



I22 Child Pornography and Child Sex Dolls: An Expanding Virtual Phenomenon

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the global expansion of child pornography and other simulated and digital materials geared toward individuals with pedophilic arousal. Issues to be reviewed include: (1) international prevalence, (2) ease of access, (3) general internet phenomenon regarding child pornography, (4) simulated child pornography, (5) child sexual dolls, (6) characteristics of users, and (7) challenges in risk considerations.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by elucidating the scope and expansion of materials geared to pedophilic arousal in order to assist forensic mental health experts in evaluating these behaviors.

Global expansion of online access has led to increased production, distribution, and use of digital child pornography. Where these materials were once difficult to obtain and store in print, they are now readily, and covertly, accessible in digital format through anonymous file sharing, on the deep web, and even on regular internet sites. Evidence gathered from identified child pornography users likely represents only a small fraction of the total number of individuals who access digital child pornography, as apprehension is limited. Further, little is known about users of simulated child pornography, child anime, and other such materials. Creators of these materials have attempted to avoid prosecution and appeal to users by using offshore servers, creating “simulated” child pornography, and even by manufacturing anatomical child “dolls” for sexual use. The scope of distribution and use of these items is staggering, and associated websites are estimated to have millions of viewers.

Evidence from forensic populations suggests that individuals who engage in digital child pornography, in contrast to those who commit hands-on child molestation, are more likely to be younger, to have completed college, to be employed, to be of higher socio-economic class, and less likely to have an active or history of a substance use disorder, serious mental illness, or significant antisocial traits. In addition, they are less likely than hands-on offenders to have a criminal history (e.g., incarceration or court appearance). However, like hands-on offenders, they are almost exclusively male. Though there is considerable debate in the field, there is mounting evidence that degree of engagement in digital child pornography (e.g., sorting and organizing image files, editing images, renaming files) is a stronger indicator of subsequent child pornography engagement, in part because of the ease with which large databases of pornography (that may unexpectedly include images of children) can be downloaded from the internet. Even less is known about child anatomical doll users, given the covert nature of their use. However, self-report data among adult anatomical doll users suggests that the clear majority are male, middle-aged (mid-30s to mid-50s), White, not partnered, well educated, heterosexual, and use their dolls for sexual stimulation and gratification.¹ Most anatomical doll users report revealing their use in online forums.

As the result of rapidly and continually expanding literature on sexual deviancy, the field has incorporated factors that have been empirically demonstrated to either contribute to, or protect from, sexual offense risk. Risk assessment methods have typically focused on hands-on offenders and utilize actuarial risk instruments that operationalize historical and dynamic risk factors to provide the most accurate risk prediction that has been available thus far. The field is moving toward greater standardization and heightened responsiveness to emerging literature, thereby enhancing the aims and integrity of forensic science. However, few instruments have been devised to assist in the assessment of solely child pornography users and none for digital or simulated child pornography users. As the phenomenon expands, this is an area of increasing concern and needed research.

This panel presentation will explore the online phenomenon of materials geared to pedophilic arousal, discuss known characteristics of users, and consider risk approaches to assessment when comparing hands-on offenders with non-hands-on offenders. Time for discussion will be available, including the ethics and legality of the availability of these materials.

Reference(s):

- ¹. *The Modern Sex Doll-Owner: A Descriptive Analysis*. Thesis presented to the Faculty of California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Science in Psychology by Sarah Valverde (formerly Schewe). August 2012.

Child Pornography, Pedophilic Disorder, Forensic Psychiatry