

Online child sexual abuse by female
Marion Desfachelles & Francis Fortin

The emergence of the internet has provided increased opportunities for online sexual offending against children such as child luring and viewing child pornography and Middleton (2009) estimates that up to one third of sexual offenders will be convicted for online sexual offenses. According to some authors, most of online sexual offenders are men (see Babchishin et al., 2013). However, Finkelhor, Mitchell & Wollak (2000) suggest that 20% of online sexual offenders are women. As they only represent a small proportion of sexual offenders (Cortoni, Babshichin, & Rat, 2016), it is not surprising that studies of female online sexual offenders are virtually non-existent (Elliott & Ashfield, 2011; Lambert & O'Halloran, 2008; Prat & al., 2014).

The aims of the present study are to develop an understanding of women who engage in online sexual offending, to understand their criminal trajectories and to compare them to female sexual offenders. To do so, we analyzed police records of women involved in at least one offence relating to child pornography (CP) or child luring in Québec (Canada) between 1991 and 2014. For all subjects of the study (N=62), we extracted demographic data and criminal history information. Results show that women commit various online sexual offences including child luring (N=4), possession (N=11), distribution (N=24), and production (N=14) of child pornography. Preliminary analyses reveal that the majority of arrested women (47%) only had one arrest. It seems that many women are also part of a more general delinquency, their criminal records reporting assaults and other non-violent offences. In terms of their offence related to the internet, only six women had at least one attested victims, in which only one had two victims. It is possible to assume in the other cases that the offence was consuming or distributing juvenile pornography, in which victims were not classified.

The findings will be discussed within the context of male online sexual offending and female general sexual offending behavior. Implications for future research will be outlined.

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