

# Child Sexual Abuse Material Viewers: The CSAM cycle

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**NOTA Cardiff**

**Michael Sheath**

**Lucy Faithfull Foundation**

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

**(National String Cheese Day,  
USA)**

1992 *20 Years* 2012



Working to Protect Children

# Directions of travel for Abusive Imagery viewers.....



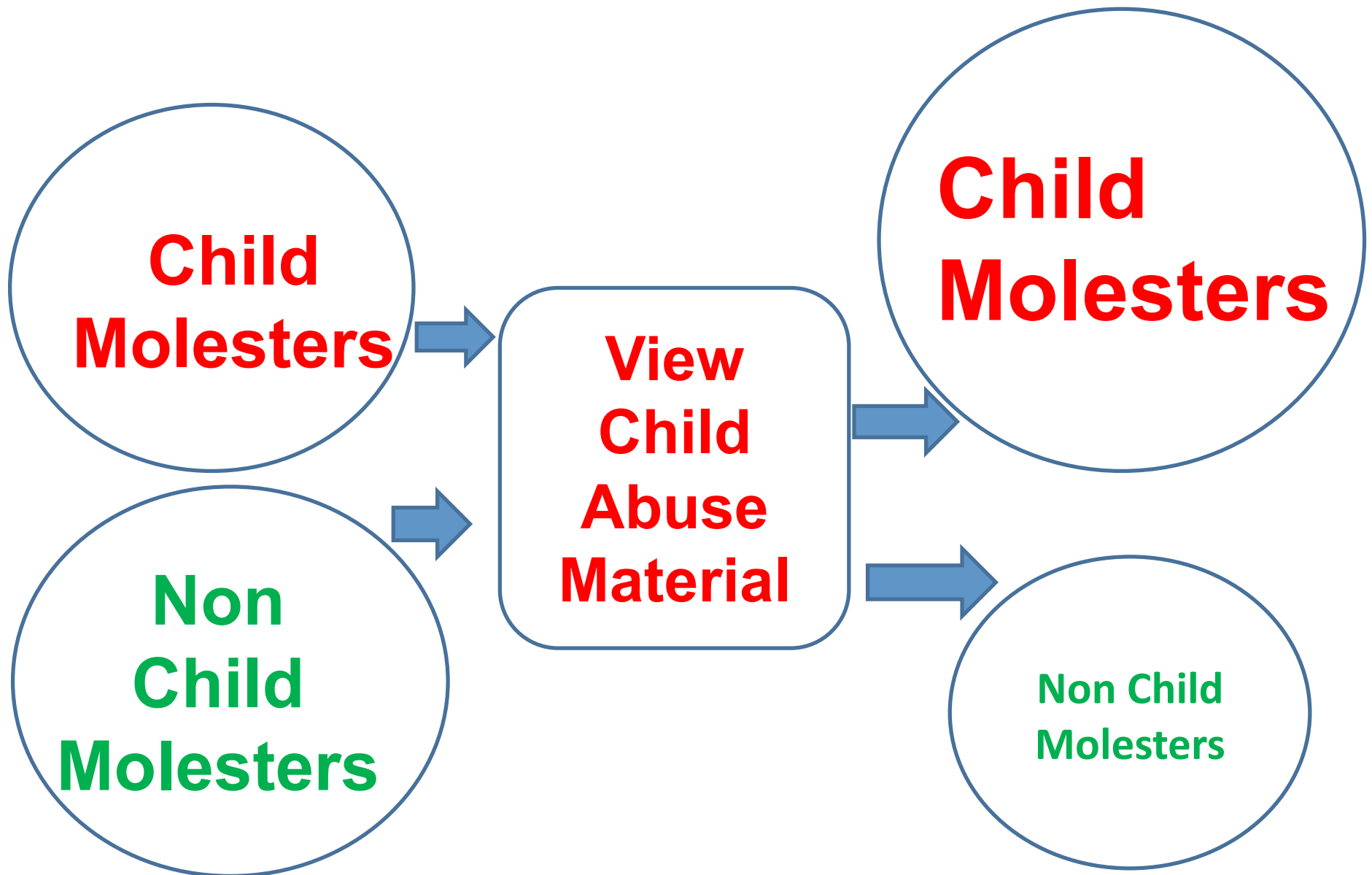
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## Two theory clusters:

- **Sex Offender theory: CSAM viewers are just like 'Contact' sex offenders, and share the same drives and ideology.**
- **Sexual Addiction theory: CSAM viewers are different from 'Contact' sex offenders and are driven by other factors.**

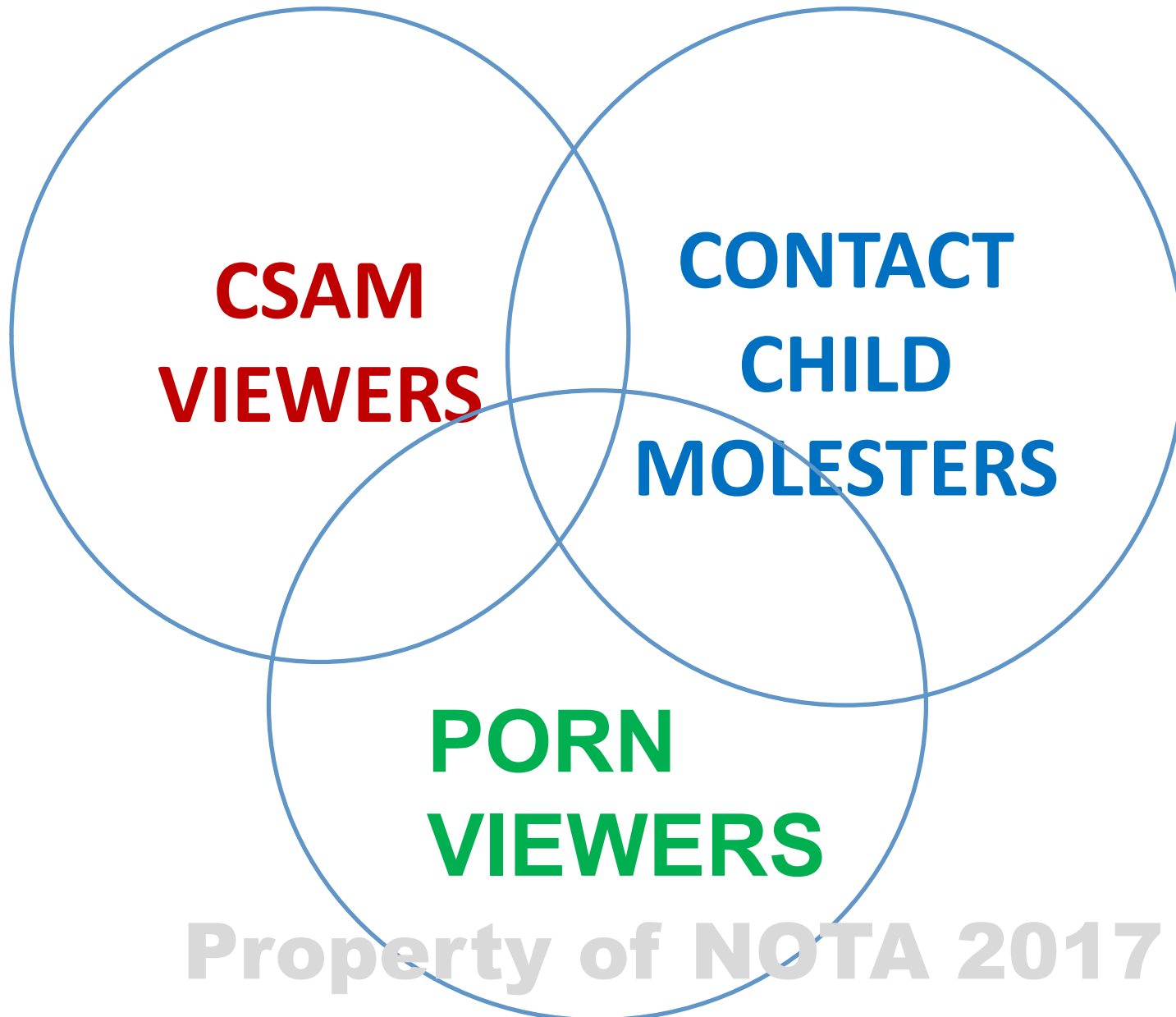
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**It might be this....**



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**Or it might be this.....**



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# The CSAM cycle. Or, 'Riding Two Horses.'

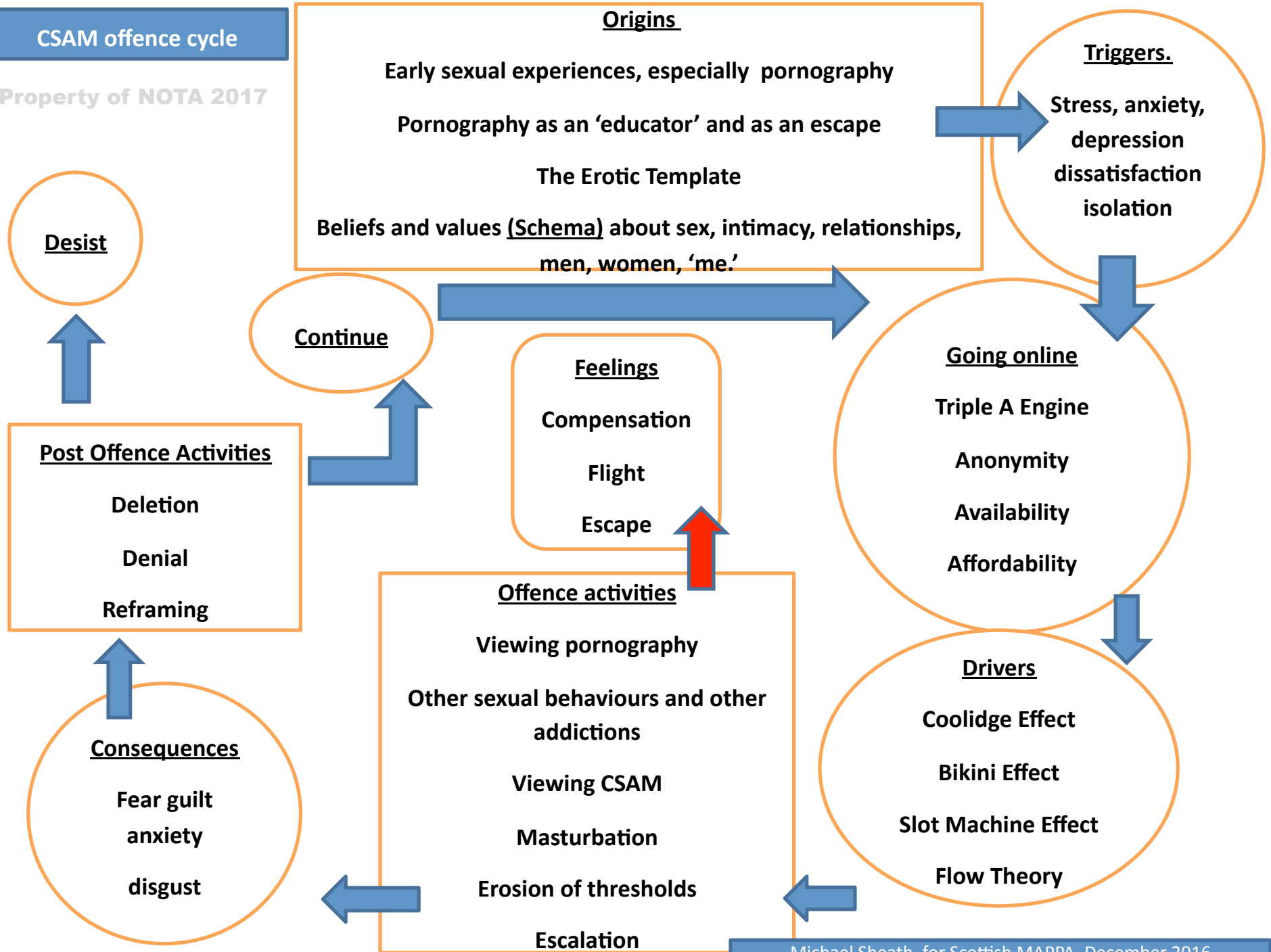
With apologies and  
acknowledgements  
to the work of  
Stephen Wolf and  
Nathan Gaunt



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**CSAM offence cycle**

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# Schema

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**‘Child Sexual Abuse Material’ has an *abusive component*, and an *ideological component***

- **CSAM: “the consequence of the exploitation or sexual abuse perpetrated against a child. It can be defined as any means of depicting or promoting sexual abuse of a child, including print and/or audio, centred on sex acts or the genital organs of children” (Interpol)**

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# Schema are ideologies

- **Our views of the world, other people and ourselves can be understood through reference to 'Schema' or 'Implicit Theory.'**
- **Schema are like prejudices, and their origins have often been forgotten**
- **They act as a filter or a lens between what is seen, and how it is understood.**
- **Child molesters or rapists often blame the victim, or offer implausible explanations for their behaviour.**

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# Schema

These views and explanations may, in fact, be a central 'core' of the offender's belief system. They drive and cause the behaviour, rather than being utilised as post hoc explanations.

Reference to 'Schema', or 'implicit theory' is one way of understanding the *manifestation* of distorted beliefs and values about women and children.

and men...and sex...and relationships...and  
intimacy

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## **Schema and the ideology of the internet**

- **It can be suggested that the ubiquity of abusive imagery and ideologies on the internet:**
  - 1. amplify and reinforce pre existing schema, prejudices and confusions in the viewer**
  - 2. create new ideas and ideologies in viewers who did not have them previously:**

**Individuals can find ‘proof’ and reassurance that their views about sex, women, and children are mainstream and commonplace, and not deviant and outré.**

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# Children as Sexual Beings

- All persons are motivated by the desire for sexual pleasure, including children.
- Children are capable of making decisions about sex, including a wish to have sex with adults.
- 'Consent, not age' has been the mantra of paedophile groups for 50 years.
- The goal of NAMBLA is to end:

***"the extreme oppression of men and boys in mutually consensual relationships."***

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## Children as Sexual Beings: The Internet 'demonstrates':

- **Children can have sex with each other, and with adults.**
- **It is possible to read accounts of children seducing adults, or 'autobiographical' accounts of pleasurable adult/child sexual encounters.**
- **It is possible to find 'proof' that children are as sexual as adults, and that they enjoy sex.**
- **It is possible to engage in sexually explicit conversation with children.**
- **Self taken imagery, and web cam generated material are increasingly problematic**

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# Entitlement

- **Some people are superior to, and more important than others. Here, adults, or more likely men, are superior to children.**
- **Adults desires and rights are paramount: children are suitable sexual objects if it is necessary for them to be used as such.**
- **Adults have a right to sexual contact and release when they need it.**

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## Entitlement: the internet demonstrates:

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- **Paying for images legitimises their viewing and collection.**
- **Sexual arousal and fulfilment are always available, because the images are always available.**
- **The viewer owes the victim nothing: he owns the means to acquire the image.**
- **'Possession' and 'ownership' are the only moral considerations in viewing.**
- **Heather Wood: Vulnerability and Dependency, versus Contempt, Control, and Triumph**



# Dangerous World

- Based on the strong belief that the sexual world is a dangerous and competitive place where all adults are likely to behave in an abusive and rejecting way
- In sexual terms, adults represent a sexual threat, whereas children can be manipulated, and represent a dependable, controllable source of sexual comfort and excitement.

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## **Dangerous World: the internet demonstrates:**

- **Sexual arousal through CSAM (the child cannot reject) and through on line grooming (the child cannot resist) is 'safer' than engaging with 'real' people, be they women or children**
- **The manipulation and selection of pornographic and abusive images allows the viewer to explore new forms of sexuality in pseudo safety.**
- **Long term use and involvement on line leads to reduced 'real world' social contact, and a greater reliance on fantasy.**

# Sex Is Uncontrollable

- **The world, including the sexual world, is uncontrollable and anarchic, external forces and stimuli are responsible for arousal: there are no moral or legal considerations.**
- **Emotions, sexual feelings and events ‘just happen’, individual people have no or little choice about their sexual thoughts or behaviour.**

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## **Sex is Uncontrollable: the internet demonstrates:**

- **Searching, downloading and viewing are beyond the offender's control: they are an 'addiction.'**
- **Arousal and interest are 'external' to the offender: they rest in the internet itself, and in the computer, and in images, not in himself.**
- **It is possible to 'revisit' historic experiences, good or bad, for nostalgic reasons, or to explore an historic sexual trauma.**

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## Nature of Harm

- a) **Sexual harm is 'relative.'** It can be reduced, in the offender's eyes, by a number of factors. These might include the 'fact' that no force was used, or that the victim was 'loved', or that sexual contact was brief, non penetrative, etc.
  
- b) **Sex with children is inherently beneficial for children. (the NAMBLA/PIE ideology)** If children are harmed, it is because of the disapproval of society rather than because of the sexual activity itself.

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## **Nature of harm: the internet suggests:**

- **Children in the images may look like they are enjoying the experience. (There's no harm at all.)**
- **Viewing pictures 'isn't as bad' as molesting children (Harm is relative.)**
- **Images are simply records of historical, unchangeable events (Harm has already been caused) 'It's only pictures.'**

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## Thus...

- Schema relating to 'hands on' abusers give us a good working understanding of the thought processes of Internet sexual abusers
- Viewing abusive imagery may reinforce deviant ideas and ambitions a person may already have about sex with children
- Viewing abusive imagery may create deviant ideas and ambitions about sex with children in persons who did not previously have them

## Awareness in offenders

- **Most consumers of abusive imagery adopt unsophisticated methods of collection**
- **Most consumers of abusive imagery adopt unsophisticated methods of storage**
- **Despite many high profile arrests (pop singers, Judges, actors), users continue to act as if they will not be caught**
- **Presumed anonymity and disinhibition remain as significant drives**
- **Viewers tend to ignore risks of detection and hope for the best**



# What are viewers looking for?

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- Asked about their mood and ‘feelings’ just prior to viewing abusive imagery, ten men on an offender group offered:

**Blankness    Hunger    Apathy    Boredom**

**Isolation    Yearning    Addicted    Loneliness**

**Compelled    Absence    Idle    Conflicted**

# What are viewers looking for?

- Asked about their mood and feelings during their viewing abusive imagery, the same men offered:

**Ceremony    Ritual    Excitement    Fear    Rush**

**Thrill            Satisfaction            The Holy Grail**

**Escapism**

**Engrossed    Amplified            In the Flow**

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# The 'Triple 'A' Engine' (Cooper)

- Access: it's there
- Affordability: it's cheap
- Anonymity or 'Pseudonymity' : you think no one knows you're looking

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**'The Bikini Effect'**  
**(Van der Bergh)**  
**(2008)**



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**Researchers (and who thought this would be a good thing to do anyhow?) found that:**

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- a) Allowing men to touch women's underwear (Not whilst attached to women....) and**
- b) Showing men films of women in Bikinis.**

**Had a significant effect on their tendency to live in the present, rather than think about the future, to seek immediate gratification and to take more risks. It also led to the triggering of 'action' impulses, and the switching off of parts of the brain concerned with discerning the thoughts and feelings of others**

**Men who thought themselves 'poor' were more affected by the phenomena**

‘The region of the brain associated with tool use lights up’ (Fiske, 2009)

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CAN SHE MAKE YOU LOSE CONTROL?



NEW LYNX DRY  
FULL CONTROL  
48HR ANTIPERSPIRANT

WATCH THE VIDEO

# The Bikini Effect

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- In other experiments, men who were sexually aroused underestimated the risks of sexual disease, were more likely to seek out 'dubious' sexual encounters, and found a range of sexual activities more appealing
- 'Hot stimuli' such as sexual cues (photographs or pornography) increase impulsivity
- There is a connection between the absence of the desired 'good', such as sex, and the impulsive desire. (Hungry people will eat anything, poor people will desire small amounts of money.)
- Sad or depressed people are more likely to seek immediate gratification

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## The Bikini Effect

- Advertisers have known and exploited this phenomena for years...
- So have Casino owners, Formula 1, and Harley Davidson dealerships

**Phwoah!  
Etc (It's ironic,  
therefore  
not sexist.)**





# The Bikini Effect

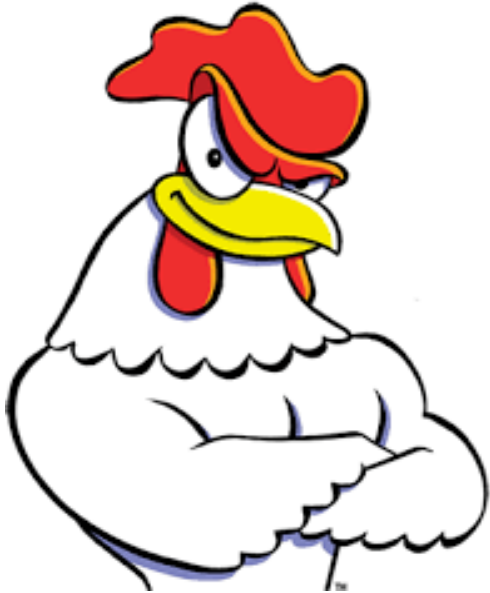
- We can suggest that viewing pornography, and viewing child abuse material, creates an arousal/disinhibition 'loop': one reinforces the other.
- Viewers 'live' in the present, and ignore the future
- Viewers seek available and immediate pleasure
- Depressed or dysphoric individuals are more likely to seek immediate gratification
- Viewers take more risks, and their 'threshold' of both risk and illegality/immorality shifts.
- Without the stimulus, the viewer will find it difficult to revisit his thinking 'cold', and may be incoherent in describing it

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# The Coolidge effect



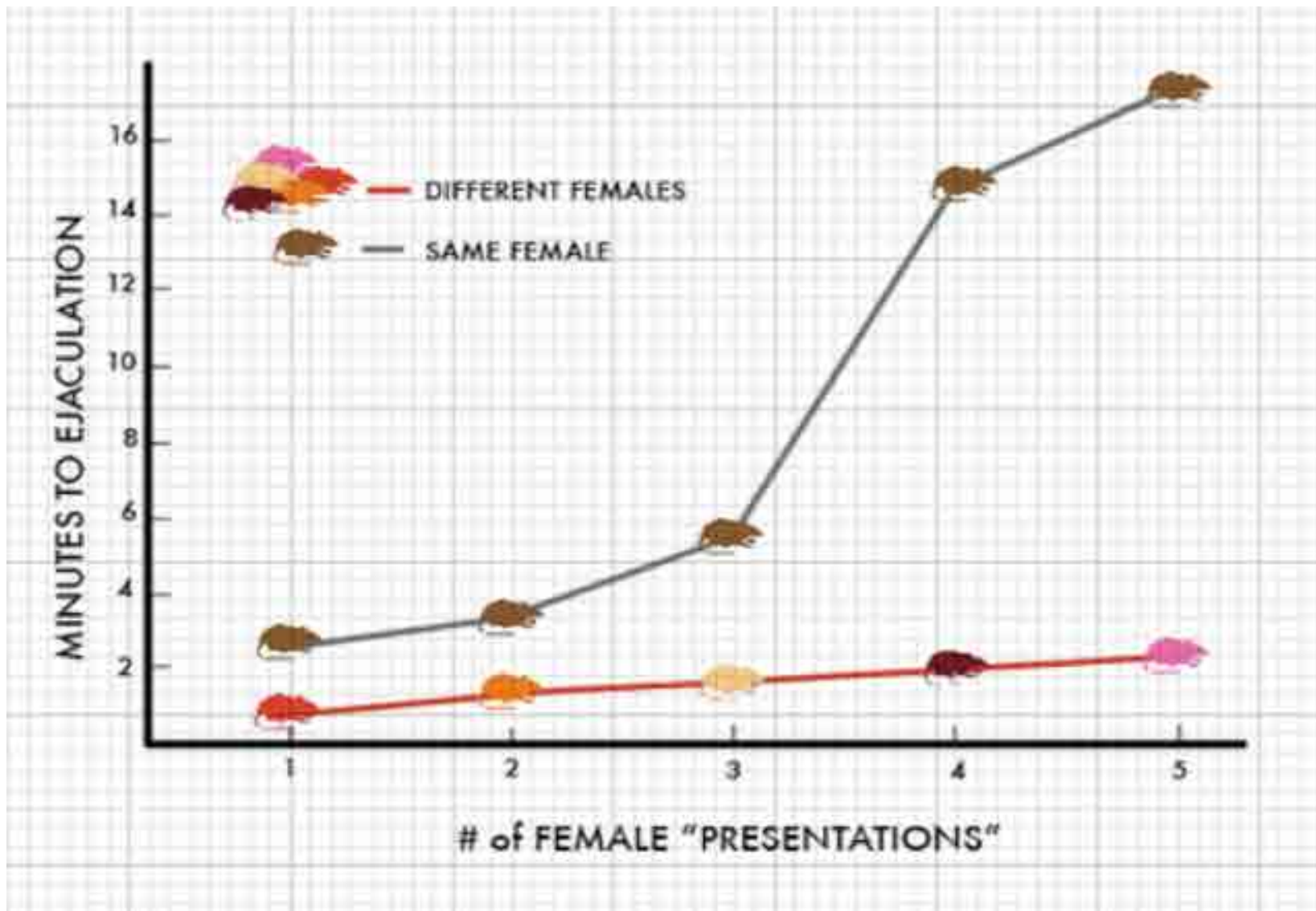
- Same chicken/different chicken
- A rat will copulate with various female rats until exhausted....
- Offer him a new rat, and he perks up...
- Novelty is a key feature in sustaining arousal.
- Dopamine provides impetus and energy



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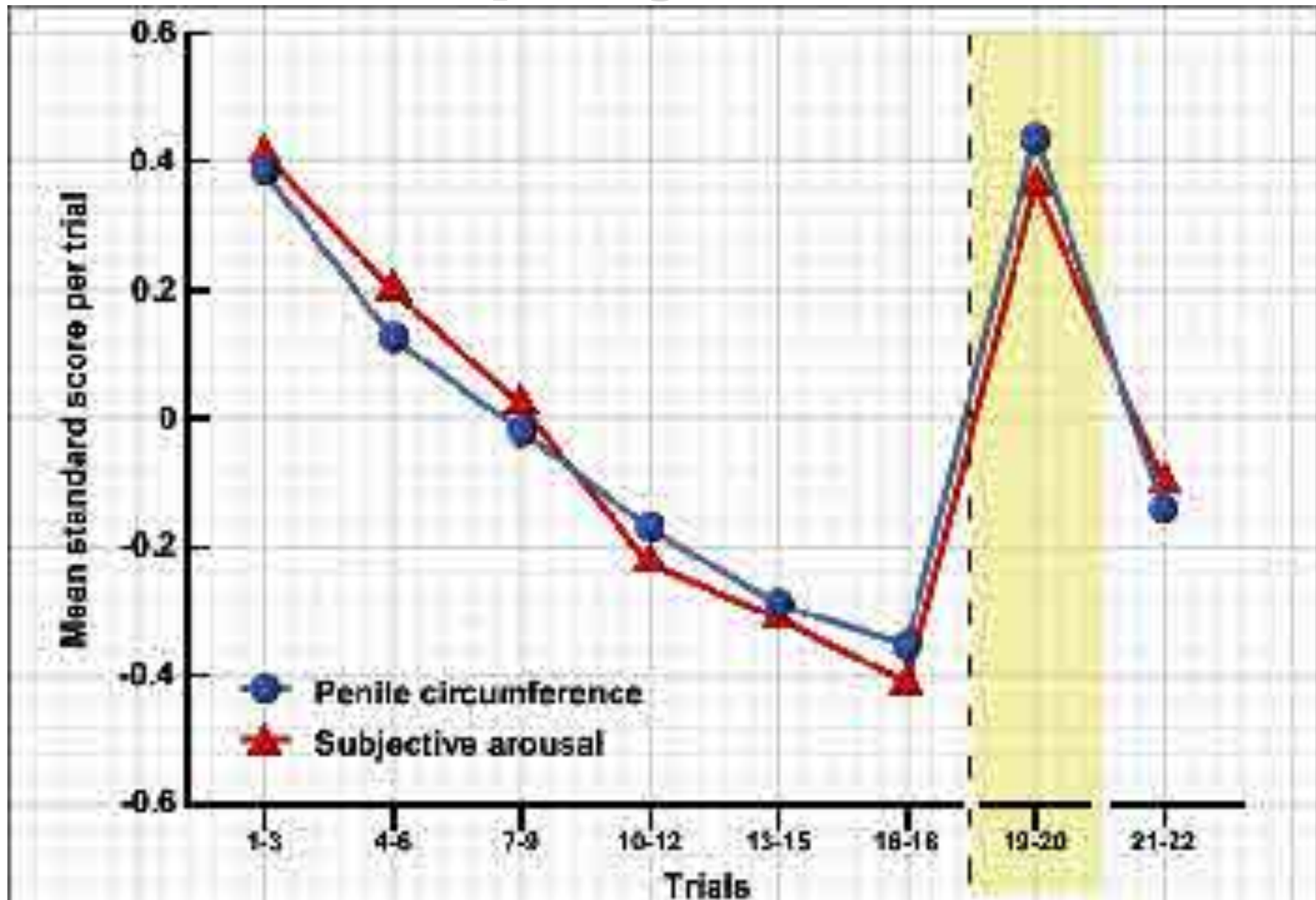
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## You dirty rat....



# Men are rats

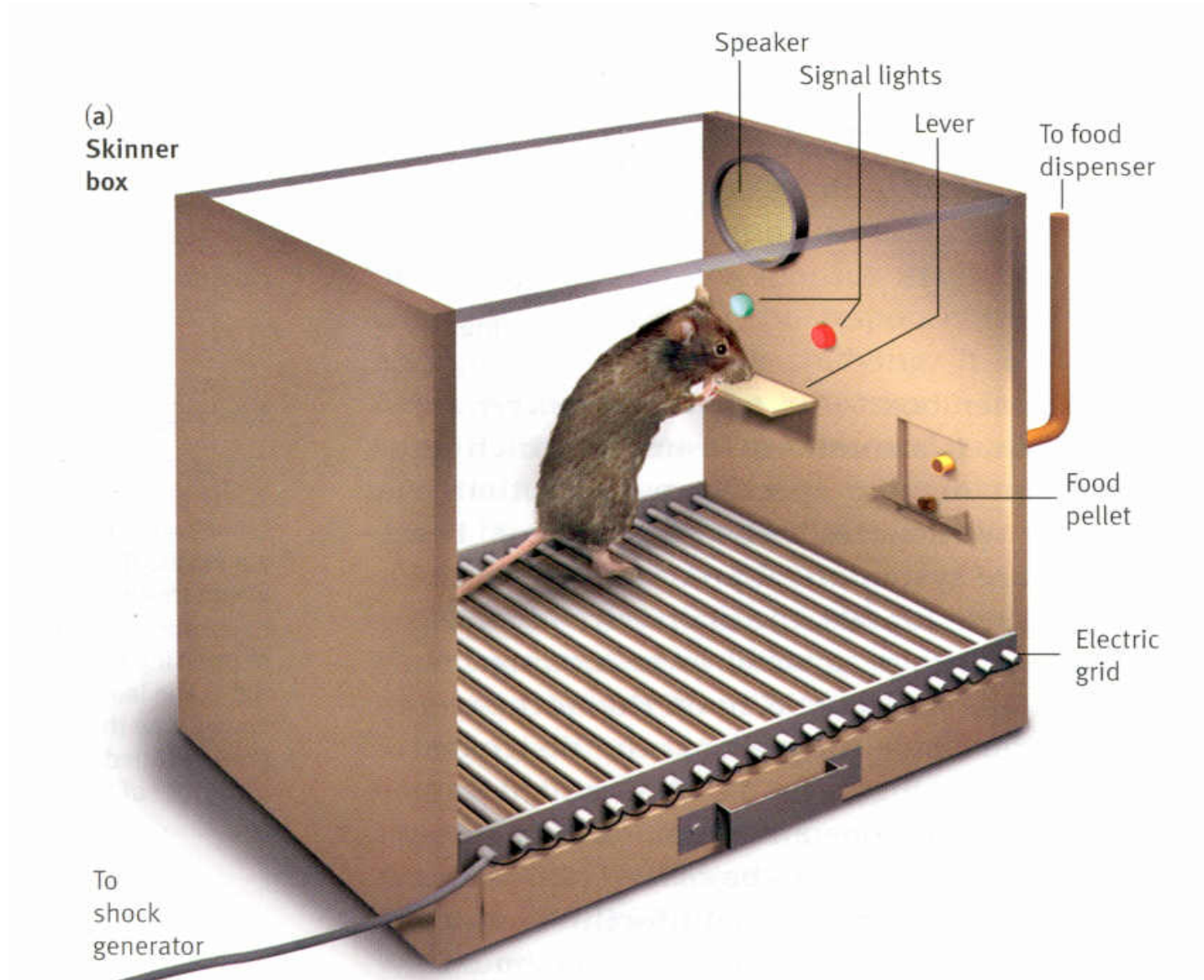
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Source: Changes in the magnitude of the world's relative to the respective of the subject with respect to the...  
See [Mandel, 2017](#), [Mandel, 2017](#), [Mandel, 2017](#), and [Mandel, 2017](#).

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## The Skinner Box Effect



## The 'Skinner Box' effect

- Consider rats (again...), or pigeons in a Skinner Box.
- When they perform an action, they get a reward.
- They perform the action as long as they get the reward: if the reward stops, they stop. (It's like your job.)
- This is *Continuous Reinforcement*
- 'Extinction' is fast.

## The Skinner Box effect

If the reward is intermittent, (food after five presses of the lever), '*Fixed Ratio Reinforcement*'

or if the reward is intermittent in terms of time (food after 15 minutes), '*Fixed Interval Reinforcement*' then

'extinction' occurs is the medium term: the behaviour persists for a while after the reward ends

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## The Skinner Box effect

If the provision of rewards is entirely random, through a *variable interval schedule*, or a *variable ratio schedule*

Extinction of the behaviour is slow: the subject will persist in the behaviour even if rewards are almost entirely removed.

This has been called the 'Slot Machine Effect': the 'reward' is random, and the behaviour itself becomes addictive, with a potent meaning beyond the likely outcome

Casinos, pornographers, and Facebook use this phenomena

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# The 'Skinner' Box effect

In terms of downloading CSAM, via Peer to Peer, or by clicking links and pop ups:

The viewer doesn't know what he's going to get

He doesn't know when he's going to get it

He may get something extremely desirable, he may get something undesirable

He can never be satiated or satisfied, because 'something else' is probably available in the future.

This is the 'Holy Grail' argument.

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# Arousal and decision making

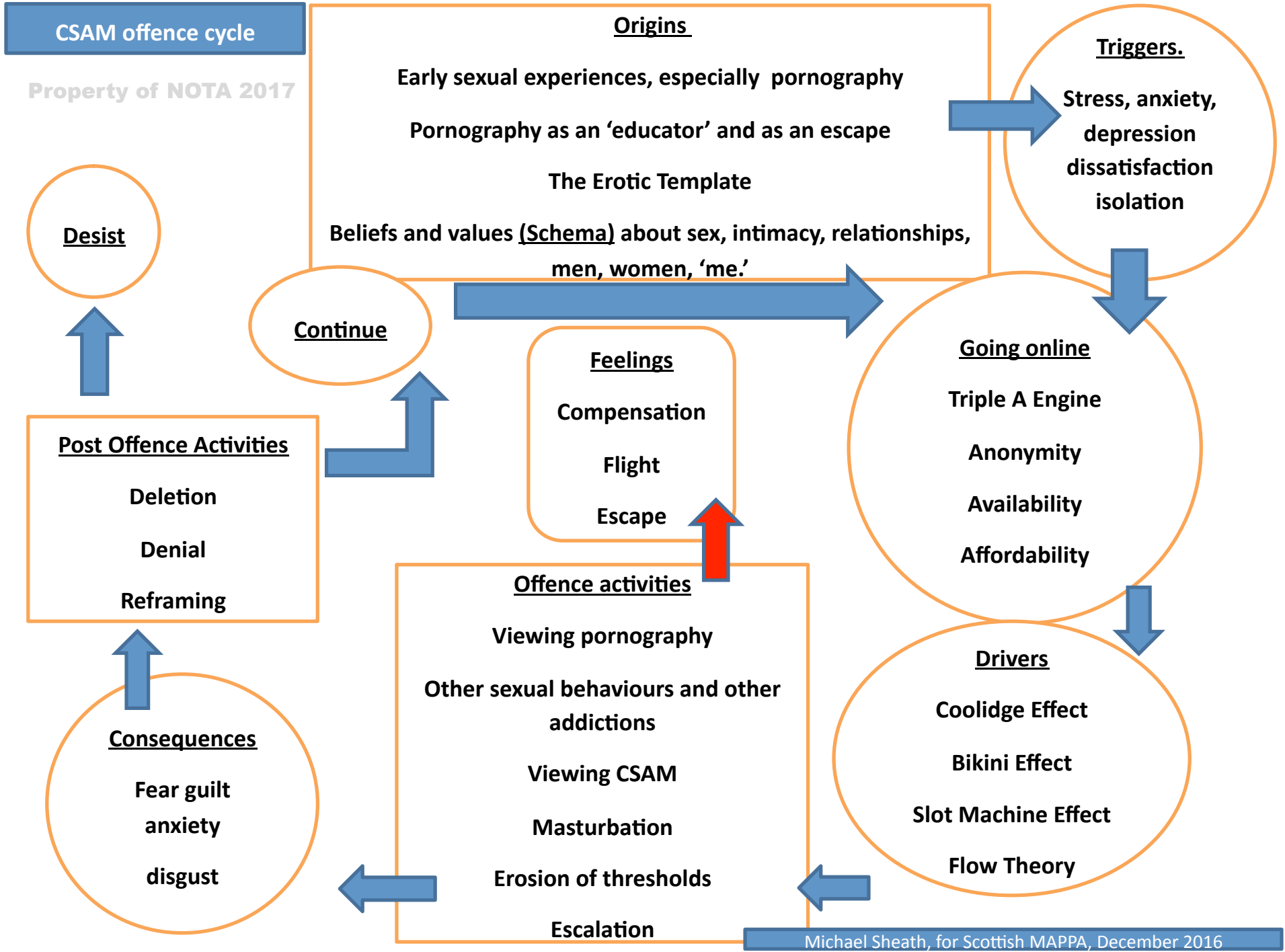
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- **The ‘Coolidge Effect’ and the ‘Bikini effect’ suggest that individuals take greater risks, think less about the future, and are more likely to seek immediate gratification, when they are distracted or engaged by sexual, erotic, or suggestive images.**
- **The ‘Skinner Box Effect’ suggests viewers are seeking rewards in a state beyond their understanding**
- **Viewers of pornographic imagery have their threshold of risk taking shifted by the effects of arousal, and by forces they are unconscious of.**

# Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi)

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- I barely understand it....
- Essentially, Flow constitutes an intense form of mental concentration or visualization, focussing on a narrow subject, or beyond objective reality.....day dreams, concepts, fiction, the imagination.
- It provides a distraction from reality
- The intensity of hyperfocus can lead to the subjective loss of time or:
- Focus on short term gains:
  - Narrowing of attention (Quayle, Loewenstein)
  - Increased search perseverance (Quayle)
- disregard for social norms



# Where does this take us in terms of interviewing?

- Offenders usually feel shameful
- Offenders usually lack insight
- Offenders usually feel out of control
  
- So....
- Rationalise
- Normalise
- Offer a framework for understanding.

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**THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION**



**PLEASE CLAP**

memegenerator.net

[msheath@lucyfaithfull.org.uk](mailto:msheath@lucyfaithfull.org.uk)

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