

On: 15 October 2011, At: 20:49

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Journal of Sexual Aggression

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tjsa20>

### The three dimensions of online child pornography offending

Hannah Lena Merdian<sup>a</sup>, Cate Curtis<sup>a</sup>, Jo Thakker<sup>a</sup>, Nick Wilson<sup>b</sup> & Douglas Pieter Boer<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Waikato, Psychology, Gate 1 Knighton Road, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, 3240, New Zealand

<sup>b</sup> Department of Corrections, PO Box 19 003, Hamilton, New Zealand

Available online: 28 Sep 2011

To cite this article: Hannah Lena Merdian, Cate Curtis, Jo Thakker, Nick Wilson & Douglas Pieter Boer (2011): The three dimensions of online child pornography offending, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, DOI:10.1080/13552600.2011.611898

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2011.611898>



PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# The three dimensions of online child pornography offending

Hannah Lena Merdian,<sup>1\*</sup> Cate Curtis,<sup>1</sup> Jo Thakker,<sup>1</sup> Nick Wilson<sup>2</sup>  
& Douglas Pieter Boer<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Waikato, Psychology, Gate 1 Knighton Road, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, New Zealand & <sup>2</sup>Department of Corrections, PO Box 19 003, Hamilton, New Zealand

---

**Abstract** *The internet has opened up opportunities for non-contact sex offending, such as the viewing of child pornography. This paper proposes a model for the classification of child pornography offenders as an aid for their assessment and treatment, deduced from empirical studies and existing typologies for child pornography offenders. Different subgroups of child pornography offenders may be described according to three dimensions: (1) type of offending, (2) the motivation behind child pornography offending and (3) the situational and social engagement in the offending behaviour. Distinct pathways of child pornography offending can be identified, related to differing criminogenic needs, severity of offending, and appropriate assessment and treatment strategies for the offenders.*

**Keywords** *Child pornography offending; classification model; sex offending; sex offender assessment*

## Introduction

With the advent of the internet a category of sex offenders has come to increased attention, namely, those who use the internet in some manner to sexually offend. In 2007, Webb, Crassati, and Keen described the difficulties occurring for professionals working with this offender group:

Internet sex offending has sparked off a new wave of arrests, charges, and convictions. As a result, the courts, prison, and probation services have an influx of internet sex offenders, and questions are raised about their management and risk. Are they child molesters or are they a new type of offender? If an individual views child pornography on the internet, is he/she likely to progress to contact sex offences? (pp. 449–450)

These questions are on the agenda of a growing professional body researching the characteristics and *modus operandi* of internet sex offenders. Above all, it has to be established if traditional assessment methods and treatment programmes, developed and validated for sex offenders with a contact victim, can also be applied successfully to online sex offenders. If not, more suitable methods of assessment and treatment need to be introduced.

---

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: h.merdian@gmail.com

This paper focuses on individuals whose offending constitutes viewing online child sexual exploitation material, also known as child pornography. According to Gillespie (2009), Interpol defined child pornography as “any means of depicting or promoting the sexual exploitation of a child, including written or audio material, which focus on the child’s sexual behaviour or genitals” (p. 6). Child pornography has been described as “the major activity that constitutes internet-related sex crimes at the present, certainly in terms of convictions” (Sheldon & Howitt, 2007, p. 7). The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2005) reported that their CyperTipline had recorded a 491% increase in reports of child pornography since 2001, resulting in 106,176 reports in 2004.

Traditional methods of sex offender assessment and treatment may be employed successfully for child pornography offenders (CPOs) if they are empirically found to share empirically the criminogenic needs of contact sex offenders. Central to the work with any sex offender population is the question of risk of re-offending. In contrast to contact sex offenders, for CPOs the focus is not only on their likelihood to re-offend in a similar manner, but also on the likelihood of escalating and changing their offending to commit a direct sexual abuse of a child. Such a more inclusive definition of risk further underlines the potential need for more specialised risk assessment tools for CPOs. Some methods of more specific assessment for CPOs have already been presented, for example by Glasgow (2010) or Buschman, Wilcox, Krapohl, Oelrich, and Hackett (2010). In summary, it is argued that some offender and offending characteristics of CPOs may be significantly different from contact sex offenders, and require a more specific approach in their apprehension and re-integration. To guide professionals in the choice of appropriate and responsive strategies for CPOs, the development of a classification model is discussed in this paper. This model is deduced from existing taxonomies for online sex offenders and consists of three dimensions: (1) type of offending (fantasy-driven versus contact-driven offending), (2) the motivation behind child pornography offending and (3) an individual’s situational and social engagement in the offending behaviour. It was designed to aid in the assessment of CPOs and to focus future research activities regarding assessment and treatment of this offender group.

### **Child pornography offending and contact sexual abuse**

One aspect to consider regarding the assessment and treatment of the offenders is how different online sex offending is in general, and child pornography offending specifically, from offline sex offending. Besides the viewing and distribution of child pornography, there are several ways in which individuals with a sexual interest in children can utilise the internet for their purposes (see Aftab, 2000; Beech, Elliott, Birgden, & Findlater, 2008; Burke, Sowerbutts, Blundell, & Sherry, 2002; Stanley, 2001; Taylor & Quayle, 2003):

- To establish and engage in contact with other individuals with a sexual interest in children
- To engage in inappropriate online sexual communication with children
- To harass children online with threats or sexually explicit material
- To locate children as potential victims for contact abuse
- To promote sexual tourism and/or child trafficking

Therefore, child pornography offences can either be the main focus of a person’s deviant online behaviours or occur in combination with any of these behaviours. For some offenders, their child pornography offending takes place alongside contact sexual abuse and plays an integral part in the sexual molestation of a child. For example, Hill, Briken, and Berner

(2006) found that up to 36% of their sample of convicted child molesters used child pornography as self-stimulation prior to their offences. The images may normalise a sexual interest in children, and the depicted scenes may function as fantasy generators or templates for real-life sexual abuse (Taylor, Quayle, & Holland, 2001). Hence, masturbating to deviant material directs the fantasy of its viewer as well as conditions a sexual interest in children that they might act upon in real life.

In addition, child pornography can be used as an interactive tool for the *grooming* of victims, a term that describes the deliberate preparation and desensitisation of victims for future sexual contact (Aftab, 2000). A case study by Itzin (1997) exemplified how family members used child pornography to first desensitise a young girl, then to make her imitate the poses until the images were used as a blueprint for her own sexual victimisation. There is an intersection between child pornography and contact sexual abuse, regardless from which side the offender approaches.

Finally, child pornography can be produced during a sexual meeting with a minor. Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell (2005) examined cases from the National Juvenile Online Victimization study that involved child pornography production. About one-third of child pornography production occurred in groups of victims; often a victim was encouraged to recruit their friends and introduce new “members” to the sexual abuse. In most cases, victims were “paid” somehow, mainly with attention and alcohol/drugs. Most offenders (71%) took the pictures openly without disguising their recording devices, producing images of varying content—judged from the most serious level in each picture collection, 26% were found to be labelled as sexually explicit, 27% portrayed genitals in a non-abusive manner while 47% clearly depicted sexual abuse, 6% of which contained sexual violence. Interestingly, only three out of 10 offenders distributed the images, and only few did so in a commercial manner. Hence, besides its distribution online, the self-produced material can also function as a “trophy” or reminder of the sexual encounter for the perpetrator. In addition, these images are often used as means for blackmailing the child afterwards not to disclose the offence, by threatening to show the images to other people (Langevin & Curnoe, 2004; Tate, 1990).

In summary, it becomes apparent that for some offenders, child pornography is not inherently different from contact sex offending but instead relates to it, either as a tool to desensitise the child victim, to normalise the actions that are done to the victim; or pornographic images can be the outcome of a sexual interaction with the victim.

However, for most offenders, their online offending has no behavioural link to contact sex offending. Hanson and Babchishin (2009) examined 15 studies on online offenders with a total sample of  $n = 3,536$ . They found that 18.5% of offenders had a history of contact sex offending, “mostly against a child” (n.p.), which reduced to 13.3% when self-report data was excluded. A year later, with an increased sample of 4,697 online offenders, Seto, Hanson, and Babchishin (2010) identified 17.3% of offenders with a historic contact sex offence, “mostly against a child” (p. 9), or 12.2% when only official information was included. Seto and his colleagues also examined the recidivism rates of a combined sample of 2,630 online offenders. Fewer than 5% were found to have re-offended with a sex offence during the follow-up period of up to six years; two of the nine studies even reported no recidivists. Summarising the studies with more detailed information on recidivism, 2% of online offenders were found to re-offend with a contact sex offence, 3.4% with child pornography and 4.2% for a violent offence. According to these findings, it thus appears that CPOs have small rates of both previous and recidivist contact sex offences and that for the majority of offenders child pornography offending is not related to contact sex offending.

In addition, there are some offence characteristics that differentiate child pornography use from contact sex offending. For example, the online environment may have some idiosyncratic

features that make it a unique setting for sex offending. Cooper (1998) described the “Triple A Engine” of the internet, which refers to the perceived Affordability, Accessibility and Anonymity of the online landscape. Affordability and accessibility refer to the physical and financial availability of both internet access and the wide array of online content, under the pretence of an anonymous environment. According to Barak (2005), the perceived anonymity and de-individuation of the internet may trigger behaviours which reflect inner personal desires that are usually suppressed by social constraints. In addition, newly coined labels such as “Internet Addiction” (Warden, Phillips, & Ogloff, 2001) or “Pathological Internet Use” (Davis, 2001) try to capture the idea that the internet may trigger some kind of compulsive reaction in its users. With these new concepts of a mental health disorder it is argued that the internet can hold an addictive component for its users, creating difficulties as outlined in the proposed diagnostic criteria by Warden et al. (2001) and Davis (2001); for example, loss of time when online and withdrawal symptoms when offline. Indeed, some of the CPOs in Taylor and Quayle’s (2003) sample explained that their online activity had an addictive quality to them which became increasingly difficult to control. Overall, the disinhibitive and addictive processes described, combined with increased opportunities to offend, portray features of the internet that are unique for the online environment in comparison to offline offending, and thus may constitute new aspects for assessment and treatment.

### **Child pornography offenders and contact sex offenders**

A further consideration to determine the need for more specialised assessment is based on offender characteristics. Babchishin, Hanson, and Herrmann (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of empirical studies of online sex offenders ( $n = 4,844$ ) in comparison to offline sex offenders ( $n = 1,342$ ). Online offenders were found to be younger, less likely to be of a racial minority and to have experienced physical abuse as a child. Furthermore, online offenders were more likely to endorse victim empathy, had lower impression management, were less likely to present cognitive distortions and emotional congruence with children and had less previous criminal involvement than offline sex offenders. However, online offenders displayed more sexual deviancy (measured with penile plethysmographic assessment and questionnaires). There were no differences between the two offender groups in terms of education, childhood sexual abuse, loneliness and self-esteem, measured with various scales. Overall, this meta-analysis found few but stable dissimilarities between the samples. However, one limitation of the study is that the two offender groups are likely to contain samples with both offence types. Hence, Babchishin and her colleagues (p. 94) concluded that “any observed differences would likely to be smaller than those obtained had we been able to compare pure groups of online-only and offline-only sexual offenders”.

Briggs, Simons, and Simonsen (2011) examined archival information about 51 “convicted chat room sex offenders” (a “distinct sex offender group who utilize live online chat rooms to entice male or female teens into an offline sexual relationship”, p. 74) from a forensic mental health centre. Based on behavioural information, Briggs and his colleagues suggested a twofold distinction of these chat users: those whose sexually explicit chats were ways of preparing the victim to engage in offline sexual meetings (“contact-driven”), compared to those who maintained the relationship exclusively at an online level by engaging in sexually explicit conversation, devoid of any physical contact (“fantasy-driven”); fantasy-driven offenders were found to have a higher masturbation rate (average of 5.48 times per week in comparison to 4.10 times per week for contact-driven offenders). The distinction between these two phenomenologically distinct offender types is conceptually attractive, given the

empirically identified differences in offender characteristics of contact and online sex offenders.

It has been contended in the professional literature that fantasy plays a crucial role in online sex offending. Sheldon and Howitt (2007, 2008) compared 16 CPOs, 15 contact sex offenders (CSOs) and a group of mixed offenders ( $n = 10$ , offenders with both online and offline sex offences against children) with regard to their sexual fantasies. In general, all offenders had similar fantasy content, with adult female fantasies being the most endorsed and deviant fantasies being least endorsed. However, CSOs were found to have significantly fewer fantasies about girls than the other two offender types, but reported more fantasies where they confronted a victim. Sheldon and Howitt then asked their sample of CPOs for the reasons why they did not commit any contact sex offences. Fifty-six per cent of the offenders felt that fantasy alone is more rewarding than sexual behaviour. Overall, 81% rated fantasy to have a high importance in their life (versus 50% in mixed and 40% in CSOs). This finding underlines further the distinction made by Briggs and his colleagues (2011) that, for some offenders, the focus of their offending is purely fantasy-driven, arguably without any intention to progress to contact sex offending.

In this paper, it is argued that the fantasy-driven/contact-driven distinction can be applied successfully to CPOs. It is further argued that contact-driven offenders can be assumed to share more similarities with CSOs than fantasy-driven offenders, while the latter have unique criminogenic needs. Hence, at least for the subgroup of fantasy-driven CPOs, new assessment and treatment models need to be identified based on the differences in their offending and the offender characteristics outlined above. Even though this theoretical distinction is deduced from the studies presented previously, empirical validation is required.

### **The three dimensions of child pornography offending**

There are several models that have presented classifications of CPOs into different subgroups, which are discussed in the text below. For the purpose of this paper we conducted a comparison of the existing models, which led to the conclusion that child pornography offending occurs on three dimensions. Different combinations of these dimensions will define subgroups of child pornography offenders and aid in describing different risk groups. This model will be explained below in more detail.

#### *Dimension 1: Fantasy-driven versus contact-driven offending*

The above discussion has shown that a valuable differentiation can be made between child pornography offending as a form of fantasy-driven offending and child pornography as part of contact sexual abuse (contact-driven). For the latter aspect, child pornography can either be the result of a contact sexual abuse (for instance, where an abuser produces his own child sexual abuse images) or it can be employed in the victim-grooming process to desensitise the child for future contact sexual abuse, when images of other children are shown to the victim. This differentiation has been identified before. Research by Sullivan and Beech (2004) and (in more detail) McLaughlin (2000) empirically separated their samples of online sex offenders into “collectors/traders” without any record of contact sexual abuse, “travellers” who also engage online to recruit victims for future sexual meetings and “manufacturers”, i.e., producers of child pornography. These authors also mentioned a fourth group, so-called “chatters”, who engage in online sexual discussion and activities with minors, presenting themselves as “mentors” (this group does not usually progress to abusive behaviours but

operates on the verge of legality by having “sex-education” talks with minors). In an examination of 200 cases from a police investigation on CPOs, McLaughlin found that a clear majority (71.5%) could be categorised as collectors, while 24% were travellers and only 4% manufacturers; only one subject was found to be a “chatter”. Alexy, Burgess, and Baker (2006) reviewed 225 cases from public news sources and found that 59.1% qualified as traders, 21.8% were classified as travellers and 19% displayed a combination of both trading and travelling behaviour. Overall, it appears that the majority of detected cases are confined to child pornography, with only one quarter additionally engaging in contact offending.

The above studies confirm that the suggested differentiation of two functions of child pornography (fantasy-driven and contact-driven offending) fits the empirical literature and allows classification of all online sex offender types that have been identified in these studies. Nevertheless, it does not reveal the underlying motivations of child molesters who employ the internet for their offending.

### *Dimension 2: Motivation behind child pornography offending*

Knowledge of the psychological basis of an individual’s behaviour is vital to develop appropriate risk assessment and treatment strategies (see discussion in Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Hence, the second dimension focuses on the motivation underlying a CPO’s behaviour.

One of the first approaches to separate different motivational types of CPOs was undertaken by Lanning (2001). He adjusted his original categorisation of CSOs to online sex offenders, where an individual is placed on a continuum from situational to preferential offending. A situational offender is described as seeking to access the abusive material in a one-off approach, based on curiosity or thoughts of easy money with trading, or an impulsive need for sexual gratification. Conversely, a preferential offender looks consciously and repeatedly for objectionable material involving minors. According to Lanning, the sexual preference of this group of offenders for children and adolescents is based either on paedophilia or a general interest in deviant sexual practices. While situational offenders act rather opportunistically, preferential offenders are more deliberate in their sex offending. (Lanning further labels a third group of child pornography offenders as “miscellaneous”, a group that includes primarily non-sexual encounters with objectionable material, such as media reporters who are researching the topic for a journal article.) Consequentially, it is the group of preferential sex offenders who are the “primary sexual exploiters of children” (Lanning, 2001, p. 210). According to Lanning’s analysis, they are characterised by a long-term and persistent pattern of sexually deviant, fantasy-driven behaviour and have well-developed offending techniques.

A similar distinction was suggested by Wortley and Smallbone (2006) who separated “recreational users” (occasional, infrequent use), “at-risk users” (users with a developing sexual interest in children) and “sexual compulsive users” of CPOs. While the first group clearly reflects Lanning’s (2001) situational user, the latter two groups fit into his definition of a preferential offender. Finally, built on his experiences from the COPINE project, Taylor (1999) developed another motivation-based typology, including six types of CPOs: the “confirmed collector”, the “confirmed producer”, the “sexually omnivorous user”, the “sexually curious user”, the “libertarian” who accesses objectionable material as a form of protest against online censorship and the “entrepreneur”.

Comparing these three models, four different “motivational types” of CPOs become apparent:

1. Paedophilic motivation: these offenders have a sexual preference for children, either in fantasy (“confirmed collector”) or real life (“confirmed producer”).
2. General deviant sexual interest: these offenders access child pornography as part of a general sexual deviance, not necessarily restricted to children. They may also have interest in other forms of deviant pornography, such as extreme violence or bestiality (e.g. the “sexually omnivorous user”).
3. Financial motivation: these offenders are not motivated primarily by their sexual interest, but consider child pornography as a market for commercial exploitation (“entrepreneur”). Child pornography is considered a valuable commodity that can be sold online or function as currency to gain access to more (and more deviant) material.
4. Other: this category includes users whose motivation to access child pornography is based on other reasons, such as curiosity (“sexually testing user”) or moral considerations (“libertarian”). As described previously, for some users child pornography is mainly a collectible, not a sexual tool; here, pleasure is gained mainly from sorting and completing their material or comparing the collection with other collectors. As Quayle, Erooga, Wright, Taylor, and Harbinson (2006) pointed out, some collectors differentiate themselves from paedophiles by being “only collectors”.

A closer look reveals that the first three subgroups can be considered as a more detailed description of Lanning’s (2001) preferential offender, while the last subgroup is rather opportunistically driven.

Beech and colleagues (2008) suggested a similar typology of CPOs, separating four basic motivations: curiosity, sexual interest in children, non-sexual reasons (e.g., financial incentives) and involvement in contact sex offending. However, the last aspect is not a genuine impetus for child pornography offending but is itself based on either a general sexual deviancy or a specific sexual preference for children. Nevertheless, an individual’s engagement in contact sexual abuse certainly needs to be regarded as indication of a more serious abuse process, as reflected in the first dimension of this draft typology. Hence, Beech and his colleagues’ analysis also fits into the categories outlined above. It appears that identification of the underlying motivation reveals a second dimension that will help to classify these offender types.

### *Dimension 3: The social component of child pornography offending*

Hartmann, Burgess, and Lanning (1984) offered the earliest categorisation of (offline) CPOs, based on an examination of members of 55 sex rings. They differentiated between four types of CPOs: The “closet collector” was defined as a secretive collector without a history of contact abuse or communication with other collectors. The “paedophile collector” was described as having a general sexual preference for children, which is also expressed in the contact sexual abuse of a victim. The “cottage collector” collects and sexually abuses as a form of group behaviour, in a desire to establish and maintain relationships with other collectors; and the last subtype, the “commercial collector”, belongs to an organised ring of for-profit traders of pornography. Hence, it becomes evident that the increasing sexual exploitation of children in this typology is related to an increased social involvement with other offending individuals. This approach adds the last dimension to this typology. The following section will have a closer look at the social aspect of child pornography offending.



One of the most comprehensive typologies of online sex offending has been proposed by Krone (2004, 2005). The original aspect of his work is that he defines seriousness of offending according to three aspects: (1) types of involvement, (2) level of networking with other offenders and (3) the security level employed by each subgroup. In his typology, Krone separated nine distinct forms of CPOs. The first five types (“browser”, “private fantasy”, “trawler”, “non-secure collector” and “secure collector”) are involved exclusively in non-contact child pornography offending (which Krone refers to as “indirect abusers”). Increased involvement in the offending process, as indicated by more active searching for child pornography, is understood to lead to enhanced networking with other offenders, which is assumed to result in a change in the received material (such as more extreme material) as well as an initiation of trading activities. Consequently, a higher level of involvement is also related to an increased need for security (Krone’s last aspect). The “groomer”, “physical abuser” and “producer” describe the second group, the “direct abusers”. For these subgroups, child pornography has a function in a broader offending process (involving both non-contact and contact offences) and, according to Krone, their networking with other offenders can vary. The last level is the “distributor” who can occur on any of the levels above (i.e., level of social networking and security can vary).

What again becomes apparent is that there are two distinct forms of CPOs—those involved in downloading, displaying and trading of child pornography and those whose child pornography offending is related to the contact sexual abuse of children. At least within the first group, increased networking with other offenders is representative of an increased seriousness of the offending; this is expressed in increased trading activity instead of purely collecting, possession of images with more deviant content, as well as enhanced knowledge about security measures to protect oneself. McLaughlin (2000) had already reported that in his sample of “collectors”, proceeding from static to more dynamic online locations (which again represents a shift in increased networking activities) had been related to a move from collecting to distribution of child pornography. [Static online locations have no interactive component, such as websites. Dynamic resources rely on interactions with other users, such as internet chat or messaging boards.]

A similar approach was undertaken by Carr (2006). Her comprehensive analysis of CPOs resulted in five different groups that she separated according to the internet application used to access child pornography. The two subgroups who preferred Internet Relay Chat (IRC) or File Transfer Protocols through IRC to download their material were found to spend fewer than 30 hours online per week, had no previous convictions, did not have an organised collection and did not seem to be involved in any trading or networking activities. IRCs are open chat locations based in the World Wide Web, where many different people can interact with each other. Hence, any involvement with individuals of similar interests and the exchange of objectionable material is initiated in a broader social forum. The third group preferred to engage in newsgroups, which implies a closer networking with other online offenders as well as increased knowledge about internet dynamics. Offenders who preferred newsgroups were more involved in the offending process, having had previous convictions, and often having very diverse and extensive picture collections. The most serious offender group favoured e-mail and instant messengers (such as “ICQ”), where the exchange of objectionable material is based on a one-to-one interaction with other offenders. Among other variables, this group, in Carr’s analysis, was characterised by a regular networking with other offenders, by engagement in commercial trading and/or child pornography production, by an organised image collection, by a previous criminal record and by having access to children, thus presenting a higher risk group than previous subtypes. The last group in Carr’s study showed no preference in their internet application. These offenders often had previous

convictions for a sex offence, used the internet to initiate contact with potential victims, were engaged in offline networking with other offenders and were also involved in commercial trading of the objectionable material.

Carr's analysis confirms the impression that a serious engagement in child pornography offending is related to increased networking with other offenders, a tendency to more secure internet applications and a reduction in opportunistic behaviour, such as chatting in a broader social forum. The last offender group, who were found to have no preference in their internet application, was the only group involved in online victim grooming. Similar to Krone's (2004, 2005) typology, this can be explained by the existence of two profoundly distinct groups (child pornography in isolation or as part of a broader sexual offending context). So far, an increase in seriousness of the offensive behaviour based on their level of social engagement with other offenders has been demonstrated for the first group only.

In a pilot study on CPOs in New Zealand, Carr (2004) had already observed that a progression in the offending behaviour was related to a change of preferred internet applications; second-time offenders had an increase in e-mail usage, and an enhanced networking with other offenders was related to highly specific or unusual material in their collection, which was often associated with previous convictions for sex offences. Carr then suggested commitment to collecting behaviour as well as a specific preference in image content as indicators of the seriousness of an individual's involvement. Nevertheless, both aspects, collecting behaviour as well as image specificity, are inevitably linked to social networking with other offenders, as a source of access to highly deviant and specific material. In summary, the above considerations are the theoretical basis for a CPO's categorisation based on three distinct dimensions: type of offending, motivation behind child pornography offending and social engagement in the offending behaviour.

#### *Typology of child pornography offending*

Figure 1 provides a graphical depiction of the proposed typology for CPOs in order to aid assessment and treatment planning of a CPO. On the first dimension, offenders can be divided into fantasy-driven and contact-driven offenders. The latter requires traditional sex offender assessment and treatment elements in addition to the fantasy-based approach. Secondly, an assessment of the underlying motivation of the offender is conducted. As derived above, four distinct motivations are differentiated. Purely financial and "other" motivations (for example, a misguided journalist who has to research the topic) refer to a non-sexual motivation on part of the offender, and do not indicate a need for specialised sex offender assessment and treatment. Lastly, increased seriousness of the offensive behaviour is indicated by high networking with other CPOs, for example by using interactive communication tools, being a member of a relevant newsgroup or engaging in trading with other users. In previous samples, these subgroups have displayed more intense engagement in the offending process, for example in terms of time, contacts or deviancy of material (e.g., Carr, 2006). High social networking therefore expresses higher severity in their offending and possibly an enhanced risk of re-offending.

The main subgroups of the fantasy-driven offender profile are based on generally deviant and paedophile motivation. As before, higher social networking is considered indicative of higher severity of the offending behaviour. Also, deeper engagement in child pornography offending can make it more difficult for the offender to disrupt established behavioural patterns in the future.

Overall, this is a conceptual model based on previous theories and typologies of child pornography offending without empirical validation. It is thought to aid in the categorisation

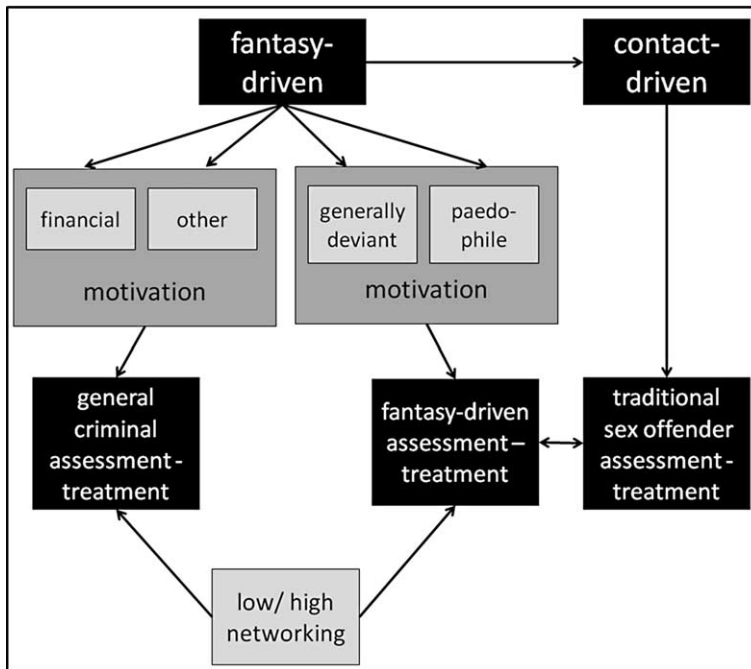


FIGURE 1. Classification model for child pornography offenders.

of CPOs and may be useful for professionals in categorising an offending individual and selecting appropriate assessment and treatment measures accordingly. The portrayed typology also allow for a dynamic component in the offending process, where individuals can shift from one subgroup to another over time. For instance, Taylor and colleagues (2001) reported from interviews with CPOs how they progressed through a series of stages in their offending behaviour. Understanding the individual's offending process is a valuable tool in identifying the level of involvement in his offending as well as to define offender needs and motivations for each stage of the offending process.

### Conclusions and future directions

This paper presents a model which allows classification of child pornography offenders into different subgroups. An individual's pathway is defined by the function of child pornography in his offending process, the underlying motivation and the social networking in his offending behaviour. Classification of an offender using the proposed model provides information about the offender's needs, severity of offending, related risks and which assessment and treatment strategies are to be selected. This model can guide future research and aid professionals to follow the "best practice approach" by using more typologically focused assessment and interventions strategies. Future research is needed to validate the applicability of this model on a group of CPOs and mixed offenders. The numerical meaning of high and low networking needs to be established. If the fantasy-driven/contact-driven distinction of sex offending can be confirmed empirically, professional instruments for a fantasy-driven offender profile need to be developed. As reviewed above, fantasy-driven offenders show some differences to contact child molesters and future research should aim to develop and validate new

assessment tools and treatment strategies for this offender group. These new instruments also need to focus on the unique environment of the internet that arguably contributes to the offending process; for example, the situational aspect of the internet. Promising examples are the assessment methods suggested by Glasgow (2010) and Buschman and colleagues (2010), and the i-SOTP treatment programme for internet sex offenders by Hayes and Middleton (2006).

## References

- Aftab, P. (2000). *The parent's guide to protecting your children in cyberspace*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Alexy, E. M., Burgess, A. W., & Baker, T. (2006). Classifying internet child sex offenders. In J. E. Douglas, A. W. Burgess, A. G. Burgess & R. K. Ressler (Eds.), *Crime classification manual: A standard system of investigating and classifying violent crimes* (pp. 425–434). San Francisco, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2006). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (4th edn). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing.
- Babchishin, K. M., Hanson, R. K., & Herrmann, C. A. (2010). The characteristics of online sex offenders: A meta-analysis. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23, 92–123. doi: 10.1177/1079063210370708.
- Barak, A. (2005). Sexual harassment on the internet. *Social Science Computer Review*, 23, 77–92. doi: 10.1177/0894439304271540.
- Beech, A. R., Elliott, I. A., Birgden, A., & Findlater, D. (2008). The internet and child sexual offending: A criminological review. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 13, 216–228. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2008.03.007.
- Burke, A., Sowerbutts, S., Blundell, B., & Sherry, M. (2002). Child pornography and the internet: Policing and treatment issues. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 9, 79–81.
- Buschman, J., Wilcox, D., Krapohl, D., Oelrich, M., & Hackett, S. (2010). Cybersex offender risk assessment: An explorative study. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 16, 197–209. doi: 10.1080/13552601003690518.
- Briggs, P., Simon, W. T., & Simonson, S. (2011). An exploratory study of internet-initiated sexual offenses and the chat room sex offender: Has the internet enabled a new typology of sex offender? *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23, 72–91. doi: 10.1177/1079063210384275.
- Carr, A. (2004). *Internet traders of child pornography and other censorship offenders in New Zealand*. Wellington, NZ: Department of Internal Affairs. Available from [http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg\\_URL/Resource-material-Our-Research-and-Reports-Internet-Traders-of-Child-Pornography-and-other-Censorship-Offenders-in-New-Zealand?OpenDocument](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Resource-material-Our-Research-and-Reports-Internet-Traders-of-Child-Pornography-and-other-Censorship-Offenders-in-New-Zealand?OpenDocument)
- Carr, A. (2006). *Internet censorship offending: A preliminary analysis of the social and behavioural patterns of offenders* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/theses/carr/>
- Cooper, A. (1998). Sexuality and the internet: Surfing into the new millennium. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 1, 187–193.
- Davis, R. A. (2001). A cognitive-behavioural model of pathological internet use. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 17, 187–195. Available from [www.elsevier.com/locate/comphumbeh](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/comphumbeh)
- Gillespie, A. A. (2009). *Defining child pornography: Challenges for the law*. Draft Position Paper prepared for the “Global symposium for examining the relationship between online and offline offences and preventing the sexual exploitation of children” prepared for the G8 Global Symposium, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, April. Available from [www.iprc.unc.edu/symposium.shtml](http://www.iprc.unc.edu/symposium.shtml)
- Glasgow, D. (2010). The potential of digital evidence to contribute to risk assessment of internet offenders. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 16, 87–106. doi: 10.1080/13552600903428839.
- Hanson, R. K. & Babchishin, K. M. (2009). *How should we advance our knowledge of risk assessment for internet sex offenders?* Position Paper prepared for the “Global symposium for examining the relationship between online and offline offences and preventing the sexual exploitation of children” prepared for the G8 Global Symposium, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, April. Available from [www.iprc.unc.edu/symposium.shtml](http://www.iprc.unc.edu/symposium.shtml)
- Hartmann, C. R., Burgess, A. W., & Lanning, K. V. (1984). Typology of collectors. In A. W. Burgess & M. Lindequist Clark (Eds.), *Child pornography and sex rings* (pp. 93–109). Toronto, CA: Lexington Books.
- Hayes, E., & Middleton, D. (2006). *Internet sexual offending treatment programme (i-SOTP): Theory manual*. Westminster, UK: National Offender Management Service.
- Hill, A., Briken, P., & Berner, W. (2006). Pornographie im Internet—Ersatz oder Anreiz fuer sexuelle Gewalt? [Pornography on the internet—substitute or stimulus for sexual violence?] In *Stiftung Deutsches Forum fuer Kriminalpraevention, Internet-Devianz* (pp. 113–134). Berlin, Germany: Bundesverwaltungsamt.

- Itzin, C. (1997). Pornography and the organization of intrafamilial and extrafamilial child sexual abuse: Developing a conceptual model. *Child Abuse Review*, 6, 94–106. Available from <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=11842836&site=ehost-live>
- Krone, T. (2004). A typology of online child pornography offending. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 279. Available from [www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi279.pdf](http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi279.pdf)
- Krone, T. (2005). Does thinking make it so? Defining online child pornography possession offences. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 299. Available from <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/9/A/B/%7B9AB4DA8B-6EDB-401B-AC9E-59EA93B1EE0%7Dtandi299.pdf>
- Langevin, R. & Curnoe, S. (2004). The use of pornography during the commission of sexual offences. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 48, 572–586. doi: 10.1177/0306624X03262518.
- Lanning, K. V. (2001). Child molesters and cyber paedophiles—A behavioural perspective. In R. R. Hazelwood & A. W. Burgess (Eds.), *Practical aspects of rape investigation: A multidisciplinary approach* (3rd edn) (pp. 199–220). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- McLaughlin, J. F. (2000). Cyber child sex offender typology. *Knight Stick: Publication of the New Hampshire Police Association*, 51, 39–42. Available from <http://www.ci.keene.nh.us/police/Typology.html>
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2005). *Child porn among fastest growing internet businesses*. Available from [http://www.ncmec.org/missingkids/servlet/NewsEventServlet?LanguageCountry=en\\_US&PageId=2064](http://www.ncmec.org/missingkids/servlet/NewsEventServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=2064)
- Quayle, E., Erooga, M., Wright, L., Taylor, M., & Harbinson, D. (2006). *Only pictures? Therapeutic work with internet sex offenders*. Dorset, UK: Russell House Publishing.
- Seto, M. C., Hanson, R. K., & Babchishin, K. M. (2010). Contact sexual offending by men with online sexual offenses. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23, 124–145. doi: 10.1177/1079063210369013.
- Sheldon, K., & Howitt, D. (2007). *Sex offenders and the internet*. Chichester, UK: West Sussex.
- Sheldon, K. & Howitt, D. (2008). Sexual fantasy in paedophile offenders: Can any model explain satisfactorily new findings from a study of internet and contact sexual offenders? *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 13, 137–158. doi: 10.1348/13553206X173045.
- Stanley, J. (2001). Child abuse and the internet. *Child Abuse Prevention Issue*, 15. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available from <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues15/issues15.pdf>
- Sullivan, J., & Beech, A. R. (2004). Assessing internet sex offenders. In M. C. Calder (Ed.), *Child sexual abuse and the Internet: Tackling the new frontier* (pp. 69–83). Lyme Regis, UK: Russell House.
- Tate, T. (1990). *Child pornography*. St Ives, UK: Methuen.
- Taylor, M. (1999). *The nature and dimension of child pornography on the internet*. Paper presented at the International Conference Combating Child Pornography on the Internet, Vienna, Austria. Available from [www.ipce.info/library-3/files/nat\\_dims\\_kp.htm](http://www.ipce.info/library-3/files/nat_dims_kp.htm).
- Taylor, M., & Quayle, E. (2003). *Child pornography: An internet crime*. Hove, UK: Brunner-Routledge.
- Taylor, M., Quayle, E., & Holland, G. (2001). Child pornography, the internet and offending. *Sociologie et Sociétés*, 32, 94–100.
- Warden, N. L., Phillips, J. G., & Ogloff, J. R. P. (2004). Internet addiction. *Psychiatry, Psychology, and Law*, 11, 280–295. Available from <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>
- Webb, L., Craissati, J., & Keen, S. (2007). Characteristics of internet child pornography offenders: A comparison with child molesters. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 19, 449–465. doi: 10.1007/s11194-007-9063-2.
- Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D., & Mitchell, K. J. (2005). The varieties of child pornography production. In E. Quayle & M. Taylor (Eds.), *Understanding the offense, managing the offender, helping the victims* (pp. 31–48). Dorset, UK: Russell House Publishing.
- Wortley, R., & Smallbone, S. (2006). *Child pornography on the internet*. Problem-oriented guides for police, problem-specific guides series, 41. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.