; online 'grooming'; sexual harassment/bullying
- Official prevalence still comparatively very low
  - U.S. 2006, 3672 arrests for online sex offences (> 600,000 arrests for violent offences, including > 92,000 arrests for forcible rape)
  - Recent increases in young people in trouble for 'sexting' etc

# Who are the victims?

## **Girls twice as likely as boys to be sexually victimised**

- Girls generally at a younger age, repeatedly, in familial setting
- Boys generally at older age, on fewer occasions, in nonfamilial setting

## **Usually know the offender**

- Often for significant periods before abuse commences

## **General vulnerabilities**

- Individual (loneliness / emotional neediness; low confidence)
- Family (violence; chaos; conflict/separation; rejection; other maltreatment)
- Peer (isolation; antisocial / risk-taking peers)
- Organisational (weak/corrupted protection systems)
- Neighbourhood (social norms; low guardianship; breakdowns in formal & informal social controls)

## **Effects vary widely**

- Greater psychological harms associated with:
  - Abuse by father/father-figure
  - Longer duration/frequency of abuse
  - More intrusive / violent
- Offender's efforts to avoid detection can compound problems
- Outcomes associated with pre-abuse, abuse, and post-abuse factors

# Who are the abusers?

## Research based on highly selective samples

- Offenders who are reported, apprehended, prosecuted, imprisoned, often in a treatment program, and selected for research
  - Likely to (eventually) capture the most 'unsuccessful' / persistent / serious / nonfamilial offenders
  - Self report data likely to be biased in various ways
- Even then, a very heterogeneous group
  - Wide variations in age, criminal histories, number of victims, types of offences, persistence/recidivism
  - Clinical researchers seem determined to find what's psychologically 'wrong' with them (something must be!?)
  - Except for male gender, no defining demographic or psychological characteristics
  - Offenders range from the psychologically ordinary to the dangerously psychopathic
  - Two distinct risk periods?: adolescence, and early middle age

# Bad apples?

## 'Bad apple' argument supported by popular stereotypes

- Based especially on media portrayals of most disturbing cases
- Sexually disturbed/disordered; persistent/undeterrable; predatory; cunning; 'weirdo'; paedophile; 'not like me'
- Popular usage of 'paedophile' as interchangeable with 'sex offender'
  - Paedophilia may describe **some** sex offences, but it doesn't explain **any**
  - Why did he commit those sex offences? Because he is a paedophile
  - Why is he a paedophile? Because he committed those sex offences

## Fundamental attribution error – the 'bad apple' bias

- 'Natural' human bias to over-estimate stable, internal (dispositional) causes, and to under-estimate unstable, external (situational) causes, of others' misconduct

(Works the other way around when attributing causes to our own misconduct)

# Behaviour as a person x situation interaction

Sexual abuse ***always occurs*** as a result of interactions between the characteristics of the abuser and the characteristics of the immediate situation in which the abuse occurs

- Does the abuser need to be abnormal / pathological for this to occur?
  - Think Rwanda; Congo; Bosnia; Abu Ghraib; Catholic Church; some remote Aboriginal communities; Pitcairn Island etc etc etc ...
- Requires a frank perspective of human nature

# Crime, including sexual abuse, is not random

- Crime is patterned in time and space
- The daily movements of offenders and victims follow predictable routines
- Crime clusters in 'hot spots' and 'hot times'
- These hot spots and hot times indicate criminogenic situations
- Future crime is *“six times more predictable by the address of its occurrence than by the identity of the offender - why aren't we thinking more about wheredunit, rather than just whodunit?”* (Sherman, 1995)

# A typology of sexual abusers

## **Predatory**

- Persistent; calculating; unambiguous sexual interest in children; prepared to invest effort, but only if necessary; may become adept at creating opportunities and avoiding detection

## **Opportunistic**

- General propensity to exploit opportunities for personal gain at the expense of others, but unlikely to invest significant effort in creating opportunities; no special/unusual sexual interest in children; may sexually abuse in low-risk, low-effort situations

## **Situational**

- Conventional social values; usually adequate self control, and sensitive to informal social controls; succumbs to temptation in specific set of circumstances

# A typology of sexual abuse situations

## **Challenging** situations

- Strong situational barriers exist (e.g. clear rules/expectations; restricted opportunities; resistant children; capable guardianship)
- Abuse requires active manipulation of the environment in order to circumvent barriers (effortful; risky)

## **Tempting** situations

- Weak situational barriers exist
- Opportunity for sexual contact is fortuitously presented (e.g. attractive, vulnerable child; absence of capable guardian)

## **Precipitating** situations

- Unexpected / unplanned circumstance arises that prompts sexual interest ('special' child)
- May involve conflation of care-seeking, care-giving & sexual motivations

# An abuser x situation typology

(Wortley & Smallbone, 2006)

<u>Abusers</u>	Predatory	Opportunistic	Situational
<u>Situations</u>			
Challenging	Manipulates		
Tempting	Exploits	Exploits	
Precipitating	Exploits	Exploits / reacts to	Reacts to

# Operationalising situational prevention

Situational prevention principles have wide application, but interventions tailored to the specific problem at hand

Principles:

- **Increase effort**
  - Make the problem behaviour more difficult and more inconvenient to enact
- **Increase risk**
  - Make it more likely that problem behaviour will be observed and detected
- **Control prompts**
  - Identify and remove/monitor triggers for abuse-related motivations
- **Reduce permissibility**
  - Make problem behaviour less excusable (clarify rules and expectations; personalise potential victims; clarify consequences etc)

# TWENTY FIVE TECHNIQUES OF SITUATIONAL PREVENTION

Increase the Effort	Increase the Risks	Reduce the Rewards	Reduce Provocations	Remove Excuses
<p><b>Harden Targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering column locks and immobilisers</li> <li>Anti-robbery screens</li> <li>Tamper-proof packaging</li> </ul>	<p><b>Extend guardianship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take routine precautions: go out in group at night, leave signs of occupancy, carry phone</li> <li>"Cocoon" neighborhood watch</li> </ul>	<p><b>Conceal targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Off-street parking</li> <li>Gender-neutral phone directories</li> <li>Unmarked bullion trucks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reduce frustrations and stress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficient queues and polite service</li> <li>Expanded seating</li> <li>Soothing music/muted lights</li> </ul>	<p><b>Set rules</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental agreements</li> <li>Harassment codes</li> <li>Hotel registration</li> </ul>
<p><b>Control access to facilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entry phones</li> <li>Electronic card access</li> <li>Baggage screening</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assist natural surveillance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved street lighting</li> <li>Defensible space design</li> <li>Support whistleblowers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Remove targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removable car radio</li> <li>Women's refuges</li> <li>Pre-paid cards for pay phones</li> </ul>	<p><b>Avoid disputes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate enclosures for rival soccer fans</li> <li>Reduce crowding in pubs</li> <li>Fixed cab fares</li> </ul>	<p><b>Post instructions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"No Parking"</li> <li>"Private Property"</li> <li>"Extinguish camp fires"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Screen exits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ticket needed for exit</li> <li>Export documents</li> <li>Electronic merchandise tags</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reduce anonymity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taxi driver IDs</li> <li>"How's my driving?" decals</li> <li>School uniforms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Identify property</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property marking</li> <li>Vehicle licensing and parts marking</li> <li>Cattle branding</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reduce emotional arousal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controls on violent pornography</li> <li>Enforce good behavior on soccer field</li> <li>Prohibit racial slurs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Alert conscience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roadside speed display boards</li> <li>Signatures for customs declarations</li> <li>"Shoplifting is stealing"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deflect offenders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Street closures</li> <li>Separate bathrooms for women</li> <li>Disperse pubs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Utilize place managers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCTV for double-deck buses</li> <li>Two clerks for convenience stores</li> <li>Reward vigilance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Disrupt markets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor pawn shops</li> <li>Controls on classified ads.</li> <li>License street vendors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Neutralize peer pressure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Idiots drink and drive"</li> <li>"It's OK to say No"</li> <li>Disperse troublemakers at school</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assist compliance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easy library checkout</li> <li>Public lavatories</li> <li>Litter bins</li> </ul>
<p><b>Control tools/ weapons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Smart" guns</li> <li>Disabling stolen cell phones</li> <li>Restrict spray paint sales to juveniles</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengthen formal surveillance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red light cameras</li> <li>Burglar alarms</li> <li>Security guards</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deny benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ink merchandise tags</li> <li>Graffiti cleaning</li> <li>Speed humps</li> </ul>	<p><b>Discourage imitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid repair of vandalism</li> <li>V-chips in TVs</li> <li>Censor details of modus operandi</li> </ul>	<p><b>Control drugs and alcohol</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breathalyzers in pubs</li> <li>Server intervention</li> <li>Alcohol-free events</li> </ul>

# Designing 'child safe' schools

## First principles

- 'Child safe, child friendly' environments
  - Balance between reducing risks, and maintaining positive, healthy, friendly environment for children and adults
- Prevention begins with clear & valid conception of the problem
  - Recognise & avoid unhelpful stereotypes (re offenders and victimisation)
  - Understand limitations of 'bottom line' regulatory requirements (e.g. employment screening; mandatory reporting)
- Focus on local settings
  - Situational analysis/prevention focuses on specific problems in specific places
  - Local risk audit: policies; practices; culture; routines; built environment (buildings & grounds)

# Some situational techniques

## **Controlling access**

- Employment screening
- Visitor sign-in / pick-up register
- Perimeter control
- Managing staff-student & student-student interactions

## **Rule setting and compliance**

- Clear rules, especially re personal-professional boundaries
- Staff education / training; parent engagement
- Facilitate compliance

## **'Target hardening'**

- Reducing vulnerabilities of children (universal)
- 'Cocooning' vulnerable children (targeted)

## **Controlling precipitators**

- Staff mentoring & supervision
- Pastoral care – observe & respond to personal problems

## **Enhancing natural surveillance**

- Routine movements of adults provides easy line of sight
- Formal surveillance for out-of-the-way places

## **Promoting extended guardianship**

- Make prevention everyone's business
- Systems for reporting/recording small concerns

# Conclusions

- Sexual abuse involves interactions between the characteristics of the abuser, and the characteristics of the immediate situation in which the abuse occurs
  - Wide variations in abuser motivations, and in the properties of situations that may permit or encourage abuse
- Most prevention efforts focused on the individual offender, usually after they have already offended
  - Need to shift focus to preventing abuse before it otherwise occurs
  - Focus on (potential) abusers, (potential) victims, settings, and systems
- Sexual abuse can (hypothetically) be 'designed-out' by
  - Making abuse-related behaviours more difficult or inconvenient
  - Making abuse-related behaviours more likely to be observed or detected
  - Identifying and monitoring/removing triggers for abuse-related motivations
  - Making abuse-related behaviours less permissible / excusable