

A typology of online child pornography offending

The Australian Institute of Criminology has recently released *A typology of online child pornography offending*, based on research funded by the Australian High Tech Crime Centre. Knowing the differences in how online child pornography offences are committed is vitally important to understanding and combating the problem of the sexual exploitation of children. There is an increasing seriousness of offending, from offences that do not directly involve a child, to offences that involve direct contact with children, from online grooming to physical abuse. Perhaps the most important factor in law enforcement is the reliance on networks by many offenders. Concentrating on these linkages is likely to help address the problem of the proliferation of child pornography. Stopping the physical abuse of children requires an intensive investigation effort concentrating on new material and on cracking into the more secretive world of individual and networked producers. Police may use stings to locate individual offenders. The greater long term value in any sting operation may lie in exploding the view that the internet is an anonymous domain in which it is safe to offend. By catching trawlers and deterring those who may be thinking of experimenting with child pornography a low level of offending will be disrupted. The Australian High Tech Crime Centre works with the Virtual Global Taskforce of police from the UK, USA and Canada to run such sting operations and other coordinated activities.

Typology of online child pornography offending

<i>Type of involvement</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Level of networking by offender</i>	<i>Security</i>	<i>Nature of abuse</i>
Browser	Response to spam, accidental hit on suspect site – material knowingly saved	Nil	Nil	Indirect
Private fantasy	Conscious creation of online text or digital images for private use			
Trawler	Actively seeking child pornography using openly available browsers	Low		
Non-secure collector	Actively seeking material often through peer to peer networks	High	Secure	
Secure collector	Actively seeking material but only through secure networks. Collector syndrome and exchange as an entry barrier			
Groomer	Cultivating an online relationship with one or more children. The offender may or may not seek material in any of the above ways	Varies – online contact with individual children	Security depends on child	Direct
Physical abuser	Abusing a child who may have been introduced to the offender online. The offender may or may not seek material in any of the above ways. Pornography may be used to facilitate abuse	Varies – physical contact with individual children		
Producer	Records own abuse or that of others (or induces children to submit images of themselves)	Varies – may depend on whether becomes a distributor		
Distributor	May distribute at any one of the above levels	Varies	Tends to be secure	Indirect

SOURCE: Krone T 2004. A typology of online child pornography offending. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no. 279 Australian Institute of Criminology Canberra

Full report available on AIC web site: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi2/tandi279.html>