

# **The grooming process in child pornography: a social work case study**

by

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Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike.  
Do not be afraid of any man, for judgement belongs to God.

Deut 1: 17

With sincere appreciation to:

- I thank my Creator for strength, perseverance and guidance in completion of this degree.
- To Inspector Sunet Coetzee, who investigated and documented the case study in a professional and objective way.
- And last but not least, I wish to express my thanks to my study leader, Dr. M.M. Steyn, for her guidance and support throughout this research study.

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## SUMMARY

### KEY TERMS:

Grooming process; Child pornography; Social work; Case study.

This social work research study explore sexual exploitation in the form of child pornography. The grooming process, a process where the perpetrator engages his victim in a relationship, whereafter he uses this relationship to abuse his victim is investigated. The research is conducted by means of a case study.

## OPSOMMING

### SLEUTEL TERME:

*Inisiëringsproses; Kinderpornografie; Maatskaplike werk; Gevallestudie.*

Hierdie maatskaplike werk navorsing studie bestudeer seksuele misbruik van kinders in die vorm van kinderpornografie. Die inisiëringsproses, 'n proses waartydens die oortreder sy slagoffers in 'n verhouding betrokke maak met die doel om hulle te misbruik, word bestudeer. Die navorsing word onderneem deur die bestudering van 'n gevallestudie.

# FOREWORD

The article format was chose in accordance with Regulation A.11.2.5 for the degree MSW (Social Work in Forensic Practice). The article will comply with the requirements of the journal in Social Work, titled Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk.

# INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

The Journal publishes articles, short communications, book reviews and commentary on articles already published from any field of social work. Contributions relevant to social work from other disciplines will also be considered. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans. All contributions will be critically reviewed by at least two referees on whose advice contributions will be accepted or rejected by the editorial committee. All refereeing is strictly confidential. Manuscripts may be returned to the authors if extensive revision is required or if the style or presentation does not conform to the Journal practice. Commentary on articles already published in the Journal must be submitted with appropriate captions, the name(s) and addressee(s) of the author(s) and preferably not exceed 5 pages. The whole manuscript plus one clear copy as well as a diskette with all the text, preferably in MS Windows (Word or WordPerfect) or ASCII must be submitted. Manuscripts must be typed double spaced on one side of A4 paper only. Use the Harvard system for references. Short references in the text: When word-for-word quotations, facts or arguments from other sources are cited, the surname(s) of the author(s), year of publication and page number(s) must appear in parenthesis in the text, e.g. "... (Berger 1967:12). More details about sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption "References". The sources must be arranged alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors. Note the use of capitals and punctuation marks in the following examples.

Die Tydskrif publiseer artikels, kort mededelings, boekbesprekings en kommentaar op reeds gepubliseerde artikels uit enige gebied van die maatskaplike werk asook relevante bydraes uit ander dissiplines. Bydraes mag op Afrikaans of Engels geskryf word. Artikels op Afrikaans moet vergesel wees van 'n Engelse opsomming van ongeveer 200 woorde. Alle bydraes sal krities deur ten minste twee keurders beoordeel word. Beoordeling is streng vertroulik. Manuskripte sal na die outeurs teruggestuur word indien ingrypende hersiening vereis word of indien die styl nie ooreenstem met die tydskrif se standaard nie. Kommentaar op artikels wat in die Tydskrif gepubliseer is, meet van toepaslike titels, die naam(name) en adres(se) van die outeur(s) voorsien wees en verkieslik nie langer as 5 bladsye wees nie. 'n Disket met die hele teks, verkieslik in MS Windows (Word of WordPerfect) of ASCII moet die hele manuskrip en een duidelike kopie daarvan vergesel. Manuskripte moet slegs op een kant van die bladsy in dubbelspasiëring getik word. Verwysings moet volgens die Harvard-stelsel geskied. Verwysings in die teks: Wanneer woordelike sitate, feite of argumente uit ander bronne gesitater word, moet die van(ne) van die outeur(s), jaar van publikasie, en bladsynommers tussen hakies in die teks verskyn, bv.

"..." (Berger, 1967:12). Meer besonderhede omtrent bronne moet alfabeties volgens die vanne van die outeurs aan die einde van die manuskrip onder die opskrif "Bibliografie" verskyn. Let op die gebruik van hoofletters en leestekens by die volgende voorbeelde.

TWO AUTHORS/TWEE OUTEURS: SHEAFOR, BW & JENKINS, LE 1982. Quality field instruction in social work. Program Development and Maintenance. New York: Longman.

COLLECTION/BUNDEL ARTIKELS: MIDDLEMAN, RR & RHODES, GB (eds) 1985. Competent supervision, making imaginative judgements. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

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# The Article

## **The grooming process in child pornography: a social work case study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article presents statements of male survivors of sexual abuse which were taken by an investigating officer within the South African Police Service. These statements indicate how the perpetrator enticed and groomed his victims to participate in child pornography and sexual acts. This article aims to guide professionals who work with child pornography to understand the process used by a perpetrator.*

### **1. PROBLEM FORMULATION**

In South Africa, the Court places particular emphasis on executing the right of the child to be protected from abuse and degradation. Degradation includes child sexual abuse, which can consist of a range of behaviours.

Child sexual abuse can, therefore, be defined as:

- Non-contact sexual abuse, which involves making sexual comments, exposing intimate body parts, voyeurism, having a sexual fixation on a child's clothing or body parts, luring, making sexually related phone calls and engaging in sexually related correspondence through the internet.
- Contact sexual abuse, which may involve making the child participate in acts such as touching (fondling) or digital or object penetration of intimate body parts.
- Sexual exploitation, which involves prostitution as well as making children participate in pornographic acts or performances for personal or commercial use (Van Niekerk, 2003:2; Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2007:1; Department of Justice Canada, 2007:2).

For the purpose of this study, sexual exploitation in the form of child pornography was explored. Child pornography is defined by the Films and Publication Act (Act no. 65 of 1996) as "any image real or simulated, however created, depicting a person who is shown as being under the age of 18 years, engaged in sexual conduct or a display of genitals which amounts to sexual exploitation, or participating in, or assisting another person to engage in sexual conduct, which amounts to sexual exploitation or degradation of children" (SA, 1996:1).

Mills (2003:196) also argues against child pornography, by stating, "child pornography wets the sexual appetites of pedophiles, fuels their fantasies, stimulates them to victimize children, inflames the desires of child molesters and encourages a societal perception that children are appropriate sexual objects."

Investigating child pornography is not an easy task. It is, however, more difficult when the abused are young males.

MacDonald (2000:1) gives the reasons when he describes in his studies with young male survivors of sexual abuse, how dominant constructions of masculinity and heterosexuality affect young men. The impact of sexual abuse on young men makes them become so thoroughly hardened that they literally anaesthetize themselves against the pain they must cope with. Some boys/ men may also become shame phobic and do everything they can to live up to the code of acting strong, autonomous, tough and unfeeling to avoid "losing face" in front of their peers. MacDonald (2000:2) concluded that many young men feel ashamed to acknowledge any experience of sexual abuse. They also often miss out on the sense of belonging and connection that come with disclosing their genuine experiences.

Waterhouse (1993:121) conducted research on male child abusers in Scotland and found that the most commonly used methods of securing sexual relations with a child could be classified into four categories. It included verbal bribes or inducements, coercion by indoctrination, verbal threats and physical force. The mentioned researchers found that whatever the specific methods of procuring sexual relations with a child, all methods involved coercive behaviour in which the victim was treated like an object, denied of separate personal emotions, used for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator. These methods of procuring sexual relations with a child included the grooming process.

The grooming process is described by Potgieter (2000:34) as where the perpetrator befriends the child and slowly and progressively gains access from less private areas, to the child's body and ultimately to his private parts, i.e. genitals and excretory organs. This is a carefully planned, gradual process whereby the perpetrator draws the victim into his power. This leaves the child helpless and powerless.

From the abovementioned the grooming process is seen as a process where the perpetrator engages his victim in a relationship, whereafter he uses this relationship to

abuse his victim. Within this research, this victim-perpetrator relationship will be investigated.

There is no known research, both in South Africa and abroad, on the grooming process in child pornography where boys were the victims. This research, therefore, aimed to describe the phenomenon of the grooming process in child pornography within the South African context.

From the above information, the following research questions were formulated:

- What process did the perpetrator use to convince boys to participate in child pornography?
- What happened to the relationships between the perpetrator and the boys after their participation in child pornography?
- What consequences were there for the boys who disclosed their participation in child pornography?
- What hypothesis can be formulated regarding the grooming process in child pornography?

## **2. RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES**

The study was conducted by means of investigating the following goal and objectives.

### **2.1 Goal**

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the process a perpetrator used to persuade under-age boys to participate in child pornography.

### **2.2 Objectives**

To achieve the goal of this study, the following objectives were formulated:

- To establish by means of a literature study and an empirical investigation what process the perpetrator uses to convince boys to participate in child pornography (whether a grooming process can be identified where boys participated in child pornography).
- To establish what happened to the relationships between the perpetrator and the boys after their participation in child pornography (whether the relationships between the perpetrator and the boys changed after they participated in child pornography).
- To establish what the consequences were for the boys, after disclosing their participation in child pornography.
- To establish what hypothesis can be formulated regarding the grooming process in child pornography (hypothesis regarding the grooming process that was used, to persuade boys to participate in child pornography).

### **3. THEORETICAL STATEMENT**

Knowledge regarding the grooming process in persuading under-age boys to participate in child pornography will provide the helping professions and investigators of criminal cases with information regarding child pornography and contribute to addressing the problem.

### **4. RESEARCH METHODS**

The research was conducted by means of a literature and empirical study.

#### **4.1 Literature study**

Fouché and Delport (2005:123) describe the aim of the literature study as contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified.

Within the literature study the reasons why a perpetrator collects child pornography were explored in order to understand the perpetrators motivation for collecting child

pornography. The grooming process the perpetrator uses in getting children involved in sexual abuse was examined and related to the case study. Lanning (1984:86) and Burgess & Hartman (1987:248-253) identified how the perpetrator blackmails and how he convinces his victims to engage in pornography. Weber's (2007:2) description of the grooming process was used to describe how the perpetrator chooses a target area, engages or "recruits" his victims, how secrecy is introduced and how an emotional bond is forged through physical contact with the victim.

MacDonald's (2000:2) study, which discusses his research in working with young male survivors of sexual assault, was studied to identify how pornography shapes attitudes and values and how this contributes to the relationship between the perpetrator and his victims. The final part of the literature study focused on how victims disclosed their participation in the abusive relationship, as discussed by Godfrey (1997:1); Collings and Wiles (2004:48–54) and Kogan (2004:147-165).

Literature for the research study was obtained from social work, psychology and criminology. Articles in professional journals, research reports and dissertations and the Internet were used to gain information. Knowledgeable persons from the South African Police Service were also consulted for their experience in the field of child sexual abuse/ pornography.

## **4.2 Empirical investigation**

The research is conducted according to the aspects outlined as follows.

### **4.2.1 The Design**

The empirical investigation was conducted through the qualitative research approach. The qualitative researcher is concerned rather with understanding than to explaining, choosing observation over controlled measurements as well as the subjective exploring of the reality within the perspective of the informed in contrast to the outsider's view point (Creswell,

2003:4-6). The nature of this study is within the descriptive research area. Monette, Sullivan and De Jong (2005:5) describe descriptive research as the attempt to discover facts or describe reality.

For the purpose of the research, a case study was executed. Flick (2006:141) describes the aim of a case study as the precise description or reconstruction of a case. The term "case" is rather broadly understood, and can include persons, social communities, organisations and institutions as the subjects. Fouché (2005:272) describes a case study as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a "bounded system, or a single or multiple case, over a period of time." The criterion for selecting cases for a case study should be "the opportunity to learn." Gravetter & Forzano (2003:175) describe a case study as a report describing a single individual, including the description of the unique characteristics and responses of the individual.

A case known to the South African Police service was investigated through the analysis of numerous statements taken by the investigating officer. The case involved statements by twenty under-age boys who were victims of sexual abuse and child pornography.

#### 4.2.2 Information collection

Secondary analysis was used to collect the data (Strydom & Delport, 2005:315 – 317). The South African Police Service opened the case after a child disclosed to his mother that he and some friends were involved in blackmailing two college lecturers.

According to the boy, the lecturers were involved in managing the internet shop at the college where boys paid to play computer games. During these sessions, the boys were asked to run naked around the building, in order to obtain free playtime. The lecturers touched the boys inappropriately and paid them to masturbate while recording them on a video camera.

Through a thorough investigation process, the investigating officer discovered that one of the lecturers was involved with producing and distributing child pornography since an early age. The mentioned perpetrator also managed a Kung Fu club and was involved as a youth leader at his church, where he gained access to his victims. The investigating officer established that the perpetrator was involved in enticing boys to participate in child pornography over a period of more than 18 years. More than 20 boys were identified but only approximately 20 boys were willing to give statements about the perpetrator.

This research contains information collected from the boys involved in the investigation, which reflects their own experiences and interpretations of their sexual abuse. The research focused on the statements of all the child victims involved in the case. There are approximately 20 statements of boys aged between eight (8) and thirteen (13) years of age. Statements were transcribed and coded, in order to make sense of what happened to the boys. Related topics and patterns of experiences were identified by comparing transcripts from several victims. Literature was studied to create links relating to the information obtained in the case study. The final part of the information collection involves incorporating the results obtained in the context of established knowledge and linking the results with supporting literature. The statements/ documents can be classified as personal documents.

A personal document is “ ... one in which the human and personal characteristics of somebody who is in some sense the author of the document finds expression, so that through its means the reader of the document comes to know the author and his views of events with which the document is concerned” (Strydom & Delpont, 2005:314). Although these documents were not produced for research purposes, they and the information they contain can be used for research.

Flick (2006:246) defines documents as, “standardised artifacts, in so far as they typically occur in particular formats as notes, case reports, contracts, drafts, death certificates,

remarks, diaries, statistics, annual reports, certificates, judgments, letters and expert opinions.” The documents that were used can be classified as official, state documents with restricted access. They comprise statements taken by an investigating officer, (Family violence Child protection and Sexual offences unit), within the South African Police Service, for the purpose of investigating a reported case of alleged child sexual abuse.

#### 4.2.3 Sampling

The sampling in the research was purposeful (De Vos, 2005:192- 203). The research focused on the statements of all the child victims involved in the case investigated by the SAPS.

#### 4.2.4 Data analysis and interpretation

The interpretation of data is the core of qualitative research. Analysis is a strategy with the objective of taking a complex whole and resolving it into parts. The constant variables of factors that are relevant to the understanding of a phenomenon of an event are isolated (Poggenpoel, 1998:336). Within the research, the researcher was attentive to phrases in the respondents' statements. The themes in the statements were compared with one another to establish whether there was a concept which could unite them.

The strategy which was used can be classified as analytical induction which aims to develop universal statements containing essential features of a phenomenon that are found to lie behind the existence of a social occurrence (Poggenpoel, 1998:338).

The approach of Morse and Fields was used for data analysis. According to this approach, analysis requires from the researcher a relentless search for answers, active observation and accurate recall (Poggenpoel, 1998:340). Four cognitive processes appear integral to this method: comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing and recontextualising.

The researcher personally processed data. Throughout the data analysis phase, the researcher tested accuracy and trustworthiness of the data by using triangulation with the literature and an independent coder. Triangulation is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in a particular data source, investigator and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators and methods (De Vos, 2005:361).

#### 4.2.5 Ethical aspects

- The documents, which were used, contained very explicit and sensitive information regarding child sexual abuse. The documents were not used to expose or identify any child victims in order to ensure ethical practices (De Vos, 2005:56 - 69). This ethical aspect is also a limitation to the study as no children could be contacted to verify information.
- Permission was obtained from the South African Police Service to conduct research on these highly sensitive statements. A letter of permission is attached as an Addendum.
- All information was treated as confidential by the researcher. The researcher was also compelled to uphold the ethical standards as stipulated by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP).
- Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The Ethical Approval number is 06K07.

#### 4.2.6 Limitations to the study

- Secondary analysis that was used to analyze and interpret the statements made by the victims can be seen as a limitation to the study. There were no direct consultations with the victims to probe for clearer understanding of the words and feelings of the victims.

- A comprehensive internet search has been executed for relevant academic publications regarding the research topic. A shortage of relevant literature however was identified which pertain to the subject under study.

## **5. DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL DATA**

The main focus of the research is the process a perpetrator used to persuade under-age boys to participate in child pornography. The reporting of the data will be according to the four research objectives.

### **5.1 What process did the perpetrator used to convince boys to participate in child pornography?**

In order to answer this question the following were considered: the reasons perpetrators collect child pornography as well as literature studies and the grooming process in child sexual abuse. This information was compared to information obtained from the case study.

#### **5.1.1 The reasons for collecting child pornography:**

According to the literature, child pornography is collected for:

- Sexual arousal and gratification of perpetrators: they use it the same way other people use adult pornography - to feed sexual fantasies (Tate, 1992:207; Lanning, 1984:86).
- To lower the inhibitions of children: perpetrators utilize books on human sexuality, sex education, and sex manuals to lower the inhibitions of children. Children often believe that if something is in a book, it must be acceptable (Lanning, 1984:86).
- To convince reluctant children to engage in sexual activity with an adult: if the child sees other children are involved, peer pressure may let the child think it is acceptable to participate (Lanning, 1984:86).

- To blackmail children: it is a way to ensure the child keeps the secret. The perpetrator uses photographs taken of the child to ensure secrecy (Lanning, 1984:86; Burgess & Hartman, 1987:248-253).

***The participants in the case study were introduced by the perpetrator in pornography by:***

- Showing children photos he took of them and of other boys. The perpetrator told the boys that the photos were of a group of boys who were his friends. The perpetrator told the boys that there were boys at his club who were also participating in photo shoots. According to boy A, the perpetrator always had photos of naked boys with him. The perpetrator also showed boy B photos of naked boys, as well as photos of boys involved in oral sexual stimulation.
- Convincing the boys to engage in pornography by showing them that other boys are also involved. In order to ensure participation, the perpetrator used photos to apply peer pressure.
- Showing some boys a photo of a pregnant woman and thereafter remarked:

**“How can a man do such things (sexual intercourse) with a woman?”**

The perpetrator told them men must do “it” (sexual intercourse) with men. The perpetrator stated that men must not do “it” (sexual intercourse) with women because they give germs to men. The perpetrator received medical books through the mail. He showed some of the boys photos of sexually transmitted diseases and remarked that this is what happens when men do “it” (sexual intercourse) with women.

The perpetrator showed boy A and boy B a video of two lesbian women who engaged in oral sex. The perpetrator related his disgust and told the two boys that he had shown the video to all the boys at the club.

The resemblance between the literature and the process the perpetrator used is very clear. The perpetrator utilized medical books, videos and photos of naked boys to lower the boys' inhibitions and to make it acceptable for them to participate in child pornography.

#### 5.1.2 Literature views on grooming:

Marshall (1988:267- 288) conducted studies and found that a third of the rapists and more than half of those who committed child sexual abuse, admitted that they deliberately used pornography in preparation for committing an offence.

Itzin (1997:94-106) found that sexual abuse was linked to either being shown pornographic magazines and videos or becoming involved in the making of abusive videos. The compliance of children in child sexual abuse, prostitution and pornography is often achieved with violence and threats of violence (Itzin, 1997:94-106). Itzin is also of the opinion that the recording (photos, video taping etc.) of sexual abuse in children is used to reinforce the children's sense of responsibility for the abuse and to ensure their silence.

From the above information, it seems as if there is a link between sexual abuse and pornography. Pornography is further used to threaten the victims to ensure non-disclosure.

#### 5.1.3 Grooming process:

Weber (2007:2) described *grooming* as a process, which begins when the perpetrator **chooses a target area, engages or "recruits" his victims**, where **secrecy** is introduced and an **emotional bond** is forged through **physical contact**.

The grooming process and how it relates to the case study will be discussed next.

- The target area

Perpetrators often target children with obvious vulnerabilities. According to Weber (2007:2) a child who feels unloved and unpopular will soak up adult attention like a sponge. Children with family problems, who spend time alone and unsupervised, who lack confidence and self-esteem and who are isolated from their peers, are likely targets.

***The perpetrator's modus operandi in the case study to identify his target area***

***included:***

- The perpetrator was a church youth leader; he also managed a Kung Fu club. The perpetrator gave some of the boys a lift to the Kung Fu club. At times, he fetched them early in order to return to his apartment for sexual gratification.
- The perpetrator met some of the boys in different ways. It happened when they were friends with his sister's son, or boys who were his neighbours, or where the boys' mother and the perpetrator's mother were friends.
- The perpetrator showed movies on Friday evenings at the neighborhood where he stayed. Most of the children of the village attended the movies.

- The engaging or recruitment

According to Weber (2007:2) perpetrators **engage or "recruit" their victims** in different ways. Many use a combination of forced teaming and charm, and they may offer to play games, give rides, or buy treats and gifts as tokens of friendship.

***The perpetrator's modus operandi in the case study to engage or recruit his victims***

***included:***

- Acting as an instructor of martial art: At the age of eighteen years, the perpetrator was perceived as an expert in Kung Fu and he run a club at a mine village. The perpetrator and members of his club went camping on weekends to practice Kung

Fu. At these getaways, the perpetrator instructed the boys to practice naked while he took photos of them.

- Promising excellence: The perpetrator used the same technique years later when he conveyed to boys that if they practice Kung Fu at his apartment, they would be able to graduate quicker in Kung Fu. At the perpetrator's apartment, he told some of the boys to undress. The reason for undressing was, according to the perpetrator, to see where their problem areas with their Kung Fu moves were. The perpetrator video recorded these training sessions.
- Using them as models: The perpetrator built plaster sculptures as a hobby. He approached boys to use them as models. The perpetrator asked the boys who modeled for him to take their clothes off in order for him to take photos or videos of them. The perpetrator alleged that he needed these photos to build the sculptures. The perpetrator paid some of the boys for being models.
- Paying for modeling: The perpetrator paid boy C, R 20.00 – R 30.00 to masturbate him (perpetrator) and to pose for naked photos. The boy used the money to buy sweets and cigarettes.
- Treats and compensation: The perpetrator opened a bank account for boy D. The perpetrator paid money into this account. He (perpetrator) instructed boy D not to tell his mother about the bank account.

The perpetrator and boy D went to Mozambique on holiday, he took boy D on outings to Pretoria and they even visited the perpetrator's parents. The perpetrator bought boy D McDonald's burgers and Pizzas regularly. They further engaged in activities like fishing, outings to the Voortrekker Monument, went swimming, visited the zoo, and played video games together and practiced Kung Fu, at the Buddhist Temple in Bronkhorstspuit.

- **Secrecy**

A predator will usually introduce **secrecy** at some point during the grooming process. Secrecy binds the victim to the perpetrator. Later on, secrecy joins with threats (Weber, 2007:2).

***The participants in the case study were introduced by the perpetrator in secrecy by:***

- Instructions:** The perpetrator instructed the boys not to tell anyone about what they were doing.

**“He told me seriously that I may not tell anyone.”**

- Comforting:** The perpetrator told boy E not to worry about the photos he had taken as no one will ever see them. He claimed the photos were their “secret” and that he should not tell anyone about what had happened.

- False promises:** The perpetrator also promised that he would not tell anyone about it. The perpetrator further told some boys that the video's he took of them masturbating themselves and each other would be kept in a safe in Pretoria.

- Threats:** Boy D claimed:

**“When I told him that I wanted to stop he threatened to use the videos and photos against me and that he would say that I did it willingly.”**

- **Forging of emotional bond to get physical contact**

The forging of an **emotional bond** through grooming leads to **physical contact**. Predators use the grooming process to break down a child's defenses and increase the child's acceptance of touch (Weber, 2007:3).

The first physical contact between predator and victim is often nonsexual touching, designed to identify limits: an “accidental” touch, an arm around the shoulder, a brushing

of hair. Nonsexual touching desensitized the child. It breaks down inhibitions and leads to more overt sexual touching – the predator’s ultimate goal (Weber, 2007:3).

***The perpetrator’s modus operandi in the case study to forge an emotional bond with his victims included:***

- The perpetrator persuaded boys to let him build plaster sculptures of them. He started the process by rubbing a lubricant like Vaseline on body and private parts. When the boys’ private parts became erected, the perpetrator would place plaster on it. In some incidents, the perpetrator stimulated (played with) the private parts of the boys, until an erection occurred, after which he took photos of it. The perpetrator allowed boy E to lay on a bed to put plaster on his face.

Boy E recalled,

**“Someone took off my pants and gave me a “blow Job”. After the plaster had dried the perpetrator took it off and I got dressed.”**

- Taking off his clothes: Boy F recalls,

**“When we went to sleep that night the perpetrator said that I must get undressed. I slept naked next to him.”**

- Modeling behaviour: Boy G stated,

**“The perpetrator showed me how to masturbate and also later how to masturbate him.”**

- Unexpected act: Boy H claimed,

**“Twice while I was sleeping I woke up and felt my pant’s elastic being pulled away and there was a hand on my private parts. I saw that it was the perpetrator’s hand. He started to masturbate me. I got such a fright**

**and was scared. I did not know what to do so I pretended that I was sleeping.”**

- Breaking down inhibitions: Every time before they practiced Kung Fu, the perpetrator touched boy's private parts. The perpetrator told him that the touching would make him more relaxed and help him to “switch off”.

Later on, boy I had to remove his pants and after that he was asked to touch the perpetrator's body as well as his private parts. Their routine later consisted of getting naked and masturbating each other. The touching and masturbation happened almost every day. According to the perpetrator, this touching would bring them closer together.

This question, (What process did the perpetrator used to convince boys to participate in child pornography?) focused on the reasons why a perpetrator collects child pornography.

In this case the process the perpetrator used to convince the boys to participate in child pornography consists of the perpetrator choosing his target area, recruiting his victims and introducing them to pornography. The perpetrator convinced the boys to engage in pornography because they saw proof (photos) that other boys were also posing for naked photos. The perpetrator also used photos to apply peer pressure. He further utilized books and videos on human sexuality to lower the inhibitions of the boys. He also used his collection of child pornography images, to ensure that the boys keep their relationship a secret.

## **5.2 What happened to the relationships between the perpetrator and the boys after their participation in child pornography?**

In order to answer the question, it must be understood that exposure to pornography shapes attitudes and values which influence the relationship between the perpetrator and the boys.

MacDonald (2000:2) found in his studies that dominant ideas of maleness and heterosexuality, which usually expect men to be heterosexual, independent, emotionally invulnerable, in control and powerful, have an intense impact on how young men experience and make meaning out of their sexual abuse.

Within the case study, it was found that the boys' exposure to pornography shaped their attitudes and values, which influenced their relationship with the perpetrator.

This can be related to a study done by MacDonald (2000:2-4) which stated that dominant concepts of masculinity could lead to the following effect and issue for young men who have been sexually abused:

- An intense sense of incompetence, shame and isolation where young men may believe they cannot live up to the expectations of traditional masculinity and heterosexuality.
- This can create beliefs about being a 'failure' e.g. 'A real man should be able to stop the abuse ... should not be affected by the abuse.'
- Such traditional expectations can disable young men from being able to acknowledge and seek support regarding their sense of shame, guilt, powerlessness, fear, vulnerability, betrayal, anger and other effects associated with being abused.

***The perpetrator's modus operandi in the case study to influence his victims attitudes and values, included:***

- Feelings of shame: According to boy J,

**“The perpetrator took what he wanted.”**

Boy F stated,

**“I feel ashamed and bad about what happened.”**

and boy K declared,

**“It was the first time in my life that I had to do with something sexual or with the perpetrator. I thought it was right.”**

- Feelings of unease: Boy H stopped attending Kung Fu in order to break all contact with the perpetrator. After the break, while he was walking home from school, the perpetrator drove up to him and asked him to return to the club. The boy acknowledged,

**“I am scared of the perpetrator. I am scared that he will hurt me if he knows that I have spoken about it. He told me very seriously that I may tell no-one.”**

Boy L also stopped attending Kung Fu. According to him, he did not enjoy practicing anymore. He stated,

**“That which the perpetrator did always worried me. It was not right. I feel good that it has all come out.”**

- Creating fear: When boy D told the perpetrator he wanted to stop, the perpetrator threatened him and said that he (the perpetrator) will hit him, until he is unconscious. The boy believed these threats. He stated,

**“One afternoon at the perpetrator’s house I told him that I wanted to stop. The perpetrator became angry and threw a glass against the wall.”**

The boy admitted in his statement that he was thankful the abuse was made known and acknowledge that he felt ashamed of what had happened.

From the information above, it seems as if the boys faced difficulties in stopping the occurrence of sexual abuse. Those who decided to disclose risked a great deal. The boys were at a developmental stage in which their main task was to form an identity of their own, make sense regarding their own sexuality, and where they should have

developed a sense of belonging with their peers (McDonald, 2000:4). However, the relationships between the perpetrator and the boys were characterized by shame and isolation, as well as sexual identity confusion and feelings of being a failure. The child may have a lifetime of difficulty with intimacy, trust, touch and bonding, as well as poor self-esteem (Spies, 2006:50).

### **5.3 What consequences were there for the boys who disclosed their participation in child pornography?**

Collings and Wiles (2004:48–54) are of the opinion that most of the available literature on sexual abuse disclosure, examines the disclosure process in the context of specialized forensic or clinical interviews. According to Richter, Dawes & Higson-Smith (2004:55–94) studies which focused on disclosure concerning non-penetrative forms of sexual abuse, rely almost exclusively on accounts of disclosure provided by children living in the United States of America and in other Western Countries.

There are further only a few prevailing studies which provided information regarding the proportion of child sexual abuse victims who make informal disclosures but who do not go on to make formal disclosures. According to Collings (2006:36) five studies regarding children who made informal disclosure found that an average of 54% of respondents indicated that:

(a) they told someone about their abuse, but (b) the abuse was not formally disclosed.

Kogan (2004:147-165) concluded that informal disclosure is made to confidants who are predominantly family members or friends. However, the contents of informal disclosures are described as vague, brief and lacking in detail regarding the incident (Ullman & Filipas, 2005:767-782).

- Disclosure by sexually abused boys

Godfrey (1997:1) is of the opinion that disclosure by sexually abused boys can be manipulated by the following:

- Boys are socialized to take responsibility for themselves. This prevents them from viewing themselves as damaged after sexual abuse and this inhibit them from talking about painful experiences.
- Boys can be stigmatized as homosexual in a developmental phase where the age group norms make homosexuality unacceptable.
- By disclosing sexual abuse, boys stand to lose their independence.

***The reasons victims did not disclose their abuse included:***

- Boy M never talked to anyone about the abuse before his statement was taken. It was his first confession when the statement was taken. He claimed that he never told his parents what had happened to him. After the abuse became known, he did not want his parents to find out about it because he was afraid that his parents would blame him for the abuse.
- Boy F, acknowledged that he felt shy and bad about what had happened, while boy K recognized that he experienced sexual feelings for the first time with the perpetrator. He thought it was correct but after realizing he was abused, he started experiencing problems with his identity and tried to commit suicide. According to boy I, he did not want to give information regarding the alleged photos and sexual abuse because he felt he had to protect his church. He also acknowledged that his relationships with girls were unsuccessful.
- Boy N told his girlfriend that he and the perpetrator engaged in oral sex. His girlfriend suggested he should contact the police, but he did not. He was afraid

that his name would be mentioned in the newspaper. He was approached by the investigating officer and decided to disclose. He stated that,

**“That which the perpetrator did always worried me. It was not right. I feel good now that it has come out.”**

From the information obtained in the research, it seems as if disclosing and facing issues arising from sexual abuse can be greatly threatening to young men who are attempting to achieve developmental tasks. The boys who participated in child pornography did not disclose, even though they recognized that they were uncomfortable with what had happened. It seems as if the boys also felt responsible for what had happened to them.

#### **5.4 RECAPITALIZATION**

From the information obtained, it seems as if the perpetrator reduced his victims' inhibitions to make it acceptable for them to participate in child pornography. The perpetrator provided “proof” (photos) that other boys were also participating in pornography and he used this to apply peer pressure on them. The victims faced difficulties in stopping the abuse and even though they were uncomfortable with what had happened, they were not able to disclose the abuse.

#### **5.5 CONCLUSION AND HYPOTHESES**

From the literature and empirical information the following conclusions can be drawn which can serve as hypothesis regarding the grooming process in child pornography in follow up research:

- The perpetrator groomed his victims to engage them in (child) pornography by introducing them to (child) pornography, thereby applying peer pressure and lowering the inhibitions of his victims.
- By being introduced to (child) pornography, the victim's attitudes and values are shaped in such a way that they experience their situation as shameful; they started to

feel isolated and a failure. The pornography images are further used by the perpetrator to ensure the abuse is kept a secret.

With this the first objective namely, **what process did the perpetrator use to convince the boys to participate in child pornography, was reached.**

- The perpetrator used the pornographic images he created not only as sexual stimulation tools for himself, but also as tools to apply peer pressure, thereby ensuring that his victims will allow the abuse. He further used the pornographic images as tools to ensure that his victims keep the abuse a secret.
- The victims found it difficult to stop their abuse due to their relationship with the perpetrator although their relationship was characterized by shame, isolation, sexual identity confusion and feelings of being a failure.

The above mentioned conclusion lead to the achievement of the second objective, namely **what happened to the relationship between the perpetrator and the boys after their participation in child pornography.**

- Young boys found it threatening to disclose sexual abuse, even though they recognized that they were uncomfortable and felt that it was wrong what happened to them.

The third objective namely, **what consequences were there for the boys after their participation in child pornography** are contained in the conclusions.

The aim of this study has been successfully achieved.

## **6. SUMMARY**

This research aimed at describing the phenomenon of the grooming process in child pornography within the South African context. The primary goal of this study was to investigate the process a perpetrator used to persuade under-age boys to participate in child pornography.

The objectives of the research are reached. The research was conducted by means of a literature and empirical study. Within the literature study, the reasons why a perpetrator collects child pornography were explored. The grooming process the perpetrator used in getting children involved in sexual abuse was examined and related to the case study. The literature study also identified how pornography shapes attitudes and values and how this contributes to the relationship between the perpetrator and his victims. The final part of the research focused on how victims disclosed their participation in the abusive relationship.

By completing this research article, the information obtained will provide the helping professions and investigators of criminal cases to understand the way a perpetrator uses child pornography to persuade victims to participate in child abuse.

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# **ADDENDUM**



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THE HEAD  
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT  
PRETORIA  
0001

7 November 2007

**CAPT M C BADENHORST  
SOCIAL WORK SERVICES (FORENSIC)  
SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE  
KLERKSDORP**

**RE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL : THE GROOMING PROCESS IN CHILD  
PORNOGRAPHY : A QUALITATIVE SOCIAL WORK STUDY : M A (SOCIAL  
WORK) NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY**

1. Your research proposal on above mentioned topic refers.
2. Your proposal was referred to Snr Supt Anneke Pienaar (Commander: Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit) and she recommended the study.
3. After perusal of your proposal, this office is hereby giving you permission to conduct research on the above mentioned topic subjected to the following conditions:
  - 3.1 no information may be divulged relating to the identity of victims, witnesses, perpetrators, suspects or the investigating officer or police officials mentioned in the dockets perused;
  - 3.2 no attempt must be made to contact any victim, witness, perpetrator or suspect mentioned in a docket perused;
4. All the stipulations of National Instruction 1 of 2006 Research in the Service, must be adhered to (for example, par 6.2(e) The researcher will allow the

Service fourteen days to peruse the report in order to determine whether complies with all conditions for the approval of the research before it is published in any manner and, if it is found not to comply with any condition, that he or she will not publish it.)

regards



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