

GROOMING TYPOLOGIES

The communication strategies used focus on whether the offender is fantasy-driven (keeping the sexual contact online) or contact-driven (expecting to engage in physical and sexual contact with the victim) (Briggs et al., 2011). It has been theorized that most online (solicitation) offenders are patient enough to develop relationships with their victim, which can easily eventually move to contact offending (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2004).

- Grooming is the process by which the offender engages the victim to prepare for victimization.
- Some grooming strategies are direct, involving immediate introduction of sexual conversation, threats, and coercion, while less direct methods are used over time to establish a relationship with the victim.
- Unfortunately, the later is the most difficult to detect because many of the relationship strategies used appear normal in nonvictim grooming situations.
- Some offenders move immediately into soliciting sexual contact online or offline thereby skipping the grooming process altogether (e.g., DeHart et al., 2017; Loesnzo-Dus, Izura, & Pérez-Tattam, 2016; Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017; O'Connell, 2003). Several theories of grooming will be discussed.

O'Connell (2003)

This involves 5 stages:

- 1) Friendship forming stage
- 2) Relationship forming stage
- 3) Risk assessment stage
- 4) Exclusivity stage
- 5) Sexual stage.

This received some support from (Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).

- Some found that many offenders may skip the stages of friendship or relationship forming and risk assessment stage and move immediately into sexual conversation and attempted meeting with the victim (Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).
- The progression and order of the stages varied with offenders who followed O'Connell's model (Black et al., 2015).

Staksrud (2013)

This model has 3 stages.

1. This involves observing the chat rooms as a passive observer. Once a specific victim is identified, the offender initiates communication, encouraging the victim to enter into private chat.
2. This involves grooming behavior and activity.
3. This involves engaging the victim in sexually explicit conversations, exchanging sexually explicit photos or videos, and then perhaps initiating a meeting (if in-person contact is attempted or occurs, the offender is now a dual or contact offender). This model has been supported by others (e.g., Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).

This model has been supported by other. Some found that many offenders may skip the stages of friendship or relationship forming and risk assessment stage and move immediately into sexual conversation and attempted meeting with the victim

Briggs et al. Typology (2011)

The *fantasy-driven* offender restricts the sexual interactions to online activities and the *contact-driven* offender meets the victim online and then in person to engage in sexual and physical contact (Briggs et al., 2011).

The *fantasy-driven* offender has also been referred to as the *cybersexual* offender (Briggs et al., 2011; DeHart et al., 2017; Grosskopf, 2010; Kloess et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2012).

- These offenders limit their offending to online interaction with the minors.
- These offenders are not motivated by a desire to engage in physical contact with the victim.
- Kloess et al., (2017) highlight the danger of the fantasy-drive/cybersexual offender in that the dynamic nature of the offender's motivations may change in any given situation or perhaps at times the offender may have contact-driven motivations when usually they do not.
- Therefore, the fantasy driven/cybersexual offender may at any time change their sexual motivation to include contact-driven thoughts and therefore engage in physical and sexual contact with the child/ren as demonstrated in the literature (e.g., Kloess et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2012).
- The seriousness of the sexually exploitive interactions with minors is a serious form of abuse regardless of whether offline physical and/or sexual contact occurs.

Webster et al Typology (2012)

- This typology offers three categories: *intimacy seekers, adaptive, and hypersexual* (Webster et al., 2012).

Intimacy seekers typically do not have prior sex offenses (again, however, most have self-reported undetected contact offenses).

- These offenders believed that they were involved in an intimate and consenting relationship with the minor.
- They spent time establishing a relationship and then ensued a contact meeting with the victim.
- They view the relationship with the victim as consensual and likely did not significantly modify their identity.
- These offenders tended to be cautious to avoid others becoming aware of their sexual intentions.
- They were less likely to collect child porn or engage in contact with other offenders online.
- They spent a significant amount of time communicating with the victim before meeting with them for what they viewed as a "intimate" relationship.

The hypersexualized offenders were less inclined to meet the minor in person.

- Their discussion was highly sexualized and they spent little time or had little concern about the victim's life.
- They tended to have extensive child porn collections, some had extensive and extreme adult porn collections and to have significant contact with other offenders online.
- They tended to have previous convictions for child porn.
- They altered their identity and often used an avatar or picture of their genitals rather than of their face.
- The contact was highly sexualized and moved quickly.
- Their offense supporting beliefs involved dehumanizing young people.
- They tended not to use the phone and did not personalize the conversation.
- Offline meetings were less common with this group (Webster et al., 2012).
- These offenders quickly introduced sexualized content and did not attempt to establish a relationship.

The adaptable offender was more likely to have previous sexual offense convictions.

- This offender engaged in multiple online identities.

© 2019

Scott A. Johnson, MA, LP 612-269-3628 scott@forensicconsultation.org

- They modify their behavior and approach to fit the child's needs and to ensure success with the victim.
- Some used and possessed child porn.
- They had offense supporting cognition that focused on their own needs and viewed the victim as mature and capable of engaging in sexual contact but did not view the contact as a relationship.
- Some have small collections of child porn and tended not to have significant contact with other offenders online.
- These offenders adapted their identity and grooming to fit the victim's behavior and response.
- The contact occurred at the pace set by the victim.
- These offenders tended to be more security conscious and often had multiple electronic devices (Webster et al., 2012).
- This category is similar to cyber-sex only offenders identified by DeHart et al. (2017). This group engages in both online and offline sexual behavior (DeHart et al., 2017).

DeHart et al. Typology (2017)

- This typology offers four categories: cyber-sex only offenders, cybersex/schedulers, schedulers, and buyers (DeHart et al., 2017).
- The **cyber-sex** only offenders are fantasy-driven as Briggs et al.'s (2011) proposed.
- They engage in sexual chat, expose themselves online and expect the same from their victim, but have no intent at that time to meet the victim in person.
- Many mention scheduling meetings with the victim but the details were vague and the offenders did not follow through with the meetings. Most are Caucasian.
- The **cybersex/schedulers** engage in online sexual behavior, including explicit sexual talk and exchanging explicit images/videos.
- This is the group most likely to demonstrate child-specific or incest interests.
- They tend to have long interactions with the victim, often lasting several months.
- They are the group most likely to ask the victim specific questions about the victim's sexual characteristics.
- These offenders are likely to schedule a meeting with the victim but were the most likely to cancel or not show-up.
- The rationale provided by the researchers for why the meeting was not kept include 1) the offender was pretending to be interested in a meeting to maintain victim compliance; 2) the offender was reluctant or fearing that the meeting was a trap; and 3) the discussion of a meeting may have simply been a part of the offender's fantasy.
- The **schedulers** are similar to Briggs et al.'s (2011) contact group.
- Most are Caucasian though more non-White offenders were in this group.
- These offenders explicitly sought sexually explicit photos of the victims but rarely exposed themselves.
- About a third expressed child-specific specific or incest themes.
- About half of the offenders engaged the victim for only one day, seeking what is referred to as a "hook-up".
- These offenders do not attempt to develop a relationship with the victim.

- The offender's grooming typically involved discussing the victim's sexual experiences, asking about whether the victim has a boyfriend, and within a few chats schedules a meeting. Some of these offenders requested sexually explicit photos to ensure that the victim was real.
- The **buyers** are like the schedulers in that their focus is to meet with the victim offline.
- They are less likely to expose themselves to the victim and only some requested sexually explicit photos from the victim.
- About a third expressed child-specific or incest themes, and approximately a third interacted with the victim for only a day.
- The main focus of these offenders is to negotiate sexual favors in exchange for money and may include human traffickers, pimps, and family members offering their children to others for sexual behavior.
- These offenders are more ethnically diverse.
- One of the findings of DeHart et al.'s research was that online interactions can escalate rapidly.
- They also supported the findings of Briggs et al. (2011) that decoys versus actual victim online did not change the outcome of the offender scheduling a meeting nor did it appear to hamper the offender's behavior of exposing themselves, seeking sexually explicit photos, or engaging in or encouraging masturbation.
- Strategies and behaviors associated with grooming involves many different behaviors.
- The manipulation of minors often included encouraging the victim become actively involved in the sexual activities either online or offline and giving the appearance of freedom of choice.
- This may include asking the victims about their previous sexual experiences, graphically describing the types of sexual activities they would like to have with the child, and discussing with the child the inappropriate behavior of the relationship between the adult and the victim (Marcum, 2007).

THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN ONLINE GROOMING

- First, it should be noted that not all sex offenders or solicitation offenders (online/offline) engage in the grooming process.
- Some offenders move immediately into initiating sexual conversation, exchange of sexually explicit photos, and/or sexual behavior online or offline.
- These offenders quickly sexualize the conversation and may use coercion, pressure, threats or force to gain victim compliance or simply move on the next victim.
- They utilize various strategies to engage in cyber-rape and online exploitation of the victim regardless of whether the sexual exploitation remains online or moves also to offline contact (Barber & Bettez, 2014; Broome, Izura, & Lornezo-Dus, 2018). This is similar to Webster et al.'s (2012) hypersexual offender.
- The online groomers structure the online environment to allow for maximum persuasion on minors.
- They engage the child to feel like they are an active part of the plot. This includes operating in multiple scenarios online with different potential victims at the same time (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018; Bergen, 2014; Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).
- Anonymity allows for the offender to overcome personal and social barriers (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018).
- The offender thoroughly studies the victim's environment and vulnerabilities and then develops strategies to involve the victim in the abuse.

© 2019

Scott A. Johnson, MA, LP 612-269-3628 scott@forensicconsultation.org

- The in-person contact with the victim may occur once or on multiple occasions.
- Situational factors (e.g., schedules of the victim's parents, level of autonomy of the victim on the Internet) aided the offender to cross barriers of social control and approaching minors (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018).
- Online offenders (solicitation) tended to groom based on victim accessibility, opportunity, and the victim's perceived vulnerabilities, possibly victim attractiveness though not as likely (Malesky, 2007; O'Connell, 2003).
- Most online offenders visited online chat rooms geared toward minors and most read the victim's profile (Maletsky, 2007).
- The online offender often chose victims who had sexual content in their profile, assessed the victim's perceived neediness or submissiveness, focused on victims whose profiles contained the victim's age, and when the victim had young-sounding usernames (Maletsky, 2007).

One model identified how offenders actively involve minors in the process of online grooming and by doing so limits risk for detection (de Santisteban & Gámez-Guadix, 2017).

- This model involved deception, corruption, and emotional involvement of the victim.
- By making the victim appear complicit in the grooming and subsequent sexual contact, the victim may come to accept the sexual behavior as acceptable or may experience guilt, shame or fear and blame themselves for getting into the situation.
- Regardless, the victim may have been less likely to tell anyone about the victimization and contact. Nearly 85% of victims reported (mostly to friends) the offender when asked to perform sexual behavior they did not want to engage in (Villacampa, & Gómez, 2017). Many of the victims also blocked further contact from the offender or terminated contact from the offender) after refusing unwanted sexual contact (Villacampa & Gómez, 2017).
- Some offenders identify the affective needs of the victims in the early stages of contact (e.g., needy or submissive) as well as other vulnerabilities (e.g., family conflict, absenteeism from school) (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018; Malesky, 2007; Quayle et al., 2014).
- The next step of actively involving the victim in the grooming process decreased detection.
- If the victim was asked to engage in some sexual behavior they do not want to do they were more likely to report the sexual activity (Villacamp & Gómez, 2017).
- Offenders engage in impression management, tending to maintain a positive image of themselves (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018; Quayle & Taylor, 2003; Webster et al., 2012; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2015).
- This may help prevent detection by appearing to be a "normal" person at least as others may describe them.
- Offenders tend to lack awareness of the inequity of the relationship between an adult and minor, equating the relationship as if it were an adult-adult relationship (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018).
- The offender may use the victim's perception of being in love with the offender as justification for the romantic/abusive relationship (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018).
- Offenders tended to believe that victims who took the initiative in the sexual interaction were therefore to blame for the sexual contact.

- Sexualized minors who took the initiative in the sexual interaction more quickly accepted direct sexual solicitations (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018).
- Direct strategies offenders may use include offering money in exchange for sex or may offer a long-term relationship (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018; Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2019; Van Gijn-Grosvenor, & Lamb, 2016).
- Other strategies may encourage a greater affective involvement by the victim (de Santisteban, & Gámez-Guadix, 2017; Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2015), which serves to sustain the abusive relationship over time.
- Bribery may be used to offer free photo sessions to find work, that is to expose their bodies to be selected in areas of fashion or movies (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018).
- Most offenders have abused several victims (Bergen, 2014; Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).
- Victims include higher rates of females, followed by those who are gay minors or who have a poorly defined sexual identity, and victims tend to be ages 13-17 years of age (Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017; Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2013; Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2004; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2010).
- Offenders take advantage of the youth's vulnerabilities (e.g., need for attention and affection, depression, victimization) (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007b; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2001; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2015; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2010).
- The offenders also engaged in contact with strangers over the Internet or using chat rooms (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007a; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007b; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2010).

With extrafamilial child molesters, those who engaged in the noncoercive pathway of sexual molestation (molested more victims, victim was not related or may have been a stranger, more time spent in planning the offense, and used less coercion) engaged in more deviant sexual fantasizing than those in the coercive pathway (mostly female victims, knew the victim, little planning of the offense, used coercion) (Dandescu, & Wolfe, 2003; Proulx, Perreault, & Ouimet, 1999; Ward & Hudson, 2000; Ward, Loudon, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995).

Child molesters with both female and male victims and those with male victims experienced significantly more sexual fantasies prior to and after their first contact offense than those offenders with only female victims (Dandescu, & Wolfe, 2003; Langevin, Lang, & Curnoe, 1998).

Contact offenders mostly target adolescent girls (13-17), tend to be older than age 25, and did not deceive the victim about their age or sexual wants. They also engaged in sexual contact with each victim more than once (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2004). This reflects *Hebephilia* (primary sexual attraction to early adolescents approximately ages 11-14) and *Ephobophilia* (primary sexual attraction to late aged adolescents approximately ages 15-19) not Pedophilia. Only a handful of contact offenders utilize physical force or coercion. Most offenders are not strangers, having engaged in contact online with the victim extensively prior to engaging in sexual contact.

Most solicitation offenders (both fantasy-driven and contact-driven) either were honest about their age or indicated that they were younger, though none presented as being children or adolescents (Briggs, Simon, & Simonsen, 2011; Kloess et al., 2017; Marcum, 2007; O'Connell, 2003; Wolak, Finkelhor, & Ybarra, 2010). One study found that about one-third of the offenders portrayed themselves as children (Malesky, 2007).

Despite the offender blaming the victim for initiating the sexual conversation, victims indicated that it was the offender who continued to bring up sexual topics (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2015). In that study, every victim described loving feelings towards the offender regardless of their emotional state or abuse history. Abuse was redefined as by the victim as being a loving relationship.

© 2019

Scott A. Johnson, MA, LP 612-269-3628 scott@forensicconsultation.org

The online communication was highly sexual, often involving flattery and compliments to facilitate sexual activity (Kloess et al., 2017). Offenders initiated the conversation, acknowledged the victim's age, and then engaged in sexually explicit conversations. The offender took part in the sexual activity (e.g., taking explicit pictures of themselves, teaching masturbation, engaging in cybersex). The sexual content was discussed during the first conversation and the offender made their explicit sexual interests known.

In one study (Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017) 89% of the offenders introduced sexual contact in their first conversation with the decoy victim (*the decoy victim was someone working for Perverted Justice*). Most of the offenders attempted to engage in telephone contact with the victim and to organize meetings (Van Gijn-Grosvenor & Lamb, 2016; Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).

CONTACT GROOMING STRATEGIES

Contact offenders tended to groom and select a victim based on victim physical attractiveness, ease of access, and perceived vulnerabilities (Lanning, 2010; McAlinden, 2006; Olson, Dags, Ellevold, & Rogers, 2007). Online offenders (solicitation) tended to groom based on victim accessibility, opportunity, and the victim's perceived vulnerabilities, possibly victim attractiveness though not as likely (Malesky, 2007; O'Connell, 2003). Most online offenders visited online chat rooms geared toward minors and most read the victim's profile (Maletsky, 2007). The online offender often chose victims who had sexual content in their profile, assessed the victim's perceived neediness or submissiveness, focused on victims whose profiles contained the victim's age, and when the victim had young-sounding usernames (Maletsky, 2007).

Offender's engage in sexual grooming to prepare the child for sexual contact (Finkelhor, 1984). Craven et al. (2006, p. 297) identified that the specific goals included "gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance, and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure". The tactics used are meant to desensitize the children to the sexual requests as well as stimulate the children's sexual curiosity, lower the child's inhibitions, normalize the requested sexual behavior as depicted in the porn, as well as to normalize sexual relationships between adults and children (Berson, 2003; Grosskopf, 2010; O'Connell, 2003; Olson et al., 2007; Singer et al., 1992).

Offenders who engage in *offline (contact) grooming* strategies tend to use one or more of three types of grooming (McAlinden, 2006). These include 1) *Personal Grooming*: strategies used to make contact with victims appear legitimate and gain power over children, building a rapport with the children by engaging in interests the children have and/or bribery with gifts; 2) *Family Grooming*: preparing the children's parents by establishing a friendship with them, establish trust and gain cooperation in accessing the child; and 3) *Institutional Grooming*: using own job or profession to access victims. Again, the term children includes adolescent victim as well.

Usually offline aggressors are known to the child's family or acquaintances (Gruben, 1998). The offender engages in strategies including selecting a vulnerable victim, gaining access to the victim, developing trust, and then desensitizing the victim to touch (van Dam, 2001). Many of the grooming behaviors appear innocent in nature (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006). Approximately 60% of the perpetrators are known to the child but are not family members; 30% are family members; 10% are stranger to the child; and approximately 23% of cases the perpetrator is under age 18, and 90% of the perpetrators are male (Jones, Finkelhor, & Kopiec, 2001; NSOPW, 2019; Snyder, 2000).

Another investigator identified 4 steps of grooming a victim (Winters & Jeglic, 2017). These include 1) Selection of a victim, based on attractiveness, ease of access, perceived vulnerabilities of the child (Elliot, Browne, & Kilcoyne, 1995; Lanning, 2010; McAlinden, 2006; Mooney & Ost, 2013; Olson, Ellevold, & Rogers, 2007); 2) Gaining access to the victim. The goal of isolating the child physically and emotionally from others (e.g., offering a ride, meeting with the victim alone, sneaking into the victim's home or bedroom, meeting after school (Elliot, Browne, & Kilcoyne, 1995; Lanning, 2010; Mooney & Ost, 2013; Olson, Ellevold, & Rogers, 2007); and 3) Development of trust with the victim. This may include developing trust with the victim and/or the victim's family (Lanning, 2010; McAlinden, 2006); and 4) Gradually increasing physical contact in order to desensitize the victim to touch (Berliner & Conte, 1990; Christiansen & Blake, 1990; Lang & Frenzel, 1988; Lanning, 2010; Leclerc, Proulx, & Beauregard, 2009; McAlinden, 2006). When it came to identifying the above grooming behaviors, it was found that the above

© 2019

Scott A. Johnson, MA, LP 612-269-3628 scott@forensicconsultation.org

grooming strategies were difficult if not impossible to identify because the strategies used appear normal in interacting with others in general (Winters & Jeglic, 2017). The above steps appear to have at least some degree of empirical support.

Recognizing grooming behaviors is often difficult if not impossible (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006; Lanning, 2010; Winters & Jeglic, 2017). It should be noted that no specific order of grooming stages was found to be consistently supported by the literature. This suggests that each offender is unique to some degree in how they engage in the grooming process. However, specific grooming strategies were shared to some degree by all offenders.

All interactions between the offender and victim were highly sexualized and the offenders were unique in their application of strategies and which of any stage of grooming they engaged in and in what order (Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2017). This is consistent with other findings (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014; Williams, Elliott, & Beech, 2013). Grooming is a term that is often confusing, and observers of grooming may not recognize the actual grooming behavior (Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2017). Not all grooming behavior involves arrangements for meeting in person; some are only engaging in contact online. Grooming behavior may appear like any normal, appropriate behavior.

SPECIFIC GROOMING STRATEGIES AND BEHAVIORS

Introduction of Sexual Topics and Compliments

Sexual topics appear to be introduced early in the online grooming process (Dowdell, Burgess, & Flores, 2011; Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2019; Quayle et al., 2014; Webster et al., 2012). Offenders often used compliments to introduce sexual topics, playing with nonsexual and sexual conversation to establish a deeper rapport and to encourage the minor to engage in sexual behavior online (e.g., Kloess et al., 2017). Sexual topics were often introduced as a joke or game (Kloess et al., 2017; O'Connell, 2003; Williams et al., 2013). Compliments often focused on sexual physical appearance and nonsexual appearance, then personal compliments (Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017). Seeking information about the child's sexual interests and experiences is also useful in establishing compliance with sexual requests (Grosskopf, 2010). Secrecy, establishing a sense of mutuality, and a sense of a relationship also help to ensure the child's compliance (Campbell, 2009). The offender may send the victim sexually explicit pictures or videos of themselves or commercial porn to desensitize the victim to the sexual content as well as to normalize the depicted sexual behavior (Grosskopf, 2010; Kloess et al., 2017; Krone, 2005; Malesky, 2007; O'Connell, 2003; Quayle et al., 2012; Wolak et al., 2008). Adding compliments and flattery to the conversation reassures the victim's compliance and decreases risk of disclosure.

Pressure, Coercion, & Threats

Boundary-pushing is a term used to describe the process of pressuring the victim to comply with sexual directives and overcome resistance (Kloess et al., 2017; O'Connell, 2003; Williams et al., 2013). At times the offender may have minimal interest in the victim's personal life and may simply progress to using more direct and blunt directives (Kloess et al., 2017). The offender may utilize more direct and aggressive language to direct the victim into compliance. The offender may also persistent and use noncompromising pressure to coerce victim cooperation and may then become more verbally gentle to retain victim cooperation (Grosskopf, 2010; Kloess et al., 2013; Marcum, 2007). Threats, bribes and seduction are some of the strategies used by the offender (Campbell, 2009; Sullivan & Quayle, 2012).

Actively Involve the Victim

Some offenders actively involve minors in the process of online grooming by using sexualized language and conversations (de Santisteban, & Gámez-Guadix, 2017; Grosskopf, 2010; Kloess et al., 2017). Emotional involvement of the victim helps to make the victim appear complicit in the grooming and subsequent sexual contact thereby the victim may come to accept the sexual behavior as acceptable or may experience guilt, shame or fear and blame themselves for getting into the situation. The sexualized conversation and personal sexual disclosures made by the offender help normalize the sexual focus. Regardless, by involving the victim and early desensitizing the victim to the sexual content, the victim may be less likely to report the contact.

Sharing sexually explicit pictures, masturbatory acts, and explicit sexual talk via web cam are tactics used to desensitize the child and encourage compliance with sexual demands (Briggs et al., 2011; Grosskopf, 2010; Krone,

2005; Malesky, 2007; Marcum, 2007; Mitchell et al, 2007b; O'Connell, 2003). The sexual behavior of the child is recorded by the offender for sexual gratification and may also be used to blackmail and threaten the child into continued submission and compliance and secrecy (Briggs et al., 2011; Grosskopf, 2010; Krone, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2007b; O'Connell, 2003). Some offenders may use more direct implicit and explicit sexually suggestive and coercive language to stimulate the child's sexual curiosity and compliance (Olson et al., 2007).

Relationship Building

Contact driven offenders are more likely to use positive and negative words, with first person pronoun to show trust to the victim target, thereby encouraging the victim to reciprocate. (Bazarova, 2012; Chiu, Seigfried-Spellar, & Ringenberg, 2018). This technique is effective because it is the same used in healthy relationships involving self-disclosure. Some offenders spent time getting to know the victim and engaging in relationship-building. Others were very direct and blunt, immediately introducing sexual contact (Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2019). These resemble the strategies of rapists ("blitz", "con", and "surprise") (Dale, Davies, & Wei, 1997) in order to gain victim compliance. The offender also employs at least some relationship-building to maintain contact with the child over time (Dowdell, Burgess, & Flores, 2011; O'Connell, 2003). The research is mixed to the degree of time (e.g., minutes, days, months) that offenders spent in relationship-building or maintain ongoing contact with the victim as most offenders engaged in contact with multiple victims simultaneously (Dowdell, Burgess, & Flores, 2011; Lanning, 2010; Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2019; Quayle et al., 2014; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014).

Specific grooming techniques included flattery, compliments, making the victim feel special, sexualize the conversation to introduce sexual topics, erratic or nasty temperament, and grooming individuals in the victim's life to gain victim compliance (Dowdell, Burgess, & Flores, 2011; Kloess et al., 2013; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014). Victims were then encouraged to expose themselves online.

The **indirect offender** would be persistent, begging and desperate, gentle pressuring through displays of disappointment, reminding the victim they promised to engage in the requested behavior.

Offenders using the **direct approach** used threats, blackmail, insults, peer pressure. Both approaches utilized pornography to desensitize the victim to sexual topics, lower their resistance, and gain their compliance (Durkin, 1997; Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2019; Marcum, 2007; O'Connell, 2003). These are similar strategies used by contact offenders as well, not just those online (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014).

The establishment of a loving or exclusive relationship is often used by the offender (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2015). In one study, all of the victims described loving feelings towards the offender regardless of their emotional state or abuse history. Abuse was redefined by the victim as being a loving relationship.

Compliments and flattery may be made in addition of making the child feel special to agree to engage in the sexual requests. In addition, the offender may use threats, intimidation and blackmail. The use of bribes, gifts, seduction, and competition are often used as well (Campbell, 2009; Sullivan & Quayle, 2012).

Encouraging or Involving the Victim in Sexual Contact Online

Some offenders introduce sexual content immediately or very early in the conversation and may share sexual photos or engage in sexual activity via their webcam (Kloess et al., 2017; Marcum, 2007). Online only offenders (*fantasy-only*) are likely to teach the victims about sexual behaviors or use exhibitionism to get the victim to reciprocate (Briggs, Simon, & Simonsen, 2011; Chiu, Seigfried-Spellar, & Ringenberg, 2018). *Contact offenders* used the Internet to groom their victim by sending both child and adult porn to the victim (Hoffler, Muirhead, Owens, & Shelton, 2015; McCarthy, 2010). The introduction of sexual themes in conversation as well as showing porn help desensitize the victim to sexual themes and to encourage the child to engage in the requested sexual activity (Campbell, 2009; Sullivan & Quayle, 2012).

Discussion of Choice Media

Another strategy used with online offenders involves often beginning with a discussion of the choice media (e.g., social networks, chats, text messages) and elements of gaining access to minors. They often targeted several

potential victims at the same time (Quayle et al., 2014). They searched for vulnerable or sexually curious targets and adapted to the needs of the victim.

Deceiving About Offender's Age

Most of the predators *pretended* to be considerably younger across a number of areas (e.g., name, physical appearance, interests) (Quayle et al., 2004). Other studies found that the men did not lie about their age (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2004). It was found that offenders with victims 14-18 years of age *did not* include deceit, violence, or intimidation (Villacampa, & Gómez, 2017). These inconsistencies may be due to the specific populations studied or may simply represent the diversity of strategies used by offenders.

Offender Self-Disclosures

Online only (*fantasy-only*) child offenders tended to make far less self-disclosure to avoid detection as well as they had no intent to meet the child in person (Chiu, Seigfried-Spellar, & Ringenberg, 2018). *Contact offenders* tended to share more self-disclosures with the victim to increase sharing and trust (Chiu, Seigfried-Spellar, & Ringenberg, 2018; Dindia, 2002).

Networking with Other Child Predators/Liked Minded People

Contact offenders tended to network and communicate with others who shared similar deviant interests (McCarthy, 2010). This helped serve to encourage and support the offender's deviant fantasies, beliefs and behaviors.

Distorted Cognitions of Online Offenders

In general, sexual offenders tend to share common distorted thinking to justify their use of child porn as well as to justify engaging in sexual contact with children and adolescents. The degree to which the offender shares any of the following examples is unique to the individual offender. Minimization of harm to the child included believing:

1. There was no direct contact with the child (Webster et al., 2012).
2. The children depicted in the porn did not display signs of resistance or harm or may have appeared to enjoy the sexual contact. The child is not believed to be harmed by the sexual contact. (Howitt & Sheldon, 2007; Kettleborough, & Meridan, 2017). Quayle, & Taylor, 2003; Ward & Keenan, 1999; Webster et al., 2012; Winder & Gough, 2010; Winder, & Gough, & Seymour-Smith, 2015).
3. The belief that there was no harm to the child for viewing child porn or engaging in sex with children or adolescents (Kettleborough, & Meridan, 2017; Ward & Keenan, 1999).
4. Viewing themselves as being unable to control their urges or behaviors, that they are unable to stop themselves and this has been referred to in the literature as *external locus of control*. Offenders exhibited characteristics of impulse control or feelings of addiction to the Internet and therefore believing that they are out-of-control (Bates, & Metcalf, 2007; Elliot, 2012; Elliot et al., 2009; Gannon, Hoare, Rose, & Parrett, 2012; Polaschek, Calvert & Gannon, 2009; Ward & Keenan, 1999; Webster et al., 2012).
5. Viewing children as sexual beings or sexual objects. Children are viewed as wanting to engage in sex and that they enjoy sex (Kettleborough, & Meridan, 2017; Marziano, Ward, Beech, & Pattison, 2006; Ó Ciardha, & Ward, 2013; Ward, 2000; Ward & Keenan, 1999; Webster et al., 2012).
6. Some offenders may blame the victim for engaging in the sexual contact and debase the victim for doing so (e.g., blaming the victim for initiating or continuing in the grooming process, the victim's willingness to engage in sexual behavior [viewed by the offender as sexual debauchery], and sexualizing the victim) (de Santistebana, del Hoyo, Alcázar-Córcoles, & Gámez-Guadix, 2018; Malesky, 2007; Quayle et al., 2014; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2015; Winters, Kaylor, & Jeglic, 2017).
7. Having a sense of entitlement to engage children or adolescents in sexual activities (Ward & Keenan, 1999).
8. Viewing the world as being dangerous or a threatening place at one extreme and the world as a limiting and unsatisfying place at the other extreme. Emotional problems and attachment deficits contribute to this (Beech, Fisher, & Ward, 2005; Ó Ciardha, & Gannon, 2012; Polaschek & Ward, 2002; Ward, 2000; Ward & Keenan, 1999).

9. The offender believing that they are a collector and that the material provides sexual satisfaction and provides a depiction and reinforcement of a sexual fantasy or preference (Glasgow, 2010; Kettleborough, & Meridan, 2017; Lanning, 2010; Long, Alison, & McManus, 2013; Quayle & Taylor, 2001; Quayle & Taylor, 2002; Seto, Maric, & Barbaree, 2001; Seto, Reeves, & Jung, 2010).

The references are located on the website under handouts. (www.forensicconsultation.org)