



Digital & Multimedia Sciences Section - 2015

C3 Assessing the Relationship Between Individual Differences and Child Pornography Image Preferences in an Internet Sample of Child Pornography Consumers

Kathryn C. Seigfried-Spellar, PhD, University of Alabama, 410 Farrah Hall, Box 870320, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487*

After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of the relationship between child pornography image preferences and personality characteristics.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by assessing whether personality characteristics are significantly related to the types of images preferred by internet pornography users. The preferred type or genre of images, rather than the collection itself, may provide researchers with a better understanding of the personality characteristics associated with child pornography use.

Internet child pornography is not only a global epidemic, it is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States has seen a 2,500% increase in the last ten years in the number of child pornography arrests. What drives someone to collect different genres of pornography is unknown; however, one thing is for certain, the collections of child pornography users are vastly different. According to Taylor et al., child pornography should be considered as a wide range of images, which involve different levels of child victimization (e.g., innocent vs. erotic, posing vs. sadistic).¹

In general, research suggests that the majority of offenders are collecting images of young children with higher levels of child sexual victimization (e.g., sexual penetration, sadistic violence).^{2,3} For example, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre reported an increase in the number of non-commercial sources depicting babies and toddlers in child sex abuse images, as well as an increase in the number of images depicting children of different racial backgrounds and locations, such as South America and South Korea.^{4,5} In addition, the United Kingdom's Internet Watch Foundation reported an increase in the number of commercial websites depicting severe forms of child sexual abuse with more than half (69%) of the child victims appearing to be under the age of ten years.⁶ Of those images, 24% appeared to be under the age of six years and 4% of the child victims appearing to be to be under the age of two years.⁶

The preferred type or genre of images, rather than the collection, may provide researchers with a better understanding of the personality characteristics associated with child pornography use; however, this link between individual differences (e.g., extraversion) and types of images (e.g., age of child, sadistic vs. erotic) collected by child pornography users has yet to be simultaneously analyzed.⁷ Therefore, the current study will be the first to assess whether personality characteristics are significantly related to the types of images preferred by internet pornography users. The specific goal of this study was to determine if certain personality characteristics were predictive of certain child pornography image preferences.

This study was conducted electronically using an anonymous, internet-based survey in order to sample child pornography users from the "general population of internet users" rather than the clinical or forensic population. Respondents were solicited from the website Mechanical Turk[®]; research studies have shown Mechanical Turk[®] may be used to obtain high-quality data inexpensively and rapidly from a diverse participant pool and it provides better generalizability than snowball sampling procedures.^{8,9}

For the current study, more than 1,000 respondents completed the anonymous internet-based survey. The results and future implications of the study's findings will be discussed.



Digital & Multimedia Sciences Section - 2015

References:

1. Taylor, M., Holland, G., & Quayle, E. (2001). Typology of paedophile picture collections. *The Police Journal*, 74, 97-107.
2. Wolak, J., Mitchell, K., & Finkelhor, D. (2003, November). Internet sex crimes against minors: The response of law enforcement. Washington, DC: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.
3. Webb, L., Craissati, J., & Keen, S. (2007). Characteristics of internet child pornography offenders: A comparison with child molesters. *Sex Abuse*, 19, 449-465.
4. Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (2008). Strategic overview 2007-2008. London, England: Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre.
5. Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (2009). Strategic overview 2008-2009. London, England: Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre.
6. Internet Watch Foundation. (2009, April). 2008 Annual and Charity Report. Retrieved from Internet Watch Foundation Web site: <http://www.iwf.org.uk/>
7. Seigfried-Spellar, K.C. (2013). Individual differences of internet child pornography users: Peculiar findings in a community-based study. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 7(2), 141-154.
8. Berinsky, A., Huber, G., Lenz, G. (2011). Using Mechanical Turk[®] as a subject recruitment tool for experimental research. Submitted for review.
9. Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S.D. (2011). Amazon's Mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality data? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(1), 3-5.

Internet Child Pornography, Personality, Child Sex Abuse Images