

**Submission
No 31**

SEXUALISATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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Date Received: 22/02/2016

Inquiry into the sexualisation of children and young people

**A submission to the Committee on Children and Young People
Parliament of NSW**

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22 February 2016

Overview

We are grateful to the Committee on Children and Young People for this opportunity to comment on its terms of reference (TOR). Our opinions are based on our legal, psychological and criminological research on child exploitation material and related social dynamics. Our aim has been to provide information about problematic dynamics relevant to TORs ii, iii and iv. We have only referenced materials attached to this submission but we are more than happy to provide any further materials in which the Committee is interested.

TOR ii: The exposure of children and young people in NSW to sexualized images

TOR iii: The impact on children and young people of growing up in a sexualised culture

We anticipate that the Committee will receive many submissions that discuss this TOR in relation to mainstream advertising, television and pornography. Exposure to pornography in particular is a growing area of concern given the widespread accessibility and prevalence of pornography on the internet. Concerns about the effects of young people being exposed to pornography range from concerns that pornography will lead to greater incidences of risky sexual behavior to concerns that exposure will have negative influences on sexual relationships and attitudes towards women (e.g. see Lim, Carrotte & Hellard, 2016 attached). There is an ever expanding body of research examining the effects of exposure to pornography with many inconclusive and inconsistent findings, which may in part be explained by methodological issues (see Lim et al., 2016 attached for a recent summary of the evidence base and its limitations). However, what may be of interest to the Committee are some of the findings we have encountered in relation to pornography on the internet, and, in particular, child exploitation material (CEM) – which is often called ‘child pornography’. The effects of exposure to CEM is a relatively under researched area.

No material sexualizes children more than CEM. The unabashed and central interest of CEM is the eroticization of children and young people of all ages, even infants, in a variety of ways – ranging from sexualized posing, through to penetrative acts with adults, brutal torture and bestiality. There is no evidence that viewing CEM is causally linked to child sexual assault. However, CEM is a risk factor for child sexual assault for minors and adults who have a predisposition towards sexual aggression (see 4.0, Prichard & Spiranovic, 2014). It is a mistake to think that only paedophiles view CEM. On the contrary, current literature on this topic argues that the expansion of the use of CEM has been primarily driven by previously law-abiding men without a pre-existing sexual interest in children (see 3.2, Prichard & Spiranovic, 2014). Ordinary individuals can develop sexual interests in children.

The children and young people most affected by CEM are those who are sexually abused to produce it; who have been abused partly as a result of a perpetrator viewing CEM; and who have been deliberately or accidentally exposed to CEM.

This sort of material was once relatively rare and highly unlikely to be encountered accidentally by adults, let alone children. But with the Internet and cheap digital cameras, the CEM market has exploded. It is now easy to find and even accidentally encounter (see 2.1, Prichard & Spiranovic, 2014). We think that some adolescents and children may accidentally encounter CEM, including those living in NSW. We have discussed this possibility in relation to evidence that in popular, mainstream websites, CEM is intermingled with movies etc that cater to a young audience, such as *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Harry Potter* (see Prichard et al., 2013, attached; see also Svedin et al., 2011 Tables 2-5, attached). One concern we expressed in that article was that young people who had other risk factors for sexual aggression – family dysfunction, substance abuse, mental illnesses and so forth – may be more inclined to sexually abuse their siblings after viewing CEM.

While we can only surmise what effect CEM – if any – is having upon the broader culture of Australian society, we do think it has entered the public consciousness. Even non-Internet users cannot have escaped the increased spread of CEM given that prosecutions for CEM-related offences have involved very high profile figures in Australia, eg ABC TV personality Andy Muirhead and SA MP Bernard Finnegan, or attracted considerable publicity. Our sense is that the majority of Australians abhor the idea of CEM. However, one study we conducted with university students (N=431) indicated that about 10% did not think there was any harm in just *viewing* CEM that involved real children. 20% thought there was no harm in viewing CEM that did not involve real children (eg computer-generated images of CEM) (see Prichard et al., 2015, attached).

Our findings in respect to attitudes towards the viewing of CEM involving real children find support in a recent study that examined women's experiences of their partners being charged with a CEM possession offence (Liddell and Taylor, 2015 attached). The researchers in this study report that many of the participants experienced comments from friends and family that sought to minimise their partner's CEM offending. Pertinent examples include: 'Its just pornography', 'Why are you making such a big deal about this', 'He was only looking' and 'They are only pictures so what is the harm'.

Research on public views on pseudo-CEM is somewhat mixed. Research conducted in 2000 reveals that an overwhelming majority of attendees at a community meeting (N=261) felt that 'viewing' computer generated CEM was 'okay' (92.3%) with the remaining minority indicating that it was not 'okay' (7.7%) (McCabe 2000, attached). In contrast, and more consistent with the findings of our research, a 2010 study of predominately female undergraduate students (N=252) found that while the majority of respondents thought that the use of computer-generated CEM images was 'unacceptable' (93.3%) a minority of mainly male respondents disagreed (males=13.2%; females 3.1%) (Lam, Mitchell and Seto 2010, attached).

It is also important to note some forms of legal pornography nonetheless eroticize adult-minor relationships. Two common terms for this genre are “Barely Legal” and “Teen”. The material involves adult actresses. A range of techniques are used to project the fantasy of adult-minor relationships. Some movies take greater lengths than others to enhance the fantasy of an adult actress being a minor. For example: choosing actresses with small physical statures; clothing (eg Catholic school uniforms, pyjamas); child-like behaviour (eg giggling, shyness, crying); visual cues (eg apparent vaginal bleeding, teddy bears); themes (eg storylines involving step-fathers, babysitters, teachers); references to sexual inexperience (eg “fresh”, “innocent”, “virgin”); and the control exerted by male partners (Peters et al., 2014, attached). Indeed, Dines (2009:124, attached) refers to “barely legal” as “pseudo-child pornography”. Interestingly, laboratory-based lexical decision-making research revealed that exposure of undergraduate students to “barely legal” pornographic images resulted in a cognitive schema linking youth with sexuality. This indicated the potential that viewing “barely legal” pornography, in at least an artificial laboratory environment, may alter beliefs about the sexual nature of children (Paul & Linz, 2008, attached).

In summary then, the evidence base at present would suggest that CEM is relatively widespread and there are many opportunities for young people to be exposed to this material whether accidentally or deliberately. The harms to children who are abused to produce this material are clear. However, the public appear to be divided on the issue as to whether viewing of CEM is harmful. The evidence base for the harms of exposure at present is limited but would suggest that in young people with preexisting vulnerabilities, viewing of CEM may increase the chances of acting in a sexually aggressive manner. Furthermore, laboratory-based research suggests that even in those without pre-existing vulnerabilities, exposure to other forms of legal pornography that eroticize adult-minor relationships may alter beliefs about the sexual nature of children.

TOR iv: Adequacy of current measures at state and federal level to regulate sexualised imagery in electronic, print and social media and marketing, and effectiveness of self-regulation measures

One issue raised by this TOR is the question of young people creating and sharing CEM. This might be a consensual exchange or it might be done as a form of bullying, where explicit images of a young person are circulated either on social media as revenge porn or as a way to humiliate the person. Now that it is commonplace for children to have access to digital cameras (eg in phones) and to use the Internet and social media frequently, there seems a wider scope for the ways in which children “abuse” each other in a sexual way. Considering the legal definitions of CEM, scenarios might include: recording physical sexual abuse; recording a child without their knowledge with a sexual context (eg ‘up-skirting’,

or recording undressing in change rooms); recording consensual sexual activity or nakedness; computer-generating an image (eg using a photograph of the head of a child and body of an adult engaged in sexual activity); and writing or drawing depictions of children engaged in sexual activity. These activities may constitute generating CEM. Distributing the material, as well as possibly constituting a different offence (in addition to possession), may cause trauma for victims (eg because an image is shared with a school community or put on Facebook). Children may also deliberately expose other children to pornography and thereby cause distress. Educational institutions in particular require guidance in appropriate preventative measures or remedial responses in this area; being lax might hide abuse and zealousness might have unintended negative consequences. Special additional care would be required to ensure that responses are proportionate to the behaviour; among other things, labeling young people as “sex offenders” may be detrimental to their self-efficacy (noting the potential relevance of sex offender registers). Separate consideration would need to be given to lawful consensual sexual relationships between adolescents in which CEM was generated or shared.

[REDACTED]

The impact of pornography on gender-based violence, sexual health and well-being: what do we know?

Megan S C Lim,^{1,2} Elise R Carrotte,¹ Margaret E Hellard^{1,2}

INTRODUCTION

As Internet access and literacy increases, pornography has become highly accessible, cheap and diverse. Online pornography use is common in the USA, with nearly 9 out of 10 men and 1 out of 3 women aged 18–26 reporting accessing pornography online.¹ In June 2013, legal pornographic websites received more UK-based traffic than social networks, shopping, news and media, email, finance, gaming and travel websites.² For example, popular pornography website 'pornhub' received 79 billion video views in 2014.³

Increased access to pornography online has been accompanied by rising concerns that it negatively impacts health and well-being, particularly with regard to young people. These concerns include that viewing any sexually explicit material erodes morals and that specific types of pornography, such as that depicting violence against women, leads to increased violence against women in real life. Even in the case of non-violent pornography, there is anxiety that people view pornography as 'real' rather than fantasy and that this negatively influences attitudes and real-life sexual behaviour, particularly when people's sexual experience is limited such as in adolescence.⁴ Other concerns include the scarcity of condom use in pornography (both for diminishing condom use as a social norm and for the risks to the health of performers), impacts on body image (including trends in pubic hair removal and labiaplasty), and the harms of pornography addiction.

Despite the myriad of fears about online pornography, questions remain over its actual harm. Do viewers really imitate pornography in their own lives and does this negatively influence their health and well-being? Does watching violence in pornography lead to misogyny and gender-based violence? Are young

people at greater risk of the negative effects of viewing pornography (if they exist) than older adults? In this paper, we explore the most commonly cited concerns over online pornography by providing evidence, if available, to support or refute these concerns.

SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOUR

Studies have described young people incorporating ideas inspired by pornography into their real-life sexual experiences.^{5–9} By itself, this need not be problematic. If, however, online pornography is the primary source of a young person's sexual education, and they do not recognise that pornography is fantasy and not designed to be educational, then it may be giving unhealthy educational messages. Given the lack of standardised and quality formal sexual education in most countries, this is a real concern.

Only 2–3% of heterosexual pornography online includes any condom use.^{10–12} Condom use was shown to be more common in pornography depicting men having sex with men (MSM), with one study reporting condom use in 78% of acts of anal sex.¹² Non-use of condoms in sexual intercourse is a key factor in HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) risk. Importantly, several studies demonstrate that viewing unprotected anal intercourse is negatively associated with condom use among MSM; researchers have measured a correlation between the proportion of pornography featuring sex without condoms and the likelihood of engaging in unprotected anal intercourse.^{13–14} The evidence among heterosexuals is both limited and inconsistent.¹⁵ The near absence of condoms from heterosexual pornography makes it difficult to demonstrate such a relationship.

Research on the relationships between pornography consumption and other sexual behaviours continues, and the majority show some significant correlations. Increased pornography viewing has been associated with younger sexual debut, higher numbers of partners and casual sex partners.^{9–15–16} Certain sexual risk behaviours that are not widely practised among heterosexuals occur

commonly in pornography; a content analysis found that 28% of scenes include sex between three or more people.¹² The increasing popularity of heterosexual anal sex, which many women report disliking, has also been attributed anecdotally to its depiction in pornography where it features in 15–42% of scenes.^{10–12–17} Importantly all of these behaviours are associated with increased risk of STIs.

The current state of evidence is limited to correlation and does not demonstrate a causal relationship where viewing porn leads to an increase in sexual risk behaviour. Existing studies have significant limitations in being unable to determine causality; many have major study design flaws, including lack of a control group for comparison, lack of longitudinal follow-up to determine temporality of exposures and behaviours and limited ability to control for confounding factors. Different studies are difficult to compare due to inconsistent measurements and definitions of pornography. Studies have also tended to use non-representative samples (eg, convenience samples of university students), and as a consequence have low external validity.¹⁵ Therefore, the direction of the relationship is not certain; while pornography may influence behaviour, sexual experience may also influence pornography viewing and both sets of behaviours may be strongly driven by other common factors such as sensation seeking and age of sexual maturity.¹⁸

VIOLENCE AND GENDER

Between 37% and 88% of mainstream pornographic scenes include acts of physical aggression (mostly gagging and spanking), most commonly towards female actors with the scene usually suggesting that the recipient was a willing participant.^{19–20} Women are also more likely than men to be depicted as submissive during sex and as exploited or manipulated into sexual activity.^{10–20}

Despite copious research into the phenomenon over many decades, the direct evidence for how viewing violent pornography impacts on gender-based violence is inconclusive. Experimental studies which involve exposing men to violent pornography have demonstrated an increase in sexual aggression;²¹ however, the artificiality of the experimental setting limits the validity of these findings in real-world situations. A meta-analysis of non-experimental studies revealed a significant association between pornography use (particularly of violent pornography) and attitudes supporting violence against women.²² This association cannot be

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interpreted as causation, however, as men with a disposition towards violence against women are more likely to seek out violent pornography.²³ Ecological data from many countries show that the population rate of rape has decreased significantly while pornography use has significantly increased.²¹ This has led some researchers to hypothesise that exposure to violent pornography is cathartic, diverting sexual aggression away from real-life violence.²¹ Ecological data, however, are a very weak form of evidence, as changes at a national level over time may be driven by a multitude of other societal factors.

SEXUAL WELL-BEING

There are many reports about the adverse impacts of pornography on relationships, sexual enjoyment and well-being, but evidence is predominantly limited to personal anecdotes or surveys with subjective measures. For example, a common complaint from young heterosexual women is a feeling of subservience to male pleasure, being pressured or being expected to do things their male partners had seen in pornography (such as anal intercourse and ejaculation onto the female's face).⁷⁻⁹ Women's pornography use is under-represented in research, but surveys of couples in heterosexual partnerships show that men viewing pornography is associated with decreased sexual satisfaction for both partners while the female partner viewing pornography is associated with increased sexual satisfaction for both partners.²⁴⁻²⁵

Research also suggests that excessive use of pornography among men can lead to a reliance on pornography to maintain sexual arousal and consequently, loss of enjoyment during sex with a partner.⁸⁻²⁶ Although pornography addiction is not listed as an addictive disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fifth edition), many do believe in its existence. For example, studies have shown that pornography viewing is associated with brain changes similar to those observed in addiction and that pornography addiction is often associated with sexual dysfunction.²⁶⁻²⁷ Worryingly this research also showed that adolescents take longer than adults to recover from pornography addiction, which the authors attribute to the younger age of pornography exposure.²⁶

BENEFITS OF PORNOGRAPHY

There are many advocates for the benefits of pornography and a growing, albeit limited, body of supporting evidence that

to date has primarily relied on subjective assessments. Watson and Smith⁴ reviewed literature relating to the personal, relational and social value of pornography, stating that use of pornography may diminish sexual anxiety and dysfunction, encourage sexual expression and provide entertainment and satisfaction. Pornography has been associated with more open views towards sex and sexuality. For example, pornography use has been correlated with acceptance of homosexuality among US men²⁸ and may allow non-heterosexual young people to explore and learn about their sexuality in a way that they are not able to from mainstream culture. Australian²⁹ and Danish³⁰ adults have self-reported that pornography has significantly more positive than negative effects, such as an improved sex life, feeling more comfortable and open-minded about sex and being more attentive to their partner's sexual pleasure. Similarly, in a sample of 245 US students, viewing pornography was associated with a willingness to explore new sexual behaviours and reported to be a source of empowerment for the viewer, building confidence among the female participants in particular.³¹ Furthermore, there is a rising interest in more positive forms of pornography, for example 'feminist pornography' and 'sex-positive pornography' which emphasise the real sexual pleasure of female performers, represent diversity, display sexual consent and agency and provide ethical working environments for performers.³²

It should be noted that some of these identified possible benefits are in direct contradiction with the possible harms described above. Sample or study design differences may play a role in this contradiction; however, it is also likely that pornography does not influence all individuals in the same way. Further research is needed to identify factors which may mediate the impact.

DISCUSSION

Online pornography is extremely common in modern society, but its impact on sexual health and well-being remains uncertain. The available evidence suggests that pornography does affect our behaviour, sometimes in problematic ways. However, it is also likely that for many people, viewing pornography has no adverse effects and may even have beneficial outcomes. Research to date has produced mixed results and has overlooked some key groups, particularly young women. As our commentary has identified several common flaws in methodology, there is a need to conduct further research,

including systematic review, longitudinal research, and experimental studies into the various effects of pornography in representative samples of adolescents.

Despite the importance of clarifying the impact of pornography, several factors indicate that it will always be extremely difficult to provide conclusive evidence. First, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, asking adolescents about pornography and getting parental consent to do so poses ethical problems. However, given that pornography viewing typically begins from a young age (a median age of 14 years in our unpublished study), it is vital that research does include adolescents before they begin this behaviour. Another key problem is that viewing pornography is so common in our society that studies often have no meaningful control groups, limiting the quality of the research. Even studies investigating pornography and outcomes in a dose response design suffer from a lack of clarity regarding cut-off values for problematic use. The impact of pornography on sexual and relationship well-being will be particularly difficult to determine given the lack of objective methods to measure these. Finally, a causal relationship between pornography viewing and outcomes is difficult to prove as both behaviours must surely be mediated by the choice to watch pornography for example, those people more interested in sex and with stronger sexual desires are more likely to both engage in sexual behaviour and to watch pornography.

Another difficulty in obtaining high-quality evidence about the negative or positive health and social impacts of pornography is the rapidly changing environment and medium in which it is consumed. Near-instant on-demand access to billions of pornographic videos from a handheld device is likely to have a very different impact than a sexually explicit magazine kept under the bed. Furthermore, research on previous generations of young people may not be relevant to the current generation, who are now typically exposed to a high volume of diverse and explicit pornography before they have had the chance to test and develop their own sexual practices and relationships.

What responses could we implement if pornography is found to be unhealthy? Some attempts at legislation have been made; examples include international efforts to eliminate child pornography and nationwide internet provider blocks on any material deemed explicit (eg, in China). In most countries, pornography is technically restricted to viewing by adults

aged over 18 years; however, these restrictions are widely ignored and near-impossible to enforce.

California, one of the world's largest pornography-producing jurisdictions, recently made the decision to mandate condom use in all films not to reduce the potential for harm to viewers, but to protect adult film workers. This was a clear evidence-based response; performers are at risk of extremely high rates of STIs, including HIV.³³ Less clearly evidence based was the recent ruling for pornography introduced in the UK, which banned depicting behaviours, including spanking, fisting, face-sitting and female ejaculation. Critics of this ruling contend that the list of behaviours was chosen based on moral judgement rather than evidence of the negative health impacts of viewing these behaviours.

Evidence is also needed to inform policy and practice regarding education about pornography. Young people are watching pornography more frequently and from a younger age; it is becoming an entrenched part of their sexual development. This suggests that education on this topic is essential. Education may involve improving media literacy, such as building understanding of concepts including the reality and fantasy of sex depicted in pornography, expectations for real-life sex and consent. However, quality education requires a strong evidence base, which is not yet established for pornography. The most important question still to be answered is whether pornography's risks to adolescents are greater than those that have been inadequately demonstrated for adults.

Contributors MSCL and ERC conducted the literature review; all authors contributed to writing and editing the manuscript.

Competing interests None declared.

Provenance and peer review Commissioned; externally peer reviewed.



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To cite Lim MSC, Carotte ER, Hellard ME. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2016;**70**:3 5.

Published Online First 28 May 2015

J Epidemiol Community Health 2016;**70**:3 5.
doi:10.1136/jech.2015.205453

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Child Exploitation Material in the Context of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

**A Report Commissioned by the
*Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse***

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21 May 2014

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank the anonymous reviewers of this report for their contributions and Dr Valerie Williams (Faculty of Law, University of Tasmania) for her assistance collating and discussing research materials.

Executive summary

The child exploitation material (CEM) market has expanded dramatically with the advent of the Internet and digital cameras; CEM is easy to access and the risk of detection is relatively low when offenders take security precautions. Criminal laws differ between Australian jurisdictions, but generally they proscribe knowingly possessing, distributing and producing CEM. Definitions of CEM include footage, still images, written material, drawings and depictions of people who appear to be children. CEM varies from cartoons through to sadistic rape of real children. Prosecutions for CEM offences are now commonplace in Australia.

Compared with other areas of crime research, CEM research is relatively new. This report highlights where the current research base is limited; it is important these limitations are carefully considered before drawing conclusions based on this report.

CEM offenders

Current evidence suggests that some offenders use CEM without ever directly sexually abusing children. There is no evidence to support a direct causal link between viewing CEM and committing hands-on sex offences. However, CEM is associated with child sexual abuse. Viewing CEM may be a strong risk factor for child sexual abuse for individuals already disposed to sexual aggression and sexual deviancy.

CEM in the workplace

Very little research has examined CEM in workplace contexts. It may be accessed, distributed or produced in the workplace using a variety of technologies and for a variety of purposes (e.g. personal fantasies, to groom children, or financial gain). Arguably, red flags for the potential for current or future abuse of children are: possession, distribution or production of CEM; any CEM depicting children under an institutions' care; and evidence that CEM has been shown to children. Strategies highlighted within the literature for workplaces to counter CEM include:

- Software filters that block inappropriate websites
- IT systems to monitor or audit workers' Internet use
- Protocols for children and workers concerning smartphones, cameras, web-cams, computers and content transfer etc.
- Online identify verification requirements
- Situating monitors so they can be easily viewed by others
- Internet use policies that (a) stipulate sanctions for inappropriate behaviour, including reporting CEM offences, and (b) influence workplace culture by explaining the harmfulness of CEM, and
- Facilitating anonymous workplace counselling for problematic Internet use.

With a view to developing clear protocols for workplaces, research is needed to clarify: the legal context of these strategies; and how workplaces can handle CEM discovered on a worker's IT equipment without committing additional offences.

Background

This report was prepared for the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (the Commission). Its aim is to succinctly explain the relevance of ‘child pornography’, or child exploitation material (CEM), to institutional child sexual abuse and the Commission’s terms of reference. Primarily the report informs the Commission’s first (protecting children) and second (reporting child sexual abuse) terms of reference by:

- explaining the extent to which the viewing of CEM by employees (within institutions or governments) should be treated as a ‘red flag’ for current or future sexual abuse of children, and
- suggesting prevention strategies for institutions and governments to (a) reduce the risk of onset among employees, or (b) assist employees to anonymously desist from viewing CEM.

The agreed scope of this report did not encompass original legal or empirical research, but rather a brief review of available scholarly literature concerning:

- evidence as to the extent of access to CEM
- evidence as to the factors contributing to onset
- evidence linking viewing of CEM with contact child sexual abuse
- issues concerning institutions managing staff accessing CEM.

The authors¹ of the report have sought to objectively inform the Commission about available evidence, the quality of the evidence and its key messages. Scholarly literature and other relevant material were sourced through social science and psychology search engines (e.g. *PsychINFO*, *AGIS*, *APAIS-Health*, *CINCH* and *CINCH-Health*) and legal search engines (e.g. *Westlaw International*, *LexusNexus International*, *Bestlaw* and *Austlii*).²

Structure

There are six parts to this report. Part 1 explains the scope of the report and legal definitions of CEM in Australia. The second part presents available data on the prevalence of CEM offences. Part 3 examines factors that contribute to CEM onset, that is, an individual’s first decision to use CEM. Parts 4 and 5 respectively discuss (a) evidence concerning the link between physical abusing children and viewing or distributing CEM and (b) approaches to managing CEM within institutional settings.

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² Search terms included [TOPICS] Child Exploitation Material, Child Pornography, Possession, Prosecution, Distribution, Production, Prevalence/Pervasiveness/Incidence, Exposure, Peer-to-peer, Aetiology, Causes/causal, Pathways, Onset, Risk factor/factors, cognitive distortions, Attitudes, Subcultures, Hands-on offence/offending, Contact sex offence/offending, Situational Crime Prevention, Situational prevention: [AUTHORS] Wortley, Smallbone, Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchel, Taylor, Holland, Quayle, Krone, Hurley, Leary, Beech, Elliot, Seto, Demetriou & Silke, Bourke, Hernandez, Marshall, Prentky, Kingston.

1.0 What is 'child exploitation material' (CEM)?

Child sexual abuse is not a recent phenomenon, within institutional contexts or otherwise. Similarly, historical records indicate that the portrayal of child sexual abuse as a topic of eroticism through imagery is not new (Ost, 2009) and in many countries only became the subject of specific criminal laws in recent decades. This sort of material is generally called 'child pornography'. Some commentators prefer to use other terms, such as CEM, arguing that the word 'pornography' treats the material as a legitimate sub-genre of adult pornography (Beech et al., 2008).

It is an offence, typically indictable, in all Australian jurisdictions to knowingly possess CEM (Crofts & Lee, 2013; see overview by Gillespie, 2012:82-97; Warner, 2010); other major categories of CEM offences are distribution and production.³ Legal definitions of CEM differ between jurisdictions.⁴ By way of example, the framework of the *Criminal Code* (Cth.) proscribes:

- the production, distribution, control, obtaining or possession of offensive material which depicts people who are, or appear to be, under the age of 18
- among other things engaging in sexual activity or posing sexually, or depicts the breasts (if female), genitals or anuses of those people for a sexual purpose ("child pornography"), or depicts such people as victims of torture, cruelty or physical abuse ("child abuse material").⁵

The bulk of online CEM appears to involve real children of all ages, including infancy, ranging in severity from semi-nudity to rape, torture and bestiality (Niveau, 2010). Different means of categorising the seriousness of CEM are used in law, including the Oliver Scale and the COPINE Scale (Gillespie, 2012). The harmfulness of viewing CEM involving real children is a complex topic (Gillespie, 2011), and there are claims, particularly in the US, that the rationale for sentencing CEM users is flawed (Hessick, 2011). However, common explanations of the harmfulness of the possession and distribution of CEM include that it:

- stimulates the demand for production and hence arguably child sexual assault (especially when the material is purchased, or exchanged for something of non-monetary value to the sender) (Mizzi et al., 2010)

³ See for example *Criminal Code* (Tas.) ss 130A and 130B.

⁴ See Warner (2010: n 6): *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), s 70(1); *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), s 91H(2); *Criminal Code* (Qld), s 228C (distribution of child exploitation material, maximum penalty 10 years), s 228D (possession of child exploitation material, maximum penalty 5 years); *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* (SA), s 63 (production or dissemination of child pornography, maximum penalty 10 years; 12 years for aggravated offence), s 63A (possession of child pornography, maximum penalty 5 years; aggravated form 7 years); *Criminal Code* (Tas.), s 130B (distribution of child exploitation material), s 130C (possession of child exploitation material), s 130D (accessing child exploitation material); *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1995* (Tas.), ss 73A, 74B (summary offences for distribution and possession); *Criminal Code* (NT), s 125B (possession, distribution or production of child abuse material, maximum penalty 10 years imprisonment); *Classification (Publication, Films, Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1996* (WA), s 60(1) (sell or supply child pornography, maximum penalty 7 years), s 60(4) (possession of child pornography, maximum penalty 5 years).

⁵ *Criminal Code* (Cth.) ss 273.1, 273.5, 273.6, 473.1.

- may encourage active child sex offenders (CEOPC, 2012)
- may be used to “groom” children to convince them of the normality of sexual relations between adults and children (e.g. with material involving children smiling, see Prichard et al., 2011)
- denigrates children as a class (Warner, 2010) and
- may cause distress, even trauma, to the young people depicted in the material (in addition to effects of the sexual abuse) (Henzey, 2011).⁶

1.1 CEM and legal pornography: *teen* and *barely legal* genres

Importantly, unlike the US context, Australian criminal laws encompass not only images or footage involving real children, but also virtual CEM not involving real children.⁷ In practice, there are two main types of virtual CEM. The first is computer-generated, for example where the image of a child’s head is superimposed over the body of an adult engaged in a sex act. These appear to be relatively uncommon (see Wolak et al., 2005:6).

Another type of virtual CEM is pornography involving adult actresses that appear to be under the age of consent because of: their physical stature; child-like clothing (e.g. school uniforms, pyjamas); child-like behaviour (e.g. language and apparent sexual inexperience); visual cues (e.g. teddy bears and apparent bleeding from loss of virginity); and themes (e.g. storylines involving school teachers)(Paul & Linz, 2008). While such material – sometimes called *barely legal* pornography – is legal in the US on grounds of freedom of speech (Gillespie, 2011), its status under Australian criminal law appears ambiguous and it may constitute CEM on the grounds that it depicts people who appear to be under the age of consent (David Plater, pers. communication, 04/03/2014).⁸ Metrics on the consumption of such material in Australia are not available. However, the *barely legal* genre is well established; a US study of the most popular 150 *teen* pornography films found that 18% (N=28) could be categorised as *barely legal* in that they concentrated on adult-minor relationships (Peters et al., 2013). It is therefore feasible that Australians view such material.

1.2 Criticisms of CEM laws

It is useful here to note two criticisms of CEM laws; these points are relevant to part 5.0, below, in terms of dealing with CEM in the workplace. First, CEM laws have been described as inconsistent with the age of consent to sexual relations and an encroachment upon adolescent sexuality (Crofts & Lee, 2013; Leary, 2010; Walker et al., 2011). For example, under certain circumstances in Australia it may be legal for two adolescents to be lovers, but illegal for them to send images of themselves naked to each other via the Internet or via mobile phone (Albury & Crawford, 2012). Secondly, it has been publicly argued that the definitions of CEM are too broad

⁶ Wortley and Smallbone (2012) note that little research has specifically examined CEM victims.

⁷ See for example, *Criminal Code* (Cth.) s 473.1; *Criminal Code* (Tas.) s 1A.

⁸ Dr David Plater was formerly a public prosecutor in South Australia and currently teaches at the University of South Australia.

because they can be read to encompass types of art (Simpson, 2011), literature (Richards, 2011), cartoons and drawings (McLelland, 2011).

2.0 How commonly is CEM accessed?

The CEM market is experiencing unprecedented growth. Until relatively recently CEM was difficult to produce and procure. But with the combined advent of the Internet and cheap digital cameras the CEM market has boomed in terms of both supply and demand (Bourke & Hernandez, 2009; Leary, 2007; Martellozzo et al., 2010). Electronic access to CEM can be facilitated through a variety of mechanisms – by mobile telephone, email, USENET groups, websites, Internet Relay Chat and Peer-to-Peer (P2P) networks (Bourke & Hernandez, 2009; Leary, 2007).

2.1 Prevalence of access

It is very difficult to accurately estimate the scale of the online CEM market. This is partly because of the clandestine nature of some CEM trafficking networks, which can use highly sophisticated technology to evade detection (McQuade, 2009). Svedin et al.'s (2010) study of just under 2,000 Swedes aged 17-20 years found 4.2% of participants had ever viewed CEM. Since that survey was conducted in 2003 it is feasible that prevalence levels may have increased, given improvements in technology and ease of access (Seto et al., 2014). Other indicators of the strength of demand exist. For instance, a hacked European website that operated for 76 hours with 99 CEM images reportedly received over 12 million hits, including 2800 from Australia (Allard, 2008). Robust data have been obtained from studies of P2P networks. Wolak et al.'s (2013) study of *Gnutella* indicated that almost 245,000 US computers had shared 120,418 unique CEM files in a 12 month period. A similar study indicated that up to 9,700 CEM files are trafficked daily by 2.5 million distinct peers in over 100 countries (Hurley et al., 2013). Because P2P networks tend to have highly efficient systems for sharing data they appear to be significant distribution points (Prichard et al., 2011).

It seems that CEM is not difficult to encounter on the Internet even without searching for the material. Accidental viewing can occur, for example through responding to email spam (Krone, 2004) or by seeing images posted on website noticeboards (e.g Rushkoff, 2009). Accidental exposure aside, opportunities to deliberately view CEM may occur on dedicated CEM websites and legal pornography websites (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). In P2P settings, links to CEM may be intermingled with mainstream material from popular culture – movies, music, software and so forth (Prichard et al., 2013).

2.2 CEM and criminal justice statistics

Criminal justice system (CJS) data do not reflect the true prevalence of crime because of multiple factors, including police resources (see Willis et al., 2011). It is very likely that CJS data underrepresent the scale of the CEM market. However, CJS data are presented here because they show that CEM offences are now a consistent feature of criminal justice systems in this country and others (Beier & Neutze, 2012; Rashid et al., 2012). In the US in 2009, an estimated 4,901 CEM possession arrests were made (Wolak et al. 2012). Available Australian criminal justice data also indicate steady volume.

- Annual reports of the Commonwealth Director of Prosecutions show that since the financial year 2009/10 over 200 charges have been laid annually under the *Criminal Code* (Cth.) section 474.19 (using a carriage service for child abuse material). In 2011/12 almost 700 charges were laid (Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013).
- In NSW Local Courts dealt with between 50 and 100 child pornography offenders annually in the 2005-08 period (Mizzi et al., 2010).
- Between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2012, 200 CEM possession offences were sentenced in Victorian Magistrates' Courts in addition to 64 CEM production offences (SACStat, 2014a, 2014b).
- Data extracted from the Tasmanian Sentencing Database revealed that 32 individuals were found guilty of CEM offences between 2006-11 by the Supreme Court, representing 10% of all sexual cases and 1.2% of all cases (Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, personal communication, 07/02/2013).

2.3 Characteristics of CEM access, including access from the workplace

Wolak et al.'s (2012) large study of US arrestees provides useful indicators of the types of CEM accessed. Within this cohort of arrestees it was estimated that:

- 87% possessed images of children aged 6 to 12 years
- 20% possessed images of children aged less than 4 years old
- 82% possessed images of sexual penetration and
- 65% possessed CEM video footage (as opposed to still images).

Of arrestees who had used P2P networks, 42% possessed images of sexual violence against children; the rate was 19% for those who had not use P2P networks. Almost two thirds of arrestees (59%) appeared to have distributed CEM. Earlier work by the same research team examined US arrestees in the 2000-01 period (Wolak et al., 2005). Most of the cohort (91%) accessed CEM from home. Interestingly, 7% accessed CEM at work and 2% at other places, such as libraries and schools (see further, 5.1). Tehrani (2010) indicated that the rate of workplace CEM access might be higher than 7%. She cited a 2004 survey of UK workplaces conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). According to Tehrani (2010) 71% of workplaces reported dealing with a staff member for accessing CEM in the preceding two years. However, since the original CIPD report is no longer available, the efficacy of the survey is unclear. The prevalence of workplace CEM access has not been examined by more recent peer reviewed studies.

3.0 What factors contribute to CEM onset?

As acknowledged by other scholars in the field (e.g. Jung et al., 2012), the knowledge base pertaining to the aetiology of CEM offending is in its infancy. Various theories of aetiology have been developed to explain contact sex offending but there is no evidence as yet to support the validity of these theories in explaining CEM offending. Hence, the following sections pertaining to individual and situational risk factors are based on research, which has specifically explored risk factors in CEM offenders. Onset refers to an offender's first deliberate interaction with CEM. Because the legal definition of CEM is broad, there are a wide variety of contexts in which onset might occur. Among other things, it might encompass: writing text which constitutes CEM online or in a hard copy (paper form); viewing pornography that is legal in other countries yet illegal in one's own country; or generating cartoons depicting child abuse (see 1.1 & 1.2). Some of these behaviours may be relevant to the Commission and they will be discussed further in 5.0, below. However, greater concentration is given in this section of the report to CEM that involves images and footage of real children because (a) of the seriousness of this material and (b) it constitutes the bulk of the CEM market. In addition to different forms of CEM, it is important to recall that there are three broad types of CEM-related behaviour: viewing, distributing and producing CEM. Risk factors for CEM onset can be divided into individual (e.g. psycho-social backgrounds of offenders) and situational (e.g. environmental factors which, interacting with personal factors, increase the risk of criminal decision making) (Smallbone et al., 2013; Wortley, 2009; Wortley & Smallbone, 2012, 2014).

3.1 Individual risk factors

The primary individual risk factor for CEM offending is being male (e.g. see CEOPC, 2012). Others identified by research include: any prior criminal history; age of first offence (i.e. any offence before the age of 25 years); high frequency of offending; history of treatment for sexual offending; having a self-reported sexual interest in children; low education; being single; and substance use problems (Eke & Seto, 2012 citing Eke et al., 2011; Faust et al., 2009). However, research has also suggested that sexual deviance may specifically be a significant risk factor for CEM offending. For instance, research conducted by the United States Sentencing Commission (2012) based on the pre-sentence reports of 2,696 non-production CEM offenders, indicated that approximately one-third of CEM offenders had engaged in criminal sexually dangerous behaviour (e.g. contact sex offences, CEM offences) and many others had engaged in a variety of non-criminal sexually deviant behaviours (e.g. collecting children's underwear) prior to their current conviction for a CEM offence. It is not surprising that individuals who sexually abuse children are at risk of using CEM. Indeed, some individuals start using CEM *after* they have begun sexually abusing children (McCarthy, 2010). Section 4.1 and 4.2, below, provide further detail about the individual characteristics of different CEM offender profiles.

3.2 Situational risk factors

Little research has directly focussed upon the circumstances of CEM onset. However, key situational risk factors discussed by researchers are the anonymity provided by the Internet (Meridian et al., 2009) and the lessening of inhibitions this perceived anonymity may facilitate (Demetriou & Silke, 2003), the ease of access to online CEM and the low risk of detection (Wortley, 2009). It has been argued that the *situation* provided by the Internet (and private digital cameras) has been the driver of the extraordinary expansion of the CEM market over the last 20 years – rather than some sort of large-scale increase in the *individual* risk factors outlined above (3.1) (Wortley, 2012).

This view is consistent with criminological concepts that (a) the more criminal opportunities that exist, the more crime there will be and (b) previously law-abiding individuals can be “drawn into committing specific forms of crime if they regularly encounter easy opportunities for these crimes” (Clarke, 2008: 180). More importantly, the view that situational factors have driven the expansion of the CEM market is consistent with the fact that “hands-off offenders” – that is, CEM offenders who have not also been convicted of child sexual assault – come from diverse backgrounds. Commenting on the variety of backgrounds from which hands-off offenders hail, Wortley (2012: 193) stated “it is the ordinariness, not the deviance, of many online child pornography users that is striking”.

People without pre-existing sexual attraction to children may choose to deliberately view CEM for the first time “impulsively and/or out of curiosity” (Beech et al., 2008:255; Lanning, 2010). For others the process leading up to this decision may have been gradual and involved crossing a “significant psychological threshold” (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012:121). It may be that the decision to view CEM is simpler in a sexually aroused state – for instance after watching non-deviant, legal pornography; evidence indicates that sexual arousal is associated with increased risk taking behaviours and lower perceptions of negative consequences (Taylor & Quayle, 2008). It is also feasible that one pathway to CEM use might be through a gradual loss of excitement in legal pornography, leading to an escalation in the severity of the material sought (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012).

Other studies have suggested that cognitive distortions may increase the risk that an individual begins and continues an interaction with CEM. Examples of cognitive distortions include beliefs that looking at CEM is harmless, or that adult-child sexual contact is appropriate (Meridian et al., 2009; Quayle & Taylor, 2002). Online paedophilic subcultures promote such distortions by encouraging and legitimising sexual interactions between adults and children (e.g Broadhurst & Jayawardena, 2011; D'Ovidio et al., 2011; Holt et al., 2010). Our own research has suggested that the small but persistent presence of CEM intermingled with mainstream P2P material – mainly pirated movies, music, software and legal pornography – may work to normalise CEM for some groups of Internet users, including young people (Prichard et al., 2013). This possibility appears to be supported by recent calls for the decriminalisation of the possession of CEM (Falkvinge, 2012).

4.0 The links between viewing CEM and contact child sexual abuse

CEM offenders are a very diverse group and, as such, a number of typologies have been proposed to attempt to explain and account for the diversity within this group. The diversity of CEM offenders is relevant to understanding the risk CEM offenders may pose with respect to contact child sexual abuse. In particular, this diversity makes it difficult to estimate the risk of contact sex offending in CEM offenders. The diversity of CEM offenders also presents challenges with respect to treatment and management, as what works for one CEM offender may not work for another. The following section of the report outlines some of the major typologies proposed.

4.1 Types of CEM offenders

A variety of typologies have been developed to categorise the contexts in which CEM is used. The first of these, by Krone (2004), sets out nine categories of CEM offenders, including browsers, secure collectors, and those who used the material for grooming children. Merdian, Curtis, Thakker, Wilson, and Boer (2013) listed dimensions by which CEM offenders could be differentiated, namely according to: the degree that they networked with other CEM offenders; whether they were motivated by paedophilic interests, general deviant sexual interest or financial gain; or whether their use of CEM was driven by personal sexual stimulation, or, as a part of physical sexual abuse of children. Other key typologies are presented below in Table 1. This table is not an exhaustive list but it does summarise some of the predominant typologies in the literature.⁹

Table 1. Summary of CEM offender typologies proposed in the peer-reviewed literature.

Publication	Proposed CEM offender types
Beech, Elliott, Birgden, & Findlater, 2008	(1) 'Curious' and impulsive users, (2) users who access and share images to fuel their sexual interests, (3) hands-on offenders who also use child pornography, and (4) users who distribute images for non-sexual motivations (e.g. financial gain).
Lanning, 2010	Three broad types comprised of one or more subtypes: (1) situational offenders (includes "normal" adolescents, impulsive or curious adults, morally indiscriminate offenders who commit a range of offences, and profiteers), (2) preferential offenders (including paedophiles/hebephiles, diverse/sexually indiscriminate offenders, offenders with latent sexual preferences) and (3) miscellaneous offenders (including media reporters, pranksters, older "boyfriends" and overzealous citizens).
Wortley & Smallbone, 2006	Proposed a psychological typology for CEM users: (1) recreational users who access CEM out of curiosity, on impulse or for short-term purposes, (2) at-risk users who are vulnerable users and have developed an interest in CEM and (3) sexual compulsives who have a specific sexual interest in children and actively search for CEM ¹⁰ .

⁹ For a detailed overview of CEM user typologies, see Merdian and colleagues' (2013) recent paper.

¹⁰ This typology was originally developed by Cooper and colleagues (1999) to account for different users of adult web sites.

It is clear that there is no agreed upon framework for capturing the diversity observed in CEM offenders and there is the potential for considerable overlap between many of the proposed ‘types’ of CEM offenders. Nonetheless, it is also clear that the typologies tend to distinguish between those who may be considered situational offenders and those who are preferential offenders. With respect to situational offenders, the majority of typologies acknowledge that some CEM users may access CEM for reasons other than sexual interest or deviancy such as curiosity, out of impulse or financial gain.¹¹ Preferential offenders, on the other hand, are driven by a sexual interest in children and may exclusively use CEM or may use CEM in conjunction with or to facilitate hands-on offending. It is plausible that these two broad types may differ with respect to risk of contact sex offending given that preferential offenders appear to be more sexually deviant and, as noted in the following section of this report, sexual deviance is a major predictor of recidivism in contact sex offenders. However, there is no evidence as yet to support the validity of sexual deviance as a predictor of contact offending in CEM offenders.

4.2 Research on the relationship between CEM and child sexual abuse

In 3.1 it was noted that some individuals start using CEM after they have begun sexually abusing children (McCarthy, 2010). However, an issue of intense interest in this field is the reverse situation, namely whether viewing CEM might cause some individuals to start sexually abusing children. Work on this topic has led to the study of three groups:

- CEM-only offenders who have not sexually abused children (also called ‘**hands-off**’ offenders)
- child sex offenders who have not used CEM (also called ‘**hands-on**’ offenders), and
- ‘**dual**’ offenders who have engaged in both child sexual abuse and CEM (Elliott & Beech, 2009).

The relationship between these offender profiles is complex and available evidence is inconsistent, even conflicting. Table 2 provides a summary of a number of studies, which have explored differences between hands-off offenders, hands-on offenders, dual offenders and, in some instances, community controls.

Table 2. Summary of findings from peer-reviewed research exploring differences between hands-off offenders, hands-on offenders and dual offenders.

Publication	Cohort	Key findings	Conclusions
Armstrong & Mellor, 2013	32 online hands-off offenders, 32 hands-on offenders, 47 community controls	Hands-off offenders more likely possess insecure attachment style and poor sense self-worth than other two groups and more avoidance and distress than community controls.	Internet an attractive medium for hands-off offenders to explore sexual interests. Social avoidance and interpersonal distress for hands-off offenders may act as protective factors against

¹¹ Berlin and Sawyer (2012, p.31) argue that ...’ some individuals appear to be experiencing compulsive urges to voyeuristically view such images, devoid of any motivation to actually approach a child sexually’.

			hands-on offending.
Babchishin, Hanson & Hermann, 2011	Meta-analysis of 4,844 offenders included hands-off offenders and hands-on offenders	Hands-off offenders were younger, less likely a racial minority, higher sexual deviancy, greater empathy and lower cognitive distortions. Higher rates of physical and sexual abuse for hands-off and hands-on offenders than the general population.	Hands-off offenders are a unique subtype but a notable study limitation is that it was not possible to isolate pure groups of hands-on and hands-off offenders so may have been considerable overlap between these groups.
Elliott, Beech & Mandeville-Norden, 2013	526 hands-on offenders, 459 hands-off offenders & 143 dual offenders	Dual offenders had higher empathy than other two groups and poorer self-management than hands-off offenders. Hands-on offenders had lower victim empathy, greater cognitive distortions, externalised locus of control, and greater impulsivity.	Dual offenders represent a unique group with differing treatment needs to hands-on offenders. Poor self-control may be the factor that leads to hands-on offending in dual offenders.
Jung et al., 2013	50 CEM, 45 non-contact offenders, 101 child molesters	Hands-off offenders had greater academic and vocational achievements but less likely to be married at time of offence and on average had less biological children.	Hands-off offenders are a low risk for hands-on offending due to having higher internal inhibitions and less likelihood of access to children.
Lee et al., 2012	113 hands-off offenders, 176 hands-on offenders and 60 dual offenders	Hands-off offenders more likely employed in professional occupation, lower on antisociality and less likely to commit hands-on offence but odds of doing so increased as scores on an Antisocial Behaviour scale increased.	Hands-off offenders have characteristics that inhibit antisocial behaviour and are lower risk for committing hands-on offences. However, hands-off offenders are heterogeneous and risk for hands-on offending increases significantly for those who exhibit antisocial behaviour.
Long et al., 2013	60 hands-off offenders and 60 dual offenders	Hands-off offenders less likely live with a partner, have children or prior convictions. Hands-off offenders possessed more CEM images overall but fewer images at serious end of scale (e.g. penetrative or sadistic material).	Hands-off offenders are lower risk of hands-on offending as less likely have access to children and have sexual preference for non-touching/non-penetrative activity (measured by analysis of CEM image possession).
Marshall et al., 2012	30 hands-off offenders and 28 hands-on offenders	Preliminary findings from an ongoing study – hands-off offenders had greater obsessions and compulsions as well as loneliness.	Preliminary findings point towards unique treatment needs of hands-off offenders.
McCarthy, 2010	56 hands-off offenders and 51 dual offenders	Dual offenders more likely have a diagnosis of paedophilia, use Internet to locate and groom potential victims, network with others who share deviant interests and possess larger	Hands-off offenders are a heterogeneous group. Appears CEM does not play a causal role in hands-on offending – 84% dual offenders reported committing hands-on offences

		proportion of CEM than adult pornography.	prior to CEM offences.
Seto, Hanson, & Babchishin, 2011	Meta-analysis of 4,697 online offenders	12% of CEM offenders had a history involving a hands-on offence based on official data whereas the figure was 55% based on self-report. Recidivism rate for CEM offenders was low – 2% hands-on and 3% for a CEM offence (based on follow-up period less than 4 years on average).	Hands-off offenders as a combined group are a low risk for hands-on sex offences even though they are likely to have a sexual interest in children. However, individual traits and life circumstances may distinguish between those who refrain from hands-on offending and those who do not.
Webb, Craissati & Keen, 2007	90 hands-off offenders, 120 hands-on offenders based on index offence	Hands-off offenders were younger, had higher contact with mental health services as an adult, fewer live-in relationships and fewer substance issues. Based on an 18-month follow-up period, hands-off offenders less likely to re-offend.	Hands-off offenders are a heterogeneous group with a small minority likely to commit new CEM offences but not hands-on offences and the majority of CEM offenders pose a low risk for sexual reconvictions.

The research summarised in Table 2 suggests that hands-off CEM offenders are a distinct subtype of offender who demonstrate considerable diversity but appear on the whole to pose a low risk for hands-on offending. It is worth noting here that studies of hands-off offenders have relied primarily on criminal histories. Official criminal records may underrepresent offence prevalence (regarding criminal histories, see Neutze et al., 2011). For instance, it seems that when subject to polygraph testing, hands-off offenders are more likely to reveal a greater sexual preference for extreme CEM and for material depicting pre-pubertal children (Buschman et al., 2010). However, in the absence of further studies of this nature, it is not possible to draw firm conclusion for the Commission about the efficacy of criminal history or self-reported data.¹²

4.3 CEM and child sexual abuse: key findings from research to date

The point of consensus is that, at present, there is no evidence to support a direct causal link between viewing CEM and committing hands-on sex offences (Fishe et al., 2013; Webb et al., 2007). Still, there is an association between the two behaviours since, taken as a whole, a significant percentage of CEM offenders appear to have committed hands-on offences. Seto et al.'s (2011) large meta-analysis found that 12% of CEM offenders had a criminal history for hands-on offending (see Table 2). The percentage of CEM offenders who self-reported hands-on offending was much higher: 55%. Similarly, 22% of those arrested for CEM offences in the US in 2009 were also charged with child sexual abuse (Wolak et al., 2012).

¹² Buschman et al. (2010) also found that under polygraph testing participants admitted to a higher rate of hands-on offending, which was highlighted by the CEOPC (2012). However, the use of polygraph to disclose offence history is not without its critics (e.g. Rosky, 2013).

The extent to which hands-off offenders pose a risk in terms of progressing to hands-on offences against children remains a major issue of contention.¹³ The research presented in Table 2, above, indicated that hands-off offenders are a unique group, distinct from both hands-on and dual offenders. Some characteristics of hands-off offenders may actually work to reduce the likelihood that they progress to hands-on offending, including higher levels of education, lower levels of access to children, higher levels of empathy, lower cognitive distortions, and a tendency to avoid interpersonal distress (e.g. as might be encountered from the aftermath of child sexual abuse). An alternate proposal is that viewing CEM provides a sexual outlet for some individuals that enables them to resist physical offending against children (Ost, 2009; Wolak et al., 2008; Wortley, 2010). However, there does not appear to be any empirical evidence to support this statement.

Scholars still accept that viewing CEM may lead some people to hands-on offending because the conditional pairing of CEM with deviant sexual fantasies, masturbation and orgasm may reinforce their sexual attraction to children (Quayle et al., 2006; Sullivan & Beech, 2004; Taylor & Quayle, 2008). Relevant to this perspective is the fact that hands-off offenders have been found to have higher levels of sexual deviancy than hands-on offenders (Babchishin et al., 2011).¹⁴ This is pertinent because deviant sexual interests (including paedophilic interests) are the strongest single predictor of recidivism in both adult and adolescent contact sex offenders (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). It may be that anti-social personality traits are important in moving from 'viewing' to 'doing'. Lee et al.'s (2012) findings indicate that hands-off offenders are more likely to progress to contact offending if they possess anti-social personality traits. This is consistent with meta-analytic findings that recidivism among contact sex offenders is best predicted by sexual deviance and antisocial personality or criminal lifestyles (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon 2005).

Broader research on sexual aggression is also noteworthy. Studies have shown that pornography use is a risk factor for sexually aggressive behaviour among people

¹³ There are a number of reasons why we would recommend caution before concluding that hands-off offenders pose a low risk for committing hands-on offences. First, most studies that have examined recidivism in hands-off offenders have employed short follow-up periods. Yet, related research has shown that, on average, extrafamilial child molesters who offend against unrelated victims tend to be older and their risk for recidivism remains elevated until they reach their 50s (see Hanson, 2002) – thus short follow-up periods may not be adequate to accurately gauge recidivism for hands-on offences in CEM offenders. Furthermore, the majority of studies have relied upon official data (convictions) and thus may only be examining a small sub-set of CEM offenders given that the majority of CEM offenders are not apprehended (e.g. see Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). Other limitations of the evidence-base, as noted by the independent reviewers of this report, include but are not limited to the small sample sizes on which the majority of studies are based, selection biases with respect to not only prosecution of CEM offenders but also selection criteria for inclusion of CEM offenders in various studies, as well as differences in definitions of CEM which may influence the findings obtained in studies conducted in different jurisdictions.

¹⁴ Jung et al. (2013, pp. 296-297) note that although CEM offenders appear to be more sexually deviant, police practices may be such that only the more deviant CEM offenders are prosecuted.

who possess other risk factors that predispose them towards sexual aggression. This is true for adult males (Kingston et al., 2009), children and adolescents (Alexy et al., 2009). In other words, pornography use¹⁵ appears to increase the risk of sexual aggression in adults, adolescents and children who are predisposed to that type of behaviour. It is possible that these risks are elevated if such people view deviant pornography, including CEM, as opposed to legal pornography (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Kingston et al., 2008).

In conclusion, there is no direct evidence to support a causal link between viewing CEM and committing hands-on sexual offences. However, there is an association between hands-on sexual offences and CEM. A consistent finding within the literature is that CEM offenders are a very diverse group. As a combined group, CEM offenders possess some characteristics (e.g. they are less likely to have access to children and exhibit greater levels of social/interpersonal distress and avoidance) that would inhibit them and/or lessen the likelihood of progressing to contact sex offending. Yet, the evidence also suggests that the risk of engaging in contact offending as a result of viewing CEM is greatly increased for vulnerable individuals who are already predisposed to sexual aggression.

¹⁵ Research conducted in a laboratory setting, using a lexical decision-making task, also revealed that exposure of undergraduate male and female students to virtual CEM (sexually explicit material depicting models that appear underage) resulted in a cognitive schema linking youth with sexuality (Paul & Linz, 2008). The study's authors acknowledge that attitudes are not necessarily linked with action but this study indicates the potential for viewing of CEM to alter beliefs about the sexual nature of children.

5.0 CEM in institutional contexts: issues relating to staff

This final part of the report has three sections. The first (5.1) overviews available information on CEM in institutional settings as they relate to staff. The second section (5.2) addresses the extent to which CEM can be treated as a red flag for child sexual abuse. In 5.3 the report outlines prevention strategies for institutions to (a) reduce the risk of onset among employees, or (b) assist employees to anonymously desist from viewing CEM. Terms such as ‘employee’ and ‘worker’ are meant to encompass all institutional contexts relevant to the Commission, including volunteers and religious. While we have focused on primary sources, we have included some relevant secondary material that is not otherwise accessible, particularly as cited by Tehrani (2010). Since this report’s terms of reference focused upon the issue of staff accessing CEM, it was outside the scope of this report to examine the management and prevention of CEM offences by adolescents or children under the care of institutions. However, there appear good reasons for future research to address this since (a) adolescents and children can be perpetrators of sexual violence (see 4.3; Alexy et al., 2009) and (b) evidence indicates that adolescents can use CEM (see 2.1; Svedin et al., 2010).¹⁶

5.1 Background – CEM in institutional contexts

Although researchers have rarely focussed on the use of CEM in institutional settings, some literature does discuss its occurrence. A study of US arrestees from 2000-2001 found 7% had accessed CEM from their workplace (see 2.3). It is unclear what percentage of offenders in 2014 might access CEM this way, given the proficiency of modern Internet access in the home. In the UK unverified claims have been made that CEM use is increasing in workplace settings, with employees: using CEM to groom children; generating CEM images at work; or accessing CEM at work. The same source suggested that motivations exist for offenders to engage in such behaviours at the workplace because it (a) is easy, (b) avoids the risk of detection by family members at home, and (c) is perceived as having a lower risk of detection than CEM access at home (Gamble, 2005; cited in Tehrani, 2010).

These serious suggestions await empirical investigation. It is certainly accepted that employees are willing to use the Internet in the workplace for private purposes, including online shopping, social interaction and so forth (Greenfield & Davis, 2002). Perhaps as many as 16% view legal pornography at work (Websense, 2006; cited in Cameron, 2012). Anecdotal reports occasionally link CEM with institutional or workplace settings. Examples of such cases are worth considering:

- CEM was discovered on the workplace computer of a 28 year-old teacher. His employer contacted the police. The same man was already the subject of a police investigation. CEM was also found on the man’s home computer. The investigation

¹⁶ Prichard et al. (2013) estimated that of 162 persistent search terms recorded over a three month period on a P2P network, three related to CEM (e.g ‘pthc’ – an acronym for ‘pre-teen hardcore’) and 36 catered to a youth market (e.g *Harry Potter*).

triggered allegations of child sexual abuse. The man was convicted of sexual assault and CEM offences (Wolak et al., 2005).

- A woman who worked in a day care centre began sending a friend photographs of the infants under her care undressed and, later, being penetrated with objects. She took the photographs with her mobile phone; workplace rules against the presence of phones had relaxed (Quayle, 2012).
- The conviction of a man for downloading 1000s of CEM images shocked his colleagues at the small charity for which he worked. He was highly regarded by the workplace. Media coverage of the case affected the ability of the charity to operate in the local community for several years (Tehrani, 2010).
- Over 30 Victorian children in out of home care were allegedly targeted by organised crime for prostitution. Some of the abuse was filmed to generate CEM (ABC, 2014).
- Police recovered a stolen council-issued laptop belonging to a Tasmanian Alderman. On it they found legal pornography in addition two CEM files: a cartoon strip and a portion of literature which depicted children engaged in sexual acts. The Alderman claimed that he deleted the CEM files as soon as they were downloaded and that his sexual interests lay in adult pornography (ABC, 2011; News.com.au, 2011).

These examples, in addition to the background provided by sections 1.0-4.0 of this report, suggest that institutionally-linked CEM may vary greatly according to its: **form** (electronic or hard copy, video footage, still images, written material, drawings and virtual representations of children (1.1)); **severity** (e.g. semi-nudity though to sadistic rape (1.1)); **means of access and generation** (e.g. mobile phone, digital cameras and multiple Internet mechanisms (2.0)); and the **motivation or purpose** of the use (e.g. accidental exposure, browsing, paedophilic sexual fantasy, to facilitate child sexual abuse, or financial gain (4.1)). Where CEM is generated in a workplace it may (a) involve physical abuse, or be developed without the child's knowledge, and (b) be distributed to others, or kept for private use (Quayle, 2012). It is also likely that as new technologies are developed, new ways of generating, distributing and accessing CEM in the workplace will emerge (Quayle, 2012).

5.2 To what extent should CEM be treated as a 'red flag' for current or future sexual abuse of children?

Many workplaces have policies to regulate the use of pornography.¹⁷ However, the discovery of CEM is different inter alia because it is illegal and may be evidence of an offence. It is outside the scope of this report to examine how institutions should respond to CEM in terms of appropriate administrative procedures and whether new legislative mechanisms could be introduced to stipulate certain responses. Yet, on this broad point it is important to consider Howell (2009), who warned from the American standpoint that managers could commit offences by deleting discovered CEM, sending the material to others for advice, or checking websites visited by the worker concerned. Although Australian legal scholars have not yet examined these possibilities, it does seem feasible that at least some of the acts described by Howell

¹⁷ Cameron (2012) has explored the effectiveness of these policies vis-à-vis Australian unfair dismissal cases. It does not seem to be clear whether legal obligations currently exist for workplaces to report discovery of CEM.

(2009) could satisfy the elements of national criminal laws. By way of example, an IT manager who, after finding CEM collected by a worker, deleted the material without contacting the police may have possessed child pornography for the purposes of the *Criminal Code (Tas.)* (s 130C) without being able to rely on any of the defences set out in section 130E, such as acting for the public benefit. Clarification of these areas of law by the Commission may encourage appropriate treatment of CEM by institutions.

The rest of this section of the report discusses situations where the discovery of CEM should be treated as a 'red flag' indicating the potential for current or future child sexual abuse. We suggest differentiating between contexts to some extent.

CEM and children under the care of institutions

Because of the evidence that some hands-on offenders groom children by showing them CEM (4.1), any indication that a worker has shown or distributed CEM to children ought to be treated as a red flag for current or future abuse.¹⁸ Naturally, material discovered that depicts children actually under the care of institutions ought to be treated as a red flag as it may constitute evidence of current abuse.

CEM depicting children not under the care of institutions

Based on current scholarly knowledge (see 4.1 and 4.2), it cannot be assumed that an employee discovered with CEM (a) has sexually abused children, (b) will ever progress to sexually abuse children, or (c) has a strong sexual interest in children. However, studies of offenders collectively demonstrate an association between child sexual abuse and CEM. An unknown portion of hands-off offenders are at risk of sexually abusing children, particularly if they possess other risk factors for sexual aggression. Dual offenders use CEM and sexually abuse children. Consequently, our view is that the discovery of CEM ought to be treated as a red flag within institutions because of the potential that the worker concerned may progress to contact offending or may already be abusing children. Discovery not of CEM but other types of deviant pornography (e.g. bestiality) might also constitute a red flag because of the links between such material and sexual aggression. However, the evidence underpinning this view is less compelling (see 4.3).

CEM in other scenarios

Generally, the use of discretion by institutions in situations relating to child abuse involves the risk that extraneous issues will sway decision-making. It is feasible that, when exercising discretion regarding the discovery of CEM, an institution might be concerned about potential damage to its own reputation or the life of their worker; consider the example above (5.1) of the repercussions experienced by a charity when one of their popular workers was convicted of CEM offences.

¹⁸ Likewise, any evidence that a worker had shown indecent images (e.g. legal pornography) to children should be treated with great concern, although strictly that scenario is beyond the scope of this report.

However, in our view discretion is necessary because of the definitions of CEM that exist in Australian law (see 1.1). For example, section 473.1 of the *Criminal Code* (Cth.) refers to “offensive material” depicting people who are, “or who appear to be”, under age. This means that in borderline cases an institution may need to judge whether material is offensive or whether the people involved appear to be under the age. Equally, the section’s definition of “child pornography” might invite an institution to decide whether the depiction of a naked child was “for a sexual purpose”. Institutions may legitimately form the view that discovered material is not CEM. For example, parents sharing photographs of their children at the beach may be neither offensive nor done for a sexual purpose.

In other circumstances institutions may discover CEM that does not involve real children. Examples noted in this report include cartoons or artwork, literature, and some genres of ‘teen’ or ‘barely legal’ pornography. Available literature suggests that although such material can be found within the collections of hands-off and dual offenders, insofar as child sexual abuse is concerned the dominant association is with footage or still images of real children, often engaged in sexual activity. However, arguably there is still sufficient reason to red flag current or future abuse. This is because (a) possession of such material is an offence and (b) it seems rational that the discovery of any sort of CEM should lead to a thorough examination of the IT equipment used by the worker concerned – a process best undertaken by police services. Subject to the clarification of criminal laws, workplace managers, among others, should take care to avoid committing offences in the way they handle the discovered CEM.

5.3 CEM and institutional prevention strategies

Only a handful of scholars have discussed CEM prevention strategies for institutions. It should be noted that: (a) little evidence exists as to the effectiveness of the strategies forwarded in the literature; and (b) legal research would be required to assess the implications of the strategies discussed below in each Australian jurisdiction.

Quayle (2012), a clinical psychologist and expert on different forms of online child exploitation, discussed the value of screening and vetting procedures. In her opinion these strategies are useful for identifying individuals with a history of sexual crimes against children, which would appear to include CEM offences as well as child sexual assault. However, Quayle warns that screening procedures will be of little help in identifying people who may develop an interest in CEM. This view is based on the fact that hands-off (CEM only) offenders are a heterogeneous group. It is also consistent with Wortley and Smallbone’s (2012) argument that situational factors have driven the increase in CEM offending, rather than individual factors (3.2).

Principles from an established criminological theory called situational crime prevention (Cornish & Clarke, 2003; Clarke, 2008; Wortley, 2012) have been forwarded as a framework for preventing CEM (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012; Quayle, 2012) and child sexual abuse (Terry & Ackerman, 2008) in institutions. Among

other things, for CEM prevention this framework recommends strategies that: increase the effort required for workers to use CEM; increase the risks related to detection; and remove excuses or cognitive distortions that workers might use to justify their actions. These strategies are intended to be integrated and not used independently of each other. Their value is in reducing the influence of situational factors that encourage criminal decision making – especially for otherwise law abiding people. Predatory or committed offenders are less likely to be influenced by situational crime prevention strategies (Clarke, 2008).

Increase effort

Workplace filters that block inappropriate websites have been suggested as a means of making CEM difficult to access online (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012; Quayle, 2012). Because workplaces own IT equipment and provide Internet services, they appear to have much greater flexibility to implement effective Internet filters than do, for example, Internet service providers or government regulators (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). Recent research would suggest that blocking P2P networks might reduce opportunities to not only access CEM, but to distribute it as well (see 2.1). Institutional filters will not prevent workers from viewing or distributing CEM through private Internet connections – including home desktop computers and smartphones (which can be used at the workplace). Nonetheless institutional filters can reduce the regularity with which workers encounter “easy opportunities” (Clarke, 2008: 180) for CEM offending. It has been suggested that at times workplaces simply fail to install filter-software (Tehrani, 2010). This highlights the importance of institutional support for CEM prevention in general.

Behavioural strategies may also be important in terms of increasing effort. Quayle (2012, citing BECTA, 2008) referred to the importance of protocols governing computers, cameras, mobile phones, web cams and content transmission – providing these were promoted among children and workers (and parents where appropriate). Logically this would, for example, increase the difficulty of generating CEM in the workplace. Recalling the example of the day care worker who generated CEM with her mobile phone (5.1), it is tempting to conclude that the crimes would not have occurred if the workplace’s protocols disallowing the use of mobile phones were properly enforced.

Increase risk

By increasing the risk that CEM offending is detected fewer workers will feel tempted to engage in such behaviours (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). Punishments (i.e. sanctions for breaching workplace regulations) are also relevant, including reporting the discovery of CEM to police services.¹⁹ However, Li et al.’s (2010) empirical research on workplace Internet policy compliance suggests that the risk of detection is more important than sanction severity. In fact it appeared from their

¹⁹ Reporting to police services seems advisable even if discovered CEM cannot be linked to individual workers. Legal research may need to clarify organisational obligations pertaining to data retention following the discovery of CEM.

study that increasing sanction severity could erode compliance by some staff members. It is important to differentiate between actual and perceived risk; the latter – the perceived risk of detection – is more important for preventing criminal decision making in specific situations (Clarke, 2008).

Monitoring staff Internet use tends to be considered the best method by which the perceived risk of detection might be increased in the workplace. It is possible that institutions' IT managers could undertake monitoring, perhaps using automated processes or through auditing Internet use (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012; Quayle, 2012). Establishing identity verification to use computers may promote the perception of risk whilst simultaneously reducing the sense of anonymity typically experienced online (see 3.2; Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). Wolak et al. (2005) estimated that over 40% of US CEM arrestees were very knowledgeable about the Internet. This suggests that for IT strategies to increase the perception of risk, they would have to appear credible and robust. Monitoring systems would also be heavily reliant upon IT managers. An unpublished survey of firms conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF, 2005; cited in Tehrani, 2010) suggested that the majority of IT managers (74%) would not report workers if they discovered that they had accessed CEM. However, the veracity of this unpublished survey is unclear. Finally, monitoring policies would need to consider issues relating to workers' confidentiality (Tehrani, 2010) and privacy.

With respect to behavioural strategies that increase perceived risk, Quayle (2012) recommended that, where possible, computers be situated so that it is easy for others to see the monitors. The BECTA protocols referred to above – concerning cameras, mobile phones, web cams and content transmission – in our view could also increase perceived risks in relation to (a) producing CEM in the workplace, and (b) using CEM to groom children. This is because if the protocols were adequately promulgated there would be a greater likelihood that children or colleagues reported such behaviours.

Removing excuses

Much has been written about criminal decision making and techniques that offenders might employ to neutralise their consciences and to justify their actions (Sykes & Matza, 1958). If a crime is perceived as morally ambiguous because, for example, it is easy to commit and is committed by lots of other people, individuals may be more ready to commit that crime; the perception of permissibility or "excusability" acts as a situational cue (Cornish & Clarke, 2003: 64). Therefore situational crime prevention considers strategies that remove excuses as valuable for otherwise law-abiding people, but less effective for predatory offenders.

Wortley and Smallbone (2012) see workplace codes of conduct as a means by which excuses relating to CEM might be tackled and they refer to empirical evidence of the effectiveness of codes in reducing things like workplace theft and bullying. In their view, workers ought to be required to sign codes of conduct that proscribe the use of workplace IT equipment or Internet accounts for CEM-related behaviours.

Quayle (2012) forwarded similar views and recommended regular reminders to staff about appropriate conduct. She also referred to research on Internet Use Policy (IUP) compliance. As noted, one of those studies found that risk of detection appeared more important than sanction severity in influencing workers' (N=246) intended compliance with IUP (H. Li et al., 2010). However, the strongest indicators of compliance were workers' perceptions of the benefits of the IUP and their personal norms regarding Internet abuses. More recently a different research team's empirical study underscored the influence of techniques of neutralisation upon IUP compliance (W. Li et al., 2013). These findings suggest that, because of their influence on workplace culture, strategies that "remove excuses" through codes of conduct (or IUPs) are potentially more important than strategies that "increase risks" or "increase effort".

In our view, evidence presented throughout this report indicates that there would be considerable benefit in workplace codes (or IUPs) "removing excuses". The starting point should be to explain what CEM is and how it can take different forms. This is because some workers may not be aware that CEM definitions may cover cartoons, literature, types of pornography that is legal in other countries and so forth (see 1.1). Institutions may also wish to express why CEM is inconsistent with their ethic (Erooga, 2012). However, to remove excuses the most critical step would be to explain the harms associated with CEM. This will counter the sorts of cognitive distortions that appear to facilitate CEM onset, including beliefs that viewing CEM is harmless, and, adult-child sexual relations are appropriate (3.2). This step may be particularly important if online CEM is becoming normalised as we have suggested elsewhere (Prichard et al., 2013). Since some offenders have reported that they begun using CEM out of curiosity, workers should be advised not to access CEM even to investigate it or to find out how bad it really is (see Lanning's (2010) references to over-zealous citizens). Finally, subject to clarification of criminal laws, workplace codes should stipulate how discovered CEM should be handled.

5.3 Systems for workers to anonymously desist from using CEM

Very little research has addressed how to assist desistance. Quayle (2012) recommended that institutions provide avenues for workers to anonymously seek help when they are aware of personal sexual interest in children. An organisation that she and others have referred to is *Stop It Now* (www.stopitnow.com), which among things aims to facilitate early recognition of problems by abusers and potential abusers. It is unclear whether other similar anonymous services exist. Alternatively, institutions may facilitate anonymous counselling for workers concerned about their attraction to children or behavioural problems relating to the Internet, including CEM, online gambling and so forth (Tehrani, 2010). As yet no specific treatment model has been developed for CEM offending (Tehrani, 2010).

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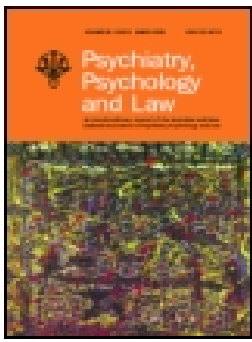
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To cite this article: Jeremy Prichard, Caroline Spiranovic, Karen Gelb, Paul A. Watters & Tony Krone (2015): Tertiary Education Students' Attitudes to the Harmfulness of Viewing and Distributing Child Pornography, *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, DOI: [10.1080/13218719.2015.1042419](https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2015.1042419)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2015.1042419>



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Tertiary Education Students' Attitudes to the Harmfulness of Viewing and Distributing Child Pornography

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Little research has examined public support for criminalising viewing and distributing child exploitation material (CEM). Using an online survey of 431 undergraduate students from Australia, we explored perceptions of the harmfulness of CEM. The majority of respondents agreed that viewing and distributing CEM lead to further production and had a negative effect on victims. Although 93% of respondents agreed that CEM involving real child victims should be illegal, 22% did not agree that CEM involving pseudoimages should be illegal. Those who demonstrated higher levels of agreement with explanations of the harmfulness of CEM were more likely to be female, to have achieved postsecondary qualifications, to have never viewed pornography, to support censorship of pornography, and to believe that CEM involving pseudoimages of children should be illegal. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Key words: child pornography; law; public; social attitudes.

Introduction

In recent decades, researchers have examined public attitudes towards a variety of criminal laws. The significance of this work lies in examining not only disjunctures between the law and public sentiment, but also how public punitiveness acts as a vector for change, particularly through political systems (Pickett, Mancini, & Mears, 2013). Although evidence of punitive sentiments certainly exists, public opinion is neither static nor homogeneous. For instance, it appears that individuals are more inclined to be satisfied with sentence outcomes – in real or hypothetical cases – once they are privy to the sorts of facts that judges use in sentencing (Lovegrove, 2007; Warner & Davis, 2012).

In attempting to understand what shapes punitive sentiments, scholars have pointed to factors such as the influence of offender archetypes (Doob & Roberts, 1983) and the role of emotions, such as anger and fear of crime (Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009; Hartnagel & Templeton, 2012; Johnson, 2009). The smaller body of research that has focused on attitudes towards sexual crimes has emphasised the influence of myths concerning offenders' modus operandi (e.g., targeting strangers), propensity for future offending, imperviousness to treatment, and so forth (Brown, Deakin, & Spencer, 2008; Fedoroff & Moran, 1997; Gelb, 2007; Pickett et al., 2013). Punitiveness towards sexual crimes may be driven by other factors as

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well, including perceptions of the permanent damage caused to victims (Pickett et al., 2013).

Some studies have indicated that sex crimes are associated with a ‘special stigma’ (Griffin & West, 2006; Manza, Brooks, & Uggen, 2004, p. 281), which attracts greater public punitiveness than other sorts of crime (Manza et al., 2004; Rogers & Ferguson, 2011; Warner, Davis, & Walter, 2011). However, still stronger stigma appears to be attached to sexual offences against children (Berry, Philo, & Tiripelli, 2012; Gavin, 2005; Schiavone & Jeglic, 2009). As Pickett et al. (2013) note, potent terms have been used by scholars to describe popular constructs of the child sex offender – such as ‘monster’ (Soothill & Walby 1991, cited in Gavin, 2005, p. 397) and ‘salivating pedophile’ (Danay, 2005, p. 152). Empirical evidence indicates that the public is more fearful of child sex offenders than other sorts of sex offenders (Kernsmith, Craun, & Foster, 2009). Mancini and Mears’s (2010) analysis of a 1991 US telephone survey found much greater support for the death penalty for child sexual abuse (51%) than for the rape of an adult (27%).

Child exploitation material (CEM)

Very little empirical attention has examined public opinion of laws governing child pornography, or ‘child exploitation material’ (CEM). The only study of this sort in the European context was conducted by Nicholls et al. (2012), which qualitatively examined public attitudes to sentencing in England and Wales ($N = 82$). Most participants considered that CEM possession warranted significant custodial sentences because, among other things, viewing CEM stimulates further CEM production and child abuse, and because the offenders were complicit in the original child abuse. A minority of participants preferred shorter custodial sentences for CEM possession because, to quote one female focus-group participant, ‘there’s a big difference

between looking at an image and actually abusing a child’ (Nicholls et al., 2012, p. 41).

In the United States, Mears, Mancini, and Gertz’s (2008) participants ($N = 425$) considered prison sentences to be the most appropriate punishment for child sexual assault (97%), distributing child pornography (89%), and indecent exposure to a child (77%). Fewer participants (68%) reported that prison was the most appropriate punishment for accessing CEM. Similar to the results from other attitudinal studies (Costelloe et al., 2009; Mancini & Mears, 2010), greater punitiveness towards sex crimes (including CEM) was associated with being white, male, less educated, and less wealthy, and having generally high levels of concern about crime. Mears et al. (2008, p. 551) queried whether their findings pointed to ‘cleavages in American society regarding the appropriate sanctioning of individuals who access child pornography’. They underscored the need for future research to examine public reasoning as to why this behaviour warrants imprisonment.

Neither Nicholls et al. (2012) nor Mears et al. (2008) differentiated between CEM involving real children and computer-generated images not involving real children. This is an important distinction, given that, as discussed below, the harmfulness of CEM involving computer-generated images of children has been questioned. A more complex question arising from Mears et al.’s (2008) investigation concerns gendered punitiveness on the one hand and, on the other, attitudes towards pornography. While they found that males tend to hold more punitive attitudes towards accessing CEM than females, research has consistently shown that males tend to be more accepting of pornography (Carroll, Padilla-Walker, & Nelson, 2008) and also hold more liberal beliefs regarding sexuality (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). This was consistent with Svedin et al.’s (2011) study of almost 2,000 Swedes aged 17–20 years, in which frequent (daily) pornography use appeared to be almost exclusively a male

phenomenon. Frequent pornography users were significantly less inclined to support prohibition or restriction of pornography, or to believe that pornography degrades women (Svedin et al., 2011, 782–783). Frequent pornography use was also associated with having viewed CEM, although participants' perception of CEM was not examined. Other factors that may influence negative attitudes towards pornography are religious beliefs (Velezmore, Negy, & Livia, 2012) and beliefs that pornography use undermines committed relationships (Byers & Shaughnessy, 2014).

Reasons to examine attitudes to CEM laws

The lack of knowledge about public attitudes to CEM laws represents a significant gap in the literature for three reasons. First, online CEM 'more so than other child sex crimes, appears to be ubiquitous' (Mears et al., 2008, p. 548). CEM offences are now a consistent feature of criminal justice systems in many countries, including Germany and Australia (Beier & Neutze, 2012; Prichard & Spiranovic, 2014). McManus and Almond (2014) reported that 268 UK offenders were convicted for CEM possession in 2012/13, in addition to 1,247 convictions for CEM production and distribution offences. In the United States in 2009, an estimated 4,901 CEM possession arrests were made (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2012). However, criminal justice data do not reflect the true prevalence of crime for a variety of reasons, including the impact of police resources on the capacity to detect criminal behaviour (see Willis et al. 2011). Given the clandestine nature of CEM offences, it seems very likely that criminal justice data significantly underrepresent the scale of the CEM market.

Svedin et al.'s (2011) study found that 4.2% of Swedish participants had ever viewed CEM. Since that survey was conducted in 2003 it is feasible that prevalence levels may have increased, given improvements in technology and an associated

increase in the ease of access to CEM (Seto, Hermann, & Kjellgren, 2014). More recent indicators of the strength of demand have been collated from studies of internationally popular peer-to-peer (P2P) websites. Wolak, Liberatore, and Levine (2014) found that almost 245,000 US computers had shared 120,418 unique CEM files in a 12-month period. A similar study estimated that 9,700 files of interest are trafficked daily by 2.5 million distinct peers in over 100 countries (Hurley, Prusty, & Soroush, 2013). Certainly it appears easy to access CEM on pornographic websites (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012) or to encounter the material without searching for it (e.g., Krone, 2004). One P2P study found links to CEM intermingled with links to mainstream pirated material – such as movies, music, software, and books (Prichard et al., 2013). Such treatment of CEM may work to construct it as 'ethically neutral' data disconnected from the child abuse that it records and hence 'acceptable for sexual entertainment' (Prichard et al., 2013, p. 997).

Secondly, it is worth examining attitudes to CEM laws because many of them are relatively new (Gillespie, 2011) when compared with other crimes, and they tend to attract significant sentencing outcomes similar to other sexual crimes (Mancini, Barnes, & Mears, 2013). For possession offences contrary to the *Criminal Justice Act 1988* (UK) s 160(1) the guidelines of the Sentencing Council for England and Wales suggest an upper range of three years' custody (Sentencing Council, 2013).

A final reason why it is important to examine the public's opinion of CEM laws is that their legitimacy has been challenged in different spheres. For example, Rick Falkvinge, founder of the Swedish Pirate Party (*Piratpartiet*), has called for the decriminalisation of CEM possession on the basis that the laws constitute unnecessary censorship that militates against freedom of information (Falkvinge, 2012, 2013). Wholesale advocacy for the decriminalisation of CEM is not evident within academia.

However, scholars have expressed concern that the strictness of some CEM laws encroaches upon freedom of expression and that the resources expended enforcing such laws could be better used to promote child welfare (Danay, 2005).

In broad terms, knowingly possessing and distributing CEM is illegal in Western countries (for a comparison of laws of the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, and International Law see Gillespie, 2012). However, important differences exist. By way of example, Australian definitions of CEM clearly encompass images not involving real children, such as cartoons and computer-generated images (Prichard & Spiranovic, 2014). Gillespie's (2011, p. 49) analysis suggests that UK law could encompass such images, but only in certain circumstances, including when they 'appear to be of photographic quality'. Some have questioned the rationale for criminalising images not involving real children, given the apparent remoteness between these sorts of material and harm to actual children (Ost, 2009).

Various explanations exist as to the harmfulness of CEM involving real children. A causal link between viewing CEM and child sexual assault has not been established (Long et al., 2013). Yet, evidence suggests that as a form of deviant pornography, CEM is a risk factor for child sexual assault when combined with other risk factors for sexual aggression (Alexy, Burgess, & Prentky, 2009; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Kingston, Fedoroff, & Firestone, 2008). Additionally, CEM is believed to encourage active child sex offenders (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, 2012), it may be used to groom children (Taylor & Quayle, 2003), it objectifies children as sex objects (Warner, 2010; Ost, 2009), it stimulates demand for CEM production and hence child sexual assault (Mizzi, Gotsis, & Poletti, 2010), and it may cause ongoing distress, even trauma, to the young people depicted in the material.

However, debates on these issues can be found as well. For instance, the market

paradigm – that is, the view that downloading CEM stimulates production – has been questioned, particularly when the material is not paid for (Hamilton, 2012). Regarding effects on victims, although the long-term impacts of sexual abuse are well founded, very little research has specifically examined additional consequences of CEM production and distribution (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). Given that academics and jurists question aspects of CEM laws, it is feasible that members of the public do too. Warner (2010, p. 395) raised this possibility in the Australian context when she queried whether CEM is regarded as a 'serious criminality in a modern and permissive society'.

The current study

This article presents the results of a 2012 preliminary study that examined public perceptions of the illegality of CEM and, related to this, common explanations of the harmfulness of distributing and accessing CEM. This is the first study to analyse public perspectives on the underlying justification for criminalising the viewing and distribution of CEM. Based on previous research regarding frequency of pornography use, the study examines sociodemographic, behavioural, and attitudinal variables that may predict public perceptions of the harmfulness of CEM, including gender, education, and religiousness. Although research has not specifically explored the association between attitudes towards censorship and attitudes towards CEM, it appears that recent debates over censorship have extended to include material such as CEM, and so it is plausible that attitudes towards censorship will predict attitudes concerning the legitimacy of criminalising CEM as well as attitudes concerning the harmfulness of CEM. Research has also shown that gender, pornography use, and attitudes towards censorship are linked, and we therefore expect that these variables will be relatively strong predictors of attitudes concerning the harmfulness of CEM.

Method

Participants

The sample comprised 431 undergraduate students from the University of Tasmania, Australia. The mean age was 27.88 years ($SD = 11.51$); 34% were in a relationship, 56% had achieved postsecondary school qualifications, and 70% were female.

Materials

The survey had three main sections. A preliminary section provided respondents with definitions of the terms 'pornography' and 'child pornography' as well as some general instructions (see Appendix A).

Section 1 asked participants about their views on 'censorship of pornography' (not CEM), attitudes regarding the 'illegality of CEM', and 'frequency of pornography usage' (not CEM). The questions regarding 'censorship of pornography' were taken from Lambe's (2002) 49-item Willingness to Censor (WTC) Scale, which assesses dispositions towards censorship in seven different categories of expression and across different media (e.g., demonstrations, newspapers, television, and Internet). The 49 items in the scale are each presented in the form of a hypothetical scenario, with respondents asked to choose one of five possible government responses to censorship.

The three items relating to pornography were adapted for use in the present study. These three items are as follows:

1.1.1 As you are surfing the Internet, you accidentally come across a site that contains graphic sexual images. I think my government should:

- confiscate the computer equipment of the site's producers
- fine the producers of the site
- require the site's producers to install a blocking mechanism so that it can't be accessed accidentally
- let the site's producers decide what to do

- protect the right of the producers to choose what to include in their site

1.1.2 A bookstore in your city sells magazines featuring pictures of nude and partially-clothed adults in various sexual positions. I think the Law should:

- force the bookstore to stop selling the magazines
- file charges against the bookstore's owner for distributing pornographic material
- require the store to place the magazines behind the counter, so customers have to ask for them
- let the store's owner decide what to do
- protect the right of the bookstore to sell the magazines

1.1.3 A locally produced, sexually explicit program has begun to air on a public TV channel / your cable system. It contains a lot of nudity and simulated sex acts. I think the city officials who granted the cable company its franchise should:

- require the cable company to stop airing the program
- fine the cable company each time the program airs
- require that the program be aired after 9:00 p.m.
- let the cable company decide what to do
- protect the right of the local producers to show their program

To determine the level of support for the criminalisation of CEM, respondents were asked the following two questions using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1):

- 1.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that it should be illegal to look at online child pornography involving real children?

- 1.3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that it should be illegal to look at online child pornography NOT involving real children (e.g., using computer-generated images)?

Participants were also asked about the frequency with which they use pornography (daily, weekly, monthly, less than monthly, or never).

Section 2 comprised 15 items designed to assess the perceived harms associated with viewing and distributing CEM (see Table 1). All items were measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1).

In the final section of the survey, respondents were asked to estimate the time taken to complete the survey and to provide feedback about the survey via an open-ended question.

Procedure

The convenience sample of students aged over 17 was recruited via email from the University of Tasmania. The survey was administered with LimeSurvey. The likelihood of response order effects was minimised through randomising the order of presentation of items within Sections 1 and 2 and the response options for these items. The response rate could not be determined with any certainty as the total number of students who received the bulk email was unknown. Nonetheless, since at least 5,000 students received the bulk email, the estimated response rate was 8.62%.¹

Results

Table 1 presents the frequency level data for items assessing the perceived harms of viewing and distributing CEM.

Given the special stigma associated with child sex offences, it is not surprising that there was a very low level of disagreement with the statements regarding the harmfulness of CEM. Nine of the 15 items achieved

≥10% disagreement about harms associated with CEM related to the: market paradigm (2.3, 2.4); innocence of children (2.5); and ongoing trauma for victims (2.7, 2.8, 2.12).

However, there was not unanimous agreement about CEM-related harms. While very few participants (2.6%) agreed that CEM was harmless because the children involved give consent and enjoy it (2.15), 7.4% agreed that distributing CEM was, in itself, harmless (2.14). One in 10 participants agreed that viewing CEM was harmless because this behaviour is divorced from the act of production (2.13). A quarter of participants disagreed with the statement that CEM encourages adults to sexually abuse children (2.1). Similarly, one third of participants disagreed that CEM makes adults more sexually attracted to children (2.10), or caused problems within adults' intimate sexual relationships.

To keep the survey short, only one section of the instrument invited participants' written comments. Coding of these qualitative data revealed that 33 participants (7.7%) stated that they would have preferred to have been given the option of responding 'neutral' or 'I don't know'. (This option was omitted from the instruments' Likert scale because of problems associated with interpreting such responses.) Twenty-one participants (4.9%) also stated that they felt ill-equipped to give opinions because they did not know enough about CEM and related behaviours.

Predictors of perceived harms of CEM

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine predictors of perceived harms of CEM. Prior to conducting this analysis, scales were constructed from individual survey items. Some individual items were transformed to correct for skewed distributions of responses, and where data transformation did not work satisfactorily, items were dummy coded (i.e., values recoded as 0s or 1s).

Scores on the three items relating to willingness to censor pornography were reverse

Table 1. Percentage of participants agreeing with items assessing perceived harms of child exploitation material (N = 431).

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2.1 Child pornography encourages adults to sexually abuse children. ³	36.7	38.5	20.0	4.9
2.2 Child pornography encourages adults to view children as sexual objects. ³	61.0	27.4	8.1	3.5
2.3 Viewing child pornography encourages producers to create more images and videos depicting children being sexually abused. ⁴	64.5	29.7	5.8	0.0
2.4 Sharing or distributing child pornography encourages producers to create more images and videos depicting children being sexually abused. ⁴	69.6	24.4	5.6	0.5
2.5 Child pornography threatens the innocence of children. ⁵	76.6	17.2	4.6	1.6
2.6 Child pornography encourages adults to believe that it is acceptable for them to engage in sexual activity with children. ³	49.0	33.9	12.5	4.6
2.7 Child pornography further traumatises victims who are upset by the fact that others may be sexually aroused by watching their abusive experience. ¹	71.5	23.9	3.5	1.2
2.8 Child pornography further traumatises victims who are upset by the fact that records of their abuse are being circulated. ¹	73.8	23.0	2.8	0.5
2.9 Child abusers may use child pornography to lure children into sexual relationships. ³	36.9	45.2	13.7	4.2
2.10 Child pornography makes adults more sexually attracted to children and less sexually interested in adults. ³	16.2	37.1	39.2	7.4
2.11 Adults who view child pornography experience difficulties in their sexual relationships with their spouse / partner / lover ³	17.6	47.6	31.1	3.7
2.12 Child pornography further harms the original victims involved as they may feel humiliated or embarrassed by the knowledge that other people are able to watch records of their abuse. ¹	78.2	18.3	3.0	0.5
2.13 Whatever harms might occur in the production of child pornography, no further harm is perpetrated just from viewing the material. ²	2.6	7.7	26.9	62.9
2.14 Whatever harms might occur in the production of child pornography, no further harm is perpetrated just from distributing the material. ²	3.2	4.2	20.0	72.6

Note: CEM = child exploitation material

¹Items designed to assess perceived harms to victims based on anecdotal accounts in the literature (e.g., Pritchard et al., 2011)

²Items designed to measure support for 'excuses' reported by CEM users (e.g., Pritchard et al., 2011; Seto et al., 2014)

³Items designed to gauge support for arguments for the potential effects of viewing CEM on adults

⁴Items assess the perceived impact of viewing or distributing CEM on production

⁵Item assesses the impact of CEM on the perceived innocence of children

scored and summed to create a total score for ‘censorship of pornography’, with a range of 3 to 15. Higher scores are indicative of a greater willingness to censor pornography. This 3-item scale was found to be unidimensional on the basis of factor analysis and internally consistent (Cronbach’s alpha = .72).

Responses on the two variables assessing level of support for the criminalisation of CEM (Item 1.2 involving real children and Item 1.3 involving computer-generated images) were dummy coded² such that a score of 1 indicated that they are either agreed or strongly agreed, whereas a score of 0 indicated that the respondent either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Responses to the item assessing frequency of pornography usage were dummy coded³ such that a score of 1 indicated that the respondent had viewed pornography whereas a score of 0 indicated that the respondent had never viewed pornography.

A unidimensional and internally consistent scale was produced, comprising five items specifically assessing the perceived effects of CEM on the attitudes and behaviours of adults (Cronbach’s alpha = .83). This scale was labelled ‘harmful effects of CEM’ and had a range of 5 to 20. Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of agreement with the perceived harmful effects of CEM on the attitudes and behaviours of adults towards children.

The five items comprising the ‘harmful effects of CEM’ scale are as follows;

- 2.1 Child pornography encourages adults to sexually abuse children.
- 2.2 Child pornography encourages adults to view children as sexual objects.
- 2.9 Child pornography encourages adults to believe that it is acceptable for them to engage in sexual activity with children.
- 2.6 Child abusers may use child pornography to lure children into sexual relationships.

- 2.10 Child pornography makes adults more sexually attracted to children and less sexually interested in adults.

The sample was skewed with respect to demographic variables (see Table 2), and thus demographic variables were dummy coded before being entered into the multiple regression analysis. Age was dummy coded and relabelled as ‘age 24 or less’ where a score of 1 indicated that the respondent was aged 24 years or younger, and a score of 0 indicated that the respondent was aged 25 years or older. Gender was dummy coded and relabelled as ‘male’; a score of 1 indicated that the respondent was male, and a score of 0 denoted that the respondent was female. Education was dummy coded and relabelled ‘post secondary’; a score of 1 indicated that the respondent had completed some postsecondary education, whereas a score of 0 indicated that the respondent had not completed postsecondary school education. Marital status was also dummy coded and relabelled as ‘in relationship’ such that a score of 1 denotes that the respondent is either married or in a de facto relationship, and a score of 0 indicates that the respondent is not married and is not in a de facto relationship. Finally, degree of religiousness was relabelled ‘religious at all’, and a score of 1 denoted that the respondent was ‘not very religious’, ‘somewhat religious’, or ‘very religious’ whereas a score of 0 denoted that the respondent was not at all religious.

With a minimum score of 3 and a maximum of 15, the mean score of respondents for ‘censorship of pornography’ ($M = 8.20$, $SD = 2.26$) was in the moderate range. Given a minimum possible score of 5 and a maximum of 20, scores for ‘harmful effects of CEM’ ($M = 15.57$, $SD = 3.22$) were in the moderate to high range.

Table 2 displays frequency level data for the dichotomous variables. The majority of the sample were female, were young (i.e., aged 24 years or younger), had obtained post-secondary school qualifications, were not in a

Table 2. Descriptive level data for all dichotomous variables in the final analysis ($N = 431$).

	Frequency (Number)	Percentage (%)
Age		
Age 24 years or younger	262	60.8
Age 25 years and older	169	39.2
Gender		
Male	130	30.2
Female	301	69.8
Post secondary education		
Yes	242	56.1
No	189	43.9
Relationship status		
Married or de facto	147	34.1
Not married or de facto	284	65.9
Religiousness		
Not very – very religious	207	48.0
Not at all religious	224	52.0
Ever viewed pornography		
Have viewed pornography	223	51.7
Have never viewed pornography	208	48.3
Illegality CEM – real images		
Agree or strongly agree	401	93.0
Disagree or strongly disagree	30	7.0
Illegality CEM – pseudoimages		
Agree or strongly agree	339	78.7
Disagree or strongly disagree	92	21.3

Note: CEM = child exploitation material.

married or de facto relationship, and were not at all religious. Just over half of the sample had viewed pornography on at least one occasion. Thirty participants (7%) disagreed that viewing CEM involving real children should be illegal. Three times as many participants ($N = 92$, 21.3%) disagreed with the illegal status of viewing CEM not involving real children ('pseudo' CEM).

Table 3 displays the correlations between each of the variables in the analysis. With the exception of the variable labelled 'in relationship', all of the predictor variables were significantly ($p < .05$) associated with 'perceived harm'. The demographic variables (age 24 or less, male, and post secondary)

had relatively weak associations with 'perceived harm', as did the item labelled 'illegality real images'. There was a weak to moderate and inverse association between 'perceived harm' and 'ever viewed pornography'. This indicates that those who have viewed pornography are less likely to agree with the perceived harms of CEM. There was also a moderate positive association between 'perceived harm' and 'censorship of pornography' and 'illegality of pseudo images', which indicates that those who are willing to censor pornography and agree that CEM involving pseudoimages should be illegal are more likely to agree with the perceived harms of CEM.

Table 3. Correlations between predictor variables entered into final step of multiple regression analysis.

	Age 24 or less	Male	Post secondary	In relationship	Religious at all	Ever viewed pornography	Censorship pornography	Illegality real images	Illegality pseudo images	Perceived harms
Age 24 or less	1.00	-.04	-.57**	-.42**	-.05	-.02	.01	.00	-.06	-.13**
Male		1.00	.07	-.02	-.08	.41**	-.29**	-.04	-.19**	-.27**
Post secondary			1.00	.35**	.04	.03	-.05	-.04	.03	.13*
In relationship				1.00	-.01	.00	.05	-.03	.03	.08
Religious					1.00	-.14**	.27**	-.08	.01	.15**
Ever viewed pornography						1.00	-.35**	-.08	-.20**	-.31**
Censorship pornography							1.00	.02	.29**	.39**
Illegality real images								1.00	.41**	.09*
Illegality pseudoimages									1.00	.38**
Perceived harms										1.00

* Significant at .05 level

** Significant at .01 level

On the first step of the multiple regression analysis, the demographic items ('age 24 or less', 'male', 'post secondary education', 'in relationship', and 'religious at all') accounted for a significant 11% of variance in 'perceived harms', $R^2 = .114$, $F(5, 425) = 10.91$, $p < .001$. Being male and 'religious at all' were significant predictors. Being male alone accounted for 7% unique variance, and 'religious at all' accounted for approximately 2% unique variance in 'perceived harms'.

The pornography usage and censorship of pornography items when entered into the second step of the model accounted for an additional 11% of variance in 'perceived harms', $R^2_{change} = .113$, $F_{change}(2, 423) = 30.92$, $p < .001$. In the second step of this model, four variables were significant predictors but accounted for a small percentage of unique variance in 'perceived harms': 'male' (1%), 'post secondary education' (<1%), 'ever viewed pornography' (2%), and 'censorship of pornography' (7%). Finally, the items concerning illegality of CEM when entered in the final step accounted for an additional 6% of variance in 'perceived harms', $R^2_{change} = .064$, $F_{change}(2, 421) = 19.04$, $p < .001$. In this final model, five variables were significant predictors, accounting for a small percentage of unique variance of 'perceived harms': 'male' (<1%), 'post secondary education' (<1%), 'ever viewed pornography' (1%), 'censorship of pornography' (4%), and 'illegality of pseudo images' (6%).

The combined model accounted for 29% of variance in 'perceived harms', $R^2 = .291$, $F(9, 421) = 19.19$, $p < .001$. Table 4 displays the unstandardised (B) and standardised (β) regression coefficients and squared semipartial correlations (sr^2) for each of the items in the three steps of the model to predict 'perceived harms'.

Of the five significant predictors in the final model, being 'male' and 'ever viewed pornography' had negative beta coefficients, meaning that being male and viewing pornography were associated with lower scores for 'perceived harms of CEM'. In contrast, 'post

secondary education', 'censorship of pornography', and 'illegality of pseudo images' had positive beta coefficients. This indicates that having 'post secondary education', having attitudes supportive of censoring pornography, and having attitudes supportive of the illegality of CEM involving pseudo-images were each associated with higher scores for 'perceived harms' of CEM. Of these five significant predictors, 'illegality of pseudo images' was the strongest predictor, followed by 'censorship of pornography' and then 'ever viewed pornography'. The variables 'male' and 'post secondary education' only accounted for a small proportion of unique variance in 'perceptions of harm'.

Discussion

This study of a convenience sample of predominantly female university undergraduates is the first to examine public perceptions of the legitimacy of CEM laws and explanations of the harmfulness of viewing and distributing CEM. Nicholls et al. (2012) and Mears et al. (2008) questioned participants about appropriate sentences for CEM – both viewing and distributing. However, the nature of the questions asked in these studies presupposed that the participants agreed with the criminalisation of CEM behaviours and agreed with common explanations of their harmfulness. Furthermore, neither of these studies examine the issue of pseudo-CEM.

The present study asked direct questions about criminalisation and showed that 7% of its sample simply did not think that viewing CEM should be illegal, while the rate for pseudo-CEM was 21.3%. This finding is interesting. It suggests that the sentiments Nicholls et al. (2012, p. 41) uncovered in the United Kingdom concerning the 'difference between looking at an image and actually abusing a child' might be shared by a sizeable minority of Australians, at least among a tertiary education sample. But it also marks a clear disjuncture between some social attitudes and the law – after all, viewing CEM,

Table 4. Unstandardised (B) and standardised (β) regression coefficients and squared semipartial correlations (sr^2) in predicting perceived harms.

Step	Variable	B	95% CI for B		β	sr^2
			Lower	Upper		
1	Age 24 or less	0.48	1.23	0.27	.07	.003
	Male**	1.89	2.52	1.26	.27	.072
	Post secondary education	0.64	0.07	1.36	.10	.006
	In relationship	0.07	0.61	0.75	.01	.000
	Religious at all*	0.79	0.21	1.37	.12	.015
2	Age 24 or less	0.51	1.21	0.19	.08	.004
	Male*	0.91	1.57	0.25	.13	.013
	Post secondary education*	0.76	0.09	1.43	.12	.009
	In relationship	0.07	0.71	0.57	.01	.000
	Religious at all	0.21	0.36	0.77	.03	.001
	Ever viewed pornography**	1.01	1.63	0.40	.16	.019
3	Censorship of pornography**	0.42	0.28	0.55	.29	.069
	Age 24 or less	0.40	1.07	0.28	.06	.002
	Male*	0.73	1.36	0.09	.10	.009
	Post secondary education*	0.70	0.05	1.35	.11	.008
	In relationship	0.03	0.65	0.58	.00	.000
	Religious at all	0.32	0.22	0.86	.05	.002
	Ever viewed pornography**	0.88	1.48	0.29	.14	.014
	Censorship of pornography**	0.32	0.19	0.45	.22	.037
	Illegality real images	0.48	1.62	0.65	.04	.001
	Illegality pseudoimages**	2.22	1.48	2.96	.28	.059

Note:

CI = confidence interval.

* Significant at .05 level.

** Significant at .01 level.

including pseudo-CEM, is an indictable crime in Australia punishable by imprisonment.

More than 90% of participants supported core legal explanations for the harmfulness of viewing CEM, including the market paradigm, the innocence of children, and ongoing trauma for victims. This means that the vast majority of people understood the possible effect of ongoing demand on the production of CEM and its potential for causing harm to victims. However, 1 in 10 of the participants saw no harm in viewing CEM, and 1 in 15 thought distributing CEM was harmless. These perspectives seem consistent with the construct of CEM as ethically neutral data

disconnected from child abuse (Prichard et al., 2013). The result indicates that a minority of participants did not agree with the various explanations that exist concerning the harmfulness of viewing and distributing CEM.

It is feasible that some of the participants in this study had not previously encountered the explanations of harm; indeed 1 in 20 participants reported their lack of knowledge of CEM and related behaviours. If this is true then some of the attitudes captured in this study may represent 'first impressions' rather than entrenched and long-held beliefs. That would imply that some participants could be persuaded to change their perspectives to accept explanations of harm – particularly

since it seems that attitudes are not static (Lovegrove, 2007; Warner & Davis, 2012). Yet the dynamic could equally work in reverse. That is, participants who currently support harm explanations may later develop opposite opinions, for example after encountering one or more of the debates challenging the legitimacy of CEM laws.

Multiple regression analysis indicated that those who demonstrated higher levels of agreement with the harms associated with viewing and distributing CEM were more likely to be female, to have achieved postsecondary qualifications, to have never viewed pornography, to support censorship of pornography, and to believe that CEM involving pseudoimages of children should be illegal. These findings contribute to the understanding of gender and attitudes towards sexual crimes. While other research suggests that men tend to have more punitive attitudes towards paedophiles (Mears et al., 2008), the results of this study suggest that they hold more liberal attitudes than women where viewing and distributing CEM are concerned. Insofar as this is consistent with previous findings concerning male liberal attitudes towards sexuality and pornography (Carroll et al., 2008; Petersen & Hyde, 2010), it suggests that men are slightly more inclined than women to construct CEM use as a victimless, private sexual pursuit.

However, it is important to note that gender, postsecondary education, and pornography usage were relatively weak predictors of 'perceived harms'. The results clearly showed that the strongest predictor of 'perceived harms' was 'illegality of pseudo images'. One possible explanation of this finding is that the 'illegality of pseudo images' questions were proxy measures of belief in the harmfulness of pseudo images. That is, since 'harmfulness' is a common justification for criminalisation of certain behaviours, it is feasible that those participants who agreed with the criminalisation of pseudoimages did so because they considered them to be associated with harm in some way. If this is

accurate, it is not surprising that these participants were inclined to also support explanations of the harmfulness of all types of CEM ('perceived harm'), including both pseudoimages and material involving real children.

The second strongest predictor of 'perceived harm' was 'censorship of pornography'. It is important to recall that the censorship questions concerned legal adult pornography – not CEM – on the Internet, in magazines, and on television. This paper cannot satisfactorily explain the relationship between perceived harms of CEM and attitudes towards censorship of pornography. It is tentatively suggested that the findings reflect a degree of conflation of the constructs of adult pornography and CEM. That is, readiness to censor adult pornography may be partly based on perceptions of its harmfulness – for example, to women, relationships, and so forth. From this cognitive starting point it is logical to view CEM as harmful because, among other things, it is a form of pornography. The converse may be true as well. So, opposition towards censoring adult pornography may be partly based on upon perceptions of it as harmless. From this starting point, it may be easier (for some) to conclude that CEM – as another form of pornography – is also harmless. General attitudes towards sexuality may underpin these dynamics.

Public attitudes towards CEM laws warrant further examination by researchers. Available metrics suggest that demand for CEM is relatively consistent and surprisingly common given that sexual abuse of children is associated with a special stigma and that CEM laws in many countries are strict and attract periods of imprisonment. CEM laws – including those pertaining to pseudo-CEM – are relatively new, and it is feasible that social perceptions of these laws may be developing and potentially influenced by public debates regarding their efficacy. The current study was novel in that its survey gauged support for rationales for criminalisation. However, its design did not enable analysis of the participants' preexisting knowledge of

these rationales. The limited qualitative information gathered in the current study suggested that the whole topic of CEM-related behaviours and their harmfulness may not have previously been considered by participants. Future research could usefully contribute to this field with qualitative methodologies that explored participants' own understanding of CEM and rationales for criminalisation. Among other things, such research may cause reflection on legal policy formation and whether additional approaches are required to inform the public about the reasons CEM laws exist.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

1. A meta analysis by Manfreda and colleagues (2008) compared web based with other survey methods; the response rates for web based surveys differed from 11% to 82%. Thus, the 8.62% response rate observed in this study would be considered low.
2. Ninety three percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that CEM depicting real children should be illegal, and 78.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that CEM involving pseudoimages should be illegal.
3. Forty eight percent of respondents indicated that they had never viewed pornography.

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Appendix A: Definitions and instructions provided to participants at the beginning of the survey

This survey is designed to measure the views and opinions of internet users towards censorship of pornography and perceived harms of distributing and viewing child pornography.

‘Pornography’

Here we use the term pornography to refer to all legally permissible forms of sexually explicit media (including pornographic magazines, x rated videos, films or DVDs and Internet sex sites) that are designed to sexually arouse the viewer. This may include sexually explicit images or videos of;

- female or male nudity or semi nudity
- implied sexual activity and actual sexual activity.

We are not asking here about literature that is of a sexually explicit content such as books and texts that describe sexual encounters or activities.

‘Child pornography’

We use the term child pornography here to refer to all forms of pornography, as defined above, that depict or involve children who are or appear to be less than 16 years of age. This can include the following forms of child pornography where;

- Children pose in an erotic manner;
- Children engage in sexual activity with other children or adults;
- An adult is made to look like or act like a child; OR
- Digitally altered images of sexually explicit pictures may be used, for example, a child’s face may be superimposed onto an adults body who is engaging in sexual activity.

There are four sections to the survey. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. At the beginning of each section you will be given instructions. Please read them carefully. There are no right or wrong answers. You are being asked for your opinion.

Remember that you can quit the survey any time.

Young People, Child Pornography, and Subcultural Norms on the Internet

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Literature to date has treated as distinct two issues (a) the influence of pornography on young people and (b) the growth of Internet child pornography, also called child exploitation material (CEM). This article discusses how young people might interact with, and be affected by, CEM. The article first considers the effect of CEM on young victims abused to generate the material. It then explains the paucity of data regarding the prevalence with which young people view CEM online, inadvertently or deliberately. New analyses are presented from a 2010 study of search terms entered on an internationally popular peer-to-peer website, isoHunt. Over 91 days, 162 persistent search terms were recorded. Most of these related to file sharing of popular movies, music, and so forth. Thirty-six search terms were categorized as specific to a youth market and perhaps a child market. Additionally, 4 deviant, and persistent search terms were found, 3 relating to CEM and the fourth to bestiality. The article discusses whether the existence of CEM on a mainstream website, combined with online subcultural influences, may normalize the material for some youth and increase the risk of onset (first deliberate viewing). Among other things, the article proposes that future research examines the relationship between onset and sex offending by youth.

Introduction

Enormous benefits flow to the international community through the Internet, encompassing most facets of life from commerce to education, to social interaction, and political dialogue. However, with the Internet has also come new and varied ways of committing crime (McQuade, 2009). One example of online crime is the distribution of child pornography on a scale unmatched prior to the Internet (see for instance Leary, 2007; Martellozzo, Nehring, & Taylor, 2010; Bourke & Hernandez, 2009). Some commentators have suggested that the term *child pornography* be avoided in this field because of the inference that the material is an acceptable erotic subgenre of mainstream pornography (Beech, Elliot, Birgden, & Findlater, 2008). This article uses the term *child exploitation material* (CEM). CEM generates considerable public consternation and seems to be the subject of media reports on an almost weekly basis. A different area of concern is how young people interact with pornography in general; a discourse is developing among researchers as to the effects of pornography upon young people vis-à-vis their attitudes to sexual relations (e.g., Bryant 2009; Greenfield, 2004; Flood, 2009a, 2009b).

This article crosses both these topics. It considers ways in which CEM may affect young people, including children, adolescents, and young adults. The first part of the article briefly considers the nature of online CEM. The second part

Received July 16, 2012; revised August 24, 2012; accepted August 27, 2012

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discusses harms for young people abused in the production of CEM; some of the long-term harms have not received sufficient recognition to date. In the third part the article analyzes young people's risk of exposure to CEM online. It focuses on one internationally popular peer-to-peer (P2P) network called isoHunt. Although other studies have researched CEM in the context of P2P networks (Hurley et al., 2012; Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2011), none has done so with a focus on youth. The article suggests that, even on relatively mainstream websites such as isoHunt, young people may encounter a degree of acceptance towards, and normalization of, CEM. It is possible that this may influence young people's attitudes towards CEM. The need for future research on young people and CEM is outlined.

In terms of the scope of this article, some consideration is given to what has been termed "self-produced child pornography" (Leary, 2010, p. 491). However, the discussion does not encompass situations where young people produce and send images of themselves via cell phones, which is a form of "sexting" that is in itself a developing area of concern (see Karaian, 2012; Leary, 2007, 2010).¹

CEM

There is general consensus that the distribution of CEM has increased dramatically with the advent of the Internet (e.g., Leary, 2007; Martellozzo, Nehring, & Taylor, 2010; Bourke & Hernandez, 2009). Distribution occurs through various systems, including e-mail, USENET groups, websites, Internet relay chat (IRC), and P2P networks (Bourke & Hernandez, 2009; Leary, 2007). Various typologies exist to describe the severity of CEM (Henry, Mandeville-Norden, Hayes, & Egan, 2010; Krone, 2004). Under some legal definitions, CEM can technically include literature as well as "morphed" or fake images not involving real child or adolescents (e.g., *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth.), S 473.1). In reality though, the bulk of Internet CEM is photographs or footage of actual children or adolescents—encompassing all age groups (even infancy) and ranging in severity from partial nudity to sexual sadism, bestiality, and torture (Niveau, 2010; Taylor, Holland, & Quayle, 2001; Krone, 2005). Criminal laws governing CEM vary between jurisdictions (Warner, 2010; Wortley, 2010). Under Australia's *Criminal Code Act (1995)* (Cth.), it is an offence to produce, distribute, control, obtain, or possess material involving people younger than 18 years of age (or who appear to be under that age), which, among other things, depicts those people engaging in sexual activity or posing sexually, or depicts the breasts (if female), genitals, or anuses of those people for a sexual purpose (SS 273.1, 273.5, 273.6, 473.1).

For various reasons it is difficult to measure the scale of the online CEM "market," how many people access it, or even the number of children and young people abused in CEM production. Nonetheless, there are indications that

¹For an explanation of the overlap between sexting and self-produced CEM, see Leary (2010).

demand for CEM is strong (Wortley, 2010). For example, Allard (2008) reported that a European website that operated for 76 hours with 99 CEM images received over 12 million hits, 2,800 of which were from Australia. Hurley et al.'s (2012) 12-month study of P2P networks (Gnutella and eMule) observed over 2.5 million distinct peers, residing in over 100 countries, who trafficked CEM. The researchers estimated that on Gnutella, on average 9,700 unique "files of interest" (CEM and associated material) appear each day (Hurley et al., 2012, p. 1).

In addition, a 2011 study recorded over 3 months the top 300 search terms of an international P2P network called isoHunt (Prichard, Watters, & Spiranovic, 2011). The bulk of the search terms related to movies, music, software, and so forth. But three CEM search terms consistently appeared. *Pthc* an acronym for pre-teen hardcore, ranked in the top 100 for a month; this search term was entered more frequently in that month than *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, *Disney*, or *Big Bang Theory*. New analyses from the isoHunt study will be presented in this article.

Harms for Children and Young People Abused in CEM Production

Discussions of CEM ought to be cognizant of the effects CEM production has upon children and young people. Research indicates that CEM can have significant and protracted negative effects on the children and young people filmed or photographed (see for instance Leary, 2007, pp. 9–12). Physical harm can be caused by sexual acts or, obviously, torture. Child sexual assault is also associated with a range of negative psychological effects in the long-term including posttraumatic stress disorder as well as anxiety disorders, suicidality, depression, and eating disorders (e.g., Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2008; Jonas et al., 2011; Kendler et al., 2000; Paolucci, Genius, & Violato, 2001).

However, aside from the effects of the abuse itself, psychological suffering is also generated by the actual distribution of films or photographs. Survivors of CEM report considerable trauma arising from the knowledge that records of their abuse circulate on the Internet (Beech, Elliot, Birgden, & Findlater, 2008; Leary, 2007). This is recognized by some legal authorities. For instance, the North American *Child Pornography Prevention Act 1996* 18 U.S.C. § 2256 (2000) (S 121.1(2)) states:

Where children are used in its production, child pornography permanently records the victim's abuse, and [the images'] continued existence causes the child victims . . . continuing harm by haunting those children in future years.

A deeper understanding of survivors' perspectives can be gained from "Amy," who was abused as a girl over a period of years by her uncle. Collectively the material he produced, which continues to circulate the Internet, gained infamy as the *Misty Series* (The Virginian Pilot, 2009). In her victim impact statement, the defendant's niece explained that she

experiences ongoing suffering from the knowledge that any time day or night someone may be sexually stimulating themselves with records of her abuse. Her sentiments clearly imply an aspect of re-victimization:

It hurts me to know someone is looking . . . at me . . . when I was just a little girl being abused for the camera. I did not choose to be there, but now I am there forever in pictures that people are using to do sick things. I want it all erased. I want it all stopped. But I am powerless to stop it just like I was powerless to stop my uncle. . . . It's like I am being abused over and over and over again. (The Virginian Pilot, 2009)

The victim impact statement further explained the young woman's fear that the record of her abuse might incite people to abuse other children, and that the material could be used to "groom" children into sexual activity. Other researchers, practitioners, and policy makers have equally expressed concerns about the use of CEM to lure or groom other children into sexual activity with adults (see Leary, 2007, pp. 12–13). "Amy" also emphasized her deep fear that one day the material will be viewed by people who know her—her friends, her future children, the friends of her future children, or someone in her wider community.

Young People Encountering CEM Online

A wide assortment of discourses is developing regarding young people and their engagement with the Internet. Some commentators, such as danah boyd, argue for a greater degree of confidence in young people's capacity to ignore and navigate past deviant material (Roiphe, 2012). A number of studies have assessed the extent to which children and young people view pornography. In Flood and Hamilton's (2003) telephone survey of 16–17-year-old Australians ($n = 200$), 2% of female participants reported deliberately viewing pornography online, and 60% of females reported inadvertent viewing of pornography. The rates reported by male participants were much higher: 38% reported deliberate viewing and 84% inadvertent viewing. Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor's (2007) U.S. study surveyed youths aged 10–17 years ($n = 1,422$). Twenty-eight percent ($n = 400$) of participants reported unwanted exposure to "pictures of naked people or people having sex" in the preceding year, either while surfing the Internet or by opening a message or a link (Wolak et al., 2007, p. 249).

The EU Kids Online Survey of approximately 25,000 9–16-year-olds from 25 European countries revealed that 14% of children and adolescents had been exposed to sexual content online, and of these, 25% were upset or bothered by what they saw (Hasebrink, Görzig, Haddon, Kalmus, & Livingstone, 2011). Females and younger children in particular were more likely to be upset by such exposure even though they were less likely to be exposed. For instance, only 5% of 9–10-year-old girls had been exposed to sexual content online, but 59% of those who were exposed were upset or bothered by this exposure (Livingstone, Görzig, & Kjarta, 2011).

Pornography aside, concerns have been expressed about the effects of exposure of children and adolescents to CEM. For instance, it has been suggested that exposure of children to CEM may make them more vulnerable to sexual victimization (e.g., Leary, 2007). It has also been suggested that exposure to CEM may encourage children to sexually exploit themselves online by posting sexually explicit images of themselves. The National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (cited in Leary, 2007, p. 19) found that 5.4% of CEM images online were self-produced. Despite such concerns, there does not appear to be any studies that have specifically attempted to measure the prevalence with which children and young people view CEM, or what distressing emotional responses viewing CEM might trigger. This is not surprising given the ethical impediments involved in conducting such research, including potentially distressing child participants by defining CEM, and asking participants to disclose potentially criminal behavior (i.e., recklessly or intentionally accessing CEM).

It is not clear what pathways young people might take into viewing CEM, although it seems likely that the spectrum crosses the media listed above, namely, e-mail, websites, mobile telephones, USENET groups, IRC, and so forth. Some young people probably encounter CEM accidentally. Certainly, studies of adults indicate that CEM is very easy to encounter (Diez, 2005; Taylor & Quayle, 2008). Unwanted pop-up messages can show images of CEM (Eberstadt & Layden, 2010). Reportedly CEM has appeared on notice boards of nonsexual websites (Rushkoff, 2009). There is also the prospect that adolescents might encounter CEM while searching for "teen" pornography; this genre of pornography is known to include not only teenagers under the age of consent, but also prepubescent children (Prichard et al., 2011).

However, presumably other young people also view CEM deliberately. The decision to deliberately view CEM for the first time has been termed "onset" (Prichard et al., 2011, p. 586). Some adult men claim that their onset began "impulsively and/or out of curiosity" (Beech et al., 2008, p. 225; Seto, Reeves, & Jung, 2010). It is feasible that young people experience the same sort of curiosity as well. Taylor and Quayle (2008) point to evidence that sexual arousal is associated with risk-taking behaviors, combined with lower perceptions of negative consequences. This suggests that onset may be easier for a young person if they are already in a sexually aroused state, for example, because of viewing mainstream pornography online.

Among other things, studies of adults suggest that onset also seems to be facilitated by (a) the anonymity afforded by the Internet (Meridian, Wilson, & Boer, 2009; O'Donnell & Milner, 2007), and (b) cognitive distortions about the children depicted in CEM (Meridian, Wilson, & Boer, 2009; Quayle & Taylor, 2002). Examples of the cognitive distortions include the belief that the children involved in CEM consent to and enjoy the sexual activity, or that while abusing children is wrong, there is no harm in viewing CEM. These views clash with the perspectives of "Amy,"

discussed above, or research on the effects of child sexual assault (e.g., Fergusson et al., 2008; Jonas et al., 2011; Kendler et al., 2000; Paolucci et al., 2001).

isoHunt, Young People, and CEM

Previous research has indicated that online group norms can influence individual behavior, whether those norms are prosocial or antisocial (Demetriou & Silke, 2003). In light of Thornberry's (1987) work, it may be that influence varies depending on the degree of attachment between the group and the individual. The findings of a 2011 study of a P2P network called isoHunt underscored a relationship between online subcultures and CEM (Prichard et al., 2011). isoHunt is a BitTorrent search engine through which users can efficiently share media, including movies, music, applications, and software. It is clear that isoHunt is popular. At the time of writing this article, isoHunt had 1.8 million registered users; over 387,000 people like isoHunt on Facebook (<http://isohunt.com/>). ishout describes itself as "the best P2P files search engine and *community*" [emphasis added] (<http://isohunt.com/>). In litigation involving the website's founder, Gary Fung, courts have taken the view that isoHunt is "consciously fostering a community that encouraged—indeed, celebrated—copyright infringement" (*Columbia Pictures Industries v Fung*, 96 U.S.P.Q (BNA) 1620 (CD Cal 2009) at 1632, per Wilson J).

The community aspects of isoHunt have been framed as features of a subculture (Prichard et al., 2011). For instance, isoHunt facilitates social interactions. On isoHunt there are social labels (and slang) and a social hierarchy of sorts. "isohunters" can chat on IRC. The forums are apparently moderated by volunteers, called "admins." Admins are assigned status and have powers to, among other things, ban abusive users. Users who post a certain number of forum user's messages are reportedly given honorary ranks and titles, such as "I pir4ate (sic), therefore I am" (*Columbia Pictures Industries v Fung*, 96 U.S.P.Q (BNA) 1620 (CD Cal 2009)). isoHunt sells t-shirts and stickers bearing its name and underwritten with the phrase "freedom of information"; the illegitimacy of copyright laws appears to be a strong subcultural norm. The isoHunt t-shirts are sold by another company called J!INX (<http://www.jinx.com/>). Other stock sold by J!INX makes reference to subcultural youth labels, such as "gamers" (computer game enthusiasts) and "geeks" (computer enthusiasts).

It is important not to understate the complexity and variety of online subcultures (see, for example, Bakioglu, 2009). Insofar as isoHunt is concerned, it is likely that its users vary enormously in their attachment to the isoHunt community. Some of the 1.8 million registered users may visit the site periodically and form a low level of attachment to isoHunt. Others may be high frequency users who identify strongly with the site. Additionally, it must be considered that users may wax and wane in their attachment to multiple communities online and offline. In fact, the influence of isoHunt on young people may overlap or even

TABLE 1. Categories of persistent isoHunt search terms (Aug–Nov 2010).

Category	n (/162)
Movies	54
Books	2
TV Shows	44
Music	15
Software	24
Pornography	19
CEM	3
Bestiality	1

Note. CEM = child exploitation material.

From "Internet Subcultures and Pathways to the Use of Child Pornography," by J. Prichard, P.A. Watters, & C. Spiranic, 2011, *Computer Law & Security Review*, 27, pp. 585–600.

compete with other online communities, for example, the infamous 4Chan, which was once described as "a surreptitious cultural powerhouse" (Sauthoff, 2009, p. 1). As noted, between August and November 2010 a study was conducted of the top 300 search terms entered by users on isoHunt, with data automatically updated daily on the website (Prichard et al., 2011). The data do not indicate how many times the search terms were entered, nor, crucially, how many people entered the search terms. However, the data do indicate the relative popularity of search terms. Of the top 300 search terms in August, 162 "persistent" terms were also in the top 300 for September and November 2010. This means that these 162 search terms enjoyed some sort of enduring popularity over a 3-month period. To classify the search terms, a research assistant manually checked the content (e.g., titles and links) to which the search term led.² This process identified eight main categories of search terms, which are shown in Table 1 below.

Clearly the bulk of persistent search terms related to pirated entertainment (movies, books, TV, music, and so forth). The remainder related to sexual content: different types of pornography, CEM, and bestiality. Examples of the 19 pornography search terms include *porn 2010* and *sex tape*. As noted earlier in this article, one of the CEM search terms, pthc, rated in the top 100 in August 2010, ranking higher than Harry Potter, despite the fact that *Harry Potter and the Deathly Harrows Part 1* was released in 2010. The other two CEM search terms were *Lolita* and *teen*.

Some caution is needed in interpreting these findings. They cannot be interpreted to mean, for instance, that more *individuals* entered pthc than Harry Potter on isoHunt in August 2010. It may be that a small group of individuals entered the CEM term repeatedly because it led to updated material. This would be consistent with the repetitive, ritualistic actions and fantasies associated with high

²A limitation of the methods used to classify search terms is that the exact nature of the content contained within these files could not be confirmed with a high degree of certainty. The research assistant analysed file names but was not able to download the content associated with these files due to issues associated with copyright infringement or criminal content.

frequency collectors of CEM (Taylor & Quayle, 2003, 2008). On the other hand, once an individual obtained Harry Potter through an isoHunt search, they are unlikely to repeat that search. This issue has been discussed in more detail elsewhere (Prichard et al., 2011), but the topic will remain unsettled until future research obtains data on individual online search behavior.

Another limitation of the data is that they only covered 3 months. It is unclear whether CEM search terms are permanently present in the top isoHunt search terms. A single check was conducted for the purposes of this article (April 4, 2012). Pthc did not rank in the top 1,000 searches advertised on isoHunt. However, Lolita ranked at 447 and teen at 334. A new CEM term, *12yo*, ranked at 888. It is suggested that while CEM search terms may fluctuate in their relative popularity, they are a relatively consistent features of the top 1000 isoHunt search list.

Young People Using isoHunt

Did the isoHunt study reveal any information on children and young people? Clearly no demographic information on the isoHunt users was available. However, it is reasonably clear that isoHunt services a youth market, from teens to early 20s, and perhaps also a child market. According to Quant Cast, younger people are overrepresented on isoHunt. The largest age bracket among isoHunt users is the 18–24-year-old age group, which makes up 27% of users. An estimated 15% of isoHunt users are younger than 18 years of age (<http://www.quantcast.com/isoHunt.com>). Evidence supporting the younger age profile of isoHunt users can be found in some of the persistent 162 search terms displayed in Table 2.

It is suggested that although the 36 search terms presented in Table 2 would interest many adults, they would particularly interest young people. *Toy Story 3*, *Prince of Persia*, *Despicable Me*, *Avatar*, *Shrek*, *Star Wars (Episode III: Revenge of the Sith)*, and *How to Train Your Dragon* were all rated PG (parental guidance recommended) by the Australian Classification Board. These search terms, as well as the generic search for Disney material, suggest children may possibly also use isoHunt, although it is just as feasible that adults might search for such material on behalf of children.

Given that out of 162 persistent search terms, at least 36 would interest a youth market, it is reasonable to conclude that some of the current 1.8 million registered users are adolescents, young adults, and possibly even children. How might those young people perceive and interact with CEM search terms? Four responses can be made to this question.

Accidental Exposure to CEM on isoHunt?

Young people may not know that the search terms relate to CEM. Arguably, while *Lolita* and *teen* may be suggestive of sexual content, they do not unambiguously identify

TABLE 2. Torrent searches on isoHunt 2010 (Aug–Nov): Potential youth market indicators.

Search term	Aug rank	Nov rank	Description
<i>Inception</i>	2	3	Movie
<i>Iron Man 2</i>	4	86	Movie
<i>True Blood</i>	8	74	Movie
<i>Toy Story 3^a</i>	9	28	Movie
<i>Prince of Persia^a</i>	12	124	Movie
<i>Star Craft II</i>	13	199	Software / game
<i>Eclipse</i>	15	157	Movie
<i>The Sorcerer's Apprentice^a</i>	16	43	Movie
<i>Futurama</i>	20	207	TV
<i>Tekken</i>	23	267	Software / game
<i>Despicable Me^a</i>	22	17	Movie
<i>Twilight</i>	24	127	Movie
Lady Gaga	30	154	Music
<i>Avatar^a</i>	31	73	Movie
<i>How To Train Your Dragon^a</i>	43	103	Movie
<i>Shrek^a</i>	54	161	Movie
Katy Perry	75	98	Music
<i>Centurion</i>	85	50	Movie
<i>Harry Potter</i>	104	53	Movie
<i>Spartacus</i>	105	195	Movie
<i>Call of Duty</i>	109	46	Software / game
Linkin Park	113	162	Music
<i>Resident Evil</i>	120	78	Movie
Top 40	123	182	Music
<i>Smallville</i>	153	38	TV
<i>Batman</i>	162	192	Movie
<i>Star Wars^a</i>	168	114	Movie
<i>Sherlock Holmes</i>	175	288	Movie
Disney	182	180	Movie
Rihanna	209	54	Music
<i>StarGate Universe</i>	219	4	TV
Usher	225	228	Music
Assassins' Creed	247	297	Software / game
Black Eye Peas	252	263	Music
Taylor Swift	254	116	Music
Lil Wayne	290	209	Music

^aMovies rated PG by the Australian Classification Board.

CEM.³ On the other hand, without prior knowledge of its meaning, pthc is not even suggestive of sexual content, particularly since other similar acronyms were search terms that led to nonsexual content, including television shows (*ufc*, *wwe*) and software (*nds*, *psp*; Prichard et al., 2011). It seems a reasonable possibility that some young isoHunt users may have clicked on one of the CEM terms without any understanding of the likely content. However, as noted above, each of the top 300 search terms leads to web links of actual movies, software, and so forth—each with its own title. These titles change regularly. Some of the titles of the CEM movies are explicit and self-explanatory, such as *kiddie sex*. Other CEM titles may be ambiguous to children or young people using isoHunt, including *little boy &*

³It should also be remembered that young people might not grasp context and meaning as quickly as adults. For instance, the most recent mainstream movie version of Nabokov's (1955) novel *Lolita* was in 1997; many young people younger than 17 years of age may be completely ignorant of the title's connotation.

girl, *Ilyo*, or *pedo*. So it seems that accidental exposure to CEM could occur on isoHunt, but the likelihood of this depends on several factors, including the age of the viewer, the ambiguity of the CEM search terms, and the ambiguity of the CEM movie titles.

Opportunity for Onset

Accidental exposure to CEM aside, there is the risk that the CEM search terms on isoHunt provide young people with an opportunity for onset, that is, their first deliberate viewing of CEM. Based on literature discussed earlier, the risk of onset may be greater for young males than young females. The former are, first, more interested in pornography generally (Flood & Hamilton, 2003). This also means young males are more likely to be using isoHunt to view pornography and, by implication, to be in a sexually aroused state when they are using isoHunt. As noted, sexual arousal is associated with risk-taking behaviors, potentially including impulsive decisions to view CEM (Beech et al., 2008). The teen genre might provide particular opportunities for onset. Some adolescents may be attracted to the idea of viewing pornography depicting people of their own age group, possibly unaware that this may fall within the definition of CEM. However, as noted earlier, the teen genre includes material with prepubescent children. So, what may have begun as a decision to view material involving people aged 14 to 15 years, for example, may lead to decisions to view CEM involving the full spectrum of ages.

Subcultural Norms as Risk Factor for Onset

It is worth considering how young people might perceive the existence of CEM terms on isoHunt. isoHunt does not openly condone or approve of CEM. However, neither has it apparently taken any steps to discourage or prevent CEM distribution. Certainly there are no prominent statements on the website denouncing the distribution of any sort of criminal material (including CEM, rape, bestiality, and so forth). The reason for this inaction appears to be that isoHunt views itself as being at arms length from the content that its users share. When isoHunt commented on the prevalence of copyright-infringing material in the advertised search terms, it suggested that the top 300 list “simply reflect[s] user activity” (*Columbia Pictures Industries v Fung*, 96 U.S.P.Q (BNA) 1620, 1632 (CD Cal 2009)). Current statements made by isoHunt about the top 1000 list are consistent with this view. The top 1000 are titled the “isoHunt Zeitgeist.” The latter word is usually translated to mean the “spirit of the age.” A header underneath the title reads:

Inspired somewhat by the Google Zeitgeist,⁴ here’s a list of top search phrases conducted at isoHunt.com, updated daily. It should be representative of what’s popular in the BitTorrent

and IRC scenes, if not the P2P world in general. (<http://isohunt.com/stats.php?mode=zg>)

Adult users may understand the subtleties at play. Profit strategies aside, isoHunt—a self-proclaimed online community—celebrates freedom of information on the Internet, and resists challenges to free speech. By openly displaying and not censoring the top 1,000, isoHunt is being true to its philosophical stance. Allowing CEM search terms to appear is not condoning CEM. Rather, it is a statement about the isoHunt community’s liberty.

However, this article contends that the messages that isoHunt projects regarding CEM, inadvertently or otherwise, may be confusing for young people, keeping in mind variations in their cognitive and moral development (Kohlberg, 1976) and the challenges they face comprehending social convention (Turiel, 1983). If a young person compares the status of CEM in the general community with its status on isoHunt, arguably different norms will become apparent. On the one hand, in the media, the community repeatedly expresses abhorrence for CEM; it has high deviant status. By contrast, isoHunt effectively treats CEM as any other type of “information.” IsoHunt is silent about the fact that members of its “community” search for CEM. Likewise, isoHunt is silent about the implication that if CEM searches appear in the top 1,000, then CEM too must be “popular in the BitTorrent and IRC scenes, if not the P2P world in general” (<http://ca.isohunt.com/stats.php?mode=zg>). Prima facie, CEM on isoHunt does not have the same deviant status as it does in the general community.

Could isoHunt’s subcultural norms increase the risk of onset? This article suggests so. As noted, online group norms—prosocial or antisocial—are considered to be influential in terms of individual behavior on the Internet (Demetriou & Silke, 2003). However, potentially, the influence of isoHunt might be greatest for young people who, in subcultural terms, are attached to the isoHunt community. Among other things, it may be that constructing CEM as “information” assists onset. As discussed earlier, a reported cognitive distortion among CEM users is that *viewing* CEM is harmless. Perhaps this paradigm is more persuasive once CEM is constructed as mere digital information, as a collection of zeros and ones. This construct arguably emphasises a disconnection between *what happened* (child sexual abuse) and *data* that were generated from that event (CEM). What happened may be viewed as unfortunate, criminal, or even repulsive. But the data are innocuous and ethically neutral, and hence acceptable for sexual entertainment. Cronin and Davenport (2001) examined the extraordinary feat of the pornography industry to reinvent its brand image on the Internet. Similarly, it could be suggested that on the Internet the CEM market is altering its brand image, albeit through more organic (and less orthodox commercial) methods.

Sexual Assaults by Young People: CEM as a Risk Factor

Among adult populations of offenders, there appears to be a relatively high level of cross-over between online

⁴The Google Zeitgeist enables Internet users to examine what other people have searched for on that search engine.

offences involving CEM and contact sexual offences involving children. A significant proportion of online CEM offenders have engaged in sexual offences involving children (e.g., see Bourke & Hernandez, 2009). Research has also shown that the use of CEM is a stronger indicator of paedophilic interests than sexual assaults involving children (Seto, Cantor, & Blanchard, 2006). Deviant sexual interests (including paedophilic interests) are, in turn, the strongest single predictor of recidivism in both adult and adolescent contact sex offenders (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005).

These findings certainly suggest that there is an association between use of CEM and hands-on sex offending. However, the exact nature of the relationship between the two behaviors is complex and continues to be debated (Beech et al., 2008; Webb and Craissati, 2007; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2008). It is possible that viewing CEM enables some individuals to resist physical offending against children altogether (Wolak et al., 2008; Wortley, 2010). Other individuals may develop an interest in CEM after they have already begun to commit sexual assaults on children (Beech et al., 2008). Alternatively, it may be that viewing CEM precedes physical offending, with sexual attraction to children being enhanced through conditional pairing of the CEM with fantasy, masturbation, and orgasm (Sullivan & Beech, 2004; Taylor & Quayle, 2008). In Kingston, Fedoroff, Firestone, Curry, and Bradford's (2008) study, offenders' self-reports suggested that not only CEM, but also other forms of deviant pornography preceded and reinforced sexual assaults against children.

Research has yet to study directly the role of CEM in the context of adolescent sex offenders, despite the fact that "sexual abuse of children by other children or adolescents constitutes a significant proportion of sexual offending against children" (Grant et al., 2009, p. 1). Alarming examples of adolescents luring other children into the production of CEM online after being coaxed themselves into self-producing for the purposes of financial profit have been cited in the literature (e.g., Leary, 2007). The empirical literature suggests that a range of risk factors are associated with adolescent sex offending, including sexual abuse history, exposure to violence, social isolation, early exposure to sex or pornography, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Seto & Lalumiere, 2010). Taken as a whole, the findings—that (a) early exposure to pornography is a risk factor for adolescent sex offending, and (b) deviant sexual interests are the strongest predictor of sexual recidivism in adolescent sex offenders—suggest that viewing CEM may play a role in adolescent sex offending. As with adult offenders, however, it is unclear for adolescent sex offenders whether viewing CEM precedes the onset of hands-on offending or vice versa.

In fact, it is likely that the relationship between viewing CEM and hands-on sexual offending is moderated by a range of factors. Research has shown that pornography use is a risk factor for sexually aggressive behavior in adult males (Kingston, Malamuth, Fedoroff, & Marshall, 2009) as well as in children and adolescents (Alexy, Burgess, &

Prentky, 2009) who possess other risk factors that predispose them towards sexual aggression. This would suggest that pornography use compounds the chances of acting in a sexually aggressive manner among adults, adolescents, and children who are predisposed to that type of behavior.

In this context it seems unlikely that young isoHunt users will be prompted to sexually assault others from their generation solely because of viewing CEM. However, CEM must act as a risk factor for sex offending by adolescents when combined with other social and psychological factors. The research literature reviewed here suggests that other forms of deviant pornography might also operate in the same way. While this article has focussed on CEM and isoHunt, there is strong evidence that various categories of deviant pornography are distributed on the website. Table 1 noted one bestiality search term, *animal sex* that persistently appeared in the top 300 between August and November 2010. Other terms have registered in the top 1,000 on single days. For example, on April 4, 2012 *rape* ranked at 258. Clicking on this search term led to a variety of movie titles. Many of these appeared to be collections of fake rape scenes in mainstream and (legal) pornographic films.

However, the titles of some movies intimated footage of actual rapes of adults: "real drugged rape" and "Anna and Marina two sisters real rape." These observations lend credence to concerns that have been raised regarding the inadvertent exposure of children to pornography via P2P sites and the effects this may have on their views regarding pornography and sexual relationships (e.g., Greenfield, 2004; Flood & Hamilton, 2003). Flood and Hamilton (2003, pp. 32–33) note that rape-focused websites are easily accessible to users without payment. Furthermore, on a number of these sites, users are simply asked to indicate if they are aged 18 years and older. This means that young people can easily and freely access the material through falsifying their age. Given that only 14 of the 31 rape-focused websites identified by Gossett and Byrne (2002, cited in Flood & Hamilton, 2003, p. 32) contained the word "rape" in their title, it is plausible that young people may be inadvertently exposed to depictions of nonconsensual and violent sexual behaviors.

Conclusion

Human behaviors surrounding the search for pornographic material on the Internet continues to be of interest to researchers from a variety of disciplines, including information science (e.g., Spink, Ozmutlu, & Lorence, 2004), and involves complex existential questions that are only starting to be explored (Keilty, 2012). This article sought to explore a relatively underresearched topic, namely, how young people might interact with, and be affected by, CEM on the Internet. The article presented new analyses from a 2010 study of an internationally popular file sharing website, isoHunt. The isoHunt study provides a vignette into the types of influences and social messages that young people experience on the Internet. The isoHunt study could not provide data on isoHunt users, but some relatively clear

conclusions can be drawn from popular search terms that the website automatically generates. Over 91 days, spanning August to November 2010, there were 162 persistent search terms. Most of these related to file sharing of popular movies, music, software, and so on. It was suggested that about 36 search terms would appeal specifically to a youth market (and perhaps a child market). Given isoHunt has 1.8 million registered users, it seems fair to suggest that young people use isoHunt; indeed, data obtained from Quant Cast suggest that an estimated 15% of isoHunt users are younger than 18 years of age. The persistent search terms also showed that some isoHunt users are interested in pornography. Additionally, four deviant persistent search terms were found, three relating to CEM, and the fourth to bestiality.

The ordinal data produced by isoHunt do not indicate how many people entered these search terms. However, it was more the concern of this article that young people might see the search terms, displayed as they are to alert users as to “what’s popular in the P2P world.” Absent any prominent statements denouncing, for instance, the distribution of CEM or the harms it causes the children involved, arguably the isoHunt website may serve to undermine the deviant status of CEM. If influenced by online group behavior, young people may take their first deliberate viewing of CEM—onset—on the basis that they perceive that many other people are doing it. Based on studies of adults who viewed CEM, onset seems to be more likely if a young person is male and in a sexually aroused state. The article also explored the possibility of subcultural influences on isoHunt. It was proposed that the isoHunt community may itself operate as a subculture. A young person who identified with this subculture may be more influenced by the isoHunt norms regarding CEM. What are those norms? Perhaps chief among them is that CEM can be categorized merely as information; whether isoHunt users access CEM is their affair.

A number of areas were identified as requiring future research. First, what are young people’s attitudes toward viewing CEM (as opposed to producing CEM)? This is important to grasp, because if young people cannot appreciate the harms associated with viewing CEM, then surely onset becomes a simpler matter. Second, to what extent do online communities shape youth norms regarding not only CEM but also other material including bestiality and rape fetish? Third, can CEM act as a risk factor in sex offending by young people, albeit in combination with other factors?

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PartnerSPEAK Research Report



PartnerSPEAK.org.au
stop pornographic exploitation against kids

Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material in Australia

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Professor S. Caroline Taylor AM

2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers would like to extend a huge thank you to the women who participated in this research. Without their willingness to share their stories this research would not have been possible. We have been humbled by their stories and generosity in sharing often traumatic experiences in the hope that this research might improve the paths for other women whose partners accessed, possessed, used and sometimes produced child abuse material.

The researchers would also like to acknowledge PartnerSPEAK for the opportunity to conduct this research. Without their help in posting the advertisement and conducting media campaigns the research would not have been possible. Our thanks also go to the PartnerSPEAK board members who were consulted on the finalised report. A special mention must be given to Mi Fon Lew, Communication Coordinator of Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE) for her editing work on the final report.

Finally we would also like to thank the Justice and Legal Studies Program at RMIT University for providing funding for the transcription of interviews, an Oxfam gift for each interview participant, and for interstate travel to conduct interviews. Thanks are also given to Edith Cowan University for the printing of the final report.

PartnerSPEAK Research Report: Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material in Australia

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ISBN: 978-0-9943519-0-6

Citation: Liddell, M., & Taylor, S. C. (2015). 'Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material in Australia.' *PartnerSPEAK Research Report*. Victoria, Australia: RMIT University.



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FOREWORD

Natalie Walker

Founder of PartnerSPEAK

This important report is a call for action. To our knowledge this published research is the first of its kind worldwide, exploring the experiences of and impact on the non-offending partners of people involved with child exploitation material. In this pilot project, the voices are few but they are consistent. Partners, and their families, are experiencing significant trauma with a distinct lack of support often coupled with ostracism and isolation.

PartnerSPEAK is deeply grateful to the research team, Dr. Marg Liddell and Professor S. Caroline Taylor AM and RMIT University (Melbourne), for undertaking this research. Hours of pro bono contribution and deep personal commitment made this research possible. Nine partners were interviewed in this pilot research report. Within this small group of participants from diverse backgrounds, we learn that some parts of their experiences as affected partners have been consistently and strikingly similar. Clearly this pilot study exposes only the tip of the iceberg.

The research participants, who volunteered to be involved in this study, shared difficult, sensitive experiences with the research team to raise awareness and better understanding of this hidden issue, so that other affected partners and children can be better supported by various agencies and their own community during this extremely difficult time. My deepest thanks go to the research participants for their courage in sharing their personal and traumatic experiences for the future benefit of other families in the community who may suddenly find themselves in similar situations. These participants have broken the silence on this growing issue and shared their most personal experiences. We must value their brave and important contribution and build on this initial research by funding and supporting further research with a broader cross-section of affected partners.

The findings of this report provide insight into the specific needs of affected partners, and allow us to pursue the most appropriate and beneficial response. Support groups such as PartnerSPEAK, law enforcement agencies, government departments and the community sector all have critical roles in supporting affected partners. By listening to partners and learning from their experiences, we become much better informed when planning and implementing best practice. Let us seriously consider and respond to the recommendations made within this report.

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Executive Summary

We are grateful to all of the women who agreed to be interviewed in this research for their willingness to tell their stories to researchers whom they did not know. They openly stated that they wanted to tell their stories so that the paths for other women learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material would be less traumatic.

Their stories are very different; with some finding their partner's child abuse material themselves, others experiencing a police raid, or their partner being apprehended at work. Some left their partners; some continued to live with their partners or continued to support a long-time partner. Some reported relatively good experiences with authorities whilst others reported a negative experience. Every woman reported irrevocable impacts as a consequence of their partner's illegal activities upon their lives and those of other family members. Some women had the experience of family members and friends minimising the activities of their partner and reported feeling 'judged' by others for adopting the stance they did with regard to their partner's possession and use of child abuse material.

The stories of these women, as told to us in interviews, make clear the distress and turmoil inflicted upon them and their extended families as a consequence of their partner's conduct. They also reveal strength and courage in dealing with and coming through such traumatic events. Most participants reported mental health issues, with many seeming to experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). There is no doubt that for many, these are long-term issues.

The loss of memories, such as photographs on computers, often compounded most women's views that they had "lost their life." This research will, we hope, pave the way for better responses to people who experience a partner's use of child abuse material. We also have a responsibility to ensure that the community has more understanding and awareness of the experiences of people whose partners use child abuse material, both at the time of the detection or investigation, or in the future as they attempt to come to terms with this offending.

The experiences of the women in our sample have much to teach and guide criminal investigators and those who provide treatment programs to offenders. From our interviews with these women we gained insight into the behaviours of their partners as well as critical insights into the behaviours and activities that aroused suspicion among those women who went on to discover the child abuse material. In addition, this study revealed the extent of secondary victimisation experienced by the participants to varying degrees. This is an important consideration both for counsellors and also for police to take into consideration.

The first section of the research report includes an introduction to the research, a brief scan of the literature particularly related to definitions and key issues related to child abuse material, and the methodology used including ethics approvals. We hoped to conduct 12 interviews and received queries from 10 women expressing interest to be interviewed. One participant was not suitable for interview given that her partner's use child abuse material was undergoing a criminal investigation. Nine women were interviewed, two of whom lived interstate.

Profile of the participants in the research

The ages of the participants ranged from late 20s to mid-60s. One of the women was in her late 20s when interviewed for the research and four of the women were in their early or mid-30s; one was in her early 40s; two were in their 50s and one was in her 60s. For the young women in the sample, the discovery of the child abuse material occurred when one of the young women was in her early-20s and three were in their mid to late-20s. Eight of the women were married.

All of their partners were male. Four had divorced their partners post discovery of the child abuse material and three participants were still living with their partners. Two of these indicated they planned to leave in the future.

Six of the women had children when their partners were arrested or investigated for the use of child abuse material. Two participants were the subject of a child protection investigation. One of these participants and her children were forced to leave the family home following the detection of her partner's use of child abuse material. Eight of the participants were employed at the time of the detection of the child abuse material.

The detection of the partner's use of child abuse material

This was different across the women we talked to. What was the same though, was the shock they experienced in either finding the material themselves; or having the police investigate or raid the house for the child abuse material. The reactions of the participants' partners when the child abuse material was investigated were very different. Three said that their offending partners expressed relief at being found out. Most initially denied their use of child abuse material, some expressed remorse, and all but one of the participants referred to the offending partners blaming either them or others for their use of child abuse material.

Participants' reaction to their partner's use of child abuse material

Most participants were emotional when discussing their partner's use of child abuse material during the interviews. Some cried constantly, some struggled for composure and regularly stopped what they were saying to regain control of their emotions. Two were very controlled throughout the interview but it was clear that they were still struggling to come to terms with the detection of their partner's use of child abuse material.

The range of responses at the detection of child abuse material were shock, hurt, anger, disbelief, extreme trauma, depression and feelings of responsibility for their partner's use of child abuse material. Five of the participants talked about their feelings of a link between their partner's use of child abuse material and their partner's childhood abuse. There was a considerable amount of guilt and/or feelings of responsibility expressed by all participants about their partner's use of child abuse material. Two participants initially thought the detection of the child abuse material could not be true.

What was also noticeable was that the long-term impact of the traumatic experience of participants sometimes resulted in contradictory feelings and comments that suggested that they continued to be affected by the experience.

Police response to the participants' partner's use of child abuse material

This was very varied. For two of our participants, the police took no immediate action when they reported their discovery. In both situations there was either very limited or no investigation. Both participants were appalled by the lack of police response. One participant felt that she was regarded as a vengeful wife because her report to police was made once she had left her partner and felt safe enough to do so. Upon making her report she was asked questions relating to her now being estranged from her partner and she felt that police viewed her complaint as one stemming from an ulterior motive. Her report to police was not investigated at all. The other participant referred to the police interviewing her partner but not examining his phone or computer.

In contrast three participants thought the initial police response was very good, but for two this was marred by the lack of support and follow up after the investigation commenced. Two participants felt the police response was very disappointing. This was related to no information being provided to them about their partner's use of child abuse material or about the investigation. Four of the participants did not receive any ongoing information from the police about the investigation, court adjournments and hearings.

The majority of the participants felt that the police lacked knowledge about what they were experiencing or where to refer them for help. Participants talked about the length of time the police kept their computers as well as the traumatic impact they experienced by the removal of all personal details including family photographs.

Sentences that the offending partners received for accessing child abuse material

Some of the participants were unclear about the sentences their offending partners received. This may have had something to do with the ongoing reaction and trauma to the raid or the investigation of their partners accessing child abuse material; the lengthy time that some investigations took; then the numerous adjournments that often followed.

One of the participants' partners was placed on a community services order and five were given custodial sentences. The longest sentence an offending partner received was 18 months. Some participants felt that the sentence their offending partner received was too harsh and other participants felt it was too lenient. All participants felt that their partners or ex-partners being on the Sex Offenders Register was important as it meant that they were being monitored over an extended period of time.

Family tension, disruption and loss of friendships

There was considerable tension between many of the participants and their families. One felt that family and friends closed ranks against her to protect her ex-partner, despite one of these friends also discovering child abuse material on her ex-partner's computer. Some referred to family and friends not treating the issue as serious, while others felt that family sometimes blamed them for their partner's use of child abuse material.

Some participants referred to losing friendships or not being able to make friends because of fear that if they discussed the issue they would be further alienated. One participant summed this up saying she had "...lost her family... lost everything... I am ostracised, stigmatised, marginalised... Not a lot of people want to talk to me about this or be friends." Some lost contact with family and there was reference to family tensions when children needed to live with two different families after the family breakdown.

Minimisation related to their partner's use of child abuse material

Comments from family and friends were often dismissive of the use of child abuse material with comments such as "He was only looking" or "They are only pictures, so what is the harm". Of concern is that people watching videos or looking at pictures do not connect that in order for this material to be available, they have been responsible for commissioning serious abuse of children.

All of the women interviewed were cognisant that the 'pictures' were the lives of children being abused. Many felt that the relatives of their partners ignored the fact the images were of children being raped, abused and tortured. Many participants were concerned that their friends continued to allow the offender to have access to their children.

All were troubled by their partner or ex-partner's potential to continue to use child abuse material. Some spoke of their anxiety when their partners formed relationships and then remarried, but when the participant warned the new partner of the ex-partner's use of child abuse material, this warning was disregarded.

The child abuse material being used and produced

For women who discovered the child abuse material on their partner's computer/s, the material ranged from images of babies and infants to young pre-pubescent and adolescent children. Some of the material involved pictures and videos depicting violence and torture.

Two participants experienced overwhelming distress and shock when they discovered that their partners had images of other children known to them. For one participant, the images were of neighbouring children and for another her own younger family member who had stayed at their home. In these latter examples, the partners of these women were not only purchasing and hoarding child abuse material but were also producing child abuse material themselves and were accessing children known and/or related to them to do so.

Lack of support

Many of the participants in this research reported that they felt alone, abandoned and unsupported. This compounded the impact of the detection and investigation of their partner's use of child abuse material. Two participants commented that the stigma of divorce could have been viewed by others as worse than the stigma of abusing children.

One participant felt that there was little support for partners of people who accessed child abuse material. She undertook a large search and said that while "there's a lot of information for the victims and lots of stories and books... there's nothing for [affected] partners." Other participants talked about the lack of knowledge about child abuse material specifically and that this compounded their isolation and trauma.

Many craved for someone to talk to who understood what they were experiencing and could provide practical non-judgmental help. The latter comment is critical as the majority of participants in our study spoke to us of others' explicit or implied blame and negative judgments towards themselves upon learning of their partner's actions.

Some women felt they were judged as either being the *cause* or as someone who must have *known* of such activity. In either case the women felt they were being judged and tainted by association rather than being understood as a collateral victim to their partner's criminal conduct.

Contact with PartnerSPEAK¹

All of the participants talked of the help that they received from PartnerSPEAK. Comments were made about feeling validated, supported by people who understood their circumstances and about not being judged. Of concern however is that most participants stumbled upon the PartnerSPEAK website after making statements online that they were "going crazy" or words to that effect. It could be assumed that many people who are dealing with a partner's use of child abuse material might not access this site.

Future strategies have been organised into **Recommendations** see next page.

¹ PartnerSPEAK is an online peer-to-peer support forum for people ('affected partners') concerned about child exploitation material viewed by their partners, spouses or family members. Following this research's completion, PartnerSPEAK rebranded and changed its URL from PartnerSPEAK.org to **PartnerSPEAK.org.au**.

Recommendations

The research provides the following recommendations for further research, policy and practice. Although the research sample was small, the researchers are confident that the following recommendations are justified.

Research

1. Research should be extended to **include both women's and men's experiences** of their partner's use of child abuse material. This should include both heterosexual and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTIQ) experiences.
2. Further research needs to be undertaken to **determine the link between adult pornography and child abuse material**. This possibility was raised by participants, who felt that their partners became desensitised as a consequence of their consumption of legal adult pornography, and their later use of child abuse material. This, they felt, led to their partner increasingly accessing violent images of adult pornography as well as images of very young children.
3. The child abuse material research needs to be published to **raise awareness of the impact of the offender's use of child abuse material on their partners**. Journal articles should examine such impact related to
 - a. the minimisation of the seriousness of the participants' partners' use of child abuse material by family and/or friends (as discussed above);
 - b. the significant psychological trauma and emotional distress experienced by the participants and their families when they discovered their partner's involvement in possessing child abuse material.
4. In addition, child abuse material research needs to publish and **raise awareness of the factors that lead a person to suspect the presence and use of child abuse material by their spouse or partner**. Such information will be of direct benefit to criminal justice personnel and therapeutic professionals as it provides insights into the subtle and nuanced characteristics and behaviours of an offender, gained within an intimate relationship. Such information can assist with intelligence gathering, prevention, early detection and exposure of offenders accessing or distributing child abuse material.

Policy and practice issues

5. Raising awareness

- a. **All universities and professional training programs** should provide information in their **health, welfare and justice-related programs** to raise awareness of the use of child abuse material; responses to child abuse material; impact on the child abuse victim and impact on the secondary victims, especially the children and the affected partner of the person who has used the child abuse material.
- b. There needs to be more awareness in the **media** of the impact of the offender's use of child abuse material on the affected partners and their families. This can be achieved by more media coverage on the topic of this research, plus publications.
- c. There needs to be an increased awareness of child abuse material at a range of levels. These include **police, child protection and counsellors**:
 - i. **Police** require more awareness of the need to support the affected partner of the person who has accessed child abuse material. Police need to be cognizant of secondary victimisation and its impact for partners; and take this into account when interacting with partners of alleged offenders to ensure that appropriate supports and referrals are provided from the outset.
 - Better communication and understanding from police is required about the impact of the offender's use of child abuse material on their affected partners and families.
 - Police need to provide information to affected partners of the offender at the time of the report, raid or investigation. Further there was concern that participants were told not to discuss the case. They were not provided with an avenue either from the police or a counsellor at the time or shortly after the detection or investigation of child abuse material, to discuss what was going to happen. Failure to provide information left the participant concerned about making sure they did not breach anything to do with her partner's case and this impacted on them receiving formal help and support.
 - Police need to provide ongoing information and support to affected partners prior to and throughout the judiciary process.
 - Police need more experience in the detection of child abuse material – this includes police officers in the child abuse units. Failure to check computers and phones in two participants' situations seems to have been a serious oversight.

- It is suggested more consideration needs to be given about the removal of photos and other personal information by police from the affected partners' computers. It seems surprising that police felt that all photos had to be wiped from computers. Further, there did not seem to be any recognition of the impact this action would have on already very traumatised lives.
- ii. **Child protection** Three participants thought child protection could have been more supportive and helpful. It is unclear from these accounts how much child protection workers knew about child abuse material. It is clear however that more awareness of the need to support the affected partner of the person who has accessed child abuse material, is required. This research demonstrated that child protection workers in one participant's situation had little understanding or awareness of the trauma associated with a spouse's or partner's use of child abuse material. It is also hard to understand why child protection did not consider a range of strategies rather than just insisting the mother and the three children find alternative accommodation. In other cases police strategies uncovered problems such as hidden cameras which, when dealt with, obviated the need for the family to leave the home and at least spared them that extra trauma.
- iii. **Counselling** It is clear from this research that counsellors need to have more awareness of the issues surrounding use and detection of child abuse material plus the resultant traumatic response and secondary victimisation that affected partners or other family members might experience. Examples given by research participants suggested that counsellors sometimes gave advice which did not take relevant factors into account.

6. Referral and support services

There needs to be somewhere for people to go who may be suspicious of their partner and think that they might be using child abuse material. Those agencies that are best situated to support affected partners are the National Child Abuse Prevention Hotline and PartnerSPEAK. At the time this research was conducted there was no known standalone specialised services for affected partners and their families. Funding should be available to establish such a service. PartnerSPEAK is considered the knowledge leader in this particular field and therefore should be consulted in extending training programs for existing services.

7. Mentoring

All participants talked about the need to have a mentor, someone who understood what was going on. This need not necessarily be a 'counsellor' but rather someone who understands the impact and experience of affected partners and families in this situation. While PartnerSPEAK provides online peer-to-peer support, the research demonstrated that the participants would like additional support such as the funding and development of a face-to-face mentoring program. This would provide a contact point and a support person for affected partners.

8. Development of a brochure

All participants felt that a brochure should be developed for key agencies, including police, to distribute at the time of the reporting of the child abuse material to police; the raid or the investigation. This needs to include:

- Where they can go for immediate online help, such as PartnerSPEAK.org.au
- What will happen from then on in terms of the investigation, the court processes including adjournments and the sentencing process
- Information about their legal rights
- Information related to appropriate counselling support services
- Centrelink details
- Legal aid details

Introduction

In recent years there has been an exponential criminal focus and social debate on what has been termed '*child pornography*' largely as a consequence of the ubiquity of the internet and social media where the digitalised abuse of children is captured and trafficked globally. The authors of this report and members of PartnerSPEAK recognize that the term 'pornography' is inappropriate to describe images of child sexual abuse and child exploitation. The term is misleading and sanitises the rape, sexual abuse and exploitation of children, which is a serious criminal offence and a human rights violation. Instead we use the term 'child abuse material' that has been coined and adopted by advocates and other researchers (Marsh, 2011; Quale & Jones, 2011) to more ethically and appropriately describe the crime. In doing so it reflects the reality of the crime against children and gives dignity and recognition to child victims through a proper linguistic framing of their experiences as innocent victims of sexual violence that are produced and disseminated on the internet.

From the extensive professional experience of Professor Caroline Taylor AM with Interpol and other police around the world, the term 'child abuse material' and 'child exploitation material' is the accepted descriptor used by police and others who work in this field. In this report the term '*child pornography*' will only be used where the term is used verbatim or will be denoted in inverted commas and italics to signify our disagreement with the term. At all other times in this report the term 'child abuse material' will be used.

This project developed out of contact and discussions between Professor S. Caroline Taylor AM (Chair of Social Justice and Director of the Social Justice Research Centre, Edith Cowan University and Adjunct Professor, RMIT) and the founder of PartnerSPEAK, Natalie Walker, regarding the impact on women who discovered their partner was downloading, using or producing child abuse material. The aim of this project has been to capture the voices and experiences of those who variously discovered that their spouse or partner was in any way using child abuse material, and the reactions and actions that followed this discovery. There is an absence of research on the experiences of women who discover their partner or spouse has been or is accessing or producing child abuse material. There are important insights and learnings to be gained about the in-situ life of the offender, especially as the offences most often occur within a private domestic setting. As well, any indicators that triggered the concern or suspicion of their partner or other contextual factors that led to exposure of the partner offending, provide additional insights. Following a discussion between Professor Taylor and the founder of PartnerSPEAK regarding the need for this research, committee of management members of PartnerSPEAK ratified an agreement for researchers to undertake this study.

This exploratory study draws from experiences of nine women who became aware of their then partner's involvement in child abuse material. In-depth, individual interviews with these women have elucidated the lived experiences of their knowledge, awareness and response to the discovery of their partners' activities. Additionally, understanding of the participants' responses, regardless of whether such activity was reported to police or not, will raise awareness and suggest improvements required to assist affected partners in these situations.

This project has generated new knowledge about the nature of women's experiences and responses to them, when they have become aware of a spouse's or partner's involvement in child abuse material. This is a significantly under-researched area of crime and response to crime. To the researchers' knowledge, no research to date has explored the experiences of non-offending women, their knowledge or insight into their partner's involvement in child abuse material, or their experiences of informal and formal responses.

The aims of this project were therefore to:

- 1. Explore the experiences and perspectives of women who have become aware of their partner's involvement in child abuse material***
- 2. Identify areas for improvement in informal responses (such as by friends and family), and formal responses (such as by police and community agencies) to these women***
- 3. Provide recommendations to improve formal responses.***

This project involved only female participants who were members of PartnerSPEAK². This project set out to interview only female affected partners who self-selected to be involved in the study, as per the advertisement on the PartnerSPEAK website. They were women who had discovered or become aware of a spouse/partner possessing illegal child abuse material. This is not unusual given that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators who possess child abuse material are males. The sample may not be representative of the wider population as it is small and participants self-selected to be interviewed. Nevertheless the stories of the participants, while different, raise some consistent themes and it would be surprising if the findings did not apply to other women who have experiences of learning about their partners' involvement in possessing child abuse material.

This report commences with the definitional issues around the terms child abuse material and '*child pornography*', and brief literature that discusses this complexity. We then describe the methodology and the ethics approval process for the research. From there we provide details about the research project, including a profile of participants; a profile of the participants' partners, and actions taken related to the participants' partners' possession of child abuse material. This includes the circumstances regarding their partner's use of child abuse material; the police response, the participant's response to the sentencing process; family disruption and tension, minimisation of the issue and the pain this caused; lack of support; and lastly their contact with PartnerSPEAK. We conclude the paper with strategies that participants suggested.

² '*Affected partners*' become members of PartnerSPEAK by participating in online forums. It was thought that women in this study needed to be members of PartnerSPEAK so they would have shared their story or been able to obtain mentoring to deal with the problems associated their partners' possession of child abuse material.

Definitional issues related to child abuse material

The sexual abuse of children is both a major crime and a human rights violation of the most serious kind. So too is *'child pornography'* though it is only in recent times that critics and the legal system have shifted from seeing *'child pornography'* as a victimless crime to be catalogued alongside adult pornography. Applying the term 'pornography' to discuss photographic and/or digitalized images involving children has been debated and contested by researchers and advocates who argue the term child abuse material and/or child exploitation material better reflects the criminal sexual violation of children (Marsh, 2011; Quale & Jones, 2011).

Accessing and downloading child abuse material is a criminal offence, and one difficult to monitor given the relative ease with which offenders operate out of private spaces on home computers. The widespread notion that those who view *'child pornography'* are merely looking at images and that they are not partaking in a contact offence, is a widespread view promulgated in scholarly literature (Long, Laurence & McManus, 2012; Norma, 2011; Pringle, 2011; Taylor, 2011).

What does the literature say about child abuse material?

Arguments have been mounted that those who download and view *'child pornography'* that is child abuse material, are 'harmless' and that their activity substitutes for 'contact offending', that is, they are merely *looking* as opposed to actually sexually abusing children. Notwithstanding the flawed foundation of this rationale – to produce the images children who are sexually abused – there is ample empirical evidence linking online offenders (those downloading and viewing child abuse material) who are also committing contact offences (the actual sexual abuse of children) (see Long et al., 2012). Moreover, child abuse material may serve as a precursor to contact offending and/or facilitate various forms of child sexual abuse (Bailey, 2007; Long, et al., 2012). In addition, the internet facilitates a private, anonymous and globalised digital marketplace for online offenders who not only download, swap, share and trade child abuse images but enables the sharing of information of current and potential child victims (Durkin, 1997; Holt, Blevins & Burkert, 2010; Jenkins, 2001; Quayle & Taylor, 2002).

Law enforcement agencies operate with finite resources on a global criminal problem that operates within layers of secrecy and privacy and is facilitated through the complex web of internet technology. *'Child pornography'* is a multi-billion dollar industry operating along a spectrum of those who procure, produce, disseminate, trade, swap, share and download material. Sitting alongside this are the millions of child victims – most of whom have never been identified both in terms of identification of the crime itself and identification of their images – when they come to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

A non-finite violation is created as a consequence of child abuse material being captured on film and disseminated globally to be viewed, downloaded, traded, and used as a sex aid by offenders around the world. Such material further aids in the procurement and abuse of other children and the making of further material. As a 2009 United Nations (UN) report on *'child pornography'* makes clear, children are aware that images of their sexual abuse will be viewed indefinitely by users as a consequence of the internet creating a digitalised image

that can never ever be erased. Law enforcement personnel working in this field also know this terrible reality and many realise its impact on the child abuse victim. As the UN report states: “This is a never-ending violation of these children’s rights to privacy which causes additional humiliation. Victims grow up knowing that photographs or videos of them will be on the internet for the rest of their lives” (UN, 2009, p. 11). More than that, the captured images of sexually abused children doubles the horror in terms of victimisation that is recorded and uploaded into a public technology that can never be erased.

In recent years studies have begun to focus specifically on the crime of child abuse material to draw out a deeper understanding not just of offenders but the machinations involved in this technology-assisted crime against children. Studies on sex offenders tend to focus on self-report which is limiting because of the propensity and inclination of sex offenders to lie about their criminal behaviour and conceal the extent of their crimes (Hall & Hall, 2007). It is therefore important to obtain evidence from other sources such as victims or non-victims who are/were intimately connected with the offender.

Closer attention to the experiences and impacts of child abuse material on child victims yields insights not only into offenders but makes explicit the depth of trauma and its ubiquitous presence and impact connected to the virtual immortality of their violation on the internet (see Marsh, 2007; Pringle, 2011; Tankard Reist & Bray, 2011). The voices of victims denounce arguments that those who view their images are somehow partaking in a victimless crime.

Only recently a prominent, long serving judge from the Victorian County Court, Justice Michael McInerney used sentencing remarks in a criminal case involving child abuse material to question the lack of serious investment by the Commonwealth government to address ‘*child pornography*’. Justice McInerney said there had been an “abject failure” by the Commonwealth to advise the community both of the seriousness of the crime and its dire consequences for child victims. Moreover Justice McInerney used the opportunity to request that the Crown Prosecutor in the case ‘advise the Attorney General’ of these concerns (Butcher, 2015).

On the global stage, in March 2015 the European Parliament voted in a resolution to further advance efforts by all criminal justice agencies and governments to eradicate online child sexual abuse, ensure the prosecution of offenders, and focus greater effort on the protection of child victims. These calls are underpinned by a growing awareness of the online child abuse ‘industry,’ and the breadth of its impact and destruction upon the lives of children. The challenges posed for the detection and successful prosecution of those who produce, procure and download these images were also highlighted (European Parliament News, 2015).

In conclusion detecting offenders is not only important in addressing the crime but helps expose and potentially track those who produce and disseminate millions of child abuse images downloaded around the globe. It also can aid in the identification of child victims and in some cases, rescue children still being abused. Early detection of offenders is critical. Partners of offenders are an important source of information not only for their capacity to provide context to the characteristics and dynamics of offenders but to learn from those who discovered their partner or spouse was engaged in online child abuse material. This is

an understudied area in terms of capturing the experiences of how such affected partners became aware of this knowledge and their capacity and decision-making in response to this knowledge including the responses they received from others.

Methodology

The project employed qualitative methods involving ethnographic interviews that involve narrative conversation. The flexible, open narrative interview structure uses open-ended introductory questions with verbal prompts around specific themes to guide the interviewees or to seek clarification of issues that arise (Agar, 1980; Oakley, 1981; Robson, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Further questions around specific themes were used as prompts to help direct the conversation for the purpose of eliciting information about the key research areas. This open narrative form of interview is very relevant for grounded theory approaches where the emphasis is on obtaining information about a phenomenon that is not well understood or researched.

This ethnographic approach enables the interviewee to tell of experiences that are marked by complexity and strong emotions while also allowing the interviewee to recall events more deeply as they reflect upon them (Harding, 1986; Reinhartz, 1992; Robson, 2002). The objective of the interviews for this research was to gain insight into the participants' perceptions of the issues and their effects (see **Attachment 1** on pages 53-54 for an outline of questions/themes). The aim was to achieve an understanding of the nature of the participants' experience as they perceived it. Analysis of the interview data involved a critical ethnographical discourse analysis of participant narratives about specific lived experiences.

As well as asking about these women's experiences, the researchers wanted to tap into their views about current and future informal and formal responses to issues that women experience in this area. Studies have shown that sensitively designed studies that make central the experiences of victim/survivors of sexual violence in order to inform education, law and policy reform can be empowering for the women who take part in such studies (Campbell, 2002; Heenan & McKelvie, 1997; Lievore, 2003 & 2005).

This project included women in the following situations:

- Women who had some experience of their partner's involvement with child abuse material
- Women who are members of PartnerSPEAK (see **Footnote 2** on page 15 for rationale).

The project excluded women in the following situations:

- Women who were not members of PartnerSPEAK
- Women for whom court proceedings relating to their partner's possession of child abuse materials are pending or ongoing.

Prior to commencing the research the following tasks were completed:

- Development of a confidential communication site for possible interviewees. A discrete email address was created at RMIT University and this was monitored each day so that researchers would respond to queries of prospective interviewees quickly.
- Funding of \$5,000.00 for transcription and gifts for participants was obtained from the Justice and Legal Studies program at RMIT. It was hoped that 12 interviews could be undertaken.
- Ethics approval.

Ethics approval

Ethics Approval was obtained from RMIT University and Professor Taylor informed Edith Cowan University of this approval. The latter was necessary as Professor Taylor was employed by that university at the time. Both researchers³ have significant experience conducting highly sensitive research involving face-to-face interviews with participants on equally sensitive and potentially distressing topics.

Following ethics approvals, a brief explanation of the project, its aims and potential outcomes were posted on the PartnerSPEAK web page in August 2013 (see **Attachment 2** on page 55). The founder of PartnerSPEAK organised a media release about the project. All participants came from those women who self-selected to be interviewed. These women contacted the researchers after reading the PartnerSPEAK advertisement. We hoped this interview would be an empowering process and we envisaged that other women would approach us and self-refer after online conversations with other participants, via the PartnerSPEAK online forum (this process is referred to as a snowballing approach).

Of interest was that this rarely occurred and the researchers were not able to obtain 12 participants for interview. We feel that part of the reason had to do with the extreme sensitivity and need for privacy among the women and this prevented the kind of open sharing that is often prevalent in snowball approaches.

In the event of unforeseen adverse events the researchers sought to minimise the risk to participants by suggesting if appropriate, they contact one of the following organisations for counselling and support:

- PartnerSPEAK
- Relationships Australia
- CASA (Centres Against Sexual Assault)
- WIRE Women's Information (Women's Information and Referral Exchange Inc.)
- Lifeline

³ The research commenced with the involvement of Dr Anastasia Powell. Dr Powell withdrew from the research due to other priorities after completing two interviews. She has had no further involvement in the research.

The Research Project

Researchers received a number of email inquiries seeking further information about the project. A total of ten women contacted the researchers expressing interest to be interviewed. One participant was not suitable for interview given that her partner's use of child abuse material was in the process of a criminal investigation.

Two interviews were organised almost immediately and within the next month three other interviews were completed. In October 2013 the founder of PartnerSPEAK and Professor Taylor undertook further media interviews to recruit interviewees and three more women came forward. The last person contacted the researchers early in 2014. A total of nine women were interviewed. All those who made email contact were forwarded a Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF) to peruse prior to the interview (see **Attachment 3** on page 56).

The researchers asked the participants to nominate a place for the interview in which they felt comfortable. Such places could include Community Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, offices of Relationships Australia, or other suitable places designated by the participants. We envisaged interviews would be conducted at a neutral location. Of interest was that three interviews were conducted in the researcher's offices and three in hotels/ coffee shops. While we originally did not envisage meeting in participants' homes, this occurred in three situations. Two of these interviews were due to the participants' need to care for infants or small children.

Interviews were organised with participants as quickly as possible after they made email contact, with the exception of the two participants who lived interstate. Prior to interviews being conducted the researchers outlined the research, including discussion of the PICF and questions. The researchers ensured that the participants were aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time, prior to the commencement or during the interview, even if the researcher had travelled interstate. Participants were also assured of their anonymity. If the participant agreed to proceed they were asked to sign the consent form. We also sought permission to audio-record the interview.

While the researchers had anticipated that the interview would take 60 to 90 minutes, in six instances the interview took approximately three hours. One interview took over four hours. At the completion of the interview the participants were given a hamper of 'Fair Trade' chocolates as a thank you for participating in the research. Interviews were digitally recorded and each researcher also documented field notes after the interview to record general themes and the tone of the interview so they could be shared with the other researcher. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim after being uploaded onto a confidential transcription link via the RMIT University confidential email address for this research.

Profile of the interview participants

The following table provides information on the profile of the nine participants in this research. After some consideration, a decision was made to ascribe codes to the participants rather than use pseudonyms. PS plus a number have been used to indicate a PartnerSPEAK interviewee. The numbers are reflective of the sequence of the interviews. All of the participants' partners were male.

While the title of the research refers to women's experiences of their partners' use of child abuse material, all women who were married at the time of the detection or raid or police investigation referred often to their partners as their husbands. We have been true to their views so where the term 'husband' was used in the interview, this term rather than 'partner' appears in the quotations. In all other discussion areas we use the term 'partner', not 'husband'.

Table 1: Demographics of participants in the research

Code	Place of interview	Age at interview	No. of children (at time of partners' use of child abuse material)	Length of relationship/marriage	Remained with partner/ or not	Employment (at time of partners' use of child abuse material)
PS 01	Victoria	35-40	None	Married under 5 years	No – divorced partner	Education sector
PS 02	Victoria	65-70	2 adult children	Married under 10 years	No – divorced partner	Administrative work
PS 03	Victoria	50-55	3 adult children	Married 20 years plus	Yes – but communicates only in writing	Community sector
PS 04	Victoria	30-35	None	Married under 10 years	No – divorced partner	Retail sector
PS 05	Victoria	30-35	3 young children	Relationship/marriage under 20 years	No – unknown if divorced	Financial sector
PS 06	Victoria	30-35	1 young child	Married under 5 years	No – divorced partner	Community sector
PS 07	Northern Territory	50-55	2 children under 20 years	Married 20 years plus	Yes	Retail sector
PS 08	Western Australia	25-30	None	Married under 5 years	Yes but will separate	Retail sector
PS 09	Victoria	40-45	2 children under 15 years	Relationship under 10 years	Still in contact	Welfare sector

For the young women in the sample, the discovery of the child abuse material occurred when one was in her early 20s, and three were in their mid- to late 20s. Six of the women had children when their partners were arrested or investigated for the use of child abuse material. Eight of the women were married. The length of time they were married at the time of the discovery or police investigation of the child abuse material is listed in **Table 1** above. The participants' contact and relationship with their partners following the discovery of child abuse material was varied. Some remained with their partners for a short time,

some divorced their partners, some continue to live with their partners, or in the case of PSO9 has continued contact.

PSO1, PSO5 and PSO6 separated fairly quickly after they confronted their partners with his use of child abuse material. PSO4 confronted her partner by phone about his use of child abuse material and told him not to return home. All four divorced their partners. PSO2 remained with her partner for a short time after the police charged him with use of child abuse material. This seemed to be related to the shock and disbelief of the discovery that he was using child abuse material. She subsequently divorced her partner.

PSO3 has remained with her partner but the relationship has deteriorated to such a degree that they only communicate in writing. She spoke of separating from her partner, and her reluctance to do this seemed to be financial as she was not in paid employment. PSO7 has remained with her partner and supported him throughout his court case and subsequent imprisonment. She said when people knew of his use of child abuse material they were very critical of her for remaining with him. PSO8 has remained with her partner. PSO9 has never lived with her partner but continues to support him.

Religious faith was mentioned by four of the participants. For PSO1, PSO3 and PSO4 religion was a significant part of daily life for both the affected participant and her partner. Both PSO1 and PSO4 talked of the stigma of separation and divorce given their religious connections. PSO4 felt there was extra stigma as she could not tell other church members the reason for separation and she would have been judged as someone who did not try hard enough to save their marriage. This information was volunteered in the interview but was not part of the questions asked of participants.

Child protection issues

Two of the families were investigated by child protection services as a consequence of the partner's criminal conduct. PSO7 stated that it was six months after her partner was charged, before child protection completed an investigation to determine whether her partner had involved the children in child abuse material. She said that while the children had indicated to her and the police that they had not been photographed by their father, she was very keen to have this confirmed by child protection, which it ultimately was.

For PSO5 the experience was very different. The Children's Court hearing occurred straight after her partner was apprehended by the Australian Federal Police (AFP). She stated

... overnight I was confronted with the choice of losing the kids over the weekend or moving away from my partner, and it seemed pretty touch and go, like, quite likely that I was going to have the kids taken away from me right there and then. So that was pretty traumatic...

She was informed by child protection that she had to leave the house. She suggested that her partner go to live at her parents' house as they were away but child protection were concerned that her partner had surveillance cameras set up in the house. They informed her that she and the children had to find alternative accommodation. This resulted in PSO5

living in temporary accommodation, which she felt was very destabilising for both she and her children.

So it took a while just to get my head around looking after myself and the kids and all that, and meant balancing work, I would have been a bit of a mess... it was horrendous...

In addition she was very critical of child protection and did not feel that they provided enough help. Further, she felt they lacked understanding of how difficult the situation was for her. PSO5 felt that child protection put obstacles in her way, especially regarding the children having supervised access with their father.

Like they organised this contact – so the court ordered that it would be three times a week, two hours each time. But then they'd cancel visits at the last minute or they'd chop and change it. So you'd try and tell the kids what's coming up and then it would change on you. And then they'd organise it in the middle of kinder[garten] sort of thing... We had a few weeks off... then I tried to get the kids back into normal routines. And they were just completely inconsiderate of what other stuff the kids had going on and all they had to do was make sure that there were the visits. Yeah, so it was pretty unpleasant.

While PSO5 thought that supervised access three times a week sounded a lot at that time, the daily questions she faced from her children asking “Where’s Daddy?”, “I miss Daddy”, “Why can’t he live with us?” due to their father being the primary carer of the children, made frequent contact necessary. In addition PSO5 said that child protection requests put pressure on her to undertake tasks that were completely unreasonable. The following is an example:

... later on one of the people from Child Protection rang me up – like I was pretty messy and had all sorts of things going on, and she asked me to organise for a security company to do a swoop on the house and remove the cameras (it is not clear if cameras were present in the house)... It [the house] was about to be sold in five weeks, so she said that she had a duty of care to the people moving into the house to make sure that that it was safe... I rang back and spoke to someone else and said, “She’s got to get off my case, I can’t deal with her any more.” I said, “I have no idea where to start making that kind of call, and I’ve just lost my entire life and you want me to do that?”

Questions arise about the pressure that child protection placed on PSO5 and the lack of child protection understanding or awareness of the trauma associated with her partner’s use of child abuse material. As well, it is unclear why child protection did not organise a “sweep” of the couple’s house (or request this from the police – see the police response related to PSO6 on pages 29 and 30) to determine if there were hidden cameras rather than insisting on PSO5 and the three children find alternative accommodation. Temporary accommodation further traumatised PSO5 and the children, given the instability of accommodation plus family issues and problems that ensued.

Circumstances surrounding the participants' partner's use of child abuse material.

The following information provides a profile of the participants' partners who had used child abuse material – see **Table 2** below for a summary.

Table 2: Profile of the partners who had used child abuse material

Code	Professional employment of partner who had used child abuse material	Denied use of child abuse material	Blamed wife or someone else for use of child abuse material	Used adult porn
PS 01	Health sector	Yes	No	Yes
PS 02	Arts sector	No	Yes – blamed wife	Yes
PS 03	IT sector	Yes	Not known	Yes
PS 04	Financial sector	Yes	Yes – blamed wife	Yes
PS 05	Carer of own children	No	Yes – blamed someone else	Not known
PS 06	Retail sector	No	Yes – blamed others	Yes
PS 07	Retail sector	No	Yes – blamed others	Yes
PS 08	Mining sector	Yes	Yes – blamed wife	Not known
PS 09	Factory sector	No	Not known	Yes

A number of the participants referred to their partners blaming either them or others for their use of child abuse material. PSO2, PSO4, PSO8 referred to their partners blaming them for their use of child abuse material. PSO2 also blamed herself for not realising there was a link between adult and '*child pornography*'. PSO3 blamed herself also and said that others blamed her – the affected partner – just as much as the offender: "...because why didn't I know, why didn't I do something about it."

PSO4 said that her partner gave the impression in court that she had framed him and or that she was responsible for the child abuse material being on the computer. She was concerned that she may have to give evidence at court. This was not however necessary. PSO5 said that her partner blamed someone else saying, "Someone else had logged into our computer network and downloaded this stuff and put it on the computer, so did it all remotely, sort of thing."

Five of the participants talked about the link between their partner's use of child abuse material and their partner's childhood abuse, most of this related to sexual abuse with one instance of neglect. For some, this was a clear connection, but for others it was a possibility. PSO2 felt that her partner had suffered abuse at some time but she did not get to the bottom of this. PSO4's partner admitted that he had accessed child abuse material for many years, which would have meant that he started using when he was in his mid-teens. PSO7 referred to her partner telling her that he had been sexually groomed when he was in his pre-teens and had been given lavish gifts. She questioned why his parents did not enquire at the time, about where he had obtained these items.

PSO8 referred to her partner accessing child abuse material from when he was in his pre-teens. PSO9 said that her partner told her he had been abandoned and neglected from a very young age. She believed that this might have led to him accessing child abuse material. He told her that looking at pictures of nude women was comforting to him. However as

PSO9 explained her partner then started to load more and more pictures, then started to download pictures of children.

There was a considerable amount of guilt and/or feelings of responsibility expressed by all participants about their partners' use of child abuse material. This is discussed below under the section titled *Participants' reaction to their partners' use of child abuse material* on page 33.

Table 3: Action taken by the participants regarding their partner's possession of child abuse material

Code	Found child abuse material	Action taken	Police action	Court action	Current Contact
PS 01	Yes	Informed police	No charges	NIL	No
PS 02	No	N/A	Arrested at work – charges laid	Prison sentence	No
PS 03	Yes	Discussed situation with church	Relative reported him to police – charges laid	Prison sentence	Yes
PS 04	Yes	Confronted partner – took computer to police	Charges laid	Community service order	No
PS 05	No	N/A	Police raid – charges laid	Prison sentence	Yes but only for supervised access of children
PS 06	Yes	Confronted partner then reported him to police	Charges laid	Prison sentence	No
PS 07	No	N/A	Police raid – charges laid	Prison sentence	Yes
PS 08	Yes	Took computer to police	No charges	NIL	Yes
PS 09	No	N/A	Police apprehension and charged	Prison sentence	Yes

The detection of their partner's use of child abuse material was different across the women we talked to. What was the same though was the shock they experienced in either finding the material themselves or having the police investigate, or raid the house for the child abuse material. PSO1 was told by a mutual friend who had serviced her partner's computer that her partner had "underage pornography" on his computer. PSO1 said that her response to this knowledge was shock but she was not surprised, as her partner's use of adult pornography had gone through significant change through their marriage. PSO1 confronted her partner and eventually decided to leave him. It was two years later when she reported him to police (see next section *Police response to the participants' partner's use of child abuse material* on page 27).

For PSO2 and PSO7, their reaction to finding out that their partners had accessed child abuse material was initially one of denial. This may have had something to do with the way

the police investigation or raid occurred (see next section ***Police response to the participants' partner's use of child abuse material*** from page 27). As mentioned before, PSO2 said that she felt guilty – her partner was a regular user of adult pornography – she felt she should have known that this was a precursor to the use of '*child pornography*'.

PSO3 said that she discussed her partner's use of child abuse material with her church in the first instance because he was involved with children's activities. They were concerned and referred her partner to a psychologist. PSO3's sister then contacted the police some six months later about PSO3's partner taking pictures of her daughter. He was interviewed by the police and charged on summons. PSO3 had no concrete knowledge that her partner had taken pictures of her niece but said she had suspicions.

PSO4 found the child abuse material images of "8- to 12-year-old girls" on her partner's computer after she became suspicious that her partner was having an affair. She rang his mobile and confronted him with what she found. She told him not to return home. She took the computers to the police some days later. PSO4 went on to say that she had confronted her partner previously about a picture she had found on his computer and he had counselling for some years after this.

PSO5 and PSO7 were shocked firstly about the police raid and could not believe that the men they had been married to for such a long time could be involved in using child abuse material. Initially PSO5 thought to support her partner as they had been together for over 10 years but this changed quickly when child protection intervened (see pages 22 and 23) and she was required to leave the family home. She referred to her life falling apart. As discussed below PSO7 has remained with her partner.

When asked about how she came to have suspicious that her partner might be accessing child abuse material, PSO6 identified two incidents that stood out for her, which "raised red flags" about what was going on for her partner. Both incidents happened at home. PSO6 says in hindsight her partner was a loner with few friends as he was not very sociable and she feels she should have picked this up as a "flag" at the time. PSO6 said that they had both watched legal "adult porn" as a couple and she became increasingly concerned about his behaviour. While he was at work she searched their garage where she found a hidden box with flash drives and DVDs etc. She also found an "extra" computer she had no knowledge about. When she opened the flash drives/USBs and DVDs, she was distressed and disgusted to find child abuse material and to her greater horror, pictures and a video of the teenage girl living next door (taken through the window of her bedroom). She also found girls' underwear in the box (it would eventuate that her partner had stolen it from the clothesline of the family next door – the underwear belonged to the teenage girl). PSO6 said she felt ill and could feel herself going numb with shock and then a sense of rage. She subsequently rang her partner and demanded he come home where she confronted him. Soon after she reported him to the police.

The situations of PSO2, PSO4, PSO5, PSO7 and PSO8 are discussed further in the next section ***Police response to the participants' partner's use of child abuse material*** on page 27. Just as the police responses were varied so was the sentencing of the offender. PSO2's partner was given a 40-month prison sentence. He was later deported to his country of origin. PSO3's partner received a nine-month sentence, with six months suspended – he

served three months in prison. PSO4's partner was sentenced to a Community Service Order for two years. PSO5's partner was sentenced to a six-month prison sentence. PSO6's partner received a two-year prison sentence with a non-parole period of 18 months. PSO7's partner was sentenced to 12 months in prison and PSO9's partner was sentenced to four months in prison.

Police response to the participants' partner's use of child abuse material

For two of our participants PSO1 and PSO8, the police took no action. It was Operation Auxin in 2004 – a police response to reporting online child abuse material, which motivated PSO1 to report her partner's use of child abuse material. Up until then she had been dealing with her marriage breakdown, economic and social changes in her circumstances and the loss of friendship networks with little support from family. PSO1 made a report to police in Melbourne and was upset by their response. Even though PSO1 advised police that a computer technician could verify the presence of child abuse material on the computer and she provided them with the details of the technician, the police officer was more interested in the fact that she had left her partner. PSO1 believed the police felt she was a vengeful wife seeking retribution on her partner. She also advised them about her partner's penchant for taking photos of people without their knowledge or consent who were either in his care or undergoing medical treatment. She received little response from the police.

PSO1 continued to follow up with police for two years but each time was rebuffed. She felt that she was not believed. PSO1 then sought access to her police report under Freedom of Information (FOI). While a lot of material was blacked out, PSO1 was able to ascertain that the police did not follow up on any of the information she provided. They did not contact the computer technician or act on the information about the photos being taken of vulnerable adults and children who were patients in the care of her partner. These were specialist sexual offence police. The police report noted her separation and divorce, and the way it was written confirmed PSO1's initial suspicions that the police felt she was motivated to harm her partner through frivolous allegations. While she acknowledged other women have had positive experiences with police, she felt that police continue to lack any real depth of knowledge about this area and continue to view reports by affected partners as suspicious and possibly motivated by revenge. PSO1 stated:

So that on initial disclosure the assumption is that the person is telling the truth, unless proved otherwise. Whereas I think the assumption was that someone is making it up, unless proved. So I felt I had to prove I wasn't lying. Obviously at that point of time in my life that was the most difficult thing I had ever done. This was the person that I probably still loved at that time, being able to hold that complex thing of still caring about the person and finding what they do abhorrent...

Even if it had gone swimmingly, it was already going to be a very difficult situation and I was not prepared to be discounted or not believed. From what I saw in the media it was a big deal and I thought it would have been responded to as if it was a big deal.

Similarly PSO8 was appalled that the specialist child abuse unit took no action related to the 'child pornography' picture that was on her computer, left there by her partner. She said, "The police child abuse unit interviewed... [name of partner] but didn't charge him. Further they didn't check his computer or his phone". She stated that the police response was very disappointing and did nothing to stop or interrupt her partner's use of child abuse material. PSO8 said that she wanted the police to be more proactive – she wanted them "to really get into that spot where [partner's name] is hiding". This comment related to his failure to initially admit to downloading child abuse material, then minimising his use. She felt that the police did not treat the issues seriously and did not validate her feelings.

In contrast to this PSO3, PSO4 and PSO6 thought the initial police response was very good. PSO4 spoke highly of the policewoman to whom she notified her partner's use of child abuse material. This policewoman warned her that once the police investigation of his use of child abuse material commenced it could not be stopped. PSO4 said this policewoman informed her of all the proceedings against her partner, from when they intended to lay charges to court appearances, adjournments and when he was sentenced. She also provided PSO4 with names of appropriate counsellors but not until all of the proceedings against her partner had been completed.

PSO3 felt that the police response was quite good. She said that the police did not have enough evidence to take her partner's computer but, "she could have offered it to them." She said initially it was "really hard to know what to do and what to say because I didn't want to be a witness against him." It seemed like PSO3 felt conflicted by her desire to support her partner, by her feelings of guilt due to her niece being the victim of her partner's use of child abuse material, and by her desire for her partner to confess to the offending. She said:

As soon as they knew he was going to be charged, his lawyers already recommended that he wipe the computer, which he did... I figured they [the police] were not going to find evidence on it so I didn't bother handing it in.

PSO3 felt that following up with the police after her partner had been charged was problematic, as it was hard to get in contact with the police. She was advised they were either out of the office or away on leave, and did not follow up contact – sometimes "because they were out, away or something". She did give a statement to the police and commented that a policewoman was very supportive.

While PSO6 felt the initial response from the police was good, after that the detective in charge of the case failed to keep her informed about the court adjournments. She was informed of these by her ex-partner's sister. Further the police did not inform her of her ex-partner's release on parole. Again she was informed of this by her former sister-in-law. The lack of follow-up contact by police was seen as disappointing by women in this study and caused them to feel a lack of confidence in the capacity of police to respond appropriately. A recent Victorian study on policing sexual violence in Victoria highlighted the problem of police not maintaining regular contact with victims post reporting, despite police protocols and guidelines requesting that police maintain regular contact (see Taylor, Muldoon, Norma & Bradley, 2012).

For PSO2 the police response was very disappointing. The police brought her partner home from work to collect all of the home computers. They had confiscated the computers at his work. When she asked the police to explain what they were doing at her house, the police officer said, "We will let your partner explain it to you". Her partner said something along the lines of "They're investigating my underage pornographic activities". She was stunned as was her partner's daughter (who was staying with them at the time). When her partner told her that he was charged with the use of child abuse material, she said she could not believe this and thought that there must have been a mistake. Given PSO2 received no information from the police, and had no one to talk to, she felt almost as if she did not exist. PSO2 said she did not even know which police station her partner had been taken to and contacted a friend who worked for Victoria Police to find this out for her.

I couldn't go to people in my street and I had close friends who had young children that used to come to our house. It was a huge dilemma. Because I was told that I cannot talk to anyone about it, even though I had talked to my neighbour and my other friend that worked in the police department, on the night that... [partner's name] was arrested to see where he was.

PSO2 talked about the number of images that her partner had accessed and that he was passing these images on to other people. She was shocked when she heard this information from the court process and the media, not from the police. She felt let down by the entire criminal justice system. PSO2 had no further dealings with the police until she requested the return of her computer, as she needed access to the personal information that was on the computer. At the request of her son, she also needed to find out if her partner had taken images of her son's children. The investigators informed her that there were no pictures of them on the computers.

When PSO2's computer was eventually returned everything had been wiped. There was considerable disappointment and distress from other participants about the seizure of computers by police when the computer belonged to the participant – personal data, including photographs was irretrievably lost. Further the sense of loss was compounded when all material had been removed from the computers especially family photographs. PSO6 spoke of this distress: "We'd had computers taken away and we lost our entire family albums, and still haven't got the whole stack with them back." Reference was often made that "I have lost my life".

PSO5 said that seven AFP officers conducted a raid at 7.30am one day. All the family were still asleep and they told her and her partner that

...our house had been flagged for downloading a particular file from a particular internet site, that had been, yeah, questionable. So they set about saying that, searching the house at that point in time, and like I just thought, oh this is weird, like I'm not quite sure what's going on... I think they'll just clear us, like they've got their wires crossed... I went off to get ready for work and I went to work and the police didn't want the kids around so we made arrangements for one child to go off to childcare and the other went to kindergarten].

PSO5 went to work then got a call from her partner at midday to say she needed to come home. When she got home she was questioned by police about what she knew of her partner's use of a particular file that had been downloaded. He had denied downloading it saying, "it must have been someone who stayed with us who must have done it... but it still didn't connect that it could have possibly been my partner." PSO5 stated that the police were pleasant to her when she was interviewed. At a later stage when PSO5 got in touch with one of the police officers he said, "We don't like to get involved with families and rip them apart and just leave them." It was clear that PSO5 felt they had done just that when she made the comment:

I'm sure they could have been more helpful, but yeah I just felt like I'd been completely left high and dry, and really hadn't had any support.

After PSO6 notified the police, they found that her partner had purchased and downloaded thousands of images that included the sexual abuse, rape and torture of very young children, including infants. PSO6's partner then moved from possession to producing child abuse material after installing hidden cameras to capture images of the neighbour's children through bathroom and toilet windows. In addition he hid cameras inside their own home and similarly secretly filmed his wife's younger sibling who was staying with them.

PSO7 said the family were all having a quiet drink on a Friday night when the police came to charge her partner. Her sister-in-law and her partner were staying and the front door was blocked so the police attempted to break it down. PSO7 said that 10 to 20 police conducted the raid and wanted everyone to stay where they were except for her partner whom they took into another room. She said that they were all very stressed and anxious. The police then searched the house. She said that they all suffered from shock and disbelief, except for her son who had seen his father looking at 'child porn'. Her partner was taken to be charged and all computers were seized. The police informed PSO7 that her partner had been...

... accessing 'child pornography' and downloading, along those lines... images and all that. They said he was under arrest or whatever and would be taking him to the Watch House... they told my daughter and she said, "Please don't put handcuffs on him" and they didn't. So that was sort of, I suppose, because she was upset. Then they took him away and we just sat there like stunned mullets.

PSO7 said that the police were not helpful. She said that one policewoman "hassled" her about making a statement related to her partner's use of child abuse material. She felt alone and unsupported having no one to talk to. PSO9 said her partner cooperated with the police and gave them everything related to his access of child abuse material.

Participants' partner's reaction when challenged about his use of child abuse material

The reactions of the participants' partners were different. When PSO1 challenged her partner, his response was one of remorse but he said he "couldn't help himself". PSO1 felt her partner abhorred what he was doing but he could not stop nor did he want intervention to help him stop. Additionally she and her partner had been childhood sweethearts, he

valued their relationship so there was some remorse as his “whole world was coming out from under him and he didn’t know to what effect”.

She felt he was also worried that if it became known that he looked at child abuse material he would lose his job. PSO1 referred to the deceit that she felt is common when people are accused of using child abuse material.

When I confronted him about any content, at this point I realised his responses were typically all lies. So when I found the teenage content I asked him, "Has there been younger than teenage, does this translate into offline life and things like that?" He said no about [viewing] younger than teenage [child abuse material]. So obviously that wasn't true.

PSO2, PSO7 and PSO9 said that their partners expressed relief at being found out. PSO2 said that her partner referred to the police’s understanding about his use of child abuse material. They made a comment along the lines of “This now is stopped for you”. Her partner told her he had said, "Yes, thank goodness". He also asked to be placed in custody after his case had been adjourned a number of times. He later went on to blame PSO2 for his use of child abuse material. PSO5 and PSO8 said their partners blamed them for their use of child abuse material. The blaming of these women by their partners post-detection suggests that their ‘relief’ was not aligned with remorse or responsibility.

PSO3 referred to her partner’s need for her to support him and sympathise with him. She commented, “He still wants to share his journey with me and he's always the victim”. PSO3 felt that she was the victim, saying:

I feel like the victim, I feel like I'm being picked on all the time. I think, "Yeah, you are, you were the one responsible" ... I doubt whether he would tell me when he started pornography, but his experience in prison even, he kept notes and everything. I thought, "No, you're not acknowledging my feelings". All along he would just ignore it.

When PSO4 told her partner that she was going to report him to the police, he admitted to her on the phone that he had struggled with his use of child abuse material for 20 years. She said he said he had been accessing material since he was 15 years of age.

I said, "Don't you want to get well, you are sick, you need to get better" and he said, "I do". He admitted on the phone that "I do want to get better", but because he couldn't face his problem or admit that he had it, he was still so much swept up in the secrecy of it all and the denial of it all. So that's why at the end of the day I said to him, "I care about you and I care about you getting better, and I'm making choices that are going to force you to get help."

PSO4’s partner later blamed her for his use of child abuse material. He also went on to deny use of child abuse material.

As indicated above PSO5’s partner said that someone must have downloaded the material, even when the police indicated he had been downloading and saving child abuse material onto his computer. He was not prepared to take any responsibility for his use of child abuse

material. Further he tried to minimise the pictures that he took of his teenage daughter in the bathroom.

... he said that he was doing it for her own safety and he thought that she was suicidal and he had to check if she was cutting herself or something, which now, it's just like, no that's ridiculous... Then he'll still hold that excuse to this day that that's what he was doing, which is just a bit nasty.

PSO6 told her partner to come home where she challenged him about his accessing of child abuse material. She "laid it out all on the bed", asking him "What is this?" She said her partner...

... broke down, buckled over, tears streaming down his face. He was like, "I've got a problem". I'm like "No fucking shit you've got a problem, what is this?" He said, "I need to get rid of it". I said, "Don't you touch that, you don't make the rules anymore. Don't you even dare." I said to him, "Is there 'child pornography' on that?" He said, "Yes". I said, "How young, 5?" He said "No, not that young". So he admitted to me that that's what it was, amongst everything else. He said, "I feel sick, I'm going to vomit". Then he ran into the ensuite.

I said, "You can't stay here. Either [daughter's name] and I go, or you go. I don't think it's fair that I uproot [daughter's name] and you've got no friends". Because he didn't, he wasn't a very social person, probably one red flag. I said, "I'm ringing your mum". He panicked. He said, "Don't do that". I said, "You've got nowhere else to go, I'm calling your mum. I'm not having you at a loose end, you need somewhere to go, so I'm calling your mum".

PSO6 called her partner's mother and he went to stay with her.

PSO7's partner was helpful to police and gave them passwords and codes to help catch other people accessing child abuse material. She said that when she questioned him later about the use of child abuse material he said he was waiting to be caught and seemed to be relieved. After being charged and released her partner slept constantly – he later had a nervous breakdown. He also attempted suicide.

PSO8's partner did not deny accessing child abuse material:

After about a week of him sleeping pretty much constantly he finally was like "Okay, well, I guess I'd better talk to you". One day we went for a walk and just sat in the bush and had a bottle of wine and he told me everything.

PSO8 told her partner that she had found the picture and that he needed to get help. This seemed to be a recurring comment in the interview – she wanted her partner to acknowledge the child abuse material and get some assistance so he did not access it again. It seemed that he was initially contrite and scared about the discovery of the child abuse material but over time minimised the seriousness of its use. He then blamed PSO8 for ruining his life and became violent towards her. She seemed to understand his reaction rather than be critical of it; she also seemed to blame herself somehow, as she said she felt

she did not give him enough time to explain the issue. PSO8 also found a therapist who was experienced in child abuse material for her partner but he attended only one session.

PSO8 said at a later time her partner was critical of her telling a few people about his use of child abuse material and while he initially blamed her, she wasn't sure if he still blames her:

... for doing what I had to do... Maybe he does [blame PSO8] and he's just saying that just to make me feel better. I don't know. He honestly doesn't talk about it at all. The first couple of weeks he did and then he just shut down.

PSO9's partner told her that his accessing child abuse material was mainly teenage girls, "like schoolgirl kind of stuff" because he has long term chronic depression and had quite a troubled childhood.

He said he started looking at arty nude type photography of adults and found it comforting, then he was looking at more 'porn' orientated... and then he moved down to the younger girls and then that moved down to children, but he glossed over the child/pre-teen sort of age group and he gave me the impression that it was very minimal part of his collection, that it was mainly teenage girls.

PSO9 said that they had just resumed their relationship when her partner was charged with accessing child abuse material and she continued to support him as she said he was depressed and suicidal.

Participants' reaction to their partner's use of child abuse material

All participants were emotional when discussing their partner's use of child abuse material in the interviews. Some cried constantly, some struggled for composure and regularly stopped what they were saying to regain control of their emotions. Two were very controlled throughout the interview but it was clear that they were still struggling to come to terms with the detection of their partner's use of child abuse material. The range of responses at the detection of child abuse material was shock, hurt, anger, disbelief, extreme trauma, depression and responsibility for their partner's use of child abuse material.

PSO1 had feelings of disbelief:

... this is the person I know better and love and have chosen to spend my life with etc. Is he capable of this? What does this say about my judgment in other things? ... and can I trust anybody? This is the person I wanted to have children with. I hear those things repeated a lot by other women. If I can't trust him, who can I trust? ... After that, for 10 years, it was "That's it, I'm never having children, I'm never having a relationship". This is a one-bedroom house for a woman that is going to be single and independent.

PSO1 said that her response to her partner accessing child abuse material was shock but she said she was not surprised. This was because his use of adult pornography had gone through significant change over time with his access to more violent material in magazines and then she found "some barely legal teen type stuff". PSO1 referred to computer technology not being very advanced at that time (10 years ago) so she did not know how to go "digging

around” in the hard drive. She said she saw the headings related to child abuse material and confronted him and then he would promise not to do it again. When PSO1 confronted her partner after their friend told her he was looking at children, he cried so loudly that PSO1 went out into the garden where she could still hear him. PSO1 talked of not being told the truth or the whole story about her partner’s use of child abuse material.

I suspect I probably found out about the child abuse images relatively early, that it hadn’t been going on for a long time, because I was on high alert and I was checking the computer. If police had listened at that point they could have got that information quite early. If he has continued to offend in this way... and if he is ever caught and charged, it would have escalated and the impact would be far greater.

PSO1 made a very interesting analogy between family violence and a partner’s detection of child abuse material:

I recognised that cycle similar to domestic violence... I am not comparing just the theoretical cycle of the being caught, the being confronted, the promising never to do it again, and then me walking on eggshells waiting for it to happen again. Then it happens again... I said I was not going to become that person in that kind of cycle and if this doesn’t stop, our relationship is going to stop.

PSO1 went online to read stories of children who had been the victims of child abuse material and when she read these she became very upset. PSO1 later told her story online and to the media. She contacted her ex-partner to inform him of this. She went on to say:

I didn’t want to ruin his life for the sake of ruining his life. I wanted him to be held to account and for other people to be safe. There was no benefit to me for him not knowing what I had been up to.

All other participants went online to read stories about child abuse material as a way to try to find out some answers about this level of abuse; to try to understand why it had happened; to get some assistance and support – see section **Contact with PartnerSPEAK** on page 45.

The response from PSO2 was one of trauma and disbelief. PSO2 she said she was in a trance for about five weeks due to shock. She had short-term memory loss and slept a lot, all related to the stress and trauma. She also felt cut off from others – at one point she offered her resignation at her place of employment – this was not accepted by the manager. PSO2 said she had the feeling that she was tainted in some way and that her partner’s use of child abuse material was in part her fault. For example, she felt guilty about not knowing and felt in some way to blame for his use of child abuse material.

She talked also about her relationship with her partner and their sexual relationship and that she should have realised something was wrong with their relationship much earlier on. She subsequently felt there were “flags”, which related to his interest in watching violence against children – something she could not do herself; and also his increasing interest in adult pornography. She and her partner went to counselling about this but she later found out that he had been accessing child abuse material.

PSO2 struggled from the time the charges were laid against her partner to the time he went to prison and beyond, even though she had felt that their marriage was over prior to him being charged with using child abuse material. She thought that some of this was related to not knowing what was happening, being severely traumatised and feeling abandoned. She talked about the secrecy and the stigma associated with the charges. PSO2 also stated that she probably could not have coped with talking about the issue in the early stages.

All women interviewed had ongoing concerns about whether their partners had taken photographs of neighbours', relatives' or friends' children and of their partners continuing to use child abuse material. PSO1 and PSO3 referred to constantly being on alert. PSO3 said:

It was about a year ago I think, we were at my daughter's place, and their friends were there with two little girls. He asked the father, "Can I take a photo of the daughter?" She was about 18 months at the time. The father, he knew he had been charged for this, but he doesn't understand. He said yes. He took the photo of the child and then he took another one of her sitting on his knee. I can feel it; I know this is wrong. When I got home I went to bed.

The next morning I checked my camera and that photo was gone. I am going, "He's downloaded that photo". Just that one photo was missing. So I thought has he got a conscience and he's deleted it because he knows it will be a risk. I thought no I bet he's downloaded to the laptop when I went to bed. So I asked him and he said, "Oh, I don't know where it went". I thought, "My goodness" so I told the police that too, so I don't know whether they checked it. So he's using familiar kids now – danger. My head's going "Danger".

PSO3 said she had remained with her partner because of her loyalty to him and felt responsibility to support him. They are likely to separate, as he will not confess to accessing child abuse material. Her comment was, "If you want a marriage you've got to be totally honest with me, and he's not. They just want to hide it."

PSO4's reaction was one of anger and hurt. She drove to her mother's house a few doors down:

I was shaking, screaming and crying and basically trying to explain to her what I had found. I just remember at the time she went to console me and I was so angry I pushed her away and was screaming, and then I just collapsed on the floor and was just screaming and crying and didn't even know what to think...

PSO4 also felt betrayed by her partner. She was concerned about his deceitfulness and the fact that she needed to warn others about what he had done. She contacted his sister interstate as she felt his sister needed to know about her brother's use of child abuse material. His sister was very dismissive of PSO4's concerns. PSO4 spoke to a small cluster of close friends who she trusted and spent time weighing up what to do. PSO4 said she gave her partner three chances to be honest and say...

"I've got a problem, I've got an addiction, I need help". After those three chances and nothing had happened, people were saying to me, "If you don't take this

further, imagine what could happen, and you've got to live with that for the rest of your life. What if he acted it out on a person", so I was weighing all that up.

PSO4 said she suffered from depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts and said at one stage she almost ran into a pole whilst driving her car – she stopped herself just in time. She did not eat properly and her sleep patterns were affected. The support she obtained from her family and church helped her through a very difficult journey.

PSO5 spoke of feeling unsafe and not able to trust anyone. In addition she could not reconcile that the man she thought she knew, loved and married accessed child abuse material – such comments were made by other participants PSO1 and PSO6. PSO5 said she was worried about the motives of others towards children and is now very aware of the issue of child sexual abuse. She said she felt duped and conned and was worried for a while that others would also blame her for her partner's conduct, but strong support from family and the police have helped her let go of those feelings. PSO5 spoke of the importance of the support from her boss. He was the only one in her circle of family and friends who asked her what she was thinking or feeling or what she wanted to do when she was debating "Should I stay? Should I go? ... It wasn't like a black and white thing for him."

PSO6 said she felt confident to confront her partner and was very angry with what she had found. After he left the family home she confided in women from her mother's group and they said she should contact police. PSO6 spoke of feeling unsafe and not being able to trust others. Further she could not reconcile that man she thought she knew, loved and married was like this. She feels worried about the motives of others towards children and is now very aware of the issue of child sexual abuse and child abuse material.

PSO6 referred to feeling duped and conned and was initially concerned that others would also blame her for her partner's conduct. Strong support of family and of police has helped her let go of those feelings. She needed ongoing counselling to help her deal with the issues and fears she held about the impact on her own daughter's psychological health when she becomes aware of her father's use of child abuse material.

PSO7 said that she was in a state of shock a lot of the time after her partner was charged for using child abuse material. She referred to herself as "a mess." She said her daughter provided her with support until she got "jack of it", telling PSO7 that she was supposed to be the mother. PSO7 talked a lot about her decision to stay with her partner. As indicated previously, many people criticised her for the decision to stay. Ultimately it became a decision about PSO7's children:

I can get another husband I know because I have been married before, but the kids can't get another father. He will always be their father, good, bad or whatever, he is their father.

PSO7 felt that some odd sexual practices that occurred when her partner was in the defense forces might have had some effect on her partner's use of 'child pornography'. He spent some time in Asia and they [defense force personnel] got 14-year-old boys, to dress up as girls and they then had sex with them.

PSO8 said her reaction was one of shock. She said she...

... went totally nuts trying to figure it out. I couldn't handle it. I didn't sleep for four days, I didn't eat, I forgot to feed my dog. And she just lay beside me and I just cried for four days. And one of [partner's name] friends came over and he was just like "Holy shit. What is wrong with you?" And I was just like, "Oh nothing. Just don't worry." And he wouldn't leave me alone and eventually I was like, "Okay. Well, I found this picture" and totally freaking out. And he was the kind of guy that's not going to let that go...

And I didn't want to do anything about it because I was just in denial or something. I was totally freaking out. I was just like "I don't believe he's a bad person" and everything like that. And his friend was like, "I don't care. You don't have a choice." And he just pretty much forced me to go to the police, so I did. They took my computer.

PSO8 had a very severe reaction following her discovery of the child abuse material. She had time off work, could not sleep, then slept all of the time and put on a lot of weight. She eventually got some antidepressants and anxiety medication as she had panic attacks. PSO9 said her initial reaction to hearing about the charges related to her partner accessing child abuse material was one of shock, surprise, especially given the police found over 100,000 images, plus some weapons in his possession.

The emotional impact for these women was clearly one of trauma and layers of shock and grief which they largely endured in isolation, some of the participants just wanted to sleep all of the time, others had trouble sleeping; some of the participants did not eat properly and others overate due to shock.

It was clear that there frequently was a lack of awareness about the trauma that ensued for participants when they found the child abuse material or when the police apprehended their partners. They were not regarded as victims, and some were explicitly blamed by their partners or others, or had this implied.

Moreover they received comments indicating a total lack of insight and understanding about their dilemma and the fact they were secondary victims of their partner's criminal behaviour. Some comments included "Why aren't you doing anything for the children [child abuse material victims]?" and "Why are you involved in PartnerSPEAK? It's not about you, it's [issue is] about the children [child abuse material victims]."

PSO1 said she had been stigmatised for supporting partners of offenders who use child abuse material, because they are not the primary victims. There is a general perception that either the affected partners are not harmed, or worse, that they are complicit through guilt by association.

Participants' reactions to the sentencing process

Brief details above provide some information on the sentences that the participants' partners received following the court process. Some of the participants were unclear about the sentences that their partners received. This may have something to do with the ongoing reaction and trauma to the raid or the investigation of their partners accessing child abuse material; the lengthy time that some investigations took; then the numerous adjournments that often followed. For some the sentence was too harsh and for others too lenient.

PSO2 felt that the whole sentencing exercise was a PR exercise:

... let's give him a big sentence so it looks to the community that we are onto this and we are not going to tolerate these crimes, so we are going to sentence this man, even though he hasn't hurt anyone physically, but we are going to do this and sentence him to 40 months. That's a pretty hefty crime for something like that.

She went on to say that she felt he was able to get on with his life in a way that she could not and that everyone in the prison loved him and he was in his element. Further PSO2 said that her partner was able to realise one of his long life ambitions and that was to make musical instruments.

He left jail with this whole lot of art and craft that he had made there to prepare him for his new life in [overseas country]... that were shipped over there. That was a bit of a kick in the bum for me, because I am still suffering. I am not saying he's not suffering, or hasn't suffered, I am not saying that at all. But I'm saying, look what we women... look how we suffer and where is the support, the real justice in this? Where is it? He didn't go to any program in jail because the talk around the jail was that it's really of no use to anyone.

PSO3 felt her partner's prison sentence was light saying, "He only served three months in prison. But at least that got him on the Sex Offenders Register". She later said that he will be on the register for 10 years.

PSO4 felt shocked that her partner received a light sentence (after pleading guilty he received a community service order) but stated that at least her partner would "be monitored and [she] didn't need to feel responsible anymore". She felt that the number of images should have resulted in a prison sentence. She also felt that this would have been more of a deterrent to his future use of child abuse material.

PSO5's partner was sentenced to imprisonment but it is not known if he was on parole after release. PSO5 said she felt like a victim of the court and criminal justice system. This however was not elaborated upon.

PSO6's partner was sentenced to imprisonment – 18 months was non-parole. He is now on parole with conditions that stipulate that he is not allowed to have contact with PSO6 or their daughter. He will be on the Sex Offenders Register for 15 years and this will seriously compromise the type of contact he can have with his daughter. For example he will not be able to see her at any event where other children are present.

PSO7 said that the court process was very difficult as she was not familiar with the criminal justice system. She seemed a bit confused about the length of sentence overall but was pleased that it wasn't as long as she thought it might be. Her partner will be on the Sex Offenders Register for 10 years.

PSO9 supported her partner whilst he was in prison and remained in contact with him when he was released on parole. He was placed on the Sex Offenders Register for eight years.

All participants felt that their partners or ex-partners being on the Sex Offenders Register was positive as it meant that they were being monitored.

Family tension, disruption and loss of friendships

There was considerable tension between many of our interview participants and their families. PSO1 did eventually tell her ex-partner's family and friends about his use of child abuse material. This was when she decided to tell her story to the media. She felt that they closed ranks against her to protect her ex-partner.

PSO2 felt that she had...

*... lost her family... lost everything... I am ostracised, stigmatised, marginalised...
Not a lot of people want to talk to me about this or be friends.*

PSO2's daughter was supportive of her but her son had some ongoing issues firstly because she stayed a short time with her partner then would not go to stay interstate with her son. Her son felt that her loyalties and obligations were at odds with the realities of what her partner had done, yet she chose at times to put his needs above those of her adult children. He and PSO2's brother did not want to discuss her partner's use of child abuse material or for her to discuss the issue with others. It was clear that her adult children were impacted by the criminal actions of her partner and were likely confused by her ongoing support of him. Her son was very upset when PSO2 decided to tell her story to the media.

There was considerable tension between PSO3 and her sister due to PSO3's partner taking pictures of PSO3's niece and the circumstances under which the child abuse material was reported to police (see page 28).

She was really angry. My brother-in-law was ready to kill him if he came near or whatever. He wasn't allowed anywhere near them when the proceedings started. So that's the only time I've spoken to her on the phone and there was a bit of controversy as to how the police got him to the police station. My sister said that they picked him up or something and he refused to go so he walked there or something. But I heard that he was called up and told to go there on the way to work. I don't know what was the truth and what was not. She was terribly angry. She had always been suspicious, but she saw stuff.

PSO3 has lost contact with her sister:

I haven't spoken to her in two years now, two and half years. My crazy mother, she got it, she got the truth but then she's backstabbed and now she supports him. This

is her granddaughter, two of her granddaughters have been abused and she supports him: "Poor [partner's name]", and I think how can you.

PSO4 told her sister-in-law about her partner's use of child abuse material but this was disregarded by her. PSO4 was bothered about this as she feared for the safety of her sister-in-law's children.

PSO5 spoke of the tension between her sister, her partner and her mother. This seemed to be the result of PSO5 needing to live with both families. She lived with her sister after leaving the family home (where her partner remained). She spoke of trying to adjust to other people's parenting styles at a time when the children were adjusting to a different situation and the tension that this created. When she went to live with her mother, there were similar problems. She also spoke of the tension related to her mother going to her partner's court appearances. PSO5 said she was:

Just trying to respect his space and appreciate he was going through a hard time, without trying to make it worse for him in any particular way. So I didn't really appreciate her going to the court appearances, I just thought it was sort of making it into a bit of a public debacle, like a bit of a spectacle to be watched, and I just didn't understand why – how she thought that was helping in any way.

PSO5 also talked of the lack of understanding from her mother if she failed to discuss a particular issue with her. She said it was exhausting trying to keep everyone up to date with what was happening:

... if I had a court appearance coming up, I probably would have spoken to his ex (wife), I probably would have spoken to his mum, I probably would have spoken to my counsellor and probably work as well. So that's like, if you've got a half hour or 45-minute conversation after being at full-time work for the four nights in a row, you're just not necessarily thinking about their feelings first. Like I kind of had to just think about what I needed at any particular point in time, that was all. It was all a bit much to manage her. I thought she was a bit fragile so I didn't necessarily want her to know everything going on either. So she was a bit resentful.

PSO5 also talked about the problems that ensued when her partner was released from prison. She said he just turned up without warning. She said she had already told him that any contact with the children would be supervised and it would be limited. He then became nasty, was late for access visits and was "quite antagonistic." She said he was angry about the restriction of the contact and tried to convince her that "legally I didn't have a leg to stand on."

In contrast to most of the participants, PSO6 had strong support from her family and friends. For PSO6 this was vital in helping her to make the decisions to both report her partner and divorce him. PSO6 described tension with her in-laws due to PSO6 reporting her partner and then divorcing him. A decision recently to have contact with in-laws for the sake of her small daughter has been difficult and has caused tensions in her relationship with her sister who was a victim of PSO6 partner's use of child abuse material. PSO6 talked of how she felt she was betraying her partner on some level and also betraying her sister by having

contact with her ex-partner's family, but did so only in order that her daughter had contact with cousins.

PSO7 and her partner are still together and she made a comment early on about this and that many people judge her negatively because of it. A particular issue was that she and her sister-in-law are no longer close because she is still with her partner. PSO7 said that making this kind of decision is harder than others might realise. PSO7 talked at some length about the decision to support her partner while he was in prison and remain with him upon his release and the toll this has taken on her and her two children. Both children suffer from health issues as a result of their father's conviction and imprisonment. Further there has been some stress related to keeping her partner's use of child abuse material and his sentence, a secret from his elderly mother. She talked about the difficulty in doing this.

PSO8 said that she was still in contact with her partner's mother but she has decided not to talk to her mother-in-law about her son's use of child abuse material. She said her mother-in-law...

... would feel completely responsible and she would feel terrible and I don't want to do that to her because she's such a sweet lady... And she's in her 60s and doesn't need to feel like she's totally ruined her son's life.

PSO8 discussed her partner's use of child abuse material with her mother but it seemed that this was not much help and to some degree she was and still is very isolated. It seems like she has not been able to make friends easily either. Similar to PSO2, PSO8 also stated that she lost all of her friends in Australia and on occasions that she talked about her partner's use of child abuse material, the friends distanced themselves from her. She said, "I've got maybe two friends that are sort of close so I'm not ready to lose them too", meaning that she could not afford to discuss issues related to her partner's use of child abuse material with them.

The saddest response PSO8 had was when a friend told her she must report her partner to the police for his use of child abuse material saying he would be there for her, and then decided that he did not want to have anything further to do with her. This was extremely hurtful to PSO8.

Minimisation related to the participants' partner's use of child abuse material

Many participants were concerned that their friends continued to allow the offender to have access to their children. PSO1 felt that most of her friends closed ranks around her partner to protect him from her, with comments like, "It's just pornography", "Why are you making such a big deal about this?" and "Don't you know you could ruin his career?" When PSO1 was believed by family and friends, the common response was "He was only looking" or "They are only pictures so what is the harm?"

The 'friend' who serviced the computer and found the images and subsequently told PSO1, finished up continuing to support her partner over PSO1. One of her partner's friends who had children said that PSO1's partner was never going to be allowed to babysit the children

or be left alone with the children. She went on to say, "That gradually fell away over the next years. All his friends stood by him. All his groomsmen that we had in our wedding, were groomsmen in his next wedding". She commented, "Not only did they push me out they closed ranks around him". PSO1 also commented that when people did not minimise the situation, they were hysterical and even viewed the affected partner of the person who uses child abuse material, as a paedophile:

So it's minimisation or hysteria, and nothing in between.

PSO3 had an issue in convincing friends about the seriousness of her partner's use of child abuse material. She stated,

They don't get it. They've seen the behaviour. I think how do they not get it. They want to support him because he's so nice. He's helpful, he's nice. That's what he uses to get to them.

PSO4 said that she had one friend contact her a few days after she had found the child abuse material and ask her if she was "just revengeful because you know that he's had this relationship with this woman at his work. Are you just going to take it to the police to get back at him, what's your motive?" Another friend told her,

"... think long and hard about the decision you are about to make because you could ruin his life. He won't be able to work with children, he will have to report where he's living and he won't be able to live near schools and kindergartens and it will dramatically affect his life, so think about what you're about to do and make sure that you understand the seriousness of what you're about to do".

PSO4 went on to say

... no one really acknowledges, "Oh my gosh you must feel..." No one actually talks about your own feeling and emotion; they are talking about "What are your actions going to be?" and I felt like I was in a lose-lose situation. Either way I was going to get judged and I was damned if I do, damned if I don't. I felt somewhat attacked by people...

In contrast PSO5 was told that she could have received victims of crime compensation but she did not pursue this as "I didn't feel like I was a victim of a crime". She felt that she was...

... some sort of a victim of the court process and the legal system, but I didn't feel like he [her partner] had personally done anything to me so I didn't feel like I should be saying that my partner had committed a massive crime. Like, it wasn't him that caused the grief, in some ways. He did, he is the reason why it all happened, but I didn't necessarily feel like I should be treated any differently to any other separated couple who obviously have a whole lot of issues to deal with. So maybe I could have pursued victims of crime, and even just to get the counselling covered, because I would have been out of pocket about \$80 potentially every counselling session.

Again this demonstrates some contradictions and minimisation of the crime of downloading child abuse material, by PSO5. This may be due to confusion about her feelings, the traumatic experiences and upheaval that she and her children had following apprehension of her partner for his use of child abuse material. She also had little support – see details under *Future strategies* on page 46.

When PSO6's mother-in-law and sister-in-law were told about her partner's use of child abuse material, they both minimised the seriousness saying that it was "only pictures" and therefore there was no "hands-on" abuse, so it was less harmful. Both refused to acknowledge the damage even though PSO6's partner was filming other children and PSO6's sister, and thus making his own child abuse material.

PSO6's doctor also minimised the abuse referring to it as a "teenage crush" on young girls and suggested there was no harm in her partner's behaviour. While the GP referred her on for counselling, PSO6 was very angry because the GP made it sound like she was overreacting.

Many of the participants were concerned and in some cases distressed about their partner's or ex-partner's potential to continue to use child abuse material. PSO1 and PSO4 spoke of their anxiety when their partners formed relationships and then remarried. PSO1 emailed then spoke to her ex-partner's new partner to warn her about his use of child abuse material. This warning was disregarded by the new partner.

PSO9 was concerned that some of their friends continued to allow access of their children to her offending partner who had been imprisoned for use of child abuse material. She also stated that the psychiatrist that her partner saw, seemed to have little understanding of the seriousness of someone accessing child abuse material or the responsibility of a psychiatrist to report it. The issues that PSO9 mentioned here were similar to the lack of knowledge discussed by other interviewees regarding specialist services not being able to understand the issues related to child abuse material and respond appropriately.

Of concern here is that people watching videos or looking at pictures don't connect that in order for this to be available, they have been responsible for commissioning serious abuse of children. The majority of the women interviewed were cognisant that the 'pictures' were the lives of children being abused. It is surprising that many relatives of partners ignored the fact the images were of children being raped, abused and tortured.

If such denial or ignorance of the seriousness of possessing child abuse material is a common issue and we suspect it is, it is cause for serious concern. It has taken decades for the public to understand the prevalence and seriousness of child sexual abuse. Further, there does appear to be a disjuncture in this research between public awareness and understanding of what constitutes child abuse material and child exploitation material, especially given some of the comments participants encountered such as those suggesting that their partners were only "looking" or that the child abuse material was "only pictures". Hence increased public awareness of this issue is critical.

Lack of support after participants' partner was investigated/charged

PSO1 felt unsupported as no one in her world said, "Yes, you are doing the right thing; you need to leave this person." Because of the circles she mixed in, the stigma of divorce was worse than the stigma of abusing children. What she needed to hear was a validation about leaving her partner.

PSO2 felt let down by the entire criminal justice system. She referred to her sense of abandonment:

The abandonment issue is that you are of little consequence, you are of no consequence to anyone or anything... My trust is gone. I felt abused, like I was the cover, the foil, because I was a very nice person too and upstanding in the community... so it was like every level of my understanding and my treatment of myself just went out the door and I felt bare of everything. I felt raw and absolutely bare.

There was nothing around me that I could support myself with in terms of feelings about myself or knowingness about anything, and I thought I was a fairly intuitive and fairly, how shall I say, solid in who I was and who I was with [partner's name] in terms of our marriage, and how supportive and respectful we were of one another.

PSO3 felt that there was little support for partners of people who accessed child abuse material. She undertook a large search and said that while "There's a lot of information for the victims and lots of stories and books... there's nothing for [affected] partners." PSO3 said that she thought that this was related to partners being too "scared to come out," hence there was nothing written about them. Her example was how petrified she was once her partner was charged then convicted. She was worried that people would react negatively to her and her children, especially her son who was still at school, as information about her partner's conviction was in the newspapers.

PSO3 felt that she would be blamed for his use of child abuse material, as indicated earlier. She is still fearful about what people in her local neighbourhood know or do not know. She also talked about her partner's family supporting him but "not one of his family approached me to see how I was coping with the charges against him".

While PSO4 received support from her close family, some friends and her church, she talked a lot about the lack of understanding and support received from others in her social circle, especially those connected to her partner. She also felt the lack of knowledge about child abuse material was a problem. Of concern was that she was told after she submitted the computers to the police that she must not talk about the criminal investigation to anyone. This put considerable pressure on her and prevented her from getting counselling support.

As indicated earlier PSO5 felt she had no support, nor was she offered any, but also did not think support would have been possible either. She said she had more recently worked out

that CASA could have offered counselling after someone she knew told her about the organisation. They said:

“They do have support groups for people like you”. But I haven’t quite worked out how “people like me” is framed as a group to actually access services.

Further PSO5 did not hear about PartnerSPEAK until six months after the police raid. She has since found it valuable to view online other people’s stories.

PSO7 felt alone and unsupported. This was compounded by living in a large country town. She did say that her partner’s parole officer had been helpful at least until this same parole officer breached her offending partners order for a non-criminal condition of his parole. PSO7 indicated that the founder of PartnerSPEAK had been an enormous help to her but this was some years ago. As she’s not that computer savvy, she did not do much posting but did say she put her story on the PartnerSPEAK website.

PSO7 said that until the interview for this research, she had never had the opportunity to talk non-stop about her partner’s use of child abuse material and the impact of this on her and their children, including her decision to stay in the marriage. This was because any counselling session was for 50 minutes and it was hard to really talk openly in a limited time frame. She talked about the cost of these sessions and indicated that most of the time she talked about the issues with her son, rather than herself. He is using drugs. She did have one person – her son’s friend’s mother who supported her throughout her partner’s court case.

PSO8 felt alone and unsupported. The most support she obtained early on seemed to be from PartnerSPEAK (see next section below **Contact with PartnerSPEAK**). Early counselling services she accessed were not useful, as the counsellors had limited awareness of the use of child abuse material.

When PSO9 found out about her partner’s use of child abuse material, she did not think she needed any support as she was getting a lot of support from friends, two of whom she talked to about the issues. Her problem about talking to others was:

I didn’t really want to talk about it because people would go, “What the hell are you doing supporting a child sex offender? Like you are a counsellor, how can you support this person?” I suppose I was a bit worried about people knowing.

PSO9 indicated towards the end of the interview that she had decided to seek help for her depression and would contact a psychologist.

Contact with PartnerSPEAK

PSO1 talked about the lack of understanding of the important role played by PartnerSPEAK. She referred to the importance of service providers strongly supporting the victim and wanting to protect the children but there was also a need to support secondary victims such as the affected partner of those who use child abuse material. Participants valued their contact with PartnerSPEAK.

All of the participants talked of the help that they received from PartnerSPEAK. Comments related to feeling validated, supported by people who understood their circumstances and about not being judged. Of concern however is that most participants stumbled upon the PartnerSPEAK website after, as PSO8 said, “going crazy” online. It could be assumed that many people who are dealing with a partner’s use of child abuse material might not access this site.

PSO2 talked about the impact PartnerSPEAK had on her life and the positive role model that the founder of this online forum had on her. She was a mentor and an example of a strong woman who had recovered from her experience. This had assisted PSO2 to feel that she could recover too.

PSO4 has contributed to the PartnerSPEAK forum and this has been very helpful as she has felt that she could share her story and help others. She said that she needed to move out of that space however, and is now is involved in a movement against the sexualisation of girls.

PSO5 said it was “definitely helpful to read about other people’s stories on the website and realise that there are other people thinking and feeling the same kinds of things” as she was. As indicated above, she also felt that people in her situation needed to know about PartnerSPEAK at the time of the initial investigation of their partner’s use of child abuse material.

PSO7 felt the greatest support she received came from PartnerSPEAK especially the founder who was “really good and very helpful.” As she is not that computer savvy, she did not do much posting but did say she put her story on the website.

PSO8 said she had no idea how she came across PartnerSPEAK. She found out about her partner’s use of child abuse material and within a couple of days she contacted PartnerSPEAK after undertaking a large search on the internet. She found the online discussions very helpful. With the help of the founder of PartnerSPEAK, she was able to locate a therapist who has some knowledge of child abuse material. PSO8 said she has found her sessions with this person very valuable.

Future strategies

The following represents the strategies participants thought important. PSO1 suggested that a unit or subject should be incorporated into every counselling, psychology, social work and justice related program so that every single practitioner in Australia has at least thought of or has some awareness about child abuse material and what happens to all involved, including children and the affected partners of the offenders. Every single community organisation should at least offer counselling or some sort of therapeutic intervention for affected partners of those who use child abuse material.

PSO1 felt that the media needed to be aware of the impact that the offender’s use of child abuse material has on affected non-offending partners; the media should not name affected partners, or regard them as part of the offence or problem. Instead they should write articles from an affected partner’s perspective to improve awareness that these people are secondary victims, rather than someone who has contributed to the offending.

Much more awareness and understanding are required for affected partners of those who are involved in accessing child abuse material. PSO2 felt that PartnerSPEAK had faced some criticism by others who believed that the non-offending partners are not people in need of any special assistance; instead they should be focusing on child victims of such abuse. She felt there was little knowledge about the traumatic impact and associated long-term problems for affected partners of people who use child abuse material.

PSO1 felt that as the police had a primary criminal focus, there needs to be somewhere for people to go who may be suspicious of their partner and think that they might be using child abuse material. She felt that the National Child Abuse Prevention Hotline could fill that role.

PSO2 felt that there needed to be better communication and understanding from police about the impact of the offender's use of child abuse material on that person's partner.

If a policewoman came to see me several days later and said, "Now [PSO2's name] how are you feeling?", or "I can see, you know dazed eyes", or "Have you been to the GP? Are you sleeping, or cooking? What is it that you need?"

PSO2 felt that a mentor was required to help the affected partner of the offender talk through information and issues. This would also ensure that this person's needs were met.

PSO1 said that child protection would need to change if they were to be of any use to the family of the person who had used child abuse material. She stated,

How can the mother get support from child protection when she's going to be worried about intervention from child protection? And also not everybody leaves. Not everybody leaves immediately for a whole host of social and financial reasons. In that situation the [affected] partner is not going to want child protection involved because she will be fearful that her children will be taken away from her and that she'll get a record.

PSO1 felt that this research was important in counteracting the minimisation of people's use of child abuse material, as there is little or no information of the experiences and the patterns of behaviour of the offending partner. She also criticised the pro-porn movement, saying it is a lucrative area and it does not want bad press from research or from organisations such as PartnerSPEAK.

PSO2 and PSO4 believed that there needed be more awareness in society about the sexualisation of children.

PSO2 believed that additional research is needed to highlight the link between adult and child pornography. She also felt that there needed to be some understanding about whether there is a link between use of child abuse material and some earlier experience/abuse in life. She talked about the need to research/interview offenders to find out this information.

Like other participants, PSO3 was crying out for knowledge about her partner's use of child abuse material. She had limited knowledge and thought that it would be good to know "What is 'child pornography' and what isn't?" Like other participants she also wanted to

know about the link between ‘adult pornography’ and ‘child pornography’. PS03 talked about access to legal aid and the need to be able to get Centrelink, as well as knowing whom to report suspicions about a partner’s use of child abuse material.

PS04 thought there needed to be more information for affected partners about what to do when they either find child abuse material or their partners are apprehended for accessing child abuse material. While the policewoman in PS04’s situation was extremely supportive and provided a lot of information, PS04 was told not to discuss the case with anyone. She was constantly concerned about making sure she did not breach anything to do with her offending partner’s case and this impacted on her receiving formal help/support. It was not until 12 to 18 months later (after her partner’s conviction) that the police referred PS04 to a psychiatrist, then for counselling at a Victims of Crime service.

PS04 indicated that if the police had referred her to PartnerSPEAK early on, that would have been extremely helpful. Like others she thought that a brochure from police would have been helpful but given the shock she was experiencing it might have been hard to absorb the information. In summary she thought people needed to know:

- Who to ring
- Where to go for help/support
- Who are the best support services

PS05 felt that child protection services could have been more helpful. She said that they thought she had not protected her children and there was always that threat over her head that they might remove the children. This was even after the police were very happy that she did not have any knowledge of her partner’s use of child abuse material. She also felt that child protection might be able to recruit better staff if they paid more money that is, “twice as much” as workers currently receive.

PS05 said she would have liked to have had contact with other people to know “that I wasn’t the only person in the world that it had happened to, because it’s just, it’s really embarrassing, like you just don’t want anyone to find out about it”. She said being told about the CASA group counselling could have been good. She felt that knowing about the PartnerSPEAK website straight away would have been beneficial – she did not find out about this service until six months after the police raid.

Because all I had to go off was what was appearing in the press every day really... It might have been helpful to know what the core processes might be, what could be around the corner from Child Protection, although I’m not sure if that would make it worse, if you’re worrying about it and it doesn’t actually happen. But, just not being briefed at any point about what was going on, in terms of the children’s court process and what it meant.

Additionally PS05 felt that some kind of financial help should be provided. She has to pay for her legal bills and is still paying these. In addition while she was able to access 10 visits a year on the mental health plan with counsellors, additional funding would have been beneficial. She also thought that group counselling would have been good.

PSO6 had to Google and ferret out information about her rights and what things she needed to do to protect herself and her child. She had to find out about financial support; family law and custody issues; counselling and child care support services she could access; and what the court process meant and her legal rights. She believed that material, brochures and information were needed specifically to assist women who suddenly find almost overnight that their life is turned upside down; it is hard enough to find out all this information and much harder when an affected partner is scared and traumatised.

PSO7 and PSO8 said that counselling services needed to be more aware of issues surrounding the use of child abuse material. PSO8 said that her experience was that many had little knowledge and understanding of the issue. She was referred to a relationship counsellor who was no help whatsoever and was even shocked to hear her talk about her partner's use of child abuse material. Services did not even know where to refer her. In the end she contacted the founder of PartnerSPEAK and felt that "even she had a hard time finding someone to help."

PSO8 said, "The whole thing about child abuse material is just too underground. It's taboo and it is just not something people want to deal with." PSO8 also felt that more knowledge about child abuse material and how to receive help is important. She wanted affected partners and their families to be referred to some kind of helpline.

Similar to other participants, PSO9 thought more information needed to be available to affected partners at the time of the apprehension and following this. She felt isolated given that she did not live with her partner, so documentation would have been helpful.

All participants talked about the importance of having access to both online and paper information about the use and access of child abuse material. PSO3 talked about looking for a brochure on a support service to help her understand what was happening to her. Others wanted similar information but wanted to know what would happen after their partners had been charged.

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Attachment One: Interview Themes/ Indicative Questions

Research title: Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material

Introductory questions

Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Age, where you're from, work/study, children, etc (if applicable)?

How did you first hear about PartnerSPEAK? What was your reason for becoming involved in the support network/visiting the site? How much involvement/contact have you had with the network?

Recognising the problem

How did you come to learn or form a view that your partner at the time had involvement in child abuse material on the internet?

(Consider the responses here and ask if they were aware if the partner was using/viewing adult pornography and why, type etc. if this were the case and/or any other kind of pornographic material)

What was your initial reaction/response when you had suspicions or became aware of this information?

What fears or concerns did you have at the time and did they impact on your decision/s about what actions you felt you could or would take?

Did you confront your partner with your knowledge/awareness or suspicions?

If yes – what were their reactions and how did you respond/handle them?

If no – did you feel unable to confront your partner or were you fearful to do so or concerned for the safety of yourself and others (perhaps children or other family members)?

What actions did you take?

Can you tell me a bit about how you felt, taking those actions?

Did you feel at any time that your personal safety was compromised due to taking this action?

Responses from your partner

Can you tell me about the reaction from your partner when you confronted him or he heard that you had reported that he had involvement in child abuse material on the internet?

Can you tell me about how you felt about his reactions?

What was the reaction from others such as family, friends and others when you disclosed this information or tried to discuss your concerns?

Responses from agencies

Did police become involved at any stage and were there any criminal proceedings as a consequence?

When you reported your concerns or knowledge to police or other agencies what responses did you receive?

How helpful or unhelpful was the response?

Can you tell me about how you felt about that response?

What was the impact of reporting for you personally and also for your children (if applicable) and/or other family members?

Improving the response

What kind of help/support would you have liked to receive?

How could police and other agencies or services better respond to these issues?

Do you have a view about how increased awareness and help for partners could be provided?

And can you tell me who would be the best organisations to provide that help/support?

Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think would benefit the research

Demographic details

Age, rurality, parental status, socioeconomic indicators

Attachment Two: Information for PartnerSPEAK.org⁴ website

RMIT University is seeking to interview members from PartnerSPEAK.org who have had some experience of partner's past involvement in the use child abuse material.

The research is titled: 'Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material'

If you wish to participate, we would like to arrange an in-person interview at a time and a safe location that suits you, to discuss your experience and views. In the interview, we would ask you to share your experiences, including:

- How you came to learn of a partner involvement in child abuse material?
- What reactions you experienced from others, including the partner?
- What response you experienced from police or other agencies?
- How do you think responses by police and other agencies could improve?
- What do you feel are the support needs for women who become aware of this activity, and how could this support be provided?

We expect that the interview will take between 60 to 90 minutes.

Please contact Caroline Taylor, Marg Liddell or Anastasia Powell on 9925 2506 or 9925 3566 if you wish to participate in this research. If you are currently involved in court proceedings related to your partner's possession of child abuse material, which are pending or ongoing, it would be best to wait until these are completed prior to talking to us.

⁴ Following this research's completion, PartnerSPEAK rebranded and changed its URL to PartnerSPEAK.org.au

Attachment Three: Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)

Project Title: Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material

Investigators: Professor Caroline Taylor AM, Dr Marg Liddell and Dr Anastasia Powell (RMIT University).

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by RMIT University. Please read this letter carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators.

What is the project about? Why is it being conducted?

This study explores the experiences of women who have become aware of a partner's involvement in child abuse material (also referred to as child pornography). This area of crime is often hidden and the experiences and support needs of partners is not well understood by police and other professionals and the public. By listening to women's knowledge and experiences, it is our hope that this research will provide much needed information that can be used to improve the responses of support services and police, as well as contribute to further knowledge about these crimes.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate as someone with personal experience of having reported or become aware of a partner's involvement in child abuse material. We believe your experiences have much to teach us about these crimes, about the current responses by police and other professionals, as well as how these responses and supports can be improved.

If you agree to participate, what will you be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, we would ask to arrange an in-person interview at a time and a safe location that suits you, to discuss your experience and views. In the interview, we would ask you to share your experiences, including:

How you came to learn of a partner's involvement in child abuse material?

What reactions you experienced from others, including the partner?

What response you experienced from police or other agencies?

How do you think responses by police and other agencies could improve?

What do you feel are the support needs for women who become aware of this activity, and how could this support be provided?

We expect that the interview will take between 60 to 90 minutes. With your permission, we will audio-record the interview and transcribe it for analysis.

What will happen to the information you provide?

All interviews are confidential and the transcripts will be non-identifiable so as to ensure that you, the participant, cannot be identified by a third party. Once transcribed the digital recording is destroyed. Transcriptions will be retained in line with RMIT policy for 5 years. Interview transcripts will not contain names or any identifying material and will be stored securely by the researchers on password protected computers and cannot be accessed by anyone other than the researcher/s.

We anticipate that the findings of this research will be published in academic journals, books and presented at conferences. In any such publications, you would be referred to by a false name (pseudonym). A summary of the study findings will also be made available to you on request and on the *PartnerSPEAK.org*⁵ website.

What are the possible risks and benefits associated with your participation?

We acknowledge the courage and integrity required by women to report this crime, as well as the impact that its discovery can have on women and their families. As such, we understand that sharing this experience with us may be emotionally distressing. Each of the researchers has experience conducting interviews with women who have experienced abuse either directly or indirectly, and your well-being is our first concern and priority.

During the interview you may choose to skip any questions that the researcher might ask should you not want to talk about a particular aspect of your experience. In addition, if you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview and wish to take a break, stop the recording, or stop the interview entirely, your choice will be fully listened to and respected. In addition if you feel any distress related to areas discussed in the interview a number of organisations that provide counselling and support such as PartnerSPEAK.org; Relationships Australia; CASA (Centre for Sexual Assault) WIRE (Women's Information Referral Exchange) are available to assist you. We have contact details which we can provide upon your request.

The benefit of participating is that sharing your experience and views may contribute to the investigators' development of recommendations to improve responses and support for others who discover a partner is involved in child abuse material.

⁵ Following this research's completion, PartnerSPEAK rebranded and changed its URL to PartnerSPEAK.org.au

What are your rights as a participant?

Your involvement in this project is your own personal decision and is completely voluntary. You have the right to have any questions about the research answered at any time. Should you agree to take part, you reserve the right to withdraw your participation at any time without explanation. You also have the right to request that audio recording of the interview cease. After the interview, should you change your mind about your participation, you have the right to have all traces of your participation removed and any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed.

Whom should you contact if you have any questions?

If you have any further questions about the study or if anything is unclear, please feel free to contact the researchers via the confidential email address details below. This email address will only be viewed by the three named researchers.

If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form. The researchers will collect this form at the time of the interview.

Yours sincerely,



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If you have any complaints about your participation in this project please see the complaints procedure on the [Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT](http://www.rmit.edu.au) web page:
<http://www.rmit.edu.au/>

CONSENT FORM

Women's experiences of learning about the involvement of a partner possessing child abuse material

Investigators: Professor Caroline Taylor AM, Dr Marg Liddell and Dr Anastasia Powell (RMIT University).

I (the participant) have had the project explained to me. I have read the participant information sheet and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the research project as described.

1. I agree:

- to be interviewed
- that my voice will be audio recorded
- that the data I provide during the interview may be included in a research report, conference papers, journal articles and/or books
- that these publications will refer to me by a pseudonym and not my real name

2. I acknowledge that:

- a) I understand that my decision to participate is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
- b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
- c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
- d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a summary report of the project outcomes will be made available to me upon request. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant's Consent

Participant:

Date:

(Signature)