

Child Pornography and Likelihood of Contact Abuse: A Comparison Between Contact Child Sexual Offenders and Non-contact Offenders

Aims

This study examined whether there were discriminatory differences between dual and non-contact offenders in relation to: (a) socio-demographic characteristics, (b) quantity of IIOC¹ possessed, (c) types of IIOC possessed, and (d) internet activity (e.g., payment for IIOC, grooming behaviour). Within group analysis of dual offenders also examined: (a) the association between severity of contact offence and IIOC possessed, and (b) the relationship between contact offence victim(s) and IIOC victims.

Key Findings

- *Producers and groomers.* Offenders who produced their own IIOC were significantly more likely to be dual offenders. Most of the non-contact offenders in the sample did not produce IIOC (80.0%), whereas 53.3% of the dual offenders did. Individuals who groomed children were significantly more likely to be dual offenders. The majority of dual offenders engaged in grooming behaviours (86.7%), compared to 20% of non-contact offenders. In addition, 10.0% of both offender groups engaged in grooming behaviours using online techniques.
- *Relationship between the IIOC possessed by dual offenders and contact offence (n = 30).* Dual offenders were compared on total number of still and movie IIOC at each of the five SAP levels, with all producing non-significant effects. However, the proportion of still IIOC possessed was found to be significant for Level 1, with sadistic rapist dual offenders possessing a significantly lower proportion of Level 1 IIOC than sexual touching abusers and penetrative abusers. In support of this pattern, those offenders categorised as sadistic rapists had a significantly higher proportion of Level 4 IIOC than sexual touching abusers and penetrative dual offenders.
- The results also suggested potential associations between the gender of the children in the IIOC possessed by dual offenders and the gender of their contact victims. These suggest that when dual offenders owned IIOC of mainly males, they contact offended against male children 100% of the time. Similarly, if the IIOC possessed by offenders were mainly of females, the contact victim was also female in 91.7% of cases. Among offenders who had fairly equal amounts of male and female IIOC, their contact victims were female in 57.1% of cases, male in 14.3%, and both genders 28.6% of the time. The overlap between the IIOC victim and contact child abuse victim matching in terms of gender was calculated at 75%, indicating that the majority of dual offenders possessed IIOC that matched the gender of their contact victim.
- When taking the age of the children into account, analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between the average age of children in the IIOC and the average age of contact victims. This suggests that the higher the average age of the children in the IIOC, the higher the average age of the contact victim.

¹ Indecent Images of Children

- *Explanation during police interview.* There was a significant difference between offender groups in the explanation given in police interview for their possession of IIOC. Dual offenders were most likely to give no comment (39.3%), with 28.6% giving a cognitively distorted view, and 17.9% admitting their attraction to IIOC. In contrast, 48.3% of non-contact offenders admitted their attraction and 24.1% provided a positive justification.

Methodology

The sample consisted of 120 (60 dual and 60 non-contact) adult male IIOC offenders aged 18 years and older. They were selected through stratified opportunity sampling. All 120 offenders were arrested between January 8, 2007 and February 25, 2011. Data collection occurred between May 2009 and August 2011. A subsample of 60 offenders (30 dual and 30 non-contact) were selected using stratified opportunistic sampling, and used to analyse the relationship between IIOC possession and internet offending behaviour.

Background

There is little available evidence examining why offenders select certain imagery (e.g., Seto, Reeves, & Jung, 2010), though previous research on adult pornography and IIOC possession suggest that individuals seek out material that is most arousing to them and reflects their sexual fantasies (Glasgow, 2010; Seto, Maric, & Barbaree, 2001). Quayle and Taylor (2002) suggest that IIOC preserve victims at the age and developmental stage which is most arousing to the offender, and consequently image collections may indicate the sexual preference of the offender in terms of victim gender, age and preferred sexual activity (Seto et al., 2006). This highlights the utility of examining the image collections of IIOC offenders as potential indicators of risk of future contact offending.

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Research Team Matthew Long (Kent Police), Laurence Alison (University of Liverpool) & Michelle McManus (University of Central Lancashire)

Contact information Michelle McManus (mamcmanus@uclan.ac.uk)

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