THE INTERNAL WORLD OF THE JUVENILE SEX OFFENDER

Through a Glass Darkly then Face to Face

TIMOTHY KEOGH

FORENSIC PSYCHOTHERAPY MONOGRAPH SERIES
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ROUTLEDGE

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Foreword by Stanley Ruszczynski

Forensic Psychotherapy Monograph Series

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2012 by Karnac Books Ltd.

Published 2018 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 9781855758629 (pbk)

Edited, designed and produced by The Studio Publishing Services Ltd
www.publishingservicesuk.co.uk
e-mail: studio@publishingservicesuk.co.uk

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In thinking about those who helped me with this book, I am mindful of how fortunate I am to know and to have known so many knowledgeable, kind, and generous teachers, supervisors, mentors, and peers. I realize how enriched I am from my relationships with them.

In terms of the direct help I have received with the completion of this book, I am particularly grateful to three people who gave me extensive content feedback and advice: first, my former PhD supervisor (who encouraged me to write the book), Professor Susan Hayes (University of Sydney); second, my colleague, Professor Dianna Kenny (University of Sydney); and third, my former supervisor during my psychoanalytic training, Maria Teresa Hooke (Past President of the Australian Psychoanalytical Society). Their editorial advice was both rigorous and generous.

I am extremely appreciative of the technical advice that I received on particular sections of the book, specifically from Professor Peter Fonagy, Dr Thomas Ogden and Dr Ian Harrison. I also wish to thank Georgina Emanuel, Maria Kourt and Elizabeth Emnauel for other assistance.

I am also particularly indebted to Thomas Murphy for his comprehensive editorial support.

Moreover, I wish to acknowledge the young offenders and young people who gave of their time to facilitate my research, which substantially informed the ideas in this book.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the suffering of the victims of sexual abuse (including those offenders with backgrounds of sexual and other abuse), and hope that this book will help in some way to reduce its incidence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Timothy Keogh currently works full time as a psychoanalyst and forensic and clinical psychologist in private practice in Sydney, Australia. He is a full member of the Australian Psychoanalytical Society, a research fellow of the International Psychoanalytical Society and an associate faculty member of the Centre for Behavioural Sciences in Medicine at the University of Sydney. Dr Keogh was formerly statewide Director of Inmate Services and Programs with the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services (Australia). Prior to this he held the post of Director of the Collaborative Research Unit within the New South Wales Department of Juvenile Justice, where he was also Director of Psychological Services and Programs. He has published and co-authored numerous journal articles, monographs, and chapters on juvenile offending, sex offending, adolescent mental health, and psychotherapy. He is immediate past President of the Couples and Family Psychotherapy Association of Australasia (CAFPAA), and National Convener of the Psychoanalytically Oriented Psychology Interest Group (POPIG) of the Australian Psychological Society.

In writing this book, I am thankful for all of
the people in my life whose love sustains me,
especially my family and close friends.

In addition I wish to express my profound gratitude
to my analyst, Dr Ronald Spielman.

I dedicate this book to all of you.

SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Throughout most of human history, our ancestors have done rather poorly when dealing with acts of violence. To cite but one of many shocking examples, let us perhaps recall a case from 1801, of an English boy aged only 13, who was executed by hanging on the gallows at Tyburn. What was his crime? It seems that he had been condemned to die for having stolen a spoon (Westwick, 1940).

In most cases, our predecessors have either *ignored* murderousness and aggression, as in the case of Graeco–Roman infanticide, which occurred so regularly in the ancient world that it acquired an almost normative status (deMause, 1974; Kahr, 1994); or they have *punished* murderousness and destruction with retaliatory sadism, a form of unconscious identification with the aggressor. Any history of criminology will readily reveal the cruel punishments inflicted upon prisoners throughout the ages, ranging from beatings and stockades, to more severe forms of torture, culminating in eviscerations, beheadings, or lynchings.

Only during the last one hundred years have we begun to develop the capacity to respond more intelligently and more humanely to acts of dangerousness and destruction. Since the advent of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, we now have access to a much deeper understanding both of the aetiology of aggressive acts and of their treatment; and nowadays we need no longer ignore criminals or abuse them—instead, we can provide compassion and containment, as well as conduct research that can help to prevent future acts of violence.

The modern discipline of forensic psychotherapy, which can be defined, quite simply, as the use of psychoanalytically orientated "talking therapy" to treat violent, offender patients, stems directly from the work of Sigmund Freud. Almost one hundred years ago, at a meeting of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, held on 6 February 1907, Sigmund Freud anticipated the clarion call of contemporary forensic psychotherapists when he bemoaned the often horrible treatment of mentally ill offenders, in a discussion on the psychology of vagrancy. According to Otto Rank, Freud's secretary at the time, the founder of psychoanalysis expressed his sorrow at the "nonsensical treatment of these people in prisons" (quoted in Nunberg & Federn, 1962, p. 108).

Many of the early psychoanalysts preoccupied themselves with forensic topics. Hanns Sachs, himself a trained lawyer, and Marie Bonaparte, the French princess who wrote about the cruelty of war, each spoke fiercely against capital punishment. Sachs, one of the first members of Freud's secret committee, regarded the death penalty for offenders as an example of group sadism (Moellenhoff, 1966). Bonaparte, who had studied various murderers throughout her career, had actually lobbied politicians in America to free the convicted killer Caryl Chessman, during his sentence on Death Row at the California State Prison in San Quentin, albeit unsuccessfully (Bertin, 1982).

Melanie Klein concluded her first book, the landmark text *Die Psychoanalyse des Kindes* [*The Psycho-Analysis of Children*], with resounding passion about the problem of violence in our culture. Mrs Klein noted that acts of criminality invariably stem from disturbances in childhood, and that if young people could receive access to psychoanalytic treatment at any early age, then much cruelty could be prevented in later years. Klein expressed the hope that: "If every child who shows disturbances that are at all severe were to be analysed in good time, a great number of these people who later end up in prisons or lunatic asylums, or who go completely to pieces, would be saved from such a fate and be able to develop a normal life" (1932, p. 374).

Shortly after the publication of Klein's transformative book, Atwell Westwick, a Judge of the Superior Court of Santa Barbara, California, published a little-known though highly inspiring article, "Criminology and Psychoanalysis" (1940), in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. Westwick may well be the first judge to commit himself in print to the value of psychoanalysis in the study of criminality, arguing that punishment of the forensic patient remains, in fact, a sheer waste of time. With foresight, Judge Westwick queried, "Can we not, in our well nigh hopeless and overwhelming struggle with the problems of delinquency and crime, profit by medical experience with the problems of health and disease? Will we not, eventually, terminate the senseless policy of sitting idly by until misbehavior occurs, often with irreparable damage, then dumping the delinquent into the juvenile court or reformatory and dumping the criminal into prison?" (p. 281). Westwick noted that we should, instead, train judges, probation officers, social workers, as well as teachers and parents, in the precepts of psychoanalysis, in order to arrive at a more sensitive, non-punitive understanding of the nature of criminality. He opined: "When we shall have succeeded in committing society to such a program, when we see it launched definitely upon the venture, as in time it surely will be-then shall we have erected an appropriate memorial to Sigmund Freud" (p. 281).

In more recent years, the field of forensic psychotherapy has become increasingly well constellated. Building upon the pioneering contributions of such psychoanalysts and psychotherapists as Edward Glover, Grace Pailthorpe, Melitta Schmideberg, and more recently Murray Cox, Mervin Glasser, Ismond Rosen, Estela Welldon, and others too numerous to mention, forensic psychotherapy has now become an increasingly formalized discipline that can be dated to the inauguration of the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy and to the first annual conference, held at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London in 1991.

The volumes in this series of books will aim to provide both practical advice and theoretical stimulation for introductory students and for senior practitioners alike. In the Karnac Books Forensic Psychotherapy Monograph Series, we will endeavour to produce a regular stream of high-quality titles, written by leading members of the profession, who will share their expertise in a concise and practice-orientated fashion. We trust that such a collection of books will help to consolidate the knowledge and experience that we have already acquired and will also provide new directions for the future. In this way, we shall hope to plant the seeds for a more rigorous, sturdy, and wide-reaching profession of forensic psychotherapy.

We now have an opportunity for psychotherapeutically orientated forensic mental health professionals to work in close conjunction with child psychologists and with infant mental health specialists so that the problems of violence can be tackled both preventatively and retrospectively. With the growth of the field of forensic psychotherapy, we at last have reason to be hopeful that serious criminality can be forestalled and perhaps, one day, even eradicated.

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FOREWORD

Even at the best of times, adolescence is a time of turmoil. It is a developmental phase distinct from that of childhood and from that of adulthood and is defined by the young person's struggle between dependence and independence, the oscillation between a sense of isolation and the need to be part of a peer group, the turning away from parents, the rapid development of the body and the emergence of sexuality, the increasing awareness of physical prowess, and the more public acknowledgement of intellectual achievement or failure. These are all struggles of both the mind and the body.

Each of these developmental struggles, if successful, leads to maturational gains, but they are also accompanied by losses and the pain that accompanies loss. Winnicott refers to adolescence as a developmental phase which significantly requires a "struggling through the doldrums" with only one cure, he says, "the passage of time" (Winnicott, 1961) and the move into adulthood. The Latin word *adolescere* means "to grow up".

The adolescent process is one fundamentally driven by the complex psychic project of searching for and establishing a personal identity. As Waddell describes it, "one of the main undertakings of adolescence is that of establishing a mind of one's own, a mind which is rooted in, and yet also distinct from, the sources and models of identification that are visible within one's family, or in the wider school and community setting" (Waddell, 1998, p. 158).

All of these processes are psychosocial, by which I mean that they are experienced both internally and externally by the young person, but also have an impact and meaning for the young person's family and community. The turmoil of change, experienced by the adolescent is, to some degree, also experienced by those around him or her. Parents have to accommodate letting go of their children, often aided by the young person's rejection of them, adults have to sometimes enviously witness the newly found sexuality of adolescence, and parents and the community have to contend with the adolescent's sometimes rebellious testing out of aggression and potency. As adolescents develop into young adults, they inadvertently remind their elders of their own ageing and mortality.

So, even at the best of times, the adolescent process has a powerful impact both on the young people themselves and on those around them.

It is, therefore, not at all surprising that juvenile offending and especially juvenile sex offending evokes such intense emotions. The already disturbing turmoil of ordinary adolescents is now writ large by the impact of delinquent, criminal, and violent enactment.

Inevitably, delinquency, criminality, general violence or sexual violence—physical acts involving others—affects us all, not only in its physical outcome, but very often by also arousing strong feelings of condemnation, anger, fear, disgust, outrage, among others: toxic emotions which disturb our thinking and our responses, and from which it is often difficult to distance oneself. As Hinshelwood tells us, people who behave in this way are often described as difficult, but this is mostly because they arouse difficult feelings in us and, hence, affect us in our attitudes towards them (Hinshelwood, 1999).

Because of the power of this intrusion and emotional disturbance, the failure in the capacity to think about the perpetrator often results in the offender's actions simply being *reacted* to, for example by condemnation, the quick use of punishment, or physical incarceration. Sometimes there is an active demonization of the perpetrator.

Of course, the need to manage and control the perpetrators of such behaviour sometimes might well be required. The author of this book, however, passionately argues for there to be an emphasis on focusing on the juvenile offender's internal world. He promotes the view that behavioural management and physical containment, if not accompanied by the application of psychological interventions directed in depth at the young person's internal world, will usually be futile and possibly destructive. At worst, society's concrete reaction to the juvenile offender's actions perpetuates the cycle of mindlessness that is likely to be the root cause of such juvenile offending behaviour.

The lack of benign attachment figures and the resulting lack of psychological and emotional containment results in a failure to develop a mind that can reflect on itself or on others. Bravely, but accurately, the author shows that the controversial concept of psychopathy, which he links to the concept of malignant narcissism, continues to be a useful lens through which to explore violating and violent behaviour, be that more or less overtly sexual.

I write "bravely" because this is now a term that tends to be avoided, but perhaps if one follows the clinical understanding offered by Glover, the term reminds us of the complexity of what we are dealing with. Glover describes how essential it is for the clinician to understand and, more importantly, "to endure the psychopath's assaults on his most cherished possession, namely his capacity to heal. In other words, the prerequisite of any (such) therapy . . . is a capacity to endure repeated disappointments" (Glover, 1960, p. 149). As argued by Stoller, most sexually perverse or sexually violent behaviour is actually "an erotic form of hatred", and its underlying violence has to be taken very seriously (Stoller, 1975), both the violence against the body and also the violation of the capacity to think and reflect. Sexualization is often employed to control the object and their mind so as to protect against fears of core complex anxieties of engulfment or abandonment (Glasser, 1998).

This book is the first in the Karnac Forensic Series that takes up the issue of juvenile sexual offending. The author provides us with many tools with which to examine the internal world of the juvenile offender. Though he comes from a psychoanalytic, object relations perspective, he gives equal emphasis to other parameters, resulting in a text which is a treasure trove of psychoanalytic, clinical, neurobiological, and research-based concepts, well illustrated by clinical examples. With this range of perspectives, each explored in some detail, we are helped to navigate that which might otherwise feel like impossibly stormy and dark waters . . . waters which indeed might be felt to be ". . . inhabited by strangeness, things no one identifies with", as he quotes, at the head of Chapter One, from the American poet, Sheila Murphy.

This is an impressively scholarly and comprehensive text, as well as being clearly written and accessible, and is obviously the product of someone who has a deep appreciation of, and concern for, the subject matter. In addition, although the book presents us with conceptual and clinical thinking relating specifically to the juvenile sex offender, the reader will learn about concepts that are also applicable to the forensic and personality-disordered adult patient. With offending behaviour, disturbing and damaging in its impact, there will always be a tension between the need for physical constraint and punishment and that of seeking meaning in the behaviour and the need to understand its causes and, hence, promote the possibility of development and change. This book is a very serious attempt to help us in that latter task.

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Introduction

This book presents a series of ideas and concepts formulated over the course of more than twenty years of clinical and research experience with juvenile sex offenders. The ideas and concepts I propose stem from a psychoanalytic view of juvenile sexual offending which suggests that it represents, in the broadest sense, a failure to achieve a capacity to love maturely. Juvenile sex offenders are seen as only being capable of a *sexualized* or *violently sexualized* mode of relating to others as a consequence of having *internalized* an inadequate *blueprint or mental representation* of a mature, loving, reciprocal relationship.

The book, therefore, aims to demonstrate how understanding the *internal world* of juvenile sex offenders can inform their assessment and treatment. A focus on the internal world is what distinguishes psychoanalytical approaches to the assessment and treatment of juvenile sex offenders from other contemporary approaches, such as cognitive–behavioural and learning theory models. The particular psychoanalytical view I present is through the lens of their capacity for attachment and "human relatedness", their level of psychopathy (level of detachment), and the associated empirically based correlates of their mental representations of self and others (their "object relations"). In particular (and with reference to my own research), I explain how these provide a view into the emotional experience of juvenile sex offenders, which not only reveals them as a group to be psychologically maladjusted, but also suggests that *there are sub-groups of such offenders who are differentially motivated in their offending* and who need to be treated accordingly.

The central concept in this book, the internal world, is thus psychoanalytical in origin. Psychoanalysis is essentially a method for investigation of the mind, especially the unconscious mind. It explores the underlying motivations of behaviour and provides a method for treating mental disorder. While psychoanalysis originally identified the existence of an unconscious mental life (an internal world), it was with the development of *object relations theory* that the notion of internalized mental representations of the self, and its experience with significant others during infant development, became a particular focus. The central notion in object relations theory is that mental representations operate like a type of "shadow play" and influence our perception and associated behavioural and emotional responses to others (in the external world), that is, they shape our experience. The idea that there is transferability and modifiability of such mental representations, via unconscious processes with others, has been at the heart of the concept of transference in psychoanalysis and accounts for the importance placed on the therapeutic relationship in effecting change in psychoanalytically based treatments.

In terms of the development of these ideas, Freud, in his classic paper "Mourning and melancholia" (1917e), attempted to distinguish normal mourning from the pathological process of melancholia. In doing so, he proposed the idea that the ego could split in order to avoid mental pain and to protect an internal object (mental representation) from being lost. Ogden (2009) noted how, in this paper, "Freud made use of this seemingly focal exploration of these two psychological states (mourning and melancholia) as a vehicle for introducing – as much implicitly as explicitly – the foundation for his theory of internal object relations" (Ogden, 2009, pp. 124–125). The idea that the ego could split and that the split-off parts could have an unconscious relationship with each other paved the way for the elaboration of an object relations theory, which described how the self and its relationships with its objects become psychically represented.

Object relations theory was developed further during the 1940s and 1950s, notably by Fairbairn (1944, 1952), who coined the term, and by Klein (1946). It was a theory that suggested, in departure from Freud's view, that the key motivation for humans was a need for relationship, not primarily a response to instincts (drives). Object relations theorists argue that it is our primary (attachment) relationships, in interaction with unconscious fantasy (referred to as *phantasy*), which primarily influence the development of internalized psychic representations. When developmental conditions are favourable (secure and loving), the development of a positive and secure sense of self and a belief in the value of interdependency in relationships are fostered (Diamond & Blatt, 1994).

Fairbairn (1944) liberated himself from Freud's *Sexualtheorie* (libido theory) and elaborated an *Endo-psychic* structure. Fairbairn explained the complex processes involved in the splitting of the self and its relationships with its objects as part of the development of an autonomous self. Klein (1946), like Fairbairn (1944), built on what Freud had outlined and stressed "object seeking" as a prime motivator in human behaviour, but still acknowledged the importance of instincts and drives. Klein (1957) also articulated the psychic processes (such as projection and splitting), which could both facilitate and retard the growth of the ego.

A central tenet of this book is that an impoverished sense of self and a poor mental representation of relationships with the other are fundamental aetiological factors in juvenile sex offending. Object relations theory explains how the self develops as a result of its experiences with significant others. The self is seen to move from a state of psychic merger with its objects to a gradual differentiation from them. This involves stages in psychological development in which, first, the self is merged with its object, to a stage where difficult to manage aspects of the self are split off and projected into the object of attachment, until a point of later maturity, when all aspects of the self can be integrated, resulting in a relatively autonomous self. In the infant, such development is normally linked to neurological maturation, which gradually facilitates integrated perception and more complex information processing. This development is also dependent upon emotional factors. As such, an emotionally responsive containing environment facilitates development from more primitive modes of ordering experience.

The development of this internal world is not linear, but dynamic, and regression to earlier developmental levels, triggered by stress, can occur. For this reason, object relations theory describes developmental positions rather than stages.

Following the elaboration of the experiences and psychic processes involved in the earliest ("autistic–contiguous") stage of development articulated by Ogden (1989), the developmental progression described can be seen as one encompassing an autistic–contiguous (AC) (Ogden, 1989) through to a "paranoid–schizoid" (PS) (Klein, 1946) and, ultimately, a "depressive" (D) mode of psychic experience (Klein, 1957), each with idiosyncratic (developmental) anxieties. The movement backwards and forwards between positions can be depicted as AC↔PS↔D.

At each level of development, the nature of the anxiety is related to "the experience of disconnectedness (disintegration) within that mode of experience" (Ogden, 1989, p. 138). In the autistic–contiguous position, this involves the disruption of the experience of "sensory cohesion" and "bounded-ness". In the paranoid–schizoid position, it involves the splitting of the self and the object. In the depressive position, it involves the challenge of integrating split feelings (of love and hate) towards the object and the negotiation of "Oedipal anxieties", that is, anxieties connected with the consequence of becoming aware of separateness and "otherness".

In the autistic–contiguous mode, it is the experience of sensation that creates psychological meaning and some basic experience of self. Ogden (1989) noted that the autistic–contiguous position is linked to a mode of attributing meaning to experience in which there are "Pre-symbolic connections between sensory impressions that come to constitute bounded surfaces. It is on these surfaces that the experience of self has its origins" (Ogden, 1989, p. 139).

He relates this to Freud's notion that "The ego [the 'I'] is first and foremost a bodily ego". The autistic–contiguous state is, thus, essentially an object-less psychic world wherein there is a predominantly psychosomatic sense of self. In the transference relationship, there is no sense of the analyst or therapist as an object.

In contrast, in the paranoid–schizoid position of psychic development, there is an attachment to an object, although the object has to be split in order for psychic balance to be maintained. In normal development, the split occurs in response to the dilemma that attachment to the object evokes *both* loving and hateful feelings, the latter because it is inevitably less than perfect in satisfying the demands of the baby.

In order to deal with this difficulty and the anxieties it generates, the baby splits off the good and bad parts of the object from himself and tries to control this state of affairs by omnipotent functioning. In this regard Klein (1946) noted that:

> The first object *is* being the mother's breast which for the child becomes split into a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast, which results in a severance of love and hate. [p. 2, my italics]

Crucial to a psychoanalytical understanding of psychopathic juvenile sex offenders is that when hate dominates the internal world, intense efforts are needed to obfuscate the need for others, which can lead, in extreme circumstances, to a detachment from others and a turning *to the self as the object* of attachment (malignant narcissism).

As a person relies less and less on splitting and projection, he can begin to bring together the different aspects of himself: the beginnings of a more integrated or whole self. Persons able to integrate hitherto split-off aspects of themselves can then begin to face the fact that they love and hate the same objects and that there are loving and hating aspects of themselves. In juvenile sex offending, split-off (unwanted) aspects of the self can be projected to the victim.

A capacity for integration is vital to mental health because it in turn enables others to be seen as separate. This is the point in psychic development when *separation and individuation* (developmental milestones most juvenile sex offenders do not achieve) can begin.

This stage of psychic development (in object relations theory terms, the "depressive position") is, however, not without its challenges, as the infant has to deal with the separateness of his objects, which involves an acknowledgement of their relationships (for example, his mother's) with others. This creates further psychological dilemmas and can result in powerful feelings of jealousy and of exclusion from other relationships. The experiences and anxieties associated with this awareness of "otherness" are referred to, in psychoanalytic theory, as "Oedipal anxieties". Resolution of these anxieties results in an increased ability to tolerate a triangular relationship, with its demands to be both included and excluded from the parental couple. This helps to develop a capacity to be aware of another's point of view and thus be able to see oneself from this vertex (Britton, 1989). Thus, it allows for a self-reflective capacity, or what Fonagy (2001) has referred to as "reflective functioning".

Attachment theory, a major lens through which we will view juvenile sex offenders, also emphasizes the relevance of internalized blueprints resulting from our experiences with our primary care-givers, but does so in a somewhat different way to object relations theory. Object relations theorists confer unconscious phantasy with a preeminent role in psychic life. In contrast, Bowlby (1969) de-emphasized its role (even though he subscribed to the concept of an unconscious mental life) and stressed the influence of external factors on psychic life.

To formulate attachment theory, Bowlby (1969, 1973) sourced ideas from ethology, the theory of evolution, control theory, and cognitive science. This resulted in a reformulation of psychoanalytic metapsychology in a manner that was more compatible with modern biology and psychology and conformed with the more usual criteria of natural science. Bowlby was criticized by psychoanalysts for emphasizing the role of external factors over internal psychic phantasies. As a theoretical framework, attachment theory was also criticized for not providing an adequate account of sexuality. This perhaps represents a lack of understanding, as Bowlby had made it clear that he saw sexual behaviour as a separate system to attachment behaviour.

Attachment theory, none the less, provided a language for many practitioners who felt uncomfortable with the lack of the usual criteria of natural science inherent in psychoanalytic, including object relations, approaches. Attachment theory consequently produced empirical proof for its theoretical tenets. Heralded by Bowlby's (1959, 1960, 1969) original theoretical ideas and developed by Ainsworth and colleages (Ainsworth, 1979; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), this empirical proof was derived from an experimental paradigm, which provided descriptions of "internal working models". These were descriptions resulting from experimental observations of infants exposed to separation from care-givers, subsequent exposure to strangers, and then reunions with their care-givers. Attachment theorists were able to describe a polarity of secure and insecure attachment in children and subsequently (through a different experimental paradigm) in adults. These internal working models were seen to be akin to the self and object representations described by object relations theory. Bowlby deliberately chose the description internal *working* model, a description he adopted from the philosopher Craik (1943), which implied dynamism and suggested that such working models are modifiable by experience.

Self and object representations in object relations theory are defined as mental structures with both cognitive and affective dimensions, which are influenced by unconscious phantasies and are also seen to develop "epigenetically", that is, with genetically determined potentials shaped by developmental experiences and associated successive differentiation. These cognitive–affective schemas of self and others are continuously developed over the life cycle, via the psychic mechanisms of introjection and projection under the *aegis of unconscious phantasy.* Such mental representations are, thus, seen to comprise conscious *and unconscious* cognitive, affective, and experiential components, which result from significant early interpersonal experiences. Blatt, Auerbach, and Levy (1997) have noted that these cognitive–affective schemas encompass what they refer to as "veridical representations of consensual reality" (p. 351). They are *idiosyncratic constructions* that often contain primitive and pathological distortions resulting in unique psychopathologies.

Whatever the differences between attachment theory and object relations theory in the way they describe the internal world, they can be seen to complement each other. Indeed, theorists such as Fonagy (2001) have explicated the relationship between psychoanalysis and attachment theory and have demonstrated how types of insecure attachment relate to particular configurations of object relations in a manner that makes the two more synchronous. I agree with this view, and consider that perhaps a key difference between attachment theory and object relations theory, in addition to the differences I have already mentioned, is the degree of specificity concerning internalized representations that each provides. The attachment status of an individual might point to the general topography of the internal world of an offender, but to fully understand an individual one needs to drill down into the rich soil of that individual's *unique* object relations. This can be achieved through an understanding of transference and countertransference experiences or, particularly relevant to the research discussed in this book, through the use of empirically based psychodiagnostic instruments such as the Rorschach test, which tap into the mental representations of self and other. In the forensic sphere, this permits a greater understanding of the significance of the victim to the offender and provides a unique means of estimating (psychodynamic)