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TYOLOGY OF PAEDOPHILE PICTURE COLLECTIONS²

Over recent years, offences related to the production, possession and distribution of child pornography have assumed great prominence. Public attention has focused on these crimes as being particularly repellent and deserving of both proactive policing and, when detected, full and extensive investigation. Increased awareness of the problem of child pornography has been associated with a parallel recognition of the significance of the Internet as a medium for the distribution of both child pornography and the facilitation and propagation of a number of sexual offences against children. Most European countries have statutes that criminalise possession of child pornography, and it is now regarded as a serious offence in most jurisdictions, attracting significant sentences on conviction.

Because of its emotive nature and also because possession is, in the main, illegal, research into child pornography has been limited. Little is known about the nature and extent of child pornography precisely because it is an illegal trade, and the distinctive qualities contributed by the current principal medium of distribution, the Internet, add even further complexity. Such work that there is tends to be from a limited evidential perspective. Lanning (1992), in what is amongst the most significant contributions to this area, outlined a behaviour analysis of child molesters describing the role of child pornography in their offending behaviour. He discussed motivation for collecting, the functions of collection and the characteristics of collections (for example important, constant, organised, permanent, concealed and shared). A major weakness of this work is its lack of empirical verification, relying instead on the experience of Lanning in law-enforcement work in this area. However, Lanning (24-6) introduces the important distinction between child pornography ('the sexually explicit reproduction of a child's image') and child erotica ('any material, relating to children, that serves a sexual purpose for a given individual'). The significance of this distinction is to emphasise the potential sexual qualities of a whole range of kinds of photograph (and other material as well) not all of which may meet obscenity criteria. The implications of that distinction in the context of the Internet could not at that time be fully explored, although Lanning does, in that and later work, clearly recognise the significance of the new technologies. The operational

implications of that distinction are significant, however, and can be seen in the way in which investigative agencies frequently divide evidential material into three categories:

1. Indicative: material depicting clothed children, which suggests a sexual interest in children;
2. Indecent: material depicting naked children which suggests a sexual interest in children;
3. Obscene: material which depicts children in explicit sexual acts.

This kind of categorisation may be helpful for law-enforcement agencies in the initial stages of investigating child pornography cases. But it does little to progress our understanding, and adds little to our knowledge of the psychological qualities of offenders involved in either production or possession of child pornography, or in the factors of adult sexual interest in children. It also tends to deflect attention away from a more discriminating analysis of the photographs themselves, and the relationship between the child, the photographer, the photograph and the user. Boyle (2000) makes a similar point within a larger framework related to pornography in general, suggesting that research has been over-concerned with the 'effects' of pornography, and neglects to consider the harm done to women, men and children in the production of pornography. A major weakness in contemporary work in this area is that it neither considers how individual consumers use and understand pornographic and other photographic media nor acknowledges their choice, responsibility and accountability for their behaviours. A particular absence in the literature is any attempt to understand the nature of photographs of children, or their significance for the user. Indeed, simple descriptions of the content of child pornography photographs are rarely referred to. An exception to this is Tate (1990), who comments on how the material ranged from 'posed pictures of naked and semi-naked children, through more explicit shots of their genitalia thumbed apart to still, film and video recordings of oral, vaginal and anal sex' (203-17). Even a more focused, recent review of knowledge about awareness respecting the legality of images on the Internet (McCabe, 2000) fails to distinguish between kinds of images, other than real and pseudo-images (which present particular legal problems).

A more detailed account of the extent and qualities of child pornography was given by Taylor (1999). This presented an overview of the situation, particularly with respect to the Internet. However, given the extensive involvement of the Internet in child pornography distribution, the account also served to summarise the more general picture of adult sexual interest in children and the Internet. More hidden areas, such as the production and distribution of child pornography videos, are far less understood, but there are grounds for thinking

that video production is the major contemporary 'primary' source of child pornography, with the Internet at the moment serving as a medium for distribution rather than production. This may well change, however, as digital photography becomes more widely available. It is important to stress that at the moment the underground *production* of video child pornography may run parallel with, but be essentially unrelated to, Internet technologies for its distribution.

The COPINE Project at University College Cork has been involved in research in this area for some four years. As part of that research, Project staff are frequently consulted to advise on seized collections, both with a view to identifying new material, but also on occasions to give some judgement of the nature of the collection, and the implications that that might have for both the investigative process and the severity of the offence. This latter issue is one with which the Project is currently concerned, and which this article in part addresses.

Collections of child pornography are not accidental; they result from deliberate choices by an individual to acquire sexual material. However, it is important to note that the sexual or erotic nature of the images lie in both the objective qualities of the material itself, and in the mind of the collector. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the collecting choices made reflect in some sense the 'value' to the individual collector of the material he has access to. Whether or not these choices in any way predict or influence subsequent behaviour (in terms of further collecting, making contact with others with similar interests, seeking out children to assault, and so on) are far from clear but are deserving of further investigation. A central issue here is the better understanding of the processes of collection, the factors that influence collecting behaviour, and the relationship between collecting and the collected material.

Pictures that are collected by adults with a sexual interest in children are not a homogeneous category. For the purposes of this article we can identify two different perspectives that are relevant when considering this issue. The first perspective relates to what is legally defined as child pornography. In a legal sense, what constitutes child pornography in fact varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction (and usually relates to local definitions of obscenity), and this necessarily limits and focuses the response of law-enforcement agencies dealing with the problem. This is an important issue, at a number of levels. When the significance of a photograph is determined by legal definitions, necessarily photographs that fall outside that definition tend either to be ignored or not evaluated because they may be seen as secondary or incidental to the main focus of prosecution. Furthermore, because of jurisdictional differences, photographs which may be illegal in one jurisdiction may be legal in another. Given the international qualities of the distribution of child pornography using the Internet, this raises amongst other things the need to improve both harmonisation of laws between states in the development of common policing strategies.

However, as a first step and even given jurisdictional difference, an objective means of judging the nature of collections independently of legal provision would aid understanding and give a basis for international comparison.

The second perspective we can identify, and for the purposes of this article a more important one, is that by emphasising a psychological approach to pictures attractive to adults with a sexual interest in children, rather than pictures legally defined as obscene, we can identify a range of discernibly different kinds of picture (Taylor, 1999) only some of which may be illegal. The kinds of picture that can be identified range from pictures of clothed children, through nakedness and explicit erotic posing to pictures of a sexual assault on the child photographed. This can be constructed to describe a continuum of increased deliberate sexual victimisation. Any particular example of a photograph attractive to an adult with a sexual interest in children, therefore, can be located along such a continuum of explicit or deliberate sexual victimisation. This continuum ranges from everyday and perhaps accidental pictures involving either no overt erotic content, or minimal content (such as showing a child's pants or underwear) at one extreme, to pictures showing actual rape and penetration of a child, or other gross acts of obscenity, at the other. Taking this perspective focuses attention not just on illegality as a significant quality of pictures, but on the preferred type of picture selected by the collector.

Such a continuum enables the construction of a simple grading system that is of value in characterising collections, and also offers a more discriminating approach to indicate the qualities of a collection. It may also contribute to improving our knowledge of the factors that enable and sustain offender behaviour as the relations between collecting behaviour and the picture material become clearer. Approaching a photographic collection of an adult with a sexual interest in children in this way may assist in developing a more discriminating approach to the management of offences by both law-enforcement agencies and the courts.

Victimisation is a central topic for focus in both analysing picture collections, and attempting to develop descriptive categories. Whether a picture is accidental or deliberate, each time a picture is accessed for sexual purposes it victimises the individual concerned. In a sense, the function of picture collections for the offender is repeatedly to victimise the child concerned, and the victim status is exaggerated by continuing use. Relevant to this, an important purpose of child picture collections for the user is that it allows instant access to the child (or a child) as victim (Healy, 1997). Actual abuse is much more difficult, often involving complex and lengthy engagement with the child before victimisation takes place. Interviews conducted as part of the COPINE research programme with individuals who have experience of both actual abuse and use of child pornography have made reference to this as a factor in sustaining involvement with child pornography and more

generally the collection of pictures. We might also note that knowledge of the victims of child pornography is very limited, but must play a central role in the management of child pornography.

The COPINE Project has amassed over the years a very large reference database² of child pornography. What follows in Table 1 is

Table 1 A typology of paedophile picture collections

Level	Name	Description of Picture Qualities
1	Indicative	Non-erotic and non-sexualised pictures showing children in their underwear, swimming costumes, etc. from either commercial sources or family albums; pictures of children playing in normal settings, in which the context or organisation of pictures by the collector indicates inappropriateness
2	Nudist	Pictures of naked or semi-naked children in appropriate nudist settings, and from legitimate sources
3	Erotica	Surreptitiously taken photographs of children in play areas or other safe environments showing either underwear or varying degrees of nakedness
4	Posing	Deliberately posed pictures of children fully, partially clothed or naked (where the amount, context and organisation suggests sexual interest)
5	Erotic posing	Deliberately posed pictures of fully, partially clothed or naked children in sexualised or provocative poses
6	Explicit erotic posing	Emphasising genital areas where the child is either naked, partially or fully clothed
7	Explicit sexual activity	Involves touching, mutual and self-masturbation, oral sex and intercourse by child, not involving an adult
8	Assault	Pictures of children being subjected to a sexual assault, involving digital touching, involving an adult
9	Gross assault	Grossly obscene pictures of sexual assault, involving penetrative sex, masturbation or oral sex involving an adult
10	Sadistic/bestiality	a. Pictures showing a child being tied, bound, beaten, whipped or otherwise subjected to something that implies pain b. Pictures where an animal is involved in some form of sexual behaviour with a child

based on descriptive analysis of this extensive collection of images, and the experiences of the Project team in categorising material. The collection contains examples of most of the material publicly available, and represents a very large sample of the total amount of material in public circulation at the moment, with a particular focus on newer material. It is wholly based on Internet sources. On the basis of this analysis, some ten levels of severity of photographs can be discerned based on increasing sexual victimisation, and examples of individual images can be located along this ten-point scale. The category system described here extends and develops the Platform for Internet Content Selection (PICS) and the Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSACi) rating system (Akdeniz, 1997), but more directly focuses on pictures related to adult sexual interest in children.

This categorising system quite deliberately includes pictures that do not fall within any legal definition of child pornography and, given this, it is important to stress that collections of photographs of children per se are not in themselves indicative of anything inappropriate. It is the context of those photographs and the way in which they are organised or stored, or the principal themes illustrated that may give rise to concern. Most families have extensive and entirely appropriate pictures of their children, and such pictures are not, in these terms, indicative of adult sexual interest in children unless they are in some sense inappropriately held. Furthermore, in the same context, depictions of children in their underwear or naked may well be entirely appropriate. They can, however, be used inappropriately by adults with a sexual interest in children. Within that inappropriate context, essentially innocent pictures can fall within the category of indicative (level 1). Level 1 may include most common pictures of children, either commercially taken or from family albums. The reasons for inclusion of these kinds of photograph within the material related to adult sexual interest in children, as noted earlier, is that the extent to which a photograph may be sexualised and fantasised over lies not so much in its objective content, but in the use to which the picture might be put. In his review of 11 case studies of paedophilic sex offenders, Howitt (1995) draws attention to the significance of this kind of relatively innocent photograph in promoting and sustaining sexual fantasy. It is the context rather than the explicit content of such photographs, therefore, that is significant, and the emphasis on context in understanding child pornography cannot be over-stressed. This is also relevant to considerations of the portrayal of children and child nudity in artistic settings.

Most pictures will clearly fall within one category, but from time to time the boundaries between categories can be somewhat blurred. The critical factor is overt sexual intent and content, which may in some circumstances be difficult to identify or verify objectively. For example, some newspaper advertisements (such as those advertising Calvin Klein underwear for young men) whilst having no intended sexual connotation for the producer, may nevertheless be thought to emphasise

and exaggerate inappropriately sexual qualities as part of the advertising strategy. The sexual qualities such pictures might have, of course, lie in the mind of the viewer rather than in objective reality, although it should be noted that the significance of using the margins of sexuality to advertise is not lost on advertising agencies who design and produce such advertisements. Kincaid (1998) discusses this at some length.³ A more complex example can be seen in an advertisement for the Bamardo's children's charity, which shows a young girl of perhaps 5 or 6 standing next to an open car door and appearing to be solicited by a kerb crawler, with other obvious prostitute figures in the vicinity.⁴ The child is wearing a dress, and has not been posed in a provocative or erotic way. The intention behind the advertisement was presumably to juxtapose a shocking image of an innocent young girl against a background of prostitution, with the text making the point that 'neglected as a child, it was always possible Kim would be an easy victim for pimps'. However powerful this juxtaposition of images may be (which is part of a series of similar advertisements), this particular image (without reference to the text) rather than being shocking might well act as a source of stimulation if an individual fantasises about under-age prostitutes or child abduction, or if the advertisement is seen as emphasising availability, rather than as a warning.

Conceptualising picture collections and child pornography in terms of a continuum emphasises the sense in which sexualisation of pictures is a psychological process. Legal specification of child pornography in terms of obscenity or sexual content necessarily fails to capture the rich array of material that is attractive to the adult with sexual interest in children. In most jurisdictions, pictures which could be categorised as level 6 or greater are likely to be illegal, in that they clearly in some sense emphasise sexual victimisation. In some jurisdictions, level 2 pictures (involving pictures of naked children in nudist settings may or may not be illegal), and unless a local law explicitly prohibits sexualisable pictures of clothed children, it is unlikely that all level 4 and level 5 pictures will be illegal. This highlights a major problem. Conceptualisations of child pornography that equate it with obscenity necessarily focus on an 'end' product and ignore the children as victims. Early work by Pierce (1984) suggests that there is a blatant disregard for the dehumanising experiences encountered by children in the production of all such material, and that the abuse of children emerges out of the whole spectrum of pornographic trade, including the recruitment of subject and the production and sale of material. This is particularly relevant to the debate about the criminalisation of pictures of child nudity (see Grasz & Pfaltzgraf, 1998).

In conceptualising picture qualities, level 3 pictures (surreptitiously taken photographs of children showing either underwear or various degrees of nakedness) represent a particular kind of dilemma, illustrating in part the issue raised above. In many jurisdictions these photographs may not necessarily be illegal, and indeed may be

indistinguishable from legitimate family photographs. Yet it can be argued that they represent a very serious example of sexual victimisation through photography. This may seem a paradoxical assertion to make, for there is a sense in which there is no victim in these pictures in that the child and his or her caretakers, because the pictures are surreptitiously taken, are more than likely to be unaware of what has happened. It is not uncommon to see pictures taken with high-powered telephoto lenses, for example, such that the photographer might be approximately 50 metres away from the paddling pool or playground that are frequent locations used in these types of picture. Other devices used are 90° lenses that disguise the photographer's intentions (a particularly effective ploy on beaches or at swimming pools). However, whilst the child may be unaware of being photographed, in many respects these pictures are particularly corrosive and offensive because they sexualise situations that should be safe and secure environments in which children can play. Perhaps the important issue here is that lack of knowledge of victimisation does not necessarily diminish its gravity. The issues here are similar to those raised by Holmes *et al.* (1998) in their discussion of the significance of 'hidden' pictures in pornography in general.

Pictures at levels 8, 9 and 10 necessarily involve the presence of someone else in the picture, either an adult or an animal. These can be best thought of as a picture of a sexual assault or rape in process, which clearly falls within all contemporary legal definitions of child pornography. The same argument applies to pictures in level 7, although the offender may not be visible in the scene. In videos of this kind of material, it is not uncommon to hear the photographer giving instructions to the child on what pose to take, to smile, and so on. Although not necessarily visible, the adult is present as the director of poses.

Not all child pornography is what it seems. What are referred to as 'pseudo-photographs' exist, which at first sight complicate the analysis. Pseudo-photographs are constructed photographs, often very cleverly done with great technical sophistication, using digital reconstruction techniques to create an image that is not a photograph of a real person, or of real events. Thus the head of a child might be placed on to the body of a woman, where the body features are manipulated to make it appear to be that of a child (breast reduced in size or eliminated, pubic hair eliminated, and so on). The person portrayed in the resultant picture, of course, does not exist. Other forms of pseudo-image superimpose different unconnected pictures; for example, a child holding a toy might be modified and superimposed on to a picture of a naked man, such that the child appears to be holding not a toy, but the man's penis. In a sense because these pictures are not real (that is to say the events they portray did not happen, or could not happen as the 'person' portrayed does not exist) they might be thought not to involve any victim. However, they represent a form of victimisation, and should be treated as such. In addition, as McCabe and Gregory (1998)

have indicated, abusers often use pornography to entice other children into posing for pictures or movies, and therefore whether the child or situation legally exists is, in a sense, irrelevant. Wasserman (1998) presents a useful review of the legal issues involved in criminalising the production of such pseudo-photographs. The psychological qualities of individuals involved in the production of these kinds of image are unknown.

Whilst the above offers a means of categorising individual pictures, an important quality of picture collections from the collector's perspective is that it is not simply an aggregation of individual pictures. Pictures generally occur in series, and the series invariably has either some sense of implicit or explicit narrative quality, or a common thematic link. Narrative qualities might be a sequence of pictures showing a child undressing or engaging in some particular act. The addition of text to pictures may serve to exaggerate such narrative qualities. A characteristic of much recent child pornography is that the still images available on the Internet are in fact video captures. The process of capturing still images from videos in many ways emphasises and exaggerates the narrative qualities of the original video. Thematic links between pictures, on the other hand, might relate to particular scenes or acts. Such narrative or thematic linkages serve important qualities for the collector, both in terms of sustaining and generating fantasy and in terms of personalising and engaging with the child victim. They also play an important part in structuring collecting behaviour, in that filling gaps in a series may be an important factor in determining selection of material. Interviews with offenders suggest that finding pictures that fill gaps is highly reinforcing to the collector and may add psychological value to a series.

The central significance of a series of pictures to the collector does not invalidate the emphasis on discriminating between individual pictures described above. In terms of the categorising process, a picture series can be characterised in terms of the highest level achieved by individual pictures within a particular series. It needs to be emphasised that the end point of a narrative series (in terms of the extent of sexual victimisation) is the most significant aspect of that series, and for the purpose of categorisation can serve to discriminate the qualities of the series. The process and features of the emergence of a picture series are also relevant factors. A similar argument may also be applied to the categorisation of video sequences.

Locating a picture, or a series of pictures, at some level may not in itself always be a complete characterisation. Other issues surrounding the material may also play a part in determining the sense of extent and severity of sexual victimisation. Factors that indicate greater severity within a given level may be:

1. Size of collection and the quality of its organisation. Size of collection may be indicative of the degree of involvement in the

processes of collecting material, and the extent to which an individual has become absorbed within the adult sexual interest-in-children community. Obsessional sorting or organising of the material is also an indication of the offender's involvement with the pictures and the amount of time spent 'off-line' engaging with the material.

2. The presence of new/private material. This also relates to the extent to which the collector has access to producers, or to the circle around which new and valued material circulates. Again it may be indicative of the degree of involvement in the child pornography world.
3. The age of the child. Recent evidence (Taylor, 1999) suggests that the age of children in new child pornography is reducing. Very young children (of 5 and under) may be particularly vulnerable to involvement in child pornography, in that they may be more susceptible to what for an older child would be inappropriate requests to undress, for example. Very young children have little or no awareness of the sexual context to what they are being asked to do, and may be subject to sexual victimisation without the same risk of disclosure to adults. In these circumstances, there is a greater imbalance in power between perpetrator and victim, and the lack of language skills may reduce the child's capacity to disclose the assault. Pictures involving babies are particularly distasteful, in that they necessarily exploit situations of total dependency.

This article has offered a structure for making more systematic discrimination between paedophile picture collections. Such discrimination offers a way of judging the degree of sexual victimisation portrayed in the photographs, and therefore offers a means of judging severity within the broad offence of possession of child pornography. It also provides a basis on which systematic picture qualities may be related to offender behaviour, including legal pictures, which may in turn help further develop our understanding of the dynamics of child pornography collecting and adult sexual interest in children.

End Notes

1. All correspondence should be directed to Professor Max. Taylor, Director, COPINE Project, Department of Applied Psychology, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland.
2. This work was partially funded by the EU Stop programme.
3. This currently exceeds 80,000 individual still pictures, as well as large numbers of video sequences.
4. See p. 102ff.
- 5- *Independent on Sunday*, 25 June 2000.

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