

A Discourse Analysis of Clear-Web Paedophile Communities

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Abstract

Child sexual abuse and exploitation is one of the most paramount issues facing our society. This global problem has been exacerbated in the digital age through increased access to technology, anonymity tools, and platforms enabling communication between paedophiles and children. These offenders also congregate in online communities with likeminded individuals to interact with each other and trade child sexual abuse material. Despite their central role in facilitating offending, online paedophile communities remain grossly understudied, particularly using linguistic methods. Thus, this research aims to increase understanding of how these communities are formed, maintained, and participated in – as well as how members construct their identities and express their attitudes to each other.

The dataset, provided by UK-based law enforcement, comprised over 100,000 words of approximately 1,600 offenders interacting in clear-web social media chatlogs. A qualitative discourse analysis approach was employed: beginning with a thematic analysis and followed by a computer-mediated discourse analysis within these themes to address the study's aims. The results revealed that offenders gained access to thriving online networks of paedophiles, trading abusive material; discussing or planning crimes; sharing advice on security measures; teaching technological skills; and forming relationships with one another. Offenders constructed their identities as paedophiles and community members through displays of knowledge about offending, using community-specific language, adhering to behavioural etiquette, and asserting their sexual interests. The groups also provided a supportive echo-chamber that reinforced cognitive distortions and proliferated a pro-paedophilia ideology. This thesis provides a novel insight into the private interactions of paedophiles on the clear-web through the deployment of linguistic methods. The findings support the suggestion that membership of online paedophile communities may be an aggravating factor in offenders posing an increased threat of harm to children.

Declaration

Ethical approval was granted for this research by the Swansea University Research and Integrity Board in 2020.

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date20/09/2024.....

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Content Warning

This thesis covers the sensitive topic of child sexual abuse (alongside references to rape, sexual violence, slurs, and other sensitive matters) and contains explicit examples that may be upsetting to some readers.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AA	Assertive Affirmative speech act
ACE/ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experience(s)
AS	Affinity Spaces
CA 2003	Communications Act 2003
CMDA	Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis
CoP	Community of Practice
CoPs	Communities of Practice
CP	Child Pornography
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSAE	Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
D	Directive speech act
DA	Discourse Analysis
EPI	Exchanges of Personal Information
ICE	Internet Child Exploitation
ICMEC	International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
IIOC	Indecent Images of Children
Int	Interrogative speech act
Kik	Kik messenger
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, plus
NCMEC	National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OCSAE	Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
OG	Online Grooming
OGDM	Online Grooming Discourse Model
OPA 1959	Obscene Publications Act 1959
PJ	Perverted Justice
RQ	Research Question
SFN/SFNs	Sexual Fantasy Narrative(s)
SM	System Message
SOA 2003	Sex Offences Act 2003
Th	Thanking speech act
TRE	Trusted Research Environment
UO/UOs	Undercover law enforcement Officer(s)
VP/VPs	Virtuous Paedophile(s)

Chapter 1: Introduction

“the only route available is to improve the delivery of justice where we can”

– Tim Grant, *Elements in Forensic Linguistics*

1. Introduction

On the 21st of June in 2017, a 29-year-old university lecturer was arrested at his office in Birmingham, England. He was charged with 188 counts that ranged from encouraging the rape of a child to possession of ‘a paedophile manual’ (Labhart, 2018). Described as ‘the absolute worst child exploitation and blackmail offender’ ever seen by the supervising officer of *Homeland Security*, it was estimated that he had more than 50 victims over an eight-year period and forced them to send him ‘horrific material’ that he distributed to other paedophiles online (Labhart, 2018). Two UK-based academics, Professor Tim Grant and Professor Jack Grieve, were amongst those involved in the huge collaborative effort that led to his arrest. This effort also included work by the *National Crime Agency*, law enforcement from several countries, *US Homeland Security*, and *Europol*. The two linguists worked in an interdisciplinary team with forensic psychologists, behavioural analysts, and computer forensics analysts. They built a linguistic profile of the suspected offender based on his prolific online presence in dark-web paedophilia sites and elsewhere online. The dark-web is an area of the internet which consists of heavily encrypted websites and communication platforms that provide spaces for anonymous illegal activities. Alongside their ‘largely correct’ (Grant, 2019) linguistic profile, Grant and Grieve worked to develop innovative techniques for investigating the dark-web communication tools that paedophiles, like this offender, employ. As with many cases before them, including the landmark *Unabomber* case, forensic linguistic analysis was utilised in the tackling of serious crime.

Grant and MacLeod (2020:166) define forensic linguistics as ‘the use of language analysis in improving the delivery of justice’. The case of the *Unabomber*, a serial mail-bomber whose manifesto was analysed for stylistic features leading to a warrant being granted on linguistic

evidence, is one of the most famous instances of the application of forensic linguistics – even being made into a popular television series¹ in 2017 which focused on the linguistic efforts that led to his capture.

Further applications include work in forensic authorship analysis (e.g. Zheng et al., 2003; Olsson, 2009; Grant, 2013; Coulthard et al., 2017) and novel collaborations with law enforcement. Professor Tim Grant and Dr Nicci MacLeod worked closely with West Midlands Police between 2010 and 2017 on their *Pilgrim* training programme which was partly aimed at developing the skills of undercover officers (UOs) in assuming the identities of online child sexual abuse victims and offenders (Grant and MacLeod, 2020). They trained officers in the linguistic aspects of this identity assumption and worked to improve the abilities of law enforcement to combat these offenders. The applications of forensic linguistics are only growing in the digital age where linguistic evidence is so often readily available in the forms of email, forum postings, and social media messaging. In his book, *Word Crime*, John Olsson (2009:5) described the new status of forensic linguistics poignantly:

Forensic linguistics began life as an instrument to correct miscarriages of justice. It now plays an active day-to-day role in our courts. [...] In an age where the erosion of civil rights and liberties has once again become a topic to rouse the passions, and rightly so, forensic science stands as one of the guardians of justice and liberty. From small beginnings just 40 years ago, forensic linguistics is now an important, and I believe, permanent component in this process.

The aim of this thesis is to further contribute forensic linguistic analysis to the field of crime investigation and prevention. Breaking new ground with the type of dataset used and the methodology applied in this context, the specific problem addressed is that of child sexual abuse offenders and their online communities. Adopting a constructionist perspective, a discourse analysis approach that followed the Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis method proposed by Herring (2006; 2013) was taken to examine a c. 100,000-word dataset of online offender-to-offender

¹ Rosemont, D. A. (Producer). Yaitanes, G. (Director). Sodroski, A., Clemente, J., Gittelsohn, T. (Creators). (2017). *Manhunt: Unabomber* [TV Series]. Discovery; Trigger Street Productions; Lionsgate Television.

interactions on private social media sites. These chatlogs, containing almost 1,700 recorded offenders, were analysed to better understand how these online paedophile communities (and their members) operate. In this chapter, Sections 2-4 establish the different facets of this problem and where further research is needed. Section 5 asserts the main aims of this thesis and proposes research questions, while Section 6 outlines the structure of the thesis, and Section 7 concludes the chapter.

2. The Problems and Challenges of Child Sexual Abuse

“The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places”

– J. R. R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings

In the UK it is estimated that 96% of all households have internet access (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Although the advent of the digital age and surge in social media usage has had many benefits for society, there have also been nefarious consequences of this advancement – namely an increase in Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE). These technological advancements ‘have revolutionised the activities of some criminal groups in much the same way as they have for the general public’ (Grant and MacLeod, 2020:4). The anonymity and secrecy of the internet enables adults to seek out children online and ‘the absence of adequate child safety mechanisms on the internet has resulted in a drastic increase of risks that children face when using digital devices or navigating the online environment’ (Soloveva et al., 2023:26). It has been proven that children and adolescents who have their internet presence habitually monitored by a parent/guardian are far less likely to report chatting with adult strangers or experience OCSAE (Greene-Colozzi et al., 2020:852). The protection of children online ‘is an extremely critical problem faced by our society across geographical and cultural boundaries’ (Gupta et al., 2012:1). However, not enough research has investigated how exactly online communication technologies are used to ‘facilitate’ the diverse forms of OCSAE which are prevalent today (Balfe et al., 2015:14; Henry and Powell, 2018:198).

OCSAE includes several different criminal acts, such as online grooming (henceforth, OG), sexual solicitation, 'searching, viewing, downloading, exchanging, producing and commissioning' Child Sexual Abuse Material (henceforth, CSAM), and sexual exploitation (Wager et al., 2018:10). The term CSAM has been adopted rather than the alternatives Child Pornography (CP) or Indecent Images of Children (IIOC). It is now the preferred terminology within law enforcement and the *National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)*, amongst others, as it more accurately refers to the abusive component of this media (NCMEC, 2021). Fonhof et al. (2019:1) defined CSAM (called CP in their study) as 'any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor'. This definition is somewhat sound as it encompasses the wide variety of criminalised CSAM. However, it does not necessarily include material that is generally innocuous but seen as sexual imagery by some child sex offenders. Insoll et al. (2021:8) claimed that CSAM includes 'images, videos, live-streaming, and any other material that depicts sexual violence against a child' as well as 'material that shows a child in a sexually suggestive or explicit manner partially clothed, or nude, and can include material that does or does not illustrate sexual activity or violence at all'. This broader classification solves many of the problems raised in prior definitions. Insoll et al. (2022:18) stressed that 'the creation, use, and distribution of CSAM is an urgent public health and human rights crisis'. In this present study the definition of CSAM aligns with that provided by Insoll et al. (2021) and refers to media depicting any/all forms of CP criminalised in the UK (see Chapter 2 Section 2.1).

Definitions of OG are equally riddled with debate as the term *grooming* first emerged in the late 1970s for use by law enforcement to describe 'aspects of a seduction pattern of offender behaviour that was poorly understood by most professionals' at the time (Lanning, 2018:5). One potential definition proposed by Lanning (2018:11) described grooming as 'the use of nonviolent techniques by one person to gain sexual access to and control over potential and actual child victims'. However, exchanging CSAM is a common occurrence during the process of OG and it has been argued that all CSAM is inherently violent because it 'represents sex between at least one party

who cannot legally consent to it' (Steel, 2009:565) – so one cannot assert that grooming is always conducted via non-violent techniques. Craven et al. (2006:297) proposed a comprehensive definition for sexual grooming (on and offline), describing it as 'a process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child' – suggesting that this is done for the purpose of 'gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure'.

It is common for *paedophile*, *child molester*, and *child sex offender* to be used interchangeably, despite the reality that not all paedophiles molest children and not all child molesters or sex offenders are paedophiles (Feelgood and Hoyer, 2008; Richards, 2011). The term paedophile generally applies to people who have a 'sexual interest (or even preference) in pre-pubescent children' (Feelgood and Hoyer, 2008:34). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5* (APA, 2000) includes a widely used definition of what makes a paedophile. Their criteria for diagnosing paedophilia outlined that an offender must, over the course of 6 months, present 'recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children' (Capra et al., 2014:18); have acted on these urges or become distressed due to the urges; and they must be aged over 16 and at least 5 years older than the victim involved. However, this classification has not been universally accepted. Capra et al. (2014:19) reviewed the DSM-5 definition and suggested the first criterion should be reformulated to instead state that the individual must present 'over a period of at least 6 months, an equal or greater sexual arousal from prepubescent or early pubescent children than from physically mature persons, as manifested by fantasies, urges or behaviours'. This revision includes a larger emphasis on preferring children sexually than mature adults, which highlights the distinction between child molesters/sex offenders and paedophiles.

There are several different known classifications for child sex offenders with differing characteristics that make defining paedophilia and creating legislation to protect children a complex

process. These will be explored in more depth within Chapter 2 Section 3. However, Chiang (2018:17) used the label *offender* for all types of child sex offenders over alternatives in her research because she considered ‘these individuals in terms of their legal status as having (or suspected as having) committed criminal offences’. The same term is used throughout this piece of research because the individuals within the dataset were suspected child sex offenders who had been identified by law enforcement as committing crimes. The term paedophile is also used in this thesis when referring to the online communities and identities as these are based around a sexual attraction to children and are how the offenders self-identified.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) by predatory adults has existed throughout history in many forms: whether by the notion of *pederasty*² in ancient Greece and Rome, or by the fact that societies from ancient times to more recent mediaeval history have considered girls between the ages of 12 and 16 as in their prime for legal marriage and childbirth (Ross, 2020). However, as stated earlier, the technological advancements of the 21st Century have allowed for a vast increase in the prevalence of CSA and OCSAE.

An article in *The Atlantic* revealed that in the UK from 2004-2005, 1.7 child sexual offences were reported per 1,000 children and by 2015-2016 ‘that had risen to 4.9 per 1,000’ (Stokel-Walker, 2018). Furthermore, in 2017/18 the number of reported sex offences against children in the UK³ was 63,238 – a vast increase from 2012/13 when the number was 22,573 (NSPCC, 2019:6-7). A recent NSPCC (2021) report found that 19% of all the child sexual offences in England and Wales in 2019/20 were flagged as ‘online crime’. In 2022 the NCMEC’s CyberTipline received 32 million reports of suspected OCSAE, which was a notable increase from the 21 million in 2020 (NCMEC, 2022). This number grew to 36 million in 2023 (NCMEC, 2023). However, it is almost impossible to accurately determine the prevalence of OCSAE (Chiang, 2018; Insoll et al., 2022), partly

² Pederasty is defined as ‘the sexual relationship between an adult man and a pubescent or adolescent boy’ in Ancient Roman and Greek society (Ross, 2020).

³ Reported offences against under 16s in England, Scotland, and Wales but under 18s in Northern Ireland.

because of the underreporting of these crimes by both victims and offenders as well as the difficulties in classifying online crimes with the anonymity and internationality of the internet.

Unsettlingly, *The Guardian* reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 there was a sharp rise in CSAM circulating online as well as an increase in OG – possibly due to a growth in internet, webcam, and live-streaming use during the period (Grant, 2020). The *NSPCC* (2020) warned that increased time online combined with tech firms struggling to maintain content moderation during the pandemic ‘brewed the perfect storm for abusers to exploit existing platform weakness and groom children’. *WeProtect Global Alliance* (2021;2023) also examined the aggravating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the issue of OCSAE – emphasising the problem of underreporting, the volume of CSAM available online, and the rise in self-generated CSAM. In their 2023 report they noted that there was a 129% increase between 2021 and 2022 in the latter issue of self-generated CSAM elicited by offenders through grooming/coercion online. They stated that OCSAE ‘is one of the most urgent and defining issues of our generation’ (2021:8). This report noted that in May 2021, *Europol* took down a CSA dark-web site which had more than 400,000 registered users. The takedown of this site highlights a lesser-studied element of OCSAE – that of the online offender community.

3. What Are Online Offender Communities?

“A sense of belonging to a community that understands and supports the true victim, set against the hostility of wider, bigoted society, is a powerful radicalizing cocktail.”

– *Laura Bates, Men Who Hate Women*

Many child sex offenders spend large amounts of time online, but the internet is not just used by offenders to view CSAM or groom victims – it also provides a platform for offenders to engage with one another. Armstrong and Forde (2003:210) noted how some prior studies, giving the example of a 1995 Australian report (PJC et al., 1995), supported the belief that organised paedophile communities were rare, ineffective, and dissimilar to other organised crime groups ‘in size, aims,

structures, methods, longevity and so forth'. Conversely, more recent studies claim that paedophiles use the internet 'to create communications structures, distribute objectionable materials and to archive their collections' (Armstrong and Forde, 2003:210; see also Martellozzo, 2015; McManus et al., 2016; Westlake and Bouchard, 2016; Insoll et al., 2022). Online paedophile communities are far more widespread and developed than many would expect considering the publicly held stereotype of the lone, opportunistic predator. Furthermore, Armstrong and Forde (2003:214) found that paedophiles 'have established organised communities via the Internet to support communications and dissemination of information, tools and techniques via Websites, e-mail, chat rooms'. Martellozzo (2015:43) echoed this, asserting that these offenders 'create complex and impenetrable child lovers' forums in which they find support and understanding from other like-minded individuals'. Insoll et al. (2024b:15) also highlighted how 'strong connectivity features such as groups, channels, or search options have turned some instant messengers into hubs of offending'.

Online offender communities are an understudied phenomenon. Their existence has only recently begun to be discussed in research into child sex offenders. A study by Seto et al. (2010) explored the attitudes of CSAM-offenders towards their offending via interviews when they were charged by law enforcement or post-trial in a clinical setting. In their police-interview sample, 79% of these offenders claimed to have participated in offender communities online. The *Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Behavioural Analysis Unit*, while analysing 251 resolved *FBI OCSAE* investigations, found that 71% (n=179) of the offenders 'had contact with like-minded individuals in conjunction with the incident offense' and this was 'typically conducted via chat rooms, email, or through peer-to-peer technology' (Shelton et al., 2016:19). *Europol* (2021:26) similarly warned that 'peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing networks remain an important channel for sharing CSAM from user to user or within small groups' and there has been 'a considerable overall increase in the use of P2P distribution networks'. These high rates of participation in offender communities show just how prevalent their usage is amongst offenders. Similarly, a dark-web survey report by the Finland-based

NGO *Protect Children* found that 46% of their CSAM-offender survey respondents claimed to be in contact with other offenders – with 19% saying this was as often as weekly (Insoll et al., 2021).

Europol's International Organised Crime Threat Assessment (2016:25) discussed how increased availability of anonymisation and encryption tools 'facilitated' online access to CSAM. The report noted that online peer-to-peer networks were amongst the most popular platforms for exchanging such material, as well as the dark-web – which was reiterated in their latest report (see *Europol*, 2021). Steele et al. (2022:9) also claimed that most offenders in their survey sample viewed CSAM on 'at least two different ecosystems', with peer-to-peer and web ecosystems being the most frequently employed and 'the most frequent technologies used as gateways'. The 'continuing misuse of online social networking and other platforms on the surface net cannot be disregarded either' as these 'continue to be used by offenders in innovative and devious ways to meet, discuss and propagate the creation and distribution of child abuse material' (*Europol*, 2016:26). The different platforms of online paedophile communities are discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.1, but it is worth highlighting that these groups can proliferate on both the dark and clear-web, in a variety of places, and for a range of different purposes. Owens et al. (2023:3) warned that 'without research into these new technical areas as they arise, law enforcement and legal professionals are left with an incomplete picture of the overall behavior' of CSA-offenders.

Bowman-Grieve (2009:1005), while investigating another type of offender community (ideological extremism), asserted that 'through community interaction individuals set their own standards, sense of identity, and meaning of group belonging'. Online paedophile communities are not just places for offenders to trade CSAM, but spaces for them to exchange advice, encourage one another, and perpetuate harmful offence-supportive beliefs. In the aforementioned *Protect Children* survey report, when offenders were asked if they had 'ever been affected by the feelings, thoughts, or behaviours of other CSAM/illegal violent material users', 35% said they had been to some extent (Insoll et al., 2021:48). Additionally, respondents who had reported being in contact with other

offenders were ‘at a higher risk of reporting having sought contact with children than those who reported not having been in contact with other users’ (Insoll et al., 2022:15). This apparent link between participation in offender communities and escalating offending behaviours is of great concern. Huikuri and Insoll (2022:3) ventured that ‘online interaction with peers may facilitate sexual violence against children’ – thus making the examination and tackling of these communities of paramount importance to furthering the prevention of OCSAE.

4. A New Perspective

“Since every individual is accountable ultimately to the self, the formation of that self demands our utmost care and attention.”

– Frank Herbert, Chapterhouse: Dune

Van der Bruggen and Blokland (2021b:952) claimed that ‘online communications between members of such communities have provided researchers with rich sources of data that can be used to explore and analyze the different ways in which these communities affirm and reinforce the interests of their members’. However, in the field of analysing OCSAE, ‘offender–offender interactions have [...] been largely obscured from academic and public consideration, despite their devastating impact’ (Chiang, 2020b:1174). Few studies exist considering that ‘online communities are of central importance for understanding online sexual violence against children’ (Huikuri, 2022a:33). Looking at offender-to-offender interactions in online communities can reveal their shared attitudes and ideologies; how they develop relationships with one another; their discussions of security measures and evading detection; CSAM trading behaviours; and potentially patterns of escalating criminal behaviours that are not present or accessible in offender-to-victim interactions or individual offender interviews. It is looking at these communities of offenders congregating in search of likeminded individuals that can shine a light on previously hidden and understudied aspects of CSA, contributing towards a field of study with such significant real-world implications.

As will be outlined in Chapter 2, most research into OCSAE and offender communities has come from criminology and psychology disciplines. Despite this field more recently growing beyond these disciplines and now including linguistics, it has been argued that ‘research on the online solicitation of minors is still in the nascent stages’ (Greene-Colozzi et al., 2020:837). One way in which linguistics can contribute a unique perspective to this research is through analyses of identity performance – of individuals *doing things with words*⁴. How offenders construct and adopt certain identities within these groups (such as community-member identities, paedophile identities, or authority figures) can both inform law enforcement on how to better infiltrate/assimilate into these communities, and aid understandings of the offenders’ pathways to membership of these communities. It also gives insight into the interpersonal dynamics at play and identity negotiations undertaken by these individuals, using methods and analysis tools either underused or never before applied to this specific context.

This study aims to address many of the existing problems and gaps in the field by approaching genuine offender-to-offender interactions from a linguistic perspective. As will be detailed in Chapter 2, some issues with prior research stem from a lack of access to real-world data and collaboration with law enforcement, which the present study includes. It looks at one-to-one (1-2-1) and group-chat dynamics between offenders on clear-web social media platforms, where there is a dearth of research. Linguistic analysis tools and approaches were applied to conduct a discourse analysis of online offender community interactions to examine these underexplored online spaces where paedophiles congregate and instigate the abuse of children.

5. Research Aims and Questions

As introduced in the prior sections, the overall aim of this research was to examine offender-to-offender communication between suspected child sex offenders from a linguistic perspective. This thesis was motivated by the ongoing problem of CSA and the various gaps within current research

⁴ An expression adopted by Austin (1962).

that make offender communities an understudied resource in this field, particularly from a linguistic approach. The overall aim of the thesis entails four specific aims, each investigated via four corresponding research questions as follows:

Aim 1.1: To discern whether current classifications of communities are appropriate in this context and which of these is most applicable to the online paedophile community.

RQ1: *What types of communities are these offender communities?*

This aim is investigated by establishing the existing classifications of community types (in Chapter 2 Section 4.2.1) as well as understanding how to determine this classification and what features the online paedophile community shares with the different community types (discussed in Chapter 4). Furthermore, evidence indicating a community type classification is identified throughout the results-focused chapters (4-7) and this evidence is reviewed to address RQ1 in Chapter 8 Section 2.1.

The second aim is to:

Aim 1.2: Increase understanding of how offenders participate in these online communities – how they are formed, maintained, and contributed to.

RQ2: *How are online paedophile communities formed, maintained, and participated in?*

This aim is addressed through various study-prongs within Chapters 5 and 6 that look at access to offender communities, relationship forming between users, community regulation, and behavioural norms by analysing conversations from online offender communities. Section 2.2 in Chapter 8 summarises these findings in answer to the research question.

The third aim is to:

Aim 1.3: Capture and examine the attitudes and ideologies proliferating in these communities to better understand how to combat this offence-supportive rhetoric.

RQ3: *How do offenders construct their paedophile identities and proliferate their ideologies?*

This is addressed in Chapter 7 through a discourse analysis of attitudes, ideology, and the normalisation of paedophilia within these communities. The findings are reviewed in answer to this research question in Chapter 8 Section 2.3.

The final aim is to:

Aim 1.4: Build a picture of how offenders use language when interacting with each other by employing discourse analysis tools.

RQ4: *How can linguistic discourse analysis contribute to the analysis of online offender communities?*

This aim focuses on the linguistic approach of this analysis when examining offender behaviours and the novel ways in which it can contribute to this field. This aim will be addressed in the results-focused Chapters 5, 6, and 7 where discourse analysis taxonomies and tools are applied to chat transcripts of online offender community interactions. The added value of these methods is discussed within those chapters as well as in Sections 2.4 and 3 of Chapter 8.

6. Thesis Structure

Having introduced in this chapter the current problem and what this thesis aims to address, Chapter 2 offers a review of existing literature in the field. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methodology chosen, followed by the four data analysis chapters (Chapters 4-7), and Chapter 8 concluding the thesis.

Chapter 2 begins by examining the problem of online child sexual crimes and prior research into the criminality and legal aspects of CSA. Then this chapter continues with a review of existing literature on offender typologies and characteristics, as well as assessing research into child

sex offender communities. Finally, Chapter 2 concludes by a review of data and methods in offender community research.

Chapter 3 begins with details about the dataset and approach, then noting the different methods and analysis tools employed with the data, followed by a walkthrough of the study's procedure, and concluding with a discussion of the ethical measures and considerations undertaken.

The next chapters are the data analysis chapters containing the results of the research. Firstly, Chapter 4 details the thematic analysis and provides an overview of the content in the community. Chapter 5 focuses on offender criminal activity, looking at on and offline criminal activity and CSAM trading, as well as discussing risk assessments made by the offenders and their self-reported motivations for doing crimes. Chapter 6 is concerned with the community building taking place within the dataset. This includes looking at how offenders access the online offender community and build relationships, what roles they take on in the community, what community rules are present, and what behavioural norms or patterns exist in these interactions. Chapter 7 looks at the offender's social identities and ideology. This chapter discusses the offender's beliefs and perceptions of themselves/their offending. It also delves into the construction of sexual identities in the community and examines the sexual fantasy storytelling taking place.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, discusses the conclusions of this project, evaluates them, and assesses the implications of these results on future research and law enforcement. The research aims and questions are revisited here; limitations are discussed; and the chapter is followed by the references, appendices, and glossary.

7. Conclusion

This chapter served to introduce the troubling problem of CSA and began to identify the areas which require further attention. It also started to delve into the issues with existing research into this field and where there is a dearth in studies. Forensic linguistics and its applications were established to

show how a linguistic perspective has and can further contribute to identifying and preventing CSAE.

These points of discussion will be continued in the following chapter which explores the research

history of this thesis topic, the criminality of CSA, and prior ventures into analysing online

paedophile communities.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

“We should strive to welcome change and challenges, because they are what help us grow.”

— H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to establish where the thesis is positioned amongst the existing body of research into child sexual abuse and offender communities. It draws from academic and non-academic studies that originated from a variety of disciplines because this topic has only recently become increasingly researched (particularly from a linguistic perspective). Section 2 of this chapter outlines the legal side of CSA, considering what laws and punishments surrounded the various criminal acts involved (2.2), as well as the problem of CSAM (2.1), and how location affects legislation (2.3).

Section 3 addresses misconceptions about the characteristics of child sex offenders and what has actually been found in research about offender characteristics (3.1). Typologies of offenders are explored in more depth (3.2) as there are several different known classifications for child sex offenders. For example, offenders could be called contact offenders (committing in-person abuse) or non-contact; fantasy-driven or contact-driven; or referred to based upon where they operate (online, offline, or mixed-method offenders) – which will be reviewed in Section 3.2. Linguistic forays into this field, such as research that provided language profiles of offenders and sought to characterise the behaviours of online groomers, are discussed in Section 3.3.

Section 4 tackles the pool of existing research into child sex offender communities. In Section 4.1 the different platforms of these communities and how they manifest online are explored, while Section 4.2 examines the structures within them. Section 4.3 focuses on identities, discussing how identity construction can be undertaken by individuals (4.3.1) and approached in research (4.3.2). Section 4.4 examines what prior research has indicated about how offenders position themselves in relation to others (4.4.1) and how they view themselves or their behaviours (4.4.2).

Section 4.3 evaluates the methods employed in offender community research and the datasets used, then Section 5 concludes the chapter. This chapter will begin by considering the broader problem of CSA, continuing from the discussions in Chapter 1 Sections 2-4, before narrowing to evaluate the existing body of research into the specific subject of this thesis: online offender communities.

2. Breaking the Law

One landmark piece of legislation pertinent to CSAE is the Sex Offences Act of 2003 (henceforth, SOA 2003), which was described by the Home Office (2004:1) as ‘the first major overhaul of sexual offences legislation for more than a century’. Within this legislation, the actual criminal acts of CSA were outlined. Sections 5-15 and 25-26 detailed the conditions required for convicting someone of a contact offence against a child, sexual activity with a child family member, and inciting a child family member to perform sexual acts. Sections 48-50 pertained to the criminality of inciting, creating, possessing, or distributing CSAM (referred to as CP in the legal documentation).

The SOA 2003 also introduced a new offence criminalising meeting a child under 16 after sexual grooming with the intention to commit a sexual offence involving that child, carrying a maximum sentence of ten years’ incarceration and registration as a sex offender in the UK. However, there have been criticisms of this legislation for not going far enough because the *act* of grooming itself was not criminalised (Craven et al., 2007). Ost (2004:149) reiterated this, pointing out that ‘if one of the main purposes of the legislation is to protect children before abuse occurs, then criminalising the very act of grooming would further meet this aim’. Craven et al. (2007:61) comprehensively criticised the SOA 2003 for its ‘poor definition and understanding of sexual grooming; scope of legislation in relation to non-Internet grooming; difficulties in identifying sexual grooming; continued focus on offenders with previous sexual convictions as opposed to any person with a sexual interest in children; and a failure of the new legislation to be truly preventative’. Years later, after a notable NSPCC campaign (2014), the Serious Crime Act in 2015 inserted a new

amendment into the SOA (2003b:8) which criminalised specifically ‘sexual communication with a child’, leading to up to two years imprisonment.

Sexual communication with a child is not the only online communication relating to paedophilia that is criminalised. The Obscene Publications Act in 1959 (henceforth, OPA 1959) and Communications Act in 2003 (henceforth, CA 2003) included offences which resulted in sexual communications between offenders about paedophilia (and thus paedophile community interactions) being criminalised due to the language used. In the CA 2003, an individual would be guilty of an offence under section 127 if they sent ‘by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character’. There are other factors that can make one guilty of this offence (such as sending messages containing false information to distress others), but this is the aspect which particularly pertains to child-sex-offender communication.

A person guilty of an offence under section 127 would be liable to ‘imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine [...] or to both’ (CA, 2003). This act thus counters the potential defence some paedophiles may have if they have been caught by law enforcement with only communications between fellow offenders (and no known victims), as the discussions of CSA and abuse narratives are crimes. Outside of the UK there was a notable case, that of Australian news reporter Ben McCormack, where the offender’s defence was that his communications with another self-professed paedophile was ‘nothing more than fantasy talk’ and therefore not criminal (Matthews, 2017). If this case took place in the UK the child-sex fantasy narratives discussed by the two offenders would have caused them to be guilty of an offence under section 127, but in Australia the result was that McCormack was fined and charged with promoting CSAM (despite him never sending or receiving CSAM).

The OPA 1959 prohibits the publication of obscene matter (referred to as ‘articles’). A report on abuse and offensive online communication by the Law Commission (2018:118) claimed

that 'recent prosecutions show that most prosecutions under the OPA 1959 are related to fantasies or discussions relating to child sexual abuse'. The report asserted that 'in an online world, obscene or indecent communication can occur via a conversation between two or more people (for example, over email, mobile, text, Facebook chat, WhatsApp or via an online chat room); or by sharing online (including sending images to one or more persons, posting on social media such as tweeting or a Facebook post, or creating a website)' (2018:114). They defined something as 'obscene' when its affect was 'such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it' (2018:116). The report discussed how online 'articles' could refer to Instant Messaging (IM) chats: citing a case of an offender-to-offender chatlog, which included sexual fantasies about young children, being taken as evidence where each individual message was classed as an 'article' (rather than the chat log as a whole) and charged under section 2 of the OPA 1959 (Law Commission, 2018:122).

This legislation criminalises sexual or obscene communication between offenders in online paedophile communities, but members of these communities are also liable to fall foul of other offences due to their CSAM trading practices. The next section will explore the criminality and prevalence of CSAM.

2.1. Child Sexual Abuse Material

CSAM is unfortunately rife in criminal spaces on the dark and clear-web, with law enforcement and child-protection NGOs detecting 'an overwhelming amount of material every year' (*Europol*, 2021:26). It is also a growing issue as 'emerging technologies, including generative artificial intelligence (AI), are introducing new dimensions to the landscape of online harms' (Insoll et al., 2024b:4). Stokel-Walker (2018) observed a large increase in CSAM prosecutions between 2000 and 2016 in the UK, where the number rose from 1,000 to 3,500 per year. Quayle et al. (2014:368) argued that 'internet solicitation, or grooming of children for sexual purposes, has received less attention than the production, distribution or downloading of abusive sexual images'. However, a

report by *Europol* (2021:6) warned that ‘children spending more time online has made them more susceptible to grooming, leading to an increase of self-produced exploitation material’ – the two issues are intrinsically linked and worsening as digital technologies advance. McGuire and Dowling (2013:5) have suggested that there can often be ‘an overlap between offenders involved in online grooming; those making, distributing or downloading illicit images; and wider, non-contact forms of online abuse, for example, adults engaging young people in cybersex’ – meaning it is likely that platforms for sharing, discussing, and creating CSAM will be where many different types of child sex offenders will congregate under the relative anonymity of the internet.

Protect Children, the aforementioned Finland-based NGO, surveyed anonymous offenders searching for CSAM on the dark-web to inform the development of their self-help programme (ReDirection). The ‘Help Us to Help You’ survey revealed that ‘nearly half (42%) of the respondents reported that they had sought direct contact with children through online platforms after viewing CSAM’ (Insoll et al., 2022:2). It also indicated that ‘certain factors are associated with a self-reported likelihood of having contacted children online after viewing CSAM’ such as higher-frequency CSAM use, being older when first exposed to CSAM, viewing CSAM depicting much younger victims, and ‘being in contact with other CSAM users’ (2022:2). Another study under the same project, this time surveying specifically Spanish-speaking CSAM-offenders, found that 70% of respondents reported first viewing CSAM under the age of 18 and the majority claimed this was accidental (Soloveva et al., 2023). In the preliminary findings of a recent ReDirection survey on the dark-web, 81% claimed to have also encountered CSAM on the surface web (half on social media and half on pornography sites); 34% searched for or shared CSAM on social media; and 70% had attempted to contact a child via social media or a clear-web messaging app (*Protect Children*, 2023). The research undertaken by this organisation aims to ‘address a gap in the research on CSAM users, which has to date largely focused on convicted or known samples of offenders’ (Insoll et al., 2022:3),

creating an 'inherent bias' as 'it is widely known that CSAM offences are hidden crimes, and the majority of offenders are never reported or convicted' (Insoll et al., 2021:9).

Due to the prevalent issue of CSAM distribution, law enforcement agencies have to employ novel countermeasures: e.g. the [CAID](#) system that helps 'identify and safeguard victims' (Thomas, 2016:32) or AI CSAM-identification technologies like the work of [Project Arachnid](#).

Detection of CSAM and other criminal content in social media messaging and other online chat platforms has become even more complex due to the rise of end-to-end encryption technologies.

This encryption means that the platform itself no longer has access to the content of the messages and prevents detection tools or the storing of evidence. A decade ago McGuire and Dowling (2013:20) warned that 'technology and encryption has advanced considerably in recent years'.

Currently, 'four of the companies that send the top 10 number of CSAM reports to NCMEC use end-to-end encryption for private messages on some of their platforms: Meta (used on WhatsApp), Google, Snap and Skype' (Teunissen and Napier, 2022:10). This directly affects countermeasures, for example: 'given its use of end-to-end encryption, CSAM cannot be detected in WhatsApp conversations unless users report it' (2022:10).

In England and Wales, the Protection of Children Act (1978) states that it is an offence for a person to take/make, possess (with a view to distribute), or publish an indecent photograph or pseudo-photograph of a child. Furthermore, part 11 of the Criminal Justice Act (1988) affirms that it is an offence to possess indecent images of children whether the intent is to distribute or not. The SOA (2003a:33-35) outlined the criminality of someone inciting, causing, arranging, facilitating, and controlling a child involved with 'child pornography' – defining this as an 'indecent' image/recording of someone under 18. Ernie Allen (the president and CEO of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC)) has argued that 'each and every time an image of a child being sexually assaulted is traded, printed, or downloaded, the child depicted in the photo is re-victimized', reiterating that the 'physical and psychological harm to these children is incalculable' and those who

download or trade in CSAM 'are as complicit as those who manufacture them' (ICMEC, 2006). Insoll et al. (2021:8) echoes this, highlighting the problem of this revictimisation.

Seto et al. (2010) compared the justifications of CSAM-offenders who were interviewed post-arrest by police and who were interviewed by clinicians post-conviction. The data suggested that 'almost half the offenders were deemed to have social difficulties with adults' (Seto et al., 2010:177) – supporting prior assertions that CSAM may be turned to by those struggling with real world relationships (Quayle and Taylor, 2002). Offenders also cited internet and sex addiction/compulsions in their motivations for seeking out and obtaining CSAM (Seto et al., 2010), which has been noted in other studies (e.g. Quayle and Taylor, 2002; Insoll et al., 2023). Quayle et al. (2006) further discussed this internet addiction as, 'when in a state of negative affect, sex offenders are more likely to use sexual behaviors as a means of coping than are non-offenders' (2006:4). They highlighted the mounting evidence that 'people use the Internet to avoid negative emotional states, such as boredom, anxiety, or depression' which may apply to sex offenders using CSAM online for sexual arousal to alleviate 'some of the more immediate feelings of distress or dissatisfaction in their lives' (Quayle et al., 2006:1). Online-offenders can 'download child pornography and masturbate to such images, providing a highly rewarding or reinforcing context for further avoidance' (2006:1) of undesirable emotional states – which has properties like that of an addictive behaviour.

Furthermore, despite Seto et al. (2010:178-9) noting that self-report data from their study may be problematic as the offenders would want to minimise their perceived culpability, it is still significant that 'a substantial minority of child pornography offenders in both samples acknowledged being sexually interested in children or child pornography'. Insoll et al. (2021:18) argued that 'whilst sexual attraction to children and the associated cognitive distortions are certainly prominent reasons for CSAM use', their analysis of CSAM-offender survey data indicated additional motivators like 'pornography escalation, sexual abuse in own childhood, and other trauma'. It has been suggested that online offenders may have different motivations than offline offenders as some

may be committing offences out of a solely financial interest in producing or distributing CSAM (Chiu et al., 2018). The monetary motivation for OCSAE, specifically with CSAM, is a pertinent problem in dismantling this industry because, alongside individual offenders, there can be entire criminal networks. *The Guardian* reported that *Europol* 'identified live streaming of overseas child abuse, paid for and directed by westerners, as a key threat in the rise of global child exploitation' (Kelly, 2018), suggesting there is a significant global market for this. A great concern with CSAM offending, Insoll et al. (2021:16) argue, is that 'there is a misconception that individuals who view CSAM pose less danger than hands-on offenders' – however, research indicates that there is 'a significant correlation between the two'.

2.2. Sentencing, Punishments, and Bias

Patrick and Marsh (2011:94) described the idea that all convicted child sexual abusers go to prison as one of the 'many myths' about these offenders: finding in a US study that only 28.7% are sent to prison. However, many do end up on the UK *Sex Offenders Register* (Ministry of Justice, 2017), which contains the details of anyone 'convicted, cautioned or released from prison for sexual offences against children or adults since September 1997, when it was set up', for between 1 year and their lifetime (Batty, 2006). The Home Office claims that 97% of all British convicted sex offenders are on the register (Batty, 2006) and the OG criminalisation amendment in 2015 means that all offenders who had sexual communication with a child online are automatically placed on it (Ministry of Justice, 2017). However, in the last decade there has been an increasing number of studies examining the sentences of CSAM-offenders and contact-offenders (Hamilton, 2011; Jung and Stein, 2012; Jung et al., 2013; Hartley et al., 2021). Most of these found a disparity where contact abusers received harsher punishments, but it was suggested that this gap is closing (Hartley et al., 2021).

Jung and Stein (2012:47) observed that Canadian CSAM-offenders were assigned more restrictive conditions than contact-offenders (such as restrictions for 'computer and/or internet, unsupervised contact with children, and going to places that children frequent') despite receiving

less severe punitive measures. These computer restrictions often did 'not encompass the increasingly prevalent capacity for smartphones or similar devices to access the Internet' (2012:47). They suggested that most existing studies maintained CSAM-offenders were 'at minimal risk for incurring contact sexual offences', and this, alongside the focus on rehabilitation, would justify having disparate sentences for the different offender types (2012:39-40). However, these factors are often not considered and the attitudes of legislatures towards online offending and contact-offenders are changing as awareness of predatory behaviour online and its prevalence increases. Hartley et al. (2021:895) noticed that 'over recent years, federal laws have increasingly sought to target and increase punishment' for CSAM offences in America. This tendency was noted prior by Hamilton (2011:545) who described how the American Congress appeared to have an appetite for handing out severe sentences to CSAM-offenders, predominantly due to 'an underlying presumption that child pornography offenders are really undetected child molesters'.

Patrick and Marsh (2011:105) noted that offenders who were strangers to their victims were more likely to receive longer sentences – despite them being rarer. Williams and Hudson (2013:232) described this in their study on perceptions of grooming as 'one of the most significant distortions expressed by the public', because in reality 'research shows that sexual abuse is more likely to occur within the home and by someone who is known to the victim'. Their conclusion has been supported by other research and official crime statistics, suggesting that around 90% of child sexual abuse victims reported knowing the perpetrator (Radford et al., 2011; Richards, 2011; NSPCC, 2019).

Patrick and Marsh (2011:96) also contended that 'if characteristics of the offender and victim determine the outcome of those convicted, then justice is not blind'. However, their study found that 'while characteristics of the offender, victim, and offense all seem to affect sentencing outcomes to some degree, the characteristics of the offense seem to play the largest part'. They observed that the gender of the victim did indeed affect the sentencing outcome, but purportedly

neither offender nor victim ethnicity influenced sentencing. Deering and Mellor (2009:394) also observed discrepancies based upon gender, this time with the perpetrators, when they compared the cases of seven female and seven male child sexual abusers in Australia and found that 'in general the women were more likely than the men to receive less jail time and lower non-parole periods'. The authors suggest that female child sex offenders are 'perceived as psychologically and/or cognitively impaired' and 'it is assumed that they are not responsible or at least are less responsible for their actions' (2009:395-7) than male child sex offenders who are 'presumed to offend as a result of rational decision-making and are therefore considered as morally culpable' for their crimes (2009:397).

Contrastingly, Hartley et al. (2021) came to different conclusions on ethnicity than Patrick and Marsh (2011), who both analysed American cases, during their statistical analysis of c. 20,000 defendants (which included over 14,000 CSAM-offender cases). They found that Black and Hispanic offenders received harsher and longer sentences over time compared with White offenders (2020:22). This study, almost a decade after Patrick and Marsh (2011) revealed clear biases against certain ethnicities in America when sentencing child sex offenders. Illustratively, Cowburn et al (2008:19) noted that 'the proportional over representation of BME [Black Minority Ethnic] men in the male sex offender population of the prisons of England and Wales has been noted for at least ten years', so it is likely that Hartley et al.'s (2021) observations in America are also present within the UK and elsewhere.

2.3. Legislation in the UK and Abroad

Having established that CSAE is a global issue, it is important to look at how different countries have investigated and legislated against this problem as well as the varying punishments for these crimes. Patrick and Marsh (2011:95), for example, observed that the US focused more on punitive action with child sex offenders, 'resulting in large numbers of offenders being incarcerated for long periods and virtually all being labelled for life through offender registration programs'. In terms of CSAM, the

ICMEC noted in 2006 that 'in 138 countries, the possession of child pornography is not a crime' and in 122 countries 'there is no law which specifically addresses the distribution of child pornography via computer and the Internet' (ICMEC, 2006). This is a concerning result, especially as the study was conducted in the mid-2000s when internet use had not yet reached the lofty heights of today. However, it does appear that CSAM laws are changing with the times.

Legislation in the US, which previously criminalised 'the production and distribution of depictions of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct', has been updated as technology progresses to include criminalising doctored images of children and virtual CSAM (Hamilton, 2011:551). In America the production of CSAM carries a minimum and maximum sentence of fifteen to thirty years (Grocki, 2015); distribution and receipt offences carry five to twenty years; and possession has no minimum sentence but can carry up to ten years (Hamilton, 2011:552). Canada focuses more on rehabilitation and non-punitive measures than elsewhere in the world (Jung and Stein, 2012), whilst some other countries use harsher measures. Forced chemical castration is a legalised form of punishment for convicted child sexual abusers in Indonesia, Poland, Moldova, Russia, and South Korea (BBC, 2016); as well as an optional sentence mitigator/parole condition in many more places, including the UK and several states in America (Blinder, 2019). Despite many countries taking severe measures to deter recidivism amongst child sex offenders, the problem is still widespread. Staksrud (2013:152) claims, for example, that Norwegian grooming legislation is completely 'redundant, both legally and practically' due to lawmakers' misconceptions about the circumstances of grooming – suggesting that a lack of understanding of these offenders and their behaviours is leading to the insufficient legal response.

A noteworthy global issue for the protection of children is 'sex-tourism' (Home Office, 2004:9). *The Guardian* reported that 'tens of thousands of British citizens who pose a sexual threat to children online are increasingly seeking out victims in poor and war-torn countries' (Kelly, 2018). The article cited Kenya and the Philippines as countries known to have high instances of child sexual

abuse being live-streamed or recorded there to be viewed/directed by paying offenders in other countries. The Home Office (2003:9) in the SOA 2003 outlined a foreign travel order to prevent convicted sex offenders from travelling abroad 'where there is a risk of serious sexual harm to children overseas'. The variable laws across the world can cause discrepancies as well as loopholes in legislation. Some countries in Europe have laws where their citizens can be prosecuted in their home country for committing a sexual offence anywhere else in the world even if it is legal in the country where the offence was committed, but this is not the case everywhere.

The National Crime Agency (2023) estimates that there are 'between 680,000 and 830,000 UK based adult offenders who pose varying degrees of risk to children, equivalent to 1.3% to 1.6% of the UK adult population'. The UK will be the focus in this study as the data was collected by UK law enforcement, with the offenders that were the source of the data collection claiming they were from here (though they interact internationally online). A new UK [Online Safety Act](#) was introduced in 2023 which strives to increase the pressure on tech companies to properly regulate their platforms by detecting and removing illegal content (like CSAM), enforcing age-limit verification on social media users, and preventing children from accessing harmful/inappropriate content (like pornography). It also introduced new criminal offences to address the rising problems of revenge-porn and 'cyberflashing' with unsolicited sexual images (NSPCC, 2023).

There are aspects within UK legislation which make it difficult for law enforcement to apprehend and convict CSA offenders. Police officers going undercover to engage with offenders online have strict rules of conduct they must follow to gather legitimate evidence and not incite the commission of a crime that would harm a legal case against the target offender/s. For example, if an UO assumes the identity of a child and speaks to a potential sex offender, they cannot suggest a meeting, 'offer sex to the offender', or share CSAM (Martellozzo, 2015:38). This could potentially mark them out as inauthentic or lose them the offender's interest before sufficient evidence is gathered. *Europol* (2021:39) recommended in a recent report that it was important to 'remove

certain legal obstacles for investigators' conducting undercover infiltration activities because 'legislative limitations' made it more difficult for UOs to 'enter closed groups with strong access controls' such as trading CSAM. However, Martellozzo (2015:46) suggested that a 'crucial question' remains unanswered: 'are undercover police investigators tactics targeting individuals that pose real risks to children or are they targeting the least dangerous?' because they may be detecting only the offenders least skilled at their predation. The next section explores the different types of offenders and research aimed at discerning their characteristics.

3. Offender Characteristics and Typologies

Child sex offender research has explored the diversity of child sex offenders and their behaviours, which will be examined in this chapter. Studies which primarily focus or make judgements on offender characteristics are discussed (Section 3.1), followed by an exploration of offender typologies through research that primarily analysed offender types (3.2). However, many studies discuss both characteristics and typologies. Due to this overlap, at times offender types will be mentioned in relation to offender characteristics and vice versa, but this is only included when the primary focus is on the aspect discussed in that section. Section 3.3 delves into the existing linguistic studies on offender behaviours and language profiles, such as how OG has been approached in this discipline. Prior to these discussions, it is important in this review to contrast the public beliefs and misconceptions about child sex offender characteristics with the actual research findings to highlight the disparity present and why further research is needed.

3.1. Offender Characteristics

3.1.1. Public Beliefs About Child Sex Offenders

It has been suggested that 'the public as a whole possesses a skewed and highly negative perception of paedophiles', which is a reality that many paedophiles find 'unbearable' (Verrijdt, 2019:125).

There is a consensus in existing literature that public perceptions of child sex offenders/paedophiles

are 'inaccurate, stereotyped and skewed', as well as aligning with the viewpoint depicted in media (Williams and Hudson, 2013:220). Some suggest a causal nature to this, with research highlighting the 'distortive effect' (Williams and Hudson, 2013:221) of the tabloid media on public perceptions of sexual crimes (Kitzinger, 2004; Jewkes, 2010; Thakker, 2012). Hartley et al. (2021:912) observed that negative media characterisation of paedophiles and new legislations for general sex offences in the US have 'proliferated' in the past two decades – and public attitudes followed suit.

An example of this is the aforementioned discrepancy between the real prevalence of familial sexual grooming in comparison with the public's underestimation of it. Williams and Hudson (2013:231) suggested that the 'disproportionately high levels of media reporting' on OG cases and *stranger danger* narratives likely influenced this perception. Additionally, there is strong public support for full information disclosure about registered sex offenders which primarily relates to the threat posed by strangers, further indicating that 'the public are overly concerned about 'stranger danger'' (2013:220). This distortion 'supports the argument that [the] public should be made more aware of the distinctions between types of sexual grooming behaviours, settings and offenders' so that they can be vigilant to the real risk factors (2013:232). However, participants in Williams and Hudson's (2013) study who personally knew a victim of grooming perceived the prevalence of familial sexual grooming more accurately (as more commonly occurring) than those who did not.

Nielsen et al. (2022) argued that the stigma against paedophiles creates the stereotypical paedophile character that society assumes is representative. They suggested that recognising nuance in the characterisation of paedophiles 'can lessen recognition barriers that protect abusers who do not fit the paedophile stereotype from detection, e.g. women' (2020:2). The concern here is that misconceptions about who child sex offenders are can lead to disbelief or lenience on those who do not fit the trope, which is incredibly harmful to both victims and the integrity of the justice system. Broome et al. (2020:12) raise the concern that 'whilst carers and young people might feel empowered to identify and protect themselves from common stereotypes

of child sexual abusers, it is likely they are less vigilant and more vulnerable to abuse when the victim (and possibly the offender) perceives themselves in a reciprocal relationship'. However, the public are not alone in broadly stereotyping or misconceiving child sex offenders. As discussed earlier, the judicial system and legislation have also been criticised for this same issue.

3.1.2. The Reality: Offender Characteristics

Studies have examined the links between child sex offenders and characteristics like intelligence levels, age, employment status, gender, or ethnicity. Hamilton (2011:583) suggested that intelligence varies within offenders as CSAM-offenders generally do not contact offend because they 'tend to be better educated, of higher intelligence, and more likely to be gainfully employed than other types of offenders' (which are factors that generally reduce the likelihood of an individual committing violent crimes). Babchishin et al. (2011:105) conducted a meta-analysis of on and offline child sex offender characteristics, observing that 'youth and unemployment are risk factors for online sexual offending'. However, their analysis indicated that, though there were few differences between on and offline offenders, online offenders were actually more likely to be unemployed than the general public but did not seem to differ in terms of education level (Babchishin et al., 2011). Research suggests that online offenders are more likely than offline offenders to be in a relationship, to have fewer offence-supportive attitudes, less identification with children emotionally, and more victim empathy (Elliott et al., 2009; Babchishin et al., 2011; Kloess et al., 2014). Offence-supportive attitudes can enable an escalation of offending behaviour via reducing psychological barriers to offending, which may explain why these are more characteristic of offline offenders (Maruna and Mann, 2006).

Gender is an emerging factor of consideration in this field as female sex offenders have long been overlooked or ignored from existing research due, perhaps only partly, to their lower prevalence. Lambert and O'Halloran (2008:286) affirmed that 'it is generally accepted that the large majority of sexual offences committed against children are perpetrated by men' and Elliott and

Ashfield (2011:93) reiterated that unlike male offenders, 'female internet offenders appear to be rare in the criminal justice system'. Kramer and Bowman (2011:255) ruminated that 'the possibility of a female paedophile as a subtype of offender whose desire is exclusively channelled towards children is currently barely thinkable' to most. However, the growing evidence that the actual number of female paedophiles has been underestimated thus far (Lambert and O'Halloran, 2008) necessitates an increase in their acknowledgement by media, law enforcement, and researchers.

In terms of perceptions of female offenders, Kramer and Bowman (2011) detailed how female paedophiles were rarely ever constructed as feminine and generally presented as masculine within media and literature. Despite this, the authors discussed three typical typologies of the female paedophile which differentiated them from male perpetrators via decidedly feminine tropes. Archetypally, the female paedophile was seen as either the lover/teacher, the 'predisposed type' (one who is predisposed to offend due to influencing factors in their lives like instability or loneliness), or the male-coerced type who has been influenced or forced by a man to commit the offence (Kramer and Bowman, 2011:247). These narratives all remove the agency and culpability of the offender as well as reframing the relationship between the abuser and victim. Deering and Mellor (2009) analysed the disparity between sentencing comments made by judges ruling on male and female offenders in child sexual offence cases in Australia. They noted that 'the sexual offences committed by the female offenders were not characterized as predatory in nature, nor premeditated, but to have occurred as a result of need (i.e., need to feel loved or wanted)', while the male child sex offenders 'were regarded most often as having offended due to sexual desire and as a result were perceived as offending for self-indulgent reasons' (2009:410). Lambert and O'Halloran (2008:293) observed this viewpoint being reflected in posts from a female paedophilia website wherein some of the posters differentiated themselves from male paedophiles, 'presenting men as more abusive and coercive' than themselves.

In terms of other demographic characteristics, offender ages can vary greatly. For example, Black et al. (2015) conducted a study on 44 offenders whose ages ranged from 25-54 and, in a study by Winters et al. (2017), all 100 offenders studied were male with the average offender age at 35.33 years, ranging from 19-64. Studies in this research field typically looked at offenders who were representative demographics of child sex offenders in majority-white, Western countries – which are disproportionately focused on in this research area. This likely skews the findings of Babchishin et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis, which claimed that research has shown that CSAM and online offenders tended to be Caucasian. However, the suggestion that online offenders are 'disproportionately' Caucasian men has implications for law enforcement practices and is notable when considering that most victims depicted in CSAM are Caucasian (Babchishin et al., 2011:110).

Research into the characteristics, behaviour, and psychology of criminals has sometimes been called criminal profiling – a practice that was somewhat popularised by the FBI's Behavioural Science Unit in the 1970s (FBI, 2013). In terms of sex offender criminal profiling, Canter and Heritage (1990:203) claimed that 'criminality is indeed antisocial in the strong sense that it relates to an unpreparedness, or inability, to relate to other people' – an inability to empathise. Research has investigated the role of empathy in sex offending (e.g. Fischer et al., 1999; Bruke, 2001:227). For example, *victim empathy* was a concept discussed by Varker and Devilly (2007:254) who explained that sex offender empathy deficits usually fall into three types: lacking in 'general empathy', 'victim empathy' (empathy for certain classes of potential victims like women or children), and 'victim-specific empathy' (empathy for the offender's own victim/s). Less empathy, alongside certain demographic factors, may be characteristic of child sex offenders. However, many of the studies mentioned thus far differentiated between different types of offenders (e.g. on/offline and CSAM/contact) who may possess different characteristics. The next section will explore these proposed typologies.

3.2. Offender Typologies

Verrijdt (2019:16) argues that it is 'essential to try and establish whether different kinds of offenders do exist' so that researchers can investigate whether there are 'diagnostically valuable typologies that can be observed within the paedophile-population'. The author criticised existing work into child sex offender typologies and outlined how, thus far, 'divisions between offenders seem to be made based on 4 processes: clinical descriptions, demographic clusters, psychometric profiles, and finally theory-driven groups' (2019:13). In terms of online offenders, categorisations have separated out offenders by motive: those who access CSAM out of non-paedophilic reasons; offenders who access CSAM to 'satisfy fantasies' but do not contact-offend; those who create and distribute CSAM for financial gain; offenders who use the internet to facilitate contact offences via grooming; and offenders who groom children online without ever moving this abuse offline (Babchishin, 2011:93). Given this variety of online goals and practices, 'it is possible that online offenders, or subgroups of online offenders, are truly a distinct type of sexual offender' (2011:93).

When looking at studies into offender typologies, it is first important to state that almost all have used detected offenders for their datasets. There are some notable exceptions to this (see Neutze et al., 2012; Insoll et al., 2021; 2022; 2023). Neutze et al. (2012:168) expressed the concern that 'at present it is not known if undetected offenders differ in a systematic way from detected offenders'. They analysed self-report data from CSAM-users who had responded to a media campaign in Germany offering treatment to undetected offenders who were concerned about their sexual attraction to children. The results indicated that 'overall, there were more similarities between detected and undetected offenders than differences' (2012:173). This study only claimed to analyse CSAM-offenders, which means that the results should not be extrapolated to offenders committing other types of crimes. *Protect Children* also gather survey data from undetected offenders seeking out CSAM on the dark-web, some of which admitted to approaching children on and offline (Insoll et al., 2021; 2022; 2024).

The most commonly discussed typology distinctions within child sexual offender research will now be explored, beginning with online, offline, and mixed-method offender types before moving on to fantasy-driven and contact-driven. Kloess et al. (2014:136) have emphasised the importance of future studies viewing internet offending as a 'dynamic process' – stressing the differentiation between online-only, mixed-method, and 'internet-initiated contact offenses', rather than grouping them all together. Online offenders have been found to be characterised by 'clinical symptoms relating to intimacy and social skills deficits, deviant sexual interest, emotional dysregulation and offense-supportive cognitions' (Elliott and Beech, 2009:191). Many of these traits would be worsened by continued time spent online, as Elliott and Ashfield (2011:94) observed in their study profiling the modus operandi of female paedophiles: increased online activity (in chatrooms, forums, websites etc.) could over time 'begin to replace face-to-face contact, resulting in increased social isolation'.

Offline offenders tend to have 'greater emotional identification with children and more cognitive distortions' (Babchishin et al., 2011:105). This conclusion aligns with a finding by Elliott et al. (2009:87) that offline contact offenders 'have greater difficulty identifying the harmful impact of sexual contact on a child and that they hold maladaptive beliefs relating to the sexual sophistication of children that diminish their ability to display empathy'. The researchers view this finding as a positive because the lower frequency of pro-offending attitudes displayed by online offenders 'suggests that they may be unlikely to represent persistent offenders or potentially progress to commit future contact sexual offenses' (2009:87). However, elsewhere some of the same researchers warned that, though online CSAM-offenders 'appear more likely to employ offence-level distortions than sexual abuse-level distortions', there is the possibility that 'repeated engagement with child pornography [CSAM] may lead to the development of sexual abuse-level cognitive distortions' (Elliott and Beech, 2009:184).

Craven et al. (2006:291) insist that research into sexual offending against children 'needs to consider the whole journey' of the offender, including what may have led to their offending and what advances it. A case study by Kloess et al. (2019b:867) that used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis on interviews with two convicted online groomers revealed three dominant themes in their offender narratives: '(a) fulfilling an unmet need, (b) spiralling cycle of [criminal internet] use, and (c) confrontation with reality'. The offenders presented their internet use as a failed coping strategy to deal with their real-life stresses, and the behaviour appeared to be compulsive as their internet use 'spiralled out of control' (2019b:867). However, the typologies of these offenders should not be extrapolated to apply to other offenders as this study only contained two OG-offenders. Naidoo and Hout (2021) conducted a qualitative analysis of interviews with 12 male child sex offenders in South Africa. They claimed that sexual abuse in childhood was a prominent influencing factor in the self-reported reasons for offenders committing abuse in adulthood. Their participants also referenced viewing CSAM as an addictive cycle, desensitising, and a relief/escape from their real-world stresses and trauma.

As well as online and offline offenders, there are those who fall into both categories – referred to here as mixed-method. It is sometimes difficult it is to distinguish between online-only and mixed-method offenders. Broome et al. (2018:443) highlight that some 'contact-driven individuals engage victims in online sexual activities, and fantasy-driven behaviour is often coupled with talk of offline meetings'. To tackle this nuance in classifying offenders as on/offline-only (which becomes problematic with mixed-method offenders), there has been a push within the existing research to analyse offenders in terms of them being *contact-driven* or *fantasy-driven*. The two subgroups can be explained as 'a contact-driven group motivated to engage in offline sexual behaviour with an adolescent and a fantasy-driven group motivated to engage an adolescent in online cybersex without an express intent to meet offline' (Briggs et al. 2011:72). This addresses the terminology issue of offline contact offenders also making use of online means to facilitate their contact abuse.

Broome et al. (2018:443) criticised the move to adopt these typologies because they suggest that the distinction 'fails to consider those individuals who engage explicitly in both online and offline abuse (mixed offenders)', but contact-driven internet offenders would encompass mixed-method offenders. Sheldon and Howitt (2008) used an offender questionnaire to assess the role of fantasy in child sex offending. They found, in agreement with the conclusions of Elliot and Beech (2009), that masturbation to a fantasy of a child by these offenders can 'reinforce the fantasy behaviour since the consequence of the fantasy is no longer a painful guilt' (2008:140). Their results indicated that the fantasies of contact-driven offenders often involved the response of another person, and this suggests that contact offenders may be motivated to offend in real life by the need for this response or at least that it is more important to the contact offender than fantasy offenders.

In terms of the proposed purposes of fantasy within offending, Howitt (2004) cited fantasy as a blueprint for offending; as a rehearsal for offending; to generate sexual arousal possibly in preparation for an offence; and as a reminder of offending acts in order to masturbate (thus making attaining fantasy material the purpose of offending). They suggested an offender's actual behaviours may be wholly separate from their fantasies. This is not always the case, as demonstrated in Woodworth et al.'s (2013) study on sex offenders with a high likelihood of re-offending which found notable links between fantasy and offending behaviours. They assert 'many clinicians now accept the view that there is a process in which obsessive fantasies may escalate in frequency and intensity driving the offender to commit violent and often sexual offences' (2013:153).

Merdian et al. (2018:238), aligning with Elliott et al.'s (2009) conclusions, observed that mixed offenders and contact offenders 'reported significantly higher cognitions relating to (a) justifications of their sexual behaviours, (b) endorsement of children as sexual agents, and (c) sexual entitlement'. The authors concluded that their findings supported the hypothesis that fantasy-driven offenders have a psychological profile distinct to contact offenders. Rimer (2019:169) observed that

their offender study participants generally ‘constructed children online and offline in different ways’: with offline children ‘said to be learning, in need of protection, irrational, inexperienced, asexual, and innocent’, while the children online in CSAM were constructed as ‘less or not “real,” to be sexualized, and ultimately as fundamentally different to those offline’ (171) through detachment and othering (see Lorenzo-Dus, 2023 for a review of othering in ideological grooming online). Elliot and Beech (2009:184) claimed that one reason why fantasy-only offenders may have more distortions about the sexual sophistication and willingness of children is that ‘contact offenders have been exposed to the reality that children are not actually sexual beings and consequently may be less likely to endorse’ these distortions. It is possible that the composition of CSAM may contribute to this: e.g. offenders may cite the ‘smiling faces of the children in the picture’ as ‘proof of their enjoyment’ (Taylor et al., 2001:99; see also Elliott and Beech, 2009).

Furthermore, Merdian et al. (2018:245) claimed that fantasy-driven offenders were more likely than contact-driven offenders to ‘use and report arousal to deviant sexually explicit material’. Following evidence from their data, the authors proposed that there was a further subgroup within fantasy-driven offenders that could be ‘differentiated through the possession of more extreme material (e.g., lower victim age, higher level of sexual explicitness) and higher social involvement’ (2018:247) with other offenders. Verrijdt (2019:ii) observed a similar division within two paedophile discussion forums that contained very different CSAM content.

The internet and the growing online communities of child sex offenders have allowed for a greater transmission between the previously separated types as, for example, contact offenders can distribute self-produced CSAM via the internet to fantasy offenders with ease (McManus et al., 2016). However, there have been criticisms of the fantasy/contact offender classification when applied to some offenders (see Broome et al., 2018). Chiang (2018) argues that this classification is problematic when applied to OG because it diminishes the abuse. She points out that, though offenders may fantasise about child sexual abuse alone or with other offenders, when

the fantasies are discussed/created with victims during OG 'the abuse is not just imagined or 'acted out', but actually inflicted' (2012:28). This is reflected in the 'sexual gratification' category from Lorenzo-Dus et al.'s (2016) OG discourse model, which emphasised that the offender obtains sexual pleasure by interacting with a minor – thus, abuse is taking place. In the present study, those who self-report doing CSA offline may sometimes be called contact offenders, or offenders doing contact abuse, but this title does not preclude them from being CSAM-users or engaging in sexual fantasy as these behaviours are not mutually exclusive. The present study does not seek to classify the offenders in these communities into the categories suggested by the research discussed in this section, but instead takes into consideration the behaviours and characteristics described when evaluating their activities.

3.3. Linguistic Research into Offender Behaviours

3.3.1. Linguistic Profiling

In support of the recent linguistic interest in OCSAE, though their call took a long time to be answered, Feelgood and Hoyer (2008:41) suggested the 'main perspective that could improve the methodological quality of sexual offender research must [...] be interdisciplinary'. Chiang (2018:51) observed that already 'linguistic research has contributed important insights about the communicative processes involved in OCSA[E] interactions including aiding the identification of online offenders' – but the research is often limited by using conversations from undercover law enforcement officers speaking to offenders rather than naturally occurring data. Although linguistic research into the field is increasing, 'thus far comparatively little research comes from this domain and that which does focuses almost exclusively' (Chiang, 2018:24) on OG, neglecting other aspects of CSA. Chiang (2018:24) expressed surprise at this 'dearth' of linguistic research because OCSAE interactions are predominantly textual, such as social media chatlogs or forum posts, and are therefore highly suited to linguistic analysis. Ioannou et al. (2018) asserted that it would be difficult to analyse offline grooming interactions from a linguistic perspective due to issues with sourcing

data – which may be why linguistic studies focus on OG. However, there have been some linguistic studies into offender typologies (rather than just online groomers) and the linguistic profiles of offenders or victims, which this section discusses.

Chiu et al. (2018) delved into offender typologies using linguistic methods. They compared contact and fantasy-driven offenders from the perspective of their goal-motivations via a statistical discourse analysis methodology. Their results indicated that contact offenders were ‘more likely than FCSOs [fantasy child sex offenders] to write online messages with specific types of words (first-person pronouns, negative emotions, and positive emotions)’ (2018:135) and these messages were more likely to be immediately followed by a reciprocation of that type. Parapar et al. (2014) found that these same types of words were more common in predators online than with non-offender internet users. Chiu et al. (2018) suggested that this was because fantasy-driven paedophiles are less concerned with trust building between themselves and the victim than the contact-driven offenders who rely on this skill to successfully groom children for offline abuse.

Grant and MacLeod (2016) tested the success of undercover law enforcement officers online assuming the identities of child victims in OG interactions via a controlled experiment. Their research investigated the usefulness of linguistic training in identity assumption as well as points of failure by UOs and how much preparation time they needed. The authors argued that their study provided justifications for using experimental data (alongside using naturally occurring data) and found that high-level linguistic knowledge was required to effectively assume target identities without detection, thus advocating for the linguistic training of UOs.

There has been notable linguistic research into the processes of OG and offender language profiles within them. Parapar et al. (2014:236) noticed features relating to stages of OG, finding that some parts of the offender’s linguistic profiles like negative emotion words or motion words are ‘known to be indicative of deceptive language’. Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2016) emphasised the central role that developing a deceptive, emotional bond had in offenders achieving sexual

gratification. Broome et al. (2020) reiterated this in their study which examined the perspectives of CSAE specialists on the deceptive language. The next section will discuss the behaviours and prevalence of grooming, followed by an exploration of the linguistic research into it.

3.3.2. Online Grooming

Craven et al. (2006) suggest there are three subtypes of grooming which collectively lead to the abusing of a child. The first of these is self-grooming, wherein the offenders justify or deny their behaviour, thus manifesting cognitive distortions that enable further offending practices. Secondly, grooming the environment involves the offenders creating an environment that allows them to gain access to their victim(s) with a lowered level of risk (perhaps by assuming a position of trust or building relationships with the victim's significant others). The final type is the grooming of the child: involving physical grooming, the gradual sexualisation of the offender and victim's relationship (Berliner and Conte, 1990), and psychological grooming, which is used 'to achieve this increased sexualization' (Craven et al., 2006:296).

Educational and preventative measures are sorely needed to protect vulnerable children from predation because the harmful effects of these adult-child interactions have been proven and measured. One study of survey responses from c. 3,000 Spanish adolescents revealed that 'sexual solicitations and interactions of minors with adults increase the likelihood of negative consequences for the victims, such as depressive symptoms or posttraumatic stress disorder' (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2018:11). The authors of this research argued that a priority in protecting children from OCSAE should be to warn them about the persuasive techniques used by offenders as this could 'reduce the effectiveness of the use of deception and bribery' (2018:17).

Certain factors have been shown to make children more at risk of grooming online, such as the child having experienced other forms of victimisation at home (Shannon, 2008) and children including identifiable personal information in their online profiles (Malesky, 2007), while parental supervision of a child's online activities has been shown to reduce the likelihood of them being

successfully groomed (Malesky, 2007). A study of 31 convicted child sex offenders found that ‘over 80% of participants frequented chat rooms geared toward minors for the purpose of meeting children/adolescents’, and a child’s willingness to ‘make sexual comments or discuss sexually related issues or topics’ was the main characteristic sought by the offenders (Malesky, 2007:28).

Much academic research into OG, particularly from a linguistic perspective, makes use of decoy-victim data, similar to Grant and MacLeod’s (2020) research with undercover law enforcement acting as decoy-offenders in offender-to-offender interactions. In the grooming context, decoy-victims (who may be law enforcement or other adults) interact with real offenders attempting to groom them. Gupta et al. (2012:3) asserted that the ‘lack of actual and real-world’ child-sex offender data for research is one of the ‘major bottlenecks [...] in studying the pedophile problem in greater detail’. Researchers have made use of decoy-data as a substitute because locating and accessing genuine police data is fraught with restrictions, ethical concerns, and privacy laws. One source that has been used extensively as a replacement for authentic OG data, is the website [Perverted Justice](#) (henceforth, *PJ*). The site contains hundreds of online transcripts from real offenders talking to adult volunteers pretending to be children.

Gupta et al. (2012) used chat transcripts of 502 conversations from *PJ* as their dataset. However, the authors suggested that their data set was ‘biased’ (2012:7) due to the data source. Chiang (2018:19) argued ‘it is problematic that the majority of our understanding of adult-child online abuse processes is based on findings from adult-adult conversations’. Due to the proposed limitations and issues with *PJ* data, Schneevogt et al. (2018) conducted a study to explore the notion that *PJ* conversations may be missing some aspects of authentic data – such as the more extreme processes of OG. Overall, they supported the conclusion that *PJ* data sets are different from authentic OG data. On the other hand, Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2016:43) described *PJ* as a ‘valuable resource’ for research in this field due to the ‘difficulty of accessing datasets of actual children interacting with groomers’. The result of this data quandary is that calls for studies in this field using

authentic offender data are always increasing (e.g. Drouin et al., 2017; Lorenzo-Dus and Izura, 2017; Winters et al., 2017; Broome et al., 2018; Chiang and Grant, 2019) and some studies which use *PJ* suggest the next step would be to test their conclusions on authentic paedophile interactions (e.g. Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016; Drouin et al., 2017).

Online grooming has been approached by linguists using different methods to examine offender and victim language. For example, move-analysis was employed by Chiang and Grant (2019) to investigate the construction of multiple online identities by a single offender while he was grooming his victims online. Move-analysis is based in genre-analysis and examines the notion of a 'move', a 'discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function' (Swales, 2004:228). Chiang and Grant (2019:679) proposed that move-analysis was 'not only a useful analytical tool for demonstrating communicative goals in interaction but also for the investigation of identity performance' and described it as a 'valuable approach' (696) to child-sexual abuse conversations.

Computer-based approaches have been applied in linguistic OG studies: namely Computer Mediated/Assisted Discourse Analysis/Studies (CMDA/CADS), machine learning, and LIWC⁵. Originally coined by Partington (2004:17) as 'CADS', this method brings together corpus linguistics with discourse studies. The 'underlying premise' of CADS is that 'software-enabled, quantitative and manual, qualitative analyses of corpora must be synergised' (Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2020:19). Baker et al. (2008:296) argued for this synergy, advocating for the use of corpus linguistics techniques in critical discourse analysis to, for example, identify topics or strategies and direct researchers to 'potential sites of interest'. A similar approach to their suggestion was taken in the present thesis where a manual computer-assisted quantitative analysis was deployed to guide the subsequent qualitative discourse analysis (see Chapter 3 Sections 3 and 4 for the full methodology).

⁵ Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is a language analysis software which primarily categorises text by determining what percentage of words fall into certain linguistic, topical, or psychological categories (see <https://www.liwc.app/>).

Some studies made use of machine learning, *Python* scripts, and customised algorithms when undertaking linguistic and non-linguistic OG research (e.g. Fu et al., 2007; Parapar et al., 2014; Schneevogt et al., 2018; Lorenzo-Dus and Kinzel, 2019). In spite of this, very few linguistic-focused studies have been conducted using quantitative computational methods outside of corpus studies in this field. One methodology developed by Lorenzo-us et al. (2016) explicitly for child-sex offender language was the Online Grooming Discourse Model (OGDM). Lorenzo-Dus et al.'s (2016:43) study suggested that 'OG comprises three phases: access, approach and entrapment'. However, there are no linguistic (or otherwise) approaches which have been developed specifically for dealing with online paedophile communities, where the interactions are offender-to-offender rather than victim-offender.

4. Offender Communities Online

As introduced in Chapter 1, Section 3, CSAM-offenders and contact offenders congregate in online communities where they can trade illegal material, exchange knowledge or skills, support one another, and discuss the abuse of children. Owens et al. (2023:2) raised the concern that, although 'previous articles have examined the prevalence and volume of CSE material [CSAM] within online communities', there have been far fewer investigations into behaviours of these offenders within their online networks. This section aims to delve into what prior research has forayed into analysing offender communities. Section 4.1 outlines where these communities operate online and the different forms they take, 4.2 discusses the potential classifications for online communities (addressing RQ1) and how these offender communities are structured. Section 4.3 covers identity construction in online groups and how this has been approached in existing research, while 4.4 discusses studies into the attitudes of paedophiles towards themselves and their behaviours. Finally, 4.5 broaches the topic of the datasets and methods used in existing studies on paedophile communities.

4.1. The Platforms of Online Paedophilia

Paedophiles interacting online form communities on different platforms in various spaces on the internet. The creation of these groups can be a complex process due to the stigma surrounding them and the illegal activity taking place. For example, they may be sprawling networks, close-knit groups, forums, or private chats. Westlake and Bouchard (2016) investigated online CSA platforms (five blogs and five websites) to explore the hyperlinking networks that start from them which led to further websites with similar content – in total analysing ten networks made up of 4.8 million unique webpages. They explained that ‘website communities are formed through hyperlinks connecting websites directly to one another’ and they ‘provide website visitors access to like-minded others and targeted content’ (2016:24).

In terms of what the purpose is of these online groups, McManus et al. (2016:167) stressed that online paedophile communities can present ‘opportunities to share experiences, fantasies, and strategy’ that lead participants to disengage from real-world connections, as well as increasing knowledge and interest in contact offending. Van der Bruggen and Blokland (2022:867) asserted that ‘first and foremost, these fora are criminal marketplaces: locations where illegal goods and services can be obtained’, but they also allow for extensive communication where crime can be normalised or ‘even promoted’ so that ‘forum members find respect, recognition, and emotional bonding’. Holt et al. (2020:300) found that forum participants were ‘encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings regarding their sexual interests, desires for relationships with minors, and personal experiences to help others realize they are not alone’. These authors analysed the postings of 806 users across four paedophile support forums with the primary focus of identifying the extent that users admitted to contact-offences against minors. The forum sample was identified through a ‘Wikipedia-style website’ (2020:300) that acted as a directory for individuals interested in finding paedophile support-sites. Quayle and Taylor (2002:358), in their analysis of CSAM online, noted that a critical issue is ‘the link between child pornography picture collection, and engagement with chat

and other forms of communication with like-minded individuals’ – suggesting that searching for CSAM online may be a gateway for accessing paedophile communities.

Woodhams et al. (2021) examined online child sex offender community interactions on forums from a psychology perspective and devised themes which captured topics discussed amongst offenders as well as common behaviours. These are discussed further in Chapter 3 Section 3.1, but the main themes they established were demographic information; ‘self-reported motivations’ (2021:5) for using online platforms; security measures; their sexual likes and interests; their behaviours in the community (e.g. modus operandi, sharing information, CSAM trading, and encouraging participation); and discussion topics in the forums like advice on how to approach/abuse children. They noted how there was evidence within the data of ‘suspects making pro-child sexual abuse statements, normalizing and minimizing the harm caused to children as a result of sexual abuse experiences, as well as referring to children as sexual beings’ (2021:9).

Chiang (2020b) also examined offender behaviours in online communities, applying a move-analysis approach to chat transcripts from 25 offenders each speaking to one undercover law enforcement officer pretending to be an offender. She found that ‘a number of the observed moves work explicitly to perform CSA ‘offenderness’ [...] – all of which focus either on previous abuse or on intentions to abuse’ (2020b:1179). The list of moves performed by offenders was as follows: greeting, maintaining conversation, rapport, sign off, identifying interests/experience, eliciting narrative, reporting events, supporting narrative, legitimising child sexual abuse, seeking support, giving support, negotiating media share, requesting media, offering media, and assessing/managing risk. Thus, these studies illustrate the claim that these communities are not ‘limited to the dissemination of material’ but actually produce ‘a forum of exchange for like-minded people where offenders can share experiences, methods to commit abuse, and successful countermeasures to evade or hinder detection’ (*Europol*, 2021:27).

The current online platforms for paedophile communities vary from social media to public forums or dark-web message boards, but communication between offender groups pre-dates the recent expansion of social media usage. Wilson and Cox (1983) for example conducted an offline study on a paedophilia group's newsletter. Martin (2000:66) discussed the emergence of IM, Instant Relay Chat at the time, noting that the conceptualisation of these chat platforms as 'rooms' substantiates a 'feeling of community in that it bestows upon the participants a common territory over which they are sovereign'. Another online means for paedophile group communication, which has likely been supplanted by social media, is the use of emailing (often initiated following contact on websites). In one of the earliest linguistic studies on CSA communities, Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) analysed email communications between paedophiles and described how the most common contribution types in their dataset were about the offender's own personal wants, needs and desires – suggesting they used their connection with other offenders to discuss topics they could not discuss elsewhere without stigma or legal consequences.

As mentioned prior, these networks also exist in parts of the internet less accessible to most and far less detectable to law enforcement: the dark-web. For example, Chiang's (2018) research investigated dark-web fora that focused on computer generated CSAM; CSAM generally; CSAM of babies, young boys, or pre-teens; and one support forum. Further studies have looked into identifying key players in CSAM networks through dark-web forums (Fonhof et al., 2019), as well as analysing individual dark-web paedophile sites like 'Pedophile Support Community' and 'Hurt 2 the Core' (Verrijdt, 2019:56). Bissias et al. (2016) studied five illegal CSAM networks to examine the policing of them and the involvement of contact offenders. The authors estimated that 'about 3 in 10,000 Internet users worldwide' (2016:185) at the time were sharing CSAM in a given month (with rates varying per country); that CSAM involving infants and toddlers was prevalent; and that around 9.5% of the offenders arrested for peer-to-peer CSAM trading on the networks they studied were identified as also being contact-offenders. A study by Owens et al. (2023:6) found that 'it is the more egregious CSE material [CSAM] that is most often viewed, downloaded, and "thanked" in such

communities'. They also observed that 'the Darkweb is an area becoming increasingly more accessible to the general population and to the non-technically savvy offenders' (2023:8), due to readily available information about how to access it and make use of encryption technologies. Van der Bruggen and Blokland (2022:865) advocate for law enforcement to profile dark-web forum members 'based on their communication patterns' in the community dynamic as this could help 'identify those members who are most influential and pose the highest risk'.

However, alongside the presence of these communities on the dark-web, offenders congregate on websites, forums, and social media through the clear-web. Some of these public paedophilia advocacy websites will be discussed further in Section 4.4. Holt et al. (2010:10) investigated several public paedophile forums and found that users often praised the community support aspect, observing that some threads 'simply contained messages about the day to day lives of posters, including birthday and holiday wishes'. Their analysis showed that 'online and general computer security was a priority, users also discussed how to stay safe and undetected offline' (2010:17) as well as giving each other advice on what personal data to keep a secret and how to evade police detection when travelling abroad to commit contact abuse. Holt et al. (2020:309) found that, despite the paedophile support-forums they analysed being populated by members with a shared sexual interest in children, 'only a small proportion of users self-disclosed engaging in physical contact'. The authors proposed that 'among pedophile forum users there exist several groups of individuals that present varying degrees of risk' (2020:309), with mixed-method offenders being the highest risk to children.

O'Halloran and Quayle (2010:73) argued that, though the easy access to a wealth of CSAM is a draw, it is 'the sense of community and belonging that may prove ultimately to be the most attractive aspect of the internet' to paedophiles. They referenced Durkin's (1997) list of the four main paedophile activities online to support this statement: trafficking child abuse images, locating child victims for offline abuse, communication with children, and communication with each

other. O'Halloran and Quayle (2010) revisited the paedophilia website 'Boy-love', previously studied by Durkin and Bryant (1999), and noted an almost tenfold increase in the size and activity of the website since the previous study a decade prior. Furthermore, Lantz (2021) investigated the effects of group versus individual offending and the influence of co-offenders on a crime – concluding that those with co-offenders committed more violent incidents causing more serious injury than individuals. They speculated that an influencing factor may be anonymity, but the question arises about what impact paedophile support-groups have on the severity of subsequent contact offending.

4.2. Structure and Classification

Blommaert (2017:1) stated that 'in the online-offline nexus, we see a tremendous variety of new groups emerge'. Online paedophile communities are a modern-day emerging phenomenon that researchers have only begun to closely examine. Thus, this thesis investigates how they are formed, structured, and participated in by members – in line with the second research aim (RQ2).

Furthermore, it is possible that traditional classifications for types of communities and online groups may be applicable to these communities, and this too will be determined (in answer to RQ1).

Consequently, this section established what these existing classifications of community types are (4.2.1) and how online paedophile groups in prior research have been structured (4.2.2).

4.2.1. Communities of Practice and Affinity Spaces

What type of groups these online offender platforms would be classed as can be considered in terms of two prominent categorisations that exist in (online) community research: Communities of Practice (CoPs) and Affinity Spaces (AS). It is important to determine which classifier best describes these online groups as this could shape the analysis frameworks applied to them and reveals different pathways of members operating on the sites. Gee (2005:225) outlined how in AS 'people relate to each other primarily in terms of common interests, endeavours, goals or practices, not primarily in terms of race, gender, age, disability or social class' as the latter variables are usually backgrounded.

He proposed the use of *spaces*, more specifically 'semiotic social spaces' (2005:216), rather than *groups*, suggesting that those in AS can 'participate peripherally in some respects, centrally in others' (2005:228). Davies (2006:220) created a list of their perceived highlights from Gee's (2005) definition of AS, describing how they include 'a common endeavour'; the spaces have 'content' that is 'organised'; there are 'many ways (portals) of entering the space'; leadership is 'porous'; and there is little division between novices or more experienced users.

Another interpretation of Gee's (2005) notion is that AS 'represent ideal learning environments, in which participants assemble voluntarily to pursue interests and endeavours that are shared across a diverse network of peers' (Bommarito, 2014:406). Much of the research into AS since Gee (2005) has involved educational online collectives as well as gaming forums. Lindgren (2012:167) suggested that AS often emerge 'within various forms of fan cultures, as websites, forums and other platforms featuring information and resources linked to a specific area of interest become interlinked through social patterns of usage and produsage'. One such example is Aljanahi's (2019) research into the online AS of adolescent boys discussing the anime *Dragon Ball Z*. one member joined this group 'to feed his interest' in the anime, 'an interest that was not being satisfied in his other social groups' (2019:43) – which echoes the sentiments expressed by child sexual abuse offenders involved with online offender communities (see Holt et al., 2010; Cranney, 2017; Kloess et al., 2019b).

CoPs, on the other hand, refer to a group of people forming a community around a 'mutual engagement in an endeavour', involving ways of talking, thinking, and values – differing from a traditional community because 'it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992:464). The concept was first coined for anthropology by Lave and Wenger (1991), then expanded in Wenger (1998), and adapted by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) as well as Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) through sociolinguistics and discourse analysis lenses. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999:173) noted that a CoP

bears 'a strong similarity to the existing term "speech community" – a concept that has proved to be a productive and useful tool for research into the orderly heterogeneity of language in its social setting'.

Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999:174) proposed that we learn to perform appropriately in a CoP based on our membership status: 'initially as a "peripheral member," later perhaps as a "core member" (or perhaps not – one may choose to remain a peripheral member)'. Additionally, Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011:25) noted that in a CoP it is 'critical that prospective members signal their associations early, to avoid exclusion' (2011:25). Holmes and Woodhams (2013) conducted research into CoPs with apprentices on a New Zealand building site to examine the process of peripheral to core member. The study found that 'apprentices need to acquire proficiency in appropriate ways of communicating in order to construct a convincing professional identity' (2013:291) – similarly, paedophiles joining a group chat may need to demonstrate their awareness and abilities relating to the distribution of CSAM, detection prevention skills, and knowledge of sexual practices to assimilate successfully with the community.

The question that then arises is whether child-sex offender online groups would be best classed as CoPs or AS. Bommarito (2014) specifies that *CoP* denotes a sense of community belonging in its members, suggesting that *AS* allude more to a shared activity or goal. Thus, *AS* 'downplay membership in the traditional sense' of a CoP, but instead they focus on 'flexible arrangements of participation across multiple spaces' (Sharma and Land, 2019:248). It has been argued that 'older conceptions of what it means to be a member impede a precise understanding of the actual forms of attachment developing between individuals and groups' (Blommaert, 2017:2). Lindgren (2012:155) claimed that, by discussing these platforms/groups as spaces rather than communities, 'one can then go on and ask whether people who interact in a given space form a community or not' as a secondary aspect for consideration. In criticism of CoPs, Gee and Hayes (2012:5) suggest that CoP as a classifier has 'been applied to so many different types of communities [...] that it has lost its

conceptual clarity', and it does not 'bear much resemblance to the geographically distributed, technologically mediated, and fluidly populated social groupings' of today due to being originally developed for offline, in-person groups. Gee (2005:232) concludes that the 'notion of affinity spaces can do lots of the sorts of work we have asked the notion of a "community of practice" to do, but without some of the baggage that "community" carries'.

However, Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999:181) maintained that CoP 'offers a fruitful concept to those interested in exploring the relationship between language and society' which can facilitate an enriched analysis. Grant and Macleod (2020) directly argued in favour of applying the CoP framework to online child-sex offenders – specifically their online community platforms. This had been undertaken before, with Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) applying a CoP framework to email communications between paedophiles. The authors proposed that 'bald-on-record questions about perverse wants', such as sexual preferences, are 'an unmistakable attack on an addressee's face in most (legal) CoP, but these appear to satisfy different functions' (2011:22) in paedophile community interactions. They claimed that it was unexpected for 'the most explicit questions and assertions about illegal activities to occur from the outset in any relationship' (2011:36), but this was the case for members of the paedophile CoP they investigated. A key example is the question 'what r u into?' because the respondent's answer to this face-threatening act 'is critical, not only to how this discourse will continue but also to whether it continues at all' (2011:37). The authors argued that their study provided a 'snapshot' of how quickly CoP members here 'feel free to discuss sensitive information, and how quickly they seek to meet up, despite knowing very little about each other' – this carelessness with their privacy illustrates the 'strength of community membership' they feel (2011:23).

Elsewhere, Chiang (2018:184) determined that the dark-web CSA forums in her study were indeed CoPs because 'each one brings together a group of people who engage in a range of common activities and practices and develop tools and resources in the pursuit of shared interests

and endeavours'. Many of these offender groups online 'explicitly identify as communities' and rules are generally dictated by administrators (Chiang, 2018:182). Furthermore, Gee (2005:225) suggested that AS often don't segregate 'newbies' and 'masters', but that they instead share the space on equal footing which does not seem to be the case with the paedophile groups discussed thus far (see Martelozzo, 2015; Chiang, 2018; Grant and MacLeod, 2020; Nielsen, 2022). Chiang (2024) has continued to investigate online paedophile communities through a CoP lens in a more recent study.

There are lesser-known classifications of online communities which could be applicable to these paedophile groups, such as Safe Spaces. The notion was developed in 'feminist, queer, and civil rights movements' and is 'associated with keeping marginalized groups free from violence and harassment' (The Roestone Collective, 2014:1347) where they congregate online. These spaces often feature moderators (whether automated moderation or designated persons) 'to determine and enforce the baseline rules of discussion' (Gibson, 2019:3). For example, Krikela (2022) analysed disagreements between members of online feminist Safe Spaces from a politeness, identity, and power-dynamics perspective. Contrastingly, this community classification has been loosely proposed for other movements like the involuntarily celibate (henceforth, incel⁶) community (see Pelzer et al., 2021). It has been argued that the discussion forums where incels congregate 'serve as a kind of "safe space"' for them to 'write hateful comments about women' while moderators 'sanction criticism of incels or incel culture' (2021:2) – akin to the production of a Safe Space for the aforementioned marginalised groups. However, this classification has not yet been proposed for online paedophile communities. Safe Spaces will be revisited in relation to the thesis' results in Chapter 8 Section 2.1, although to a lesser degree than the more prominent AS and CoPs classifications.

⁶ An incel is defined as 'a person (usually a man) who regards himself or herself as being involuntarily celibate and typically expresses extreme resentment and hostility toward those who are sexually active' (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

What is plainly missing from this area of research is a linguistic perspective on offender community interaction to establish whether these groups are AS or CoPs, as this has only been briefly broached (by Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon, 2011; Chiang, 2018). It is also necessary to discern whether these existing classifications are lacking when applied to online paedophile communities and could require adaptation or even the development of a completely different classifier. What will be explored in the results-focus chapters (4-7) is how these communities are formed, structured, and participated in by offenders. The next section examines prior research into this.

4.2.2. Hierarchies

Hierarchies in online paedophile communities have not been extensively studied, but some research has looked at the structures of certain forums/sites as well as the different roles or statuses of members within them. In other online groups, e.g. gaming or fan forums, there are often established hierarchies which may be managed by administrators or levels of paid/earned membership. A more similar comparison to paedophiles would be the aforementioned incel groups, where in some forums 'hierarchy is dictated by the number of posts a user has contributed' or by other users 'up-voting' comments from their peers (Bates, 2020:32). Pelzer et al. (2021:20) warned that 'long-term reduction of harm involves more research to assess the extent to which the incel culture is in itself a threat, what attracts individuals to engage in it, and what causes some of these individuals to turn their violent fantasies into action' – arguably, this sentiment also applied to online paedophile communities.

In terms of research specifically on CSA groups, Martellozzo (2015:43) examined a paedophile forum called *Hidden Kingdom* (the actual name was changed by the author) from interviews with law enforcement officers infiltrating online offender communities, describing how the structure of the online community was 'pyramidal, followed a clear hierarchy and was rather complex'. The forum was like an organisation, with a tight-knit and 'more closely controlled' top

level of the pyramid as well as rules for advancement controlled by administrators: e.g. members had to post 50 times a day to rise in status, which could be achieved monetarily but those who paid were less trusted (2015:43). Similarly, Nielsen et al. (2022:609) found ‘a formal structure of power’ within the *Virtuous Paedophile (VP)* forum through their qualitative analysis, which was evident from ‘the hierarchisation of the forum into different roles and responsibilities’ like founders, administrators/moderators, normal users, and unapproved users. The *VP* forum was located in the deep-web, which meant that prospective members had to be vetted by administrators prior to being able to join – thus, hierarchy was regulated entirely by those who had the power to exclude users. Van der Bruggen and Blokland (2022:867) asserted that dark-web CSAM fora ‘are typically structured by allocating members various roles, relating to their tasks, responsibilities, and status within the forum community’. This finding was echoed in a Europol (2021:27) report that described CSAM forums as ‘well-structured’ with users who are ‘hierarchically organised depending on their roles’. Chiang (2024:4) also examined six dark-web CSAM forums and found different rules and regulations for behaviour on each (some of which clashed with each other, revealing the diversity of online community group types).

Chiang (2018:184) found that in the paedophile fora she studied ‘there is at least a core group of individuals in each community who contribute regularly as well as some who seem to occupy something of a high status in comparison to others’. Her finding revealed that some members lurked in the forum without interacting, possibly because of ‘shyness, a desire for anonymity, a need to continue learning about the community, feeling that browsing alone is sufficient and feeling unable to contribute’ (2018:202). However, Chiang (2018:204) suggested that ‘it seems likely that the most experienced or ‘expert’ offenders [indicated by their group status] are those that pose the greatest threat to children’. Within these communities, there is a subgroup of members who would identify as *newbies* (Grant and Macleod, 2020) – those with ‘little or no experience of abusing or interacting in dark web environments’ (Chiang, 2020a). Chiang (2020a) argued that ‘understanding newbies can help determine offenders’ experience levels’ as well as

shining a light on how offending behaviours escalate from the lowest rung on the hierarchy upwards.

Bates (2020:32) observed that the treatment of newcomer members to incel groups online via replies to their postings was 'suggestive of recruitment, aimed at convincing and converting others to the same cause'. This behaviour was found in paedophile groups by Grant and MacLeod (2020). Through a move-analysis of 71 posts on six paedophile forums, Chiang (2020a) identified 12 different moves that characterised newbies' contributions. The most common of these (aside from greetings and sign-offs) were: 'expressing motivations', 'demonstrating alignment', 'expressing appreciation', 'demonstrating newness', 'demonstrating value', 'stating limitations', and 'seeking support' (2020a). In prior research she described how this newbie label 'begins the process of seeking membership by positioning themselves as individuals inexperienced with using fora of these kinds, looking for acceptance and to learn and gain from more experienced members' (Chiang, 2018:199). She emphasised that 'even the self-imposed label "newbie" positions them not as outsiders looking in, but as already part of the community, albeit in a low-status role' (2020a).

Holt et al. (2020:311) also suggested that administrators of public forums 'monitor content to remove any identifying or illegal information from posts due to the fear that the site may be shut down, especially if it involves questionable or overtly illegal content'. Furthermore, Chiang (2018:184) found in the fora she studied that 'users are typically not allowed to sell or trade IIOC [CSAM], are discouraged from posting personally identifying information, and commonly share advice and support' – suggesting that the particular groups analysed in these studies were more focused on support and community than criminal activity or CSAM exchange. Administrators or moderators maintain the focus of the group they operate in. They 'make strategic decisions about the forum's organization and focus' but, while some dark-web admins described getting access to more rare/valuable CSAM through their role, others complained that the 'time consuming' job prevented them from adding to their collections' (Van der Bruggen and Blokland, 2021a:270).

Communities like *Hidden Kingdom*, *VPs*, and those Chiang (2018; 2020b) studied can provide examples of not just the structural hierarchies within them, but also of the offender's views on each other which created a perceived hierarchy between offender types. One significant factor that paedophiles may discuss to differentiate themselves from others in a self-imposed hierarchy is the use of violence and actions that harm children. Grant and Macleod (2020:136) found in their dark-web fora that 'violence against children is clearly defined as different from what is depicted as consensual, and the more violent acts are condemned' because the offenders 'project identities of themselves as moral individuals who have no desire to hurt children'. Offenders 'put a good deal of identity work into ensuring their image as caring and considerate remains intact, which often requires the othering of abusers who do not follow the same code' (2020:137). Grant and MacLeod (2020:136) claimed this 'normalisation of the abusive relationship is very common' and it 'frequently occurs through the othering of 'worse' abusers' who are lower in the offender's perceived hierarchy. Chiang (2018:184) similarly noticed that one forum she studied (which focused on pre-teen CSAM) contained a CSAM type that was explicitly banned from the rest of the fora due to its violent component, 'Hurtcore', which the offenders on other sites purportedly believed to be unacceptable.

Nielsen et al. (2022) cited posts from two users in the *VP* forum who directly mentioned pro-contact offender groups and overtly distance themselves from those types of paedophiles. One user admitted that membership of these other groups had helped them emotionally, but they were strongly against how the members normalised contact offending. Another user praised the *VP* forum and cited issues with the selfishness of the pro-contact communities. They disavowed how members of these other groups advocated that children should be allowed to have sex with them – but the user noted that they had never heard children making the same argument. Others echoed this sentiment, often using derogatory comments and criticism when describing contact offenders, which enabled the *VPs* to 'adopt the same attitude towards pro-contact paedophiles that non-paedophiles adopt towards all paedophiles' (2022:610). *VPs* constructed their identities as more deserving of respect and acceptance than contact-offenders due to their restraint and commitment.

This othering sentiment was also present in the VPs attitudes towards non-paedophiles. To position themselves as higher up a perceived offender hierarchy, 'VPs did not justify their right to practice their sexual attraction, but instead their right to be respected as human beings based on their portrayal of pro-contact paedophiles as immoral and non-paedophiles as ignorant' (Nielsen et al., 2022:611). This self and other identity construction could be approached from a linguistic perspective to understand how offenders position themselves in relation to others. The following section broaches the topic of identity work, identities in an interactional context, and prior linguistic frameworks for examining this.

4.3. Identity and Interaction in Online Groups

The following sub-section (4.3.1) discusses the small number of studies into community identities in online paedophile communities. The findings are pertinent because understanding offender identity construction is central to the aims of this thesis in answering the third and fourth research questions. The next sub-section (4.3.2) delves into how offender identities could be approached from a linguistic perspective, and the few studies which have undertaken this task, as these methods were considered when developing the approach and analysis tools used in the present thesis (which will be outlined in Chapter 3). First, it is pertinent to delineate the epistemological approach to identity that has been adopted in this thesis, which guides both the data analysis and interpretation of results.

This thesis is positioned from a social constructionist perspective, which has been adapted to approach an online environment and used in an online CSA context (e.g. by Grant and MacLeod, 2018; 2020). A constructionist approach to identity considers identity as performative, rather than an inherent trait (which would be an essentialist perspective. Bucholtz and Hall's (2005:607) seminal work on how identity is produced in linguistic interactions posits that 'it is emergent in discourse and does not precede it, we are able to locate identity as an intersubjectively achieved social and cultural phenomenon' rather than a 'primarily internal psychological

phenomenon' (2005:585). They describe how identity is produced through linguistic resources that are 'necessarily broad and flexible, including labels, implicatures, stances, styles, and entire languages and varieties' (2005:607-8). Furthermore, identities can be 'relationally constructed'; 'part intentional, part habitual'; and 'in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures' (2005:585). They propose five principles to encapsulate the different avenues that identity is approached by within scholarship: Emergence, Positionality, Indexicality, Relationality, and Partialness.

While Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) work posed that all identity is constructed and performative, Grant and MacLeod (2018; 2020) added a caveat to this that identity is performative – but individuals only have certain resources available to them at any given time which constrain this identity construction (as well as facilitating it). Grant and McLeod (2020:37) see identity as 'a phenomenon best classified at the level of social behaviour, but it must be kept in mind that the identities projected by individuals are produced with the resources available to them'. The four resources which they claim can be drawn upon are an individual's entire sociolinguistic history; an individual's physical resources; the context of the interaction; and the specific individuals, community, or audience involved in an interaction (2018). These four resources make up their resource-constraint model, which they designed in response to issues they found within purely constructionist and purely essentialist approaches. The authors argue that prior interactional constructionist theories struggle to account for the 'persistence of identity' which requires 'more understanding about which aspects of identity performance remain stable while the resources we draw on are changing in each specific interactional moment' (2018:86). They instead believe that 'this persistence is best explained through the recognition that some resources which are drawn upon for identity performance are stable and subject to only slow change' (2018:93). Elsewhere, for example, Johnstone (1996:11) asserted that identity categories and contexts like ethnicity, gender,

or audience etc. are ‘resources that speakers use to create unique voices’ rather than determinate of how they talk.

4.3.1. Community Identities

Identity performance in offender communities has been examined in terms of taking on roles which may provide an offender with status, responsibility to perform certain tasks, or correspond to their experience-level in the community. Grant and MacLeod (2020:124) discussed the evidence in one dark-web paedophile forum of offenders ‘taking on the role of adviser to the other members of the room on their security’ by using directive speech acts. Speech acts, the acts of *doing things with words* (introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969)), have been analysed in several studies into CSA and offender communities from a linguistic perspective (see Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016; Lorenzo-Dus and Izura, 2017; Chiang, 2018; Grant and MacLeod, 2020). Alongside using directives, the offenders projecting an advisory role that Grant and MacLeod (2020) analysed also introduced topics not discussed by other members, such as law enforcement and technology. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011), while discussing the appearance of compliments and apologies in their corpus, similarly identified an advisory role appearing within interactions containing criticisms: for example, where an offender advises another against contact-offending.

Grant and MacLeod (2020:125) also mentioned another offender identity they observed: that of the ‘disciplinarian’ who enforced the rules of the chat room and removed members who broke those rules (separate from the administrators). As discussed prior, the ‘newbie’ identity role is performed by an ‘individual who appears unfamiliar with the norms of the room and repeatedly violates them’ (Grant and MacLeod, 2020:126). Newbies may, for example, request others share CSAM without having shared any of their own – but it is customary for CSAM to be exchanged reciprocally in these communities. Grant and MacLeod (2020:126) reiterated that this type of behaviour in the groups will ‘invariably attract criticism’ from other members. However,

despite these few exceptions, identities are an understudied aspect of paedophile community research.

4.3.2. Linguistic Approaches

The use of language in the construction and performance of social identities has been approached from many directions by linguists. This section will discuss some of the prominent methods: facework, relational-work, politeness, stance, and style. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Sifianou (2017:248) proposed that face and identity are troublesome to 'tease out at the theoretical level', but even more difficult to separate at the empirical level. They argued for the interconnectivity of face, politeness, and identity construction; suggesting that the overlap between them has come as a consequence of the field of im/politeness becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. Thus, although these approaches will be introduced here separately, they are also often interwoven when it comes to individuals and groups developing and performing identities.

Face is a notion famously developed by Goffman (1955:222), who defined *facework* as 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact'. Goffman (1955:235) insisted that 'when a face has been threatened, face-work must be done' to repair this impoliteness risk. Some alternatives have been suggested to this concept, with Bargiela-Chiappini (2003:1465) proposing 'polite behaviour' to replace facework due to claims that *face* has 'become a term with a great deal of theoretical and cultural baggage'. However, Goffman's notion of face remains widely recognised by politeness scholars. Grainger (2018:35-36) claimed that 'if the concepts of positive and negative face are applied beyond just face-threatening acts, they can be useful'.

Locher and Watts (2005:96) proposed the notion of *relational-work* as a concept for investigating discursive im/politeness: relational-work 'refers to all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice'. They suggested that the term is more

appropriate than Goffman's (1955) *facework* because 'human beings do not restrict themselves to forms of cooperative communication in which face-threatening is mitigated' (2005:28) but employ politeness and cooperation in other instances as well. However, they do clarify that it is 'equivalent to facework' if one accepts that 'facework is always present in any form of socio-communicative verbal interaction' (2008:96). Lorenzo-Dus and Izura (2017:74) argued that relational-work 'encompasses the whole spectrum of discourse behaviour geared towards managing interpersonal relations, which includes polite, impolite and politic (or contextually appropriate) behaviour'. There have also been proposals for merging the approaches (Spencer-Oatey, 2011), which further supports the interconnectivity of these approaches to identity. Spencer-Oatey (2007), building on Brewer and Gardner's (1996) levels of self-representation, suggested that facework can be considered as taking place at three levels: the individual level concerned with self- and other-oriented facework; the relational level focusing on mutuality and separation between dyads; and the group level which deals with membership of groups.

Facework has been investigated in an online paedophile community. In their email dataset, Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011:22) found that content which 'might be thought face-threatening in other contexts, cannot be treated as such here, because these emails are primarily about cultivating social relationships between the group members' and notions of what is taboo differs from other contexts. The researchers observed that 'face-threat is not really a concern as only non-members are likely to be offended by the content of these emails' (2011:31), thus taboo questions can be 'viewed as invitations to the recipient to signal their community membership, which would make them instances of positive, not negative face' (26). This phenomenon could also be understood through the notion of identity construction by an 'in-group ritual', meaning 'the ritual practices formed by smaller social units (relational networks)' (Kádár and Bax, 2013:73). Kadar and Bax (2013), who also looked at email communications, explained that in-group rituals may have different meanings for the in-group and out-group. This is pertinent to online paedophile communities due to the apparent rift between what they consider norms of behaviour and what

wider society would deem marked (such as discussing sexual and violent topics, criminal activity, and security measures).

Politeness and impoliteness analyses have also been applied to CSA data (see Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016; 2023). Face and facework were the inspiration for Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of positive and negative politeness. Criticisms have been levelled with the early politeness models: with Kasper (1990:194) calling them 'impressive' but 'over-simplistic' and Bargiela-Chiappini (2003:1463) highlighting that face and early politeness models were 'based on a Western model of interactant, almost obsessively concerned with his own self-image and self-preservation'. Watts (2010:56) later noted that 'one of the most radical changes in politeness research in the current decade has been the shift from a focus on "politeness" as a category to be defined, explained and operationalised in a rational theory of human behaviour ("second-order politeness") to a quality of emergent social practice in a constructionist theory of human behaviour ("first-order politeness") assigned to interactants involved in that practice by co-interactants'. They suggest this aligns with a general shift towards constructivism.

In Eelen's (2014) seminal second-wave critique of politeness theory, he discussed the importance of the emic and etic approaches as well as how academics have been blurring the two wrongly. He critiqued the focus in prior research on the hearer's perception of the politeness feature – taking away from the speaker's intended interpretation. More recently, Grainger (2018:22) proposed 'a neo-Brown and Levinson approach' to politeness, which was alternatively called the 'third wave of interactional approaches to politeness studies'. They suggested that politeness 'needs to be appreciative of layers of context: linguistic context in terms of pre-contexts and next moves, as well as socio-cultural context in terms of the layers of identities, roles and relationships that may be at play in any one encounter' (2018:22). These contexts are vital when considering approaching politeness in OCSAE data where societal norms of interaction are distorted.

Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2016) examined OG transcripts and found that reframing of the adult-child relationship 'was mainly realised via positive politeness strategies that emphasised the "benefits" to the victim of the sexual or romantic "goods" being "offered" or "promised" by the groomer' (2016:44). Strategies in the *compliance testing* process of their model were realised through a range of speech-acts which sometimes 'entailed the groomer using negative politeness strategies' or using direct politeness strategies like commands and even 'strategies that may be seen to threaten the victim's face needs' (2016:44), as well as reverse psychology and impoliteness. They claimed that groomers 'invest significantly in relational work' (2016:48). It would be valuable to know how offenders employed these strategies when speaking amongst their peers.

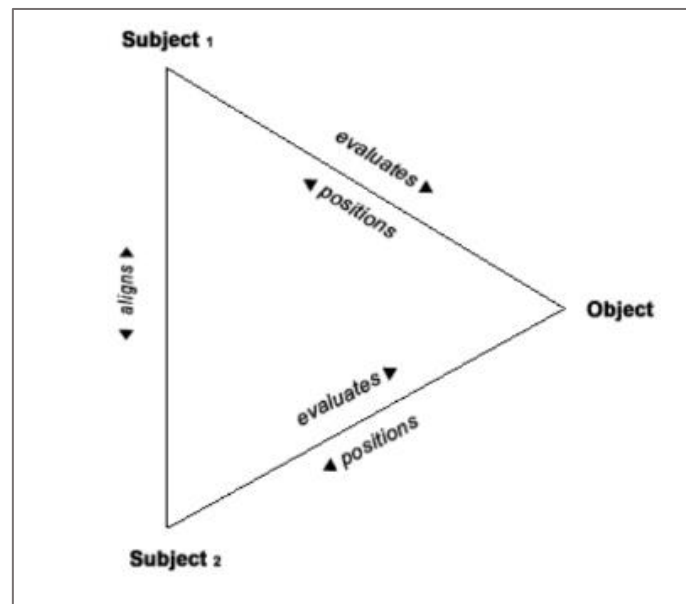
Another way of approaching identity construction is by examining the linguistic styles of individuals or groups (e.g. Lorenzo-Dus (2023) who used style and stance to investigate cyber-crime and OG). Eckert (2002:123) defined *style* as 'a clustering of linguistic resources, and an association of that clustering with social meaning' – "style' is a way of doing something' (Coupland, 2007:1). Style 'derives its meaning from the association of linguistic features with particular social groups' and speakers usually design their style for or because of their audience (Bell, 2002:142). Specific styles can construct specific identities, including group-identities, and it has been called 'a creative, negotiated process within a community of practice' (Kiesling, 2009:174). Kiesling (2009:191) argued that personal style is created by individuals through 'habitual stancetakings'.

Jaffe (2009:3) defined *stancetaking* as 'taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance'. She continued that 'one of the primary goals of a sociolinguistic approach to stance is to explore how the taking up of particular kinds of stances is habitually and conventionally associated with particular subject positions (social roles and identities; notions of personhood), and interpersonal and social relationships (including types of power) more broadly' (2009:4). Elsewhere, Du Bois (2007:171) claimed that 'stance is not something you have, not a property of interior psyche, but something you do – something you take' – it is constructed rather

than innate. Thus, stance can be approached ‘as a linguistically articulated form of social action whose meaning is to be construed within the broader scope of language, interaction, and sociocultural value’ (Du Bois, 2007:139). Coupland and Coupland (2009:229) note that stance has been analysed from a ‘predominantly authorial perspective’ in existing research.

Du Bois (2007) introduced the notion of a *stance triangle* (Figure 2.1) to aid understanding of the processes involved in stancetaking. He described stance as ‘a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field’ (2007:163). It is this positioning and alignment of the self and others that makes up the stance triangle. *Positioning* is defined here as ‘the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking sociocultural value’ (Du Bois, 2007:143).

Figure 2.1: Du Bois’ (2007:163) Stance Triangle.



This concept leads into Coupland and Coupland’s (2009:229) notion of ‘other-stance-attribution’ – that is, the attribution of stances to others, which they say is uncommon and more characteristic of conflict talk. Other-stance attribution is a discursive tool for speakers/writers to ‘map their own evaluations, attitudes, and aspirations onto other people’ (2009:246). Due to its

nature, this tool allows for ideological transfer. Coupland and Coupland (2009:246) asserted that other-stance attribution does not always implant stances in others but it 'contributes to defining the field of possible stances and, more important, is able to suggest that particular stances are normative and not to be ignored'.

This section established linguistic approaches to identity construction in online groups, which will be further discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3 as the methods used in the present thesis are outlined. What is evident is that minimal research has been done using these tools in paedophile community research thus far despite the importance of studying how offenders portray themselves when interacting with their peers. Furthermore, research has yet to investigate how offenders construct their identities through stancetaking and expressing their views on themselves/the community (although, stance and identity have been investigated with paedophile-hunter groups online (see Chiang et al., 2023)). The next section will present what is currently known about how CSA offenders perceive themselves and others.

4.4. Paedophile Beliefs and Perceptions

Within online offender communities, members interacting are commenting on certain topics and sharing their perspectives – notably, on paedophilia, criminal behaviours, other members, non-paedophiles, and their own rationalisations. This sub-section explores what past studies have uncovered about these beliefs and how they are conveyed. Section 4.4.1 establishes the pro-paedophilia messaging within these groups, while 4.4.2 delves into how the offenders view themselves and what paedophile identities they produce. In these subsections there will be discussions of ideology, attitudes, and propaganda. Van Dijk's (2006) perspective on ideology is adopted. He argued that 'ideologies are not [the] personal beliefs of individual people' (2006:117) but 'these belief systems are socially shared by the members of a collectivity of social actors' (116). Van Dijk (2006:116) makes the distinction between ideologies and 'socially shared beliefs' like 'social attitudes', suggesting that ideologies actually 'control and organize other socially shared beliefs'. He

claimed that one cognitive function of ideologies is 'to provide (ideological) coherence to the beliefs of a group and thus facilitate their acquisition and use in everyday situations' (116), which 'allow members to organize and coordinate their (joint) actions and interactions in view of the goals and interests of the group as a whole' (117).

Thus, *attitudes* here refer to the offenders' beliefs and perspectives on things, while *ideology* is what shapes and influences these attitudes in line with the belief system of a group (e.g. online paedophile communities). *Propaganda* is generally understood to be 'an expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups, deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups with reference to predetermined ends' (Miller, 1939:27). Propaganda is not just about radically changing the opinions of others but, arguably, it is 'as much about confirming rather than converting public opinion' and to be effective it must 'preach to those who are already partially converted' (Welch, 2004:214).

4.4.1. Propaganda and the Out-Group

Paedophiles can arguably be considered an out-group in society due to their associated stigma and criminality, which likely contributes to their attempts to reform a more positive image and counter the negative narratives surrounding them. Pacilli et al. (2016) researched the dehumanisation of the out-group by the in-group in a political context and found, through a cross-sectional and experimental study, that individuals who more strongly identified with their in-group saw out-group members as more dehumanised and deserving of bad treatment – this was linked with the perceived moral distance between the in- and out-groups. Huikuri and Insoll (2022:4) argued that, in paedophile communities, 'marginalisation and the subsequent need to defend deviation feed the subculture' because 'judgment of CSA by society leads to justification of the community's normative perimeters, such as CSA actually being in the interest of children or the necessity of distinguishing between 'child lovers' and 'child molesters''. The out-group experiences of offenders feed into their community identity and defensiveness. However, within online paedophile communities the rest of

society (non-paedophiles) may be perceived as the out-group, because in these insular echo-chambers the likeminded members likely view their community as their in-group.

Although online paedophile communities purportedly function as CSAM commerce sites and support networks, there is also an element in clear-web communities of paedophiles attempting to shape the public perception of themselves. This sometimes manifests through descriptions of their villainisation or out-group status to elicit pity and sometimes even by messaging akin to propaganda. Users of the five public paedophile forums Holt et al. (2010:8) studied reported that 'pedophiles had been pushed to the margins, or fringe of society, and had to constantly defend themselves'. The forum users in this data sample 'regularly discussed recent arrests and prosecutions of pedophiles and child pornography creators' (2010:14), generally expressing outrage at sentencing lengths and the perceived unfairness of arrests. The authors also noted that, 'when posters described real sexual experiences with children, they did not go into graphic detail concerning the actual sexual acts they performed' (2010:12), possibly due to a desire to disguise the sexual nature of paedophilia on publicly viewable forums: focusing instead on the emotional aspects.

Holt et al. (2010:20) emphasised that their conclusions 'may not be generalizable to private forums and chatrooms where individuals engage in illegal acts, such as the distribution and exchange' of CSAM because their data sample came from publicly viewable and accessible forums – which they reiterated in a later study on similar material (Holt et al., 2020). Nielsen et al. (2022:598) proposed that in the anti-contact offending online community *Virtuous Paedophiles*, 'the justifications used in the forum differ from those in pro-contact communities'. Private groups, which members expect to only be populated by other paedophiles, may display less restraint and more focus on the sexualisation and abuse of children. Illustratively, Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) found very different results in their private email data and placed their conclusions in stark contrast with prior research (e.g. Benneworth, 2006) which suggested that paedophiles described

their CSA behaviours in terms of personal bonds, relationships, and emotions. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011:38) claimed that their data provided 'clear evidence' that these more positive descriptions of paedophilia are not used by offenders 'in unmonitored conversations, where they are not compelled to use socially acceptable terminologies'.

D'Ovidio et al. (2009:421) conducted a content analysis of 64 pro-contact offending websites and found that 35.9% of them contained content that condemned those who spoke out against adult-child sexual relationships – noting examples of users accusing law enforcement of being the real child abusers for interviewing fragile victims of abuse. Members of these communities engage in pro-paedophilia messaging to situate themselves as victims and justify their criminal activity. Martin (2000:57) observed in an early piece of online paedophilia research that 'paedophile use of the Internet is characterised by the fear of being monitored by governmental and law enforcement agencies'. Thus, alongside the removal in the 90s/2000s of paedophilia websites like *boy-love*, 'forms of mandatory censorship have the effect of reinforcing paedophiles' belief that they are discriminated against and that their civil rights to free speech are being infringed' (2000:61). Martin (2000:61) proposed that, by making this argument, 'paedophiles insinuate themselves into the position of free speech protectors' to 'align themselves' with other free-speech advocates. Additionally, D'Ovidio et al. (2009:434) found that around 63% of the advocacy websites they examined contained appeals to 'higher loyalties, or the attempt to gain legitimacy by drawing connections to more socially desirable causes', like LGBTQ+ rights, to 'neutralize feelings of self-blame for sexual actions against children'. This conclusion was echoed by Jenkins (2001).

Nielsen et al. (2022:599) discussed how the internet provides a space for paedophiles to 'challenge the public stigma, gain mutual support and discipline each other', but there is also the risk of 'being exposed to rationalisations of child sexual abuse'. The authors therefore argued that it is important *where* the paedophiles seek out and find support online as some groups may increase rather than mitigate their risk of offending. Offenders encountering rationalisations for adult-child

sex is problematic because rationalisations for committing crimes 'serve to neutralize psychological restraints (i.e. guilt) against criminal behavior' (D'Ovidio, 2009:423). Lambert and O'Halloran (2008:285) suggested that 'traditionally, paedophiles were a marginalized group of people but the Internet assists communication within this community and facilitates the rationalization of deviant behaviours'. Reiterating this point, Martin (2000:71) proposed that paedophiles justified CSA to assuage feelings of guilt or responsibility, 'projecting blame for the trauma caused by adult-child sexual relations onto external factors such as misinformation; social repression; and the behaviour of child-victim him/herself'. He described them attempting to counter their demonisation by 'advancing the idea that paedophilia is a biologically 'natural' sexual orientation' and 'celebrating paedophilia through a process of romanticisation', as well as 'creating group cohesion and establishing the paedophile group's identities and qualities' (2000:71-72).

There are potential parallels that can be drawn between research on other criminal online groups and paedophile communities, particularly in terms of their outwards identity performances to the public/non-members. Aly et al. (2017:2) researched internet propaganda in relation to terrorist organisations, stating that 'if terrorism is understood as a form of communicative violence, and spreading propaganda and attracting attention are therefore central to it, then an online presence is logically even more vital to terrorists than it is many other organizations'. Similarly, offenders on public paedophile sites will be engaging with the creation of online propaganda to normalise abuse, change the legal restrictions, and reframe their perception by the public.

Aly et al. (2017:4) described the online propaganda strategy of the Islamic State terrorist group as focusing on narratives of 'mercy', 'victimhood', 'military gains', 'belonging', and 'utopianism' – most of which (except 'military gains') could potentially apply to paedophile advocacy messaging. Bowman-Grieve (2009:990) highlighted the importance of combatting online pro-terrorist communities 'because they encourage the construction of political and ideological

discourses supporting and justifying the use of terrorism and political violence; they provide validation'. She argued that 'the interactions between community members can be identified as contributing to the negotiation of both group and individual political identities and belief systems' (2009:998). These findings may be applicable to online paedophile communities and this possibility (that they facilitate the dissemination of an ideology, enable group identity construction, and validate behaviours) should be investigated.

O'Halloran and Quayle (2010) observed in prior research on paedophilia websites and public forums that there is a trend of justifications rather than excuses and refusals to acknowledge harm of violence towards children. The authors suggested that the 'ability to share with other individuals in a community-type environment could, potentially, provide a setting for the normalization of paedophilic attitudes and behaviour', which they said may 'pose a danger for society' (2010:84). The pattern emerging from exiting literature on sites like *Boy-love* and *VPs* indicates that these communities represent a (perhaps calculated) positive, public face of paedophilia – while the private, unmonitored groups reveal more violent tendencies and nefarious intent. However, both of these contexts appear to be ripe for the proliferation of pro-paedophilia messaging.

4.4.2. Perceptions of Themselves and Their Offending

Online paedophile communities have been used by members to speak out against their stigmatisation and advocate for their acceptance by society, but members also use these platforms to discuss their self-perceptions and to share coping strategies amongst themselves. Furthermore, 'receiving support from like-minded individuals may in turn encourage CSAM users to contact children directly' and thus there is a danger posed by 'groups of CSAM users joining communities and encouraging and endorsing each other's illicit behavior' (Insoll et al., 2022:18). This section examines the in-fighting between different types of offenders, the cognitive distortions community

members express to deny their harmful behaviours, the coping strategies they advocate for, and evidence that has been found of offenders in groups having a negative self-image.

Debates about their explicit self-styling as paedophiles or other terminology are common in these communities. Holt et al. (2010:4) asserted that many online groups use the term *child-love* rather than *paedophile* because they perceive the latter as ‘a derogatory and stigmatizing clinical term that does not adequately account for their behaviors’. They also observed that some forum users thought ‘they were different from pedophiles who harmed children’ (2010:9). Martin (2000:120) claimed that ‘child rape and molestation are not regarded by paedophiles as acts of ‘true paedophilia’’, which would be the perspective of those assuming the child-love ideology. In contrast, Grant and Macleod (2020:135) observed in dark-web fora that ‘reports of real-world abuse are often praised, and abuse of a child which is broadcast live to an individual or select group can be recognised by some communities as being among the highest value practices of all’ because ‘media has a commodity and currency value’ (133).

Non-contact offenders, such as *VPs*, often seem to place themselves in juxtaposition with contact offenders. Nielsen et al.’s (2022:605) analysis of the *VP* forum found evidence of variation between the members in terms of impulse control and likelihood of contact-offending, with some declaring that ‘they pose no threat to anyone, they can control themselves or they trust themselves’. The researchers observed that these self-described *VPs* ‘distance themselves from *the paedophile character* based primarily on the justification that *being* attracted to children should be distinguished from *acting* on the attraction’ (2022:606). The users argued that the characters of *child-lover* and the *virtuous paedophile* can act as ‘two alternatives to the paedophile character that can justify and support the paedophiles’ views of themselves’ (2022:611). Stevens and Wood (2019) also investigated the *VP* forum, finding that members generally preferred the label of Minor Attracted Persons (MAPs) rather than paedophiles due to their lack of contact-offending. Chamandy (2020) conducted research into *Reddit* users’ responses to the term *MAP* and found both positive

and negative receptions for it – though some expressed sympathy for the stigma that a non-offending paedophile must experience, there were many who expressed disgust, outrage, and violent negative responses to the notion of describing paedophilia similarly to that of any other sexual-orientation.

Levenson and Macgowan (2004:50) noted that a statistically significant predictor of a favourable outcome in sex offender treatment programmes proved to be lack of denial by the offenders or an ‘acceptance of responsibility (as measured by the offender’s acknowledging that he committed an offense; defining himself, not the child, as the aggressor; believing that sex with a child is wrong; and feeling remorse or regret)’. Spriggs et al. (2018:795) in their analysis of the attitudes of MAPs towards adult-child sex found that ‘subjects in this study endorsed views that the sexual relationship between the adult-child dyad can be loving and natural, that children are sexually curious, and that any harm done is due to the societal taboos, not to the activity itself’ – denying the harm. However, some of the participants reported mixed and negative feelings towards adult-child sex, describing aspects like ‘violence and/or rape, emotional manipulation, physical injury resulting from penetration, and very young age’ (2018:795) as causing the harm rather than act itself, but 12% of the sample did state that they thought adult-child sex was inherently harmful to the child. This supports the suggestion that ‘some offenders may superficially endorse some cognitive distortions as a way of feeling more comfortable with this [offending] behaviour, while still maintaining an awareness of the inappropriateness of his actions’ (Merdian et al., 2014:991).

Cognitive distortions can be used by offenders to rationalise their actions and may also be used as a coping mechanism to facilitate a positive self-perception. Paquette and Cortoni (2022) analysed arrest interviews with 20 CSAM-only offenders; 15 OG offenders; and 18 OG and CSAM-offenders in Canada. They found four over-arching cognitive themes held by the participants they analysed: ‘Interpersonal Relationships’, ‘Sexualization of Children’, ‘Self’, and ‘Internet’ (2022:9). Within the Sexualization of Children cognitive theme, sub-themes included viewing children as

sexual beings with agency and the ability to consent, as well as diminishing the nature of harm that their actions had on victims. Uncontrollability was the main component of the cognitions related to the Self, which occurred in high proportions of the interview samples, suggesting that offenders blamed their behaviour on drugs, alcohol, life stresses, or addiction to the material. Cognitions relating to the Internet contained sub-themes that 'virtual is not real' and 'the internet is uncontrollable' (2022:12). These shifted blame to the nature of the internet enabling accidental illegal behaviours and suggested a cognitive gap between the online offending behaviours and the idea of contact offending with victims in real life in the participants minds. Soldino et al. (2020) found evidence of similar cognitive distortions to Paquette and Cortoni (2022) and suggested further research was needed to investigate offenders' self-perceptions.

Alongside positive self-portrayal, at the expense of the victims, members of online paedophile communities discuss negative self-perceptions and describe coping strategies either to deal with their stigmatised identity or to manage urges to contact-offend. Stevens and Wood's (2019) research aimed to combat the current public response to non-offending paedophiles, which the authors said ostracised offenders rather than helping them maintain effecting coping mechanisms for non-offending. The coping mechanisms suggested by CSAM forum users included 'avoidance' of children; 'abstinence'; 'monitoring behaviour'; 'healthy lifestyle and mindfulness'; 'accepting attraction' but not acting on it; peer support or support from friends/family; and religion (2019:6-7). Cranney (2017), who investigated the *VP* forum, also referenced religion in the coping strategies and negative self-portrayals of offenders. He observed that 'stories about relatives, clergy, or others attributing the pedophilic tendencies to Satan or the devil were quite common, especially for *VPs* ensconced in religious networks' (2017:858) and several users indicated that they were more religious than they believed they would otherwise be without their paedophilic attractions. Much like the users in other forums who aligned themselves with LGBTQ+ persecution or freedom of speech movements, some of these *VPs* emphasised how they were 'born this way' and removed their agency from the situation.

Stevens and Wood (2019) also observed negative self-perceptions and criticisms of paedophilia in the forum they studied. The authors quoted one user saying 'I wish myself dead. I don't want to be attracted to children; I despise myself for fantasizing about them' and another who said 'I became clinically depressed after discovering I was attracted to children' (2019:8-9). Jenkins (2001) found contrasting attitudes while looking at the narratives posted by paedophiles on online CSAM message boards where there were a diversity of opinions relating to perceived consent, harm, and the paedophile identity. He found comments by users considering the morality of CSAM content, discussing the negative real-world consequences on victims depicted in the material like social difficulties, physical harm, and mental wellbeing. There were users discussing whether an offender would share the material if their own relative was depicted. However, there were others who often countered these ideations by laughing at these consequences, celebrating what they referred to as their 'hobby', and telling anyone voicing such opinions to just leave the platform. Some postings even contained users commenting on the shameful and abhorrent nature of their paedophile identity, which resulted in others accusing them of having swallowed an agenda or being a member of law enforcement.

These online paedophile communities provide a support mechanism for their members, whether by emotional support; support in avoiding contact-offending; support in remaining undetected by law-enforcement; support in finding CSAM material; or support in offending techniques, skills, and practices. It appears from the existing studies discussed that there is a divide between online paedophile groups that advocate for themselves via positive propaganda and provide encouragement to follow the *VP* route, and other groups that distribute CSAM and allow for sexual fantasy discussion or pro-offending narratives. Notably, there may be a correlation between these types of communities and the public or private nature of the platforms – with dark-web or private sites containing more violent rhetoric and potentially the offenders that pose a greater risk to children.

4.5. Data and Methods in Offender Communities Research

As mentioned throughout the thesis thus far, in the field of CSA research the study of online offender communities is still in the early stages. This chapter has presented what research has been done to understand child sex offender behaviours, but it has also highlighted where there are gaps in this field. This section outlines the prominent methodologies used in the few online paedophile community studies and what datasets have been examined – a topic which will be continued in Chapter 3 where the methodology of this thesis is introduced.

In terms of non-linguistic methods, O'Halloran and Quayle (2010) and Cranney (2017) both used a Content Analysis methodology to analyse data from a single online paedophile community, while McManus et al. (2016) applied Content Analysis and statistical tests to data from 12 child-sex offenders talking to each other online. Holt et al. (2020) similarly created quantitative variables by undertaking a Content Analysis of four paedophile support forums. Grounded Theory was used by Holt et al. (2010) to analyse five paedophile forums; by Verrijdt (2019) to analyse two dark-web paedophile forums; and by Nielsen et al. (2022) to analyse the *VP* forum. Grounded theory is 'inductive in that the theory develops after data collection commences; however it is also deductive in terms of analyzing data and then deciding where or who to sample next' (Quayle et al., 2014:371). Another approach used on data from the *VP* forum by psychology researchers Stevens and Wood (2019) was Thematic Analysis, which will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3 Section 3 because this method has been applied in other related research and was used in the present study.

Existing non-linguistic research into offender communities examined a variety of data sources and types. Armstrong and Forde (2003) and Balfe et al. (2015) conducted reviews of prior research, making use of existing studies and conclusions. Elsewhere, Martellozzo's (2015) research comprised of interviews with law enforcement about online offender communities, approaching the topic from the perspective of officers going undercover to infiltrate offender groups. Wilson and Cox

(1983) studied the 77 members of an offline paedophile community via data from a questionnaire, personality test, and interviewing a sample of them. In more recent studies the focus has generally been on collecting data directly from online offender communities and seeking larger datasets. Westlake and Bouchard (2016) gathered data from ten offender networks and their extensive hyperlinking systems, while D'Ovidio et al. (2009) analysed 64 paedophile websites (which dwarfed some aforementioned studies that focused on one particular site).

This diversity is promising as it demonstrates how there has been qualitative and quantitative research into these online communities. In a positive sense there has been a variety of studies on dark-web fora and public websites – but there does seem to be a dearth of studies into private IM datasets. This may be due to the possibility that paedophile forums/websites are more common than IM or group-chats, but it could also be that these groups are harder for law enforcement to detect/gain access to because of the increased level of privacy. In truth, we know very little about how offenders interact in private, encrypted groups, especially when these private communities exist on more easily accessible social media platforms rather than the dark-web. The present study seeks to cover this unexplored territory to further illuminate how offenders behave when they believe they are unobserved by wider society.

Linguistic studies into child-sex offenders have also used a variety of data sources, data types, and methodological approaches. However, datasets are generally small and lack diversity, with important studies using less than five offenders (e.g. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon, 2011; Whittle et al., 2015; Chiang and Grant, 2019) and many studies admitting to limitations because of using only male offenders, Caucasians, or only taking data from one geographical location (e.g. Malesky, 2007; Black et al., 2015; Winters et al., 2017, Schoeps et al., 2020). The focus has also been almost entirely on OG and victim-offender data – leaving online offender communities painfully under-used as a data source.

One of the few linguistic offender community studies was Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon's (2011) paedophile email communication study which employed a CoP framework and a relational work approach to politeness and facework. They stated that, 'as very little is known about the private, verbalized interactions between paedophiles, this study breaks new ground' (2011:39). Nonetheless, social media usage has grown substantially in popularity compared to email online since this paper's publication – necessitating further research into this other form of clear-web communication. More recently Chiang (2018) and Grant and MacLeod (2020) examined interactions between offenders and UOs pretending to be offenders on dark-web forums. The former employed a move-analysis and speech act analysis, while the latter approached many aspects including structural analysis, meaning analysis via speech acts, interactional analysis, and social behavioural analysis. Risaldi et al. (2023) also examined an unspecified amount of data from 13 paedophiles interacting on a website via a critical discourse analysis approach. However, although these studies are extremely valuable in beginning to understand paedophile community behaviours from a linguistic perspective, they are few in number.

Paedophile communities have been vastly understudied considering the potential information and data that could be gathered from them alongside the opportunity to look into either the public or private faces of child-sex offenders interacting with one another. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) advocated over a decade ago for more research into paedophilia online groups by linguists, particularly from a CoP standpoint. A linguistic look at offender-to-offender talk could improve understanding of how they construct their identities, how they convey their beliefs, and how they negotiate the volatile online environment of transient, secretive, criminal groups. More research into this area could also facilitate a greater understanding of offender hierarchies, their behaviours, and offending pathways – as well as how these communities develop and recruit new members into an environment that may encourage CSA. It is clear there are types of datasets in this area which are less studied than others (e.g. social media data, private IM

conversations, and more diverse offender groups) and that linguistic approaches have thus far been few and far between, necessitating further research to address these scholarly gaps.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter the problem of CSA, and the body of literature on this topic, was discussed and parsed through to establish what is currently known about CSA laws (Section 2); offender types and characteristics (Section 3); and online paedophile communities (Section 4). This research guided the aims and research questions of this thesis – which seeks to address where there are lingering questions about offender behaviour, to answer calls for further investigation, and to undertake new analyses of this under-researched data type. This chapter illustrated that there is diversity in how online paedophile communities form, regulate themselves, sustain participation, and retain secrecy. Thus, it is important to investigate these aspects within one subset of these communities that has been overlooked in existing research: clear-web social media data of private interactions amongst members. Research questions 1 and 2 seek to answer these queries by determining community type and member behaviours.

Furthermore, research question 3 aims to build upon the aforementioned studies into online paedophile community ideology and offender rationalisations, as well as linguistic studies into identity work in online groups. The final research question (4) corresponds to the calls for more linguistic research into this area and will demonstrate the applicability of discourse analysis methods to this data and context. The next chapter details the dataset used in this thesis and delves into the approach taken.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“Just because we’ve never done it doesn’t mean we can’t do it.”

— *Eva Ibbotson, The Dragonfly Pool*

1. Introduction

Transparency and replicability are paramount in empirical research to ensure ethical, good practices and credibility. Methodologies should be carefully chosen with consideration of the breadth of existing studies in the field, their appropriateness to the dataset, and the research questions/aims established. Reviewing existing research into OCSAE and offender communities, alongside evaluating previously adopted methodologies, influenced the analytic frameworks applied in this study. Thus, this chapter outlines the methodology used to answer the research questions introduced in Chapter 1 Section 5 and discusses the rationale for the methodological choices made following the review of literature in Chapter 2. First, this chapter will present the dataset supplied for the project (Section 2). Subsequent sections will cover the approach (3.1) and analysis frameworks chosen (3.2); the procedure of how the research was done prior to analysis (4.1) and during (4.2); a discussion of ethical factors that were considered in the research (5.1) and for wellbeing (5.2); and concluding remarks on this chapter (6). Reviewing and addressing ethical concerns is particularly important to discuss openly in research such as this where the dataset is especially sensitive.

2. Data

The dataset for this research originated from a data-sharing agreement between Swansea University and UK-based law enforcement agencies. This agreement led to the offender-to-offender chat files being provided in two batches, with the bulk of the data being shared prior to the beginning of the project (Batch 1) and a secondary batch of data being provided in early 2022 (Batch 2). The data-sharing agreement stipulated that the data had to be anonymised prior to being used in the project and placed limitations on where the data could be accessed from as well as its dissemination.

Batch 1 was produced in 2013-2015 and comes from two online platforms accessible by computer or mobile device: *Kik Messenger* and *GigaTribe*. *Kik Messenger* (henceforth, *Kik*) is a free IM mobile app first released in 2010 which garnered 300 million registered users by 2016 and had 15 million active monthly users as of 2022 (EarthWeb, 2023). It was suggested that ‘*Kik* holds a particular appeal thanks to its increased privacy and anonymity in comparison to competitors such as WhatsApp and iMessage’ (Still, 2021) because it requires only an email address to sign up and users find each other by a *Kik* ID-number rather than sharing any personal identifiers like phone numbers. The platform also enables multimedia messaging and group-chatting functions. Due to its encryption features, *Kik* is often unable to provide law enforcement with crucial evidence in investigations (Stolberg and Pérez-Peña, 2016). However, to counter this safety net for criminal users of the app, there have been studies into how forensic scientists could recover data from *Kik* that law enforcement could then use (e.g. Ovens and Morison, 2016; Adebayo et al., 2017). *Kik* lists its age restriction as 13, despite the *Apple* App Store rating it as inappropriate for under 17s (Still, 2021), but it has received repeated criticism for enabling OCSAE and obstructing CSA cases. A 2016 *New York Times* article into predation on *Kik* quoted the commander of the Ohio Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force describing *Kik* as ‘the problem app of the moment’ (Stolberg and Pérez-Peña, 2016:2).

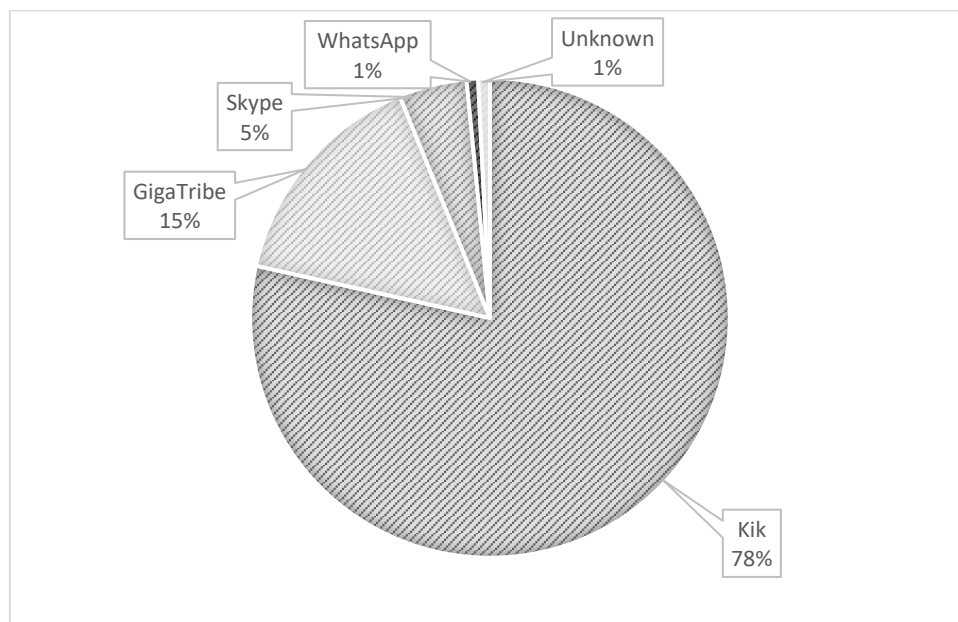
In addition to *Kik*, some of the Batch 1 data originated from a peer-to-peer desktop app, *GigaTribe*, which was initially launched in France in 2005 and an American version developed in 2008. The platform functions as file-sharing network between users who can add passwords to folders so that their data is not public but can be shared amongst choice other users who the password is given to via the chat component of the site. It also includes user profiles and the files being shared amongst users are encrypted. Much like *Kik*, *GigaTribe*’s existence has been frequently tarnished by cases of CSAM being shared amongst users – to the point that a news article search for ‘*GigaTribe*’ on *Google* produces almost exclusively results on CSAM cases relating to the platform (e.g. Department of Justice, 2021). *GigaTribe* was also cited in the *Sex Offender Law Report* journal

as the method used by a contact-offender in the US when accessing CSAM, sourcing his collection by trading files with other users on the site and inadvertently with an UO (Leary, 2012). Despite continuous criticism for their enabling of predation and CSAM sharing, these two platforms remain active.

The Batch 2 data spanned across 2016-2020 and comes from several different social media IM platforms. This second batch was smaller than the first but provided more recent data and more diversity of the source platforms involved to supplement Batch 1. There were group-chats and 1-2-1 chatlogs from *Kik*; 1-2-1 chatlogs from *WhatsApp* (a social media IM app) and *Skype* (an IM and video-calling platform); and two files where the platform was not disclosed by the data owner.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the distribution of words in the dataset (Batches 1 and 2) by platform.

Figure 3.1: The percentage breakdown of platforms used in the dataset (by total number of words).

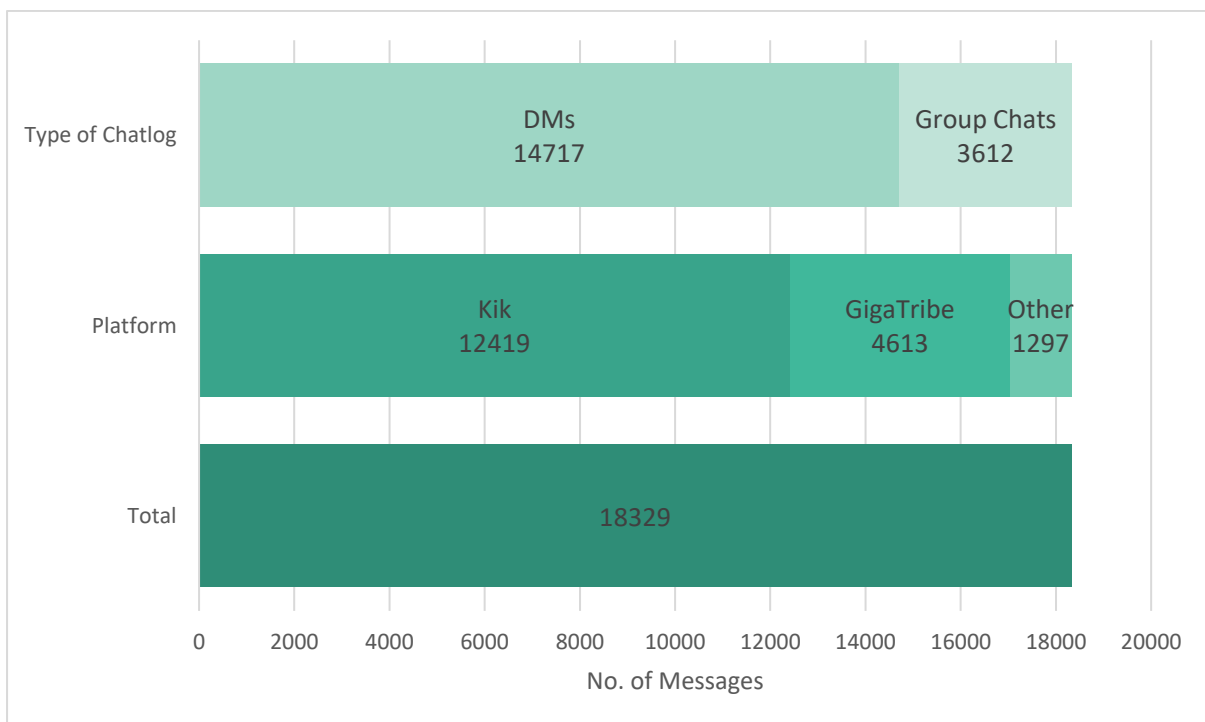


The final dataset after redaction and sampling (see Section 4.1) consisted of 97 offender-to-offender chat files, totalling 103,850 words. In Batch 1 there were 57 *Kik* 1-2-1 DM files of one offender (called P_001) talking to 57 other offenders individually, which totalled 57,892 words; 8 *Kik* group-chat files of P_001 and 406 other offenders interacting, which totalled 16,813 words; and 1 *GigaTribe* sampled file of 1-2-1 DMs between P_0463 and 1,110 other offenders, which

totalled 15,945 words. This puts the Batch 1 dataset at 90,650 words with 1,573 suspected offenders involved. Batch 2 consisted of 31 files, 30 1-2-1 DM files and one *Kik* group-chat, totalling 13,200 words and 115 offenders.

The word and message-lengths of the files varied between 7 – 15,945 words and 4 – 4,616 respectively, with an average word length of 1,071 words and an average message-length of 203 messages. Although most chatlogs were 1-2-1 DMs with two participants, group-chat participants ranged from 5 – 193 users, with an average of 65 users recorded. Due to the format the data was provided in, it was impossible to know the actual membership counts of group chats, but the number of participants recorded were counted by users whose usernames appeared in the chatlogs (either by messaging, joining, or leaving the groups). There was high variation in the lengths of the chatlogs and their durations, with some lasting less than an hour and other chats going on over the course of several months. Figure 3.2 depicts a breakdown of the platforms and chatlog types by the number of messages sent, while Appendix 1 contains the full table of all word-count lengths, chat durations, and numbers of users participating per chatlog.

Figure 3.2: Total number of messages sent in dataset by type and platform.



The total number of CSAM shared in the chatlogs is also not known as often hyperlinks were shared to folders containing undisclosed amounts of CSAM and file names or numbers included by the data owner did not necessarily correspond to numbers of images or videos being shared. However, Chapter 5 Section 3.3 will discuss the number of messages sent which included CSAM (regardless of how much was contained in each message) and CSAM trading will be examined in more detail there.

The content of the dataset varies but early observations suggested that the main topics throughout the files appeared to be CSAM access and file sharing; victim access and detailing past experiences with victims; discussing sexual preferences; risk assessments; relationship building and support group-style community building; advice sharing; planning abuse; small talk; and justifying sexual interests and actions (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of all main and sub-themes in the dataset). However, the content of the *GigaTribe* file predominantly entailed users requesting and providing passwords for file folders on the platform as well as discussing the sexual content of the folders.

One avenue that could have been explored in this research was a comparison within the dataset between different online communication platforms. However, conducting a platform comparison study between the source platforms (*Kik*, *GigaTribe*, *WhatsApp*, etc...), where the different behaviours on each is the research aim, would be problematic in this instance because of the types of platforms the chat logs were from. The purposes, functionality, and uses of the platforms differ greatly and variation in offender behaviours between them could likely be attributed towards this factor. There was also an unequal amount of data from each platform which precludes a comparative study, resulting in this route not being taken.

Throughout the thesis thus far, the dataset has been referred to as originating from the clear-web – as opposed to the dark-web. The dark-web, described in Chapter 1 Section 1, is a heavily encrypted and anonymous subset of the internet that ‘cannot be indexed by search engines’, is not ‘viable in a standard Web browser’, and requires specialised software to access (Merriam-Webster,

2024). Conversely, the clear-web (sometimes called the surface web or surface net) is the portion of the internet encountered by most people every day, indexable, and accessible by search engines. A further category is called the deep web, sitting just below the clear-web, which refers to content not searchable by standard search engines potentially behind paywalls such as databases or research papers. There is no apparent consensus on whether private chats from social media platforms constitute clear-web or deep-web content: these private messages are not publicly searchable, but they originate from social media platforms which are widely considered to be clear-web. Furthermore, the distinctions between these classifications become ever murkier as there are different levels of privacy in the clear-web environment which have expanded further since advances in encryption.

Other research has adopted different terminology, such as the *social web* for social media interactions (Russell, 2011), or the 'Accessible Web' and the 'Inaccessible Web' to supersede the clear, deep, and dark-web based more on the often-variable skillsets of individual internet users (Jatkiewicz, 2021:142). When arguing for the obsolescence of the term *deep-web*, Jatkiewicz (2021:142) asserted that 'the true availability of web pages is difficult to determine unambiguously, and in practice impossible in isolation from the human factor' of personal capabilities to access spaces online. The present study does not seek to propose new classification systems for the online environment and so, working within the existing established terminology, the dataset of offender interactions are private (encrypted to varying degrees) chats on clear-web platforms and thus they are extracted from the clear-web. Referring to them as *private* clear-web interactions differentiates them from other public pro-paedophilia advocacy websites, whilst still acknowledging that they are from a separate (more easily accessible) part of the internet distinct from the dark-web or deep-web.

3. Frameworks

3.1. Overall Approach

A qualitative discourse analysis (DA) approach was used in this research to examine identity from a constructionist perspective as well as ideology and community interactions online. As was discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.3, a social constructionist approach was adopted, and identity viewed as something performed by a speaker – with perspective outlined in Grant and MacLeod's (2018; 2020) resource-constraint model. Qualitative DA was the most beneficial route to go down due to the unique value that the data offered in a field where, as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.5, analysis of genuine offender-to-offender interactions is rare (and scarcer still from a linguistic perspective). The main areas of interest in this project, as outlined in the RQs (see Chapter 1 Section 5), are the offenders' identity constructions both as paedophiles and as members of the online paedophilia community; their ideology dissemination; relationship forming; and their criminal/risk taking behaviours. These are all areas that would better be analysed in the context of the interactions between offenders, with a consideration for the norms of behaviour and sequences of the interactions – further reinforcing the motivation to use a DA approach over, for example, a corpus analysis that can separate language from its context.

Jaworski and Coupland (2006:6) comprehensively reviewed how *discourse* has been defined throughout prior research and the different schools of thought within this approach, suggesting that 'discourse analysis can range from the description and interpretation of meaning-making and meaning-understanding in specific situations through to the critical analysis of ideology and access to meaning-systems and discourse networks'. Braun and Clarke (2021:43) claimed that 'all forms of DA are underpinned by a view of language as a social practice, something active and performative, doing things, and bringing forth realities, rather than merely transparently reflecting participants' thoughts and feelings'. Within this wealth of approaches, the specific discourse analysis approach used was Herring's (2004:6; 2013) Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) approach for analysing 'the virtual community' (discussed shortly). Data analysis was undertaken

using *NVivo*, a standard software package regularly used to enable grounded theory/thematic analysis, where one can set up frameworks and coding books to conduct coding of linguistic variables (see Section 4).

Thematic analysis was chosen as the initial stage of analysis in this project, after a review of the existing methodologies employed with this type of research, because it allowed for the language in the dataset to be coded into topic-based groups for the subsequent CMDA. Thematic analysis is a method for ‘identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ which ‘minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail’ (Braun and Clark, 2006:79). It is similar to Grounded Theory, mentioned in Chapter 2 Sections 3.3.2 and 4.5, but, contrastingly, thematic analysis ‘is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework’ (2006:81). The two-stage analysis focused in on specific areas of the dataset that could then be analysed with linguistic methods in a more efficient manner as, for example, the language relating to sexual identity construction was already gathered in one place. Herring (2004:11) suggested that data sampling for this type of linguistic analysis tended to be ‘selected according to theme, time, phenomenon, individual or group’ rather than random – and she claimed that sampling by theme or time are the most favoured choices in CMDA research. Thematic analysis has been previously employed as a method by those conducting research on paedophiles (e.g. Malesky, 2007; Whittle et al., 2014; Whittle et al., 2015; Kloess et al., 2019a) as well as online paedophile communities (e.g. Stevens and Wood, 2019), and it is ‘often considered the foundational technique for qualitative work’ (Whittle et al., 2014:408).

Some criticisms have been levelled at thematic analysis, and these predominantly concerned the need for several reviewers to confirm the coding of themes to avoid researcher-bias (see Malesky, 2007; Guest et al., 2014). However, Guest et al. (2014:10) asserted that, ‘despite these few issues related to reliability, we feel that a thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set’. Whittle et al. (2015) affirmed that discussion

between researchers during the data analysis is essential for themes to be established appropriately. This is a difficult standard to meet for a PhD where there is a sole researcher, but methods can be implemented (as will be expanded upon in the Section 4.2). The thematic analysis in Kloess et al. (2019a), for example, began with establishing the preliminary themes by an inductive, content-driven reading of OG transcripts. These themes were then coded for in the data and were revised and adjusted throughout the coding process, as well as reviewed by a supervisor – which was a similar process to that undertaken by Woodhams et al. (2021).

The themes developed for this project's thematic analysis were also devised primarily by an inductive, content-driven reading of the chatlogs. Preliminary observations from Batch 1 indicated very similar themes to those Woodhams et al. (2021) had found in their dataset (see Section 4.1). All the themes described by Woodhams et al. (2021) were present within this dataset. The main differences between their study's themes and the themes established here were terminology choices and, in some cases, the separation or grouping of certain themes/sub-themes (Appendix 2 shows the parallels between the two frameworks).

The second stage of analysis, following the thematic analysis, was CMDA. Herring (2004:4) described her proposal of how to approach studying online communities as 'a methodological toolkit and a set of theoretical lenses through which to make observations and interpret the results of empirical analysis'. She suggested that a CMDA approach 'allows diverse theories about discourse and computer-mediated communication to be entertained and tested' (2004:4). The approach begins with posing answerable research questions, selecting methods that address those questions, and applying them to the data. However, this does not mean pre-determining the analysis frameworks that will be applied to the data, as Herring (2004) suggested that phenomena of interest emerge from the data which guide the researcher in selecting analysis tools. Thus, as with the thematic analysis, 'the approach is inductive—the phenomena of interest are primary—rather than deductive, or theory-driven' (2004:16).

Herring (2004:16) argued that a CMDA approach is ‘especially well-suited to analysing new and as yet relatively undescribed forms’ of computer mediated conversations, because ‘it allows the researcher to remain open to the possibility of discovering novel phenomena, rather than making the assumption in advance that certain categories of phenomena will be found’. This argument aligns well with the present research project investigating the under-researched area of offender-to-offender online communication. Herring’s (2004; 2013) approach has been successfully applied in previous research into OCSAE from a linguistic DA perspective (e.g. Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016; Grand and MacLeod, 2020). The CMDA method suggests approaching what Herring (2004:3) called the ‘four domains’ of language: *structure*, *meaning*, *interaction*, and *social behaviour*. Herring (2013) also discussed a potential fifth domain, *multimodality*, which is indeed a valuable domain to approach DA through. However, as all media (CSAM) in this dataset was redacted by law enforcement, multimodal analysis was not possible with this dataset. The main four domains (as seen in Table 3.1) will be referenced in the following section when outlining the chosen analysis frameworks and their corresponding relevant domains of language.

Table 3.1: Herring’s (2004:18) table of the four domains of language in CMDA.

	Phenomena	Issues	Methods
Structure	typography, orthography, morphology, syntax, discourse schemata	genre characteristics, orality, efficiency, expressivity, complexity	Structural/Descriptive Linguistics, Text Analysis
Meaning	meaning of words, utterances (speech acts), macrosegments	what the speaker intends, what is accomplished through language	Semantics, Pragmatics
Interaction	turns, sequences, exchanges, threads	interactivity, timing, coherence, interaction as co-constructed, topic development	Conversation Analysis, Ethnomethodology
Social Behaviour	linguistic expressions of status, conflict, negotiation, face management, play, discourse styles, etc.	social dynamics, power, influence, identity	Interactional Sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis

3.2. Analysis Frameworks

In stage two, analysis tools and frameworks were applied to the data that investigated identity practices via the relevant four of Herring's (2004) domains in Table 3.1. The domain of *social behaviour* (Herring, 2004) relates to issues of identity, social dynamics, and power. One analysis tool employed in examining social behaviour was a coding book for offender community roles. A "coding book" here refers to a set of devised NVivo categories (called *nodes*) for analysis, rather than a pre-established framework. Community roles, which have been found in offender communities prior (see Chapter 2 Section 4.2.2), are 'important in providing a division of labour that facilitates the functioning of the community, supplying a normative function that help establish norms and order among the community, and helping each community member build their own identity within the community' (Kou et al., 2018a:2070). The coding book used in this project was developed by compiling community roles suggested in existing research and a consideration of what roles appeared to be present in a preliminary content-reading of the dataset. The existing research drawn on came from studies into online paedophile communities, other online groups with sexual content, and online communities generally. The six roles which were established and coded for in the dataset were 'The Advisor', 'The Advise Seeker', 'The Newbie', 'The Disciplinarian', 'The Administrator', and 'The Expert'.

The Advisor role was identified in dark-web paedophile forums by Grant and MacLeod (2020), as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.3.1. Though not named as a community role, Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) and Huikuri (2022a) also observed offenders dispensing advice to one another in online paedophile communities. The Advice Seeker role is an extension of the Advisor role which was added to the roles list due to the observation in this project's dataset that there seemed to be certain behaviours and language choices made by those when requesting advice – and not just by those dispensing it. It also allows for distinguishing between someone just seeking advice and a newbie to the community, because veteran members of the community will

also request advice from one another. The Newbie, or newcomer to the community, has been identified in paedophile groups (see Chiang, 2018; 2020a; Grant and MacLeod, 2020; Huikuri, 2022a), as well as colloquially being a recognised role in broader online communities, and appearing in Gee's (2005) work with online Affinity Spaces.

The Disciplinary role is employed by users who enforce the rules of the community, but are not administrators, and this too has been found in dark-web paedophile forums by Grant and MacLeod (2020). Administrators (who also enforce rules at times) differ from Disciplinarys in that the former role is assigned through the communication platform and enables Administrators to add or remove members from chats, edit group names, and maintain the community using restricted functions of the platform. Administrators have been identified in several studies into online paedophile communities (see Martelozzo, 2015; Holt et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2022; Huikuri, 2022a).

The final community role is that of the Expert: an offender who presents themselves as experienced in offending and the community, who is idolised, and who brags about their experience. This role emerged through several studies that suggested a similar identity or role, such as Kou et al. (2018b:12) who discussed an 'experienced practitioner' role in the online forums they studied. Furthermore, Bates (2020:32) observed in her research that there were members in online incel groups who were higher up the hierarchy that were 'idolised and revered', and who acted as 'community elders or leaders', rebuking 'forum members who don't appear to comply with incel ideology correctly'. Chiang (2018:204) also noted the existence of more experienced offenders in paedophile online communities that she described as 'expert offenders [indicated by their group status]', following from a CSA-offender typology study by Tener et al. (2015:329) which noted that 'expert offenders' were likely to possess large collections of CSAM, influencing the nomenclature of this community role.

Another *social behaviour* analysis tool applied to the dataset, the self-disclosure coding book, was chosen to investigate the role of exchanges of personal information (EPI) in identity construction: how these were initiated, at which points in the chatlogs, and for what purposes. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) commented on the significance of offenders disclosing identifying information in their study on paedophile email exchanges, noting their conflicting goals of relationship forming with security measures and anonymity. Kou and Gray (2018:2) claimed that research into self-disclosure has identified potential benefits ‘such as social validation, self-clarification, and relationship development’ as well as ‘possible risks such as social rejection and loss of control’. Their study looked at professionals on the ‘user experience’ *Reddit* community and how self-disclosure played a part in their online communication. In this study they defined self-disclosure with the parameters that it must be a user revealing personal information about themselves (such as workplace or location) rather than about anyone else. This research found that self-disclosure had five major functions: ‘question answering’, ‘reciprocity’, ‘evidence-based reasoning’, ‘credibility adjusting’, and ‘empathy’ (2018:14). Table 3.2 shows the definitions of these categories, which were adopted as the self-disclosure coding book. A further category, titled ‘Unprompted’, was added to the coding book following the presence in the dataset of self-disclosures without an instigating event.

Table 3.2: Kou and Gray’s (2018) self-disclosure functions.

Self-Disclosure Function:	Definition:
Question answering	The discloser shares personal information when answering a question.
Reciprocity	The disclosure emerges in accordance with the flow of conversation between two users.
Evidence-based reasoning	The disclosure serves as evidence when the discloser is making a point about something.
Credibility-adjusting	The disclosure serves as a means of de/increasing the credibility of the discloser’s opinion.
Empathy	Personal information is shared to respond to other’s disclosure of similar experiences.

Herring’s (2004) *meaning* and *social behaviour* domains were also investigated by approaching identity construction using speech acts and face/politeness coding books, respectively.

Lorenzo-Dus and Izura (2017) claimed that a ‘speech act (Pragmatics) approach to examining praise in OG was thought to be useful because OG constitutes a performative context of communication in the truest sense’ (2017:74) – it is a prime example of “doing things with words”, and thus is apt for Herring’s (2004) *meaning* domain. Speech act analysis of CSA language has been previously undertaken by Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2016; 2023) who examined speech acts within OG transcripts. The authors proposed that a speech act analysis ‘provides a useful lens through which to examine how groomers deploy their tactical, goal-driven manipulation’ (2023:29). Elsewhere, Chiang (2018) analysed IM transcripts from offenders speaking to UO pretending to be adult offenders as well as posts on an offender community forum. She employed move-analysis and a speech-act analysis method for this study. Additionally, Grant and MacLeod (2020) used a speech act analysis on their dataset of dark-web paedophile forums. The speech act framework adopted by Grant and MacLeod (2020) and Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2016; 2023) is that of Searle’s (1969) widely recognised list of speech acts (see Appendix 3), which was also adopted for the present project.

Facework is another *social behaviour* analysis tool that was operationalised into a coding book for the data. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Sifianou (2017) argued strongly for the interconnectivity of face, identity, and politeness (see Chapter 2 Section 4.3.2) – which has been exemplified here in the form of a coding book capturing politeness and facework. This coding book was divided into self-oriented and other-oriented facework, with the former containing categories that emerged from the data and the latter containing im/politeness strategies. The self-oriented facework nodes essentially captured self-attributed identity features by offenders – instances where they addressed the positive or negative face needs of themselves – and these categories were developed entirely from the data as no pre-existing framework for this was readily available.

Herring (2004:19) noted that, when coding more subjective CMDA categories like politeness, ‘empirical rigor can be maintained if the researcher operationalizes and defines each coding category in explicit terms and applies the codes consistently to the data’. As resolved in the

third wave, and explored in Chapter 2 Section 4.3.2, the approach taken when interpreting im/politeness in this project consisted of considering the context and norms of the paedophile online community alongside the speaker's intended interpretation. Culpeper (2016) stated that 'the most heinous crime when performing an analysis of impoliteness strategies, or politeness for that matter, is to simply count them up on the assumption that if the strategy is there, it necessarily is performing impoliteness. [...] Calling somebody names, for example, could be for the purpose of banter and thus a matter of cementing solidarity, not causing offence'. Impoliteness strategies were adopted from Culpeper's (2005) taxonomy (see Appendix 4 for coding book), who endorsed a politeness-in-context approach. This taxonomy was chosen over his later proposed taxonomy of impoliteness triggers (2011; 2016) because it aligned well with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies (e.g. positive/negative politeness or impoliteness) which were adopted.

Stance has been a key concept in examining identity construction through self and other styling, and it was used in this project as an analysis tool to investigate the *social behaviour* domain. Stance analysis was proposed as 'a bridge between forensic psychological and forensic linguistic assessments of texts' in a criminal context (Hunter and Grant, 2022). Following the discussion in Chapter 2 Section 4.3.2, Du Bois' (2007) stance triangle was operationalised into a coding book that could be used in NVivo, and this was supplemented by adding the appropriate corresponding nodes for other-stance attribution (see Appendix 5 for coding book).

Another coding book that was adopted to look at the *social behaviour* domain, specifically through Critical Discourse Analysis, was one for propaganda techniques. This facilitated an examination of identity construction through community ideologies and intra-group grooming. Since people 'acquire, express and reproduce their ideologies largely by text or talk, a discourse analytical study of ideology is most relevant' (Van Dijk, 2006:115). The dissemination of pro-paedophilia arguments and the promotion of the online community over others was investigated because this can have an impact on escalating offender behaviours, as well as feeding into the

addictive aspects of CSAM trading (see Quayle and Taylor, 2002; Naidoo and Hout, 2021). Torok (2015) compiled a list of propaganda types/techniques which she then used to analyse propaganda tools and Neurolinguistic Programming within the Islamic State terrorism group. Her framework was created following a review of prior research into the field and compiled techniques from several studies (Yourman, 1939; Brown, 1963; Smith, 1989; Jowett and O'Donnell, 1999; Shabo, 2008). More recently, Da San Martino et al. (2019) derived a new propaganda tools framework by examining lists from Torok (2015), Miller (1939), and Weston (2018). Da San Martino et al.'s (2019) list of propaganda and persuasion tools seems robust, and sufficiently absorbed the curated list by Torok (2015). There were no existing taxonomies for investigating persuasion/recruitment/influencing techniques in the context of online paedophilia communities. Thus, this framework was selected to investigate the presence of any mainstream propaganda tools within the attitudes expressed by offenders (see Appendix 6 for coding book).

Similarly, legitimisation techniques were also examined to investigate this ideology construction and intra-group grooming. Legitimation analysis has been used in prior research to investigate digital grooming (see Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2018; Lorenzo-Dus, 2023) and language produced online to persuade others of a certain narrative/perspective (e.g. Glozer et al., 2019; Cheng, 2021). The present study adapted Van Leeuwen's (2008) seminal legitimisation framework into an *NVivo* coding book with parent-nodes for each of the four main legitimisation techniques (mythopoesis, rationalisation, authority, and moral legitimisation) and child-nodes for the different strategies which fell under these main types. This coding book can be found in Appendix 7. Some of Van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimisation sub-types were not defined or explained in the literature and were thus excluded: these were the subtypes of theoretical rationalisation legitimisation (experimental, scientific, definition, explanation, prediction) and some from mythopoesis (over-determination and single determination). However, this seemed to be inconsequential as there were so few codes for these categories that it was not necessary to divide them up further into these additional sub-types.

In investigating Herring's (2004) *interaction* and *structure* domains and the norms of behaviour in these offender communities, a coding book looking at openings and closings was devised. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011:29) asserted that 'the presence of salutations and discourse closings can be considered fairly standard politeness conduct, and in the case of new relationships even mandatory'. Grant and MacLeod (2020:44) noted how most openings and closings studies which looked at computer mediated discourse were focused on multi-party group interactions, and there were 'very little dealing with synchronous private dyadic online interactions such as IM'. They also drew attention to the fact that, in computer mediated discourse interactions, like IM chats for example, 'formal closing sequences are not compulsory components, and conversations often terminate with no prior warning whatsoever' (2020:45). The coding book used in this project consisted of *NVivo* nodes for openings and closings, with subcategories for the chat type (DM or group-chat), and additional subcategories under closings for whether it was an intentional or unintentional closing. This last set of sub-nodes was created to capture the difference between the unintentional endings of interactions Grant and MacLeod (2020) mentioned, and more intentional closing sequences where the speaker ended the interaction. Intentional closings are the final messages before someone ends a chat, e.g. signing off, leaving, farewells, reasons to leave, etc. (see Negretti, 1999; Bou-Franch, 2011; Pérez-Sabater, 2012). Openings that were coded were greetings and initial messages sent before the first topic shift in the interaction.

Slang was investigated in the dataset to understand what community-specific lexis had been created and adopted by the offenders. Internet slang is 'a general term commonly used to refer to a range of linguistic phenomena such as abbreviations (cu for see you), acronyms (IIRC for if I remember/recall correctly) and phonetic spellings (dat for that)' (Tredici and Fernández, 2018:1595). In lexicography, Mattiello (2008:31) provides the two main definitions for slang: 'first, slang is the restricted speech of marginal or distinct subgroups in society and, second, it is a quite temporary, unconventional vocabulary characterized primarily by connotations of informality and novelty'. The present study takes a slang in-context approach, viewing the online paedophile community

members as a distinct subgroup using terminology specific to themselves (but also using common slang from wider society or from the context of the online environment). From a linguistic perspective 'slang is distinguished from the standard language in both its morphology and its semantics', characterised by 'clear insubordination as regards the standard word-formation rules' as well as renaming things whilst also enriching, qualifying, or complexifying them (Mattiello, 2008:34). Slang is 'essentially an experimental language' (Sornig, 1981:20).

Slang terms were identified following the parameters discussed in Chapter 2 of Mattiello's (2008:39) book on the subject, including both 'general slang' and 'specific slang'. However, given that there is still much debate among scholars of how specifically to approach slang, the exact method used will be outlined here. Terms were coded for if they were words or phrases that meant something other than their usual meaning; that do not traditionally appear in dictionaries; that were new or original abbreviations and acronyms; or that were amongst existing established *general slang* terminologies (e.g. common internet slang like 'omg' for 'oh my god'). Slang terms were approached thematically to divide them up into categories of slang types, as well as comparing these results with who used slang terms out of those performing community roles. Community-specific slang use could convey membership styles or expressions of status, as well as inviting semantic investigation; thus, analysing slang terms fell under both the *social behaviour* and *meaning* language domains.

Following from the discussion in Chapter 2 Section 4.2.1, one aim in this research is to determine what kinds of spaces or groups these online paedophile communities are. Affinity Spaces, Communities of Practice, and Safe Spaces all form possible ways of understanding these online communities, but it is likely that a true characterisation lies somewhere between these different classifications – taking elements from each. Seeking to establish what type of online community these are takes in elements from all four of Herring's (2004) domains. This question was considered

throughout analysis (Chapters 4-7) and is revisited in Chapter 8 in response to the results from this research.

The frameworks outlined in this section were deployed to address the research aims of the thesis and to interrogate the dataset through the four domains of *social behaviour, meaning, structure, and interaction*. Due to the novel datatype and understudied field of research, many existing frameworks or approaches were adapted from other contexts to this context of CSA interactions and their effectiveness will be evaluated in Chapter 8. Although there are many different approaches and analysis tools being used here, they are complimentary to each other both as a consequence of existing research advocating for their intersection (e.g. with politeness, identity, and face) and with what information then can be used to glean from the data (e.g. legitimisation and propaganda techniques can both help understand intra-group grooming/ideology dissemination). As will be outlined in the next section, all coding books were piloted prior to their widespread usage and analysis was undertaken in clear stages: starting with the thematic analysis and secondly the CMDA coding in relevant themes.

4. Procedure

4.1. Pre-Analysis

The research project was proposed as a study into offender-to-offender communication from a linguistic perspective using the dataset provided by law enforcement. The first step was to gain ethical approval, which is discussed in Section 5, and once ethical approval was granted the data was examined. Both batches of the dataset were provided in an *Excel* format which contained chat content between multiple offenders and some additional information relating to CSAM sharing (only presented as numerical file names), group-chat names, offender usernames, timestamps of messages, and platform names.

No demographic metadata was provided for these files about the offenders involved, nor was any case history or data extraction information shared by law enforcement. The lack of metadata about offenders added some limitations to this study, which are discussed in relation to results in Chapter 8 Section 4. However, due to the format and content of the dataset it was clear that the data in Batch 1 was sourced from two individuals, one on *GigaTribe* (P_0463) and one on *Kik* (P_001), with both offenders self-reporting being UK-based adult males. Similarly, the Batch 2 data appeared to have been sourced from 8 individuals, who also all self-reported as UK-based adult males. As any demographic information about the offenders was self-reported within the chat content and unconfirmed, this will be discussed in Chapter 5 (while exploring exchanges of personal information) rather than presented as factual in this data description.

Examination of the Batch 1 files during the redaction process revealed that the *Kik* file was a collection of 1-2-1 direct messaging (DM) chatlogs as well as some group-chat files. The *GigaTribe* file was found to be a chronological record of one offender (P_0463) interacting 1-2-1 with other offenders individually on the platform. This file could not be divided into individual chats, due to the chronological nature of the messages between P_0463 and other offenders simultaneously and the format the data was provided in, but it served as a 2-year record of one offender's IM interactions. Due to the length of the file, the repetitiveness in its content, and the time constraints from Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns that restricted data access, it was decided that this file would be sampled for redaction and analysis. A chronological sampling was unsuitable because the file was inconsistent in time and chat distribution (a years' worth of messages was half the length of 1 month in another year). Therefore, the sampling was conducted via number of messages (wherein the first 1,500 messages was sampled, then 1,500 messages was discarded, etc.) resulting in 4 sampled sections totalling 15,945 words.

The Batch 2 data contained 30 1-2-1 DM files and 1 multi-party group-chat with 73 offenders present (but only 4 participating in messaging as it was a group where only the

administrators shared posts). Some additional files were discarded from the Batch 2 dataset due to containing participants that self-reported being minors (CSAM-offenders who were under 18). It was decided that chats containing interactions with minors deviated too far from the rest of the data to include and appeared to also contain some OG, which would affect any conclusions drawn from this study if retained.

In line with the data-sharing agreement and ethical practice, the next step after separating the data (to one file per chatlog with uniform formatting) was to undertake a data redaction process. This involved removing any identifying information and replacing all offender usernames with numerical identifiers (e.g. P_001). A redaction key was developed and manually applied (see Appendix 8). Features that were redacted included any names, locations, names of workplaces, group-chat titles, names of illegal sites, all media file names, and URL links. Throughout the redaction, brief notes about the content of usernames were recorded alongside their redacted numerical identifiers and how many messages containing CSAM individual users sent (which was later used to analyse the usernames after redaction).

The data was not otherwise changed during this process and no spelling or punctuation standardisation was applied. Changing this would interfere with the authenticity of the language for analysis and would add in an opportunity for subjectivity. All data examples presented in subsequent chapters are in their original forms with redaction, and this redaction is identifiable as being within square brackets (e.g. 'I'm [first name]'). Where essential for comprehension, words that are omitted may be added in examples also within square brackets. When interactions between multiple users are shown in tabled examples, the offenders' usernames are included in italics before their corresponding messages. When extracts are included, the name of the source file is also provided (whereas in-text or tabled examples will not include this for brevity).

During the redaction process, initial observations from the dataset were noted down in terms of themes, types of interactions, and purposes of offender groups. Following redaction, the

files were reviewed by the project's supervisor to ensure that they were in line with the data-sharing agreement and were approved by the data controller after verifying no identifiers remained. The data was subsequently exported to another secure server for analysis and was transferred into an *NVivo* project (which was saved securely, accessible only by the researcher and project supervisor). The specifications of the *NVivo* version used (R1) can be found in Appendix 9. The procedure for coding files in *NVivo* consisted of opening a file, using *NVivo*'s auto-coding function to create cases for each user participating, and then manually coding the file against the coding book being applied. Following analysis, reports were extracted from the software which captured all data examples coded to the coding books as well as their frequency counts. Matrix coding query reports were produced, which showed data that was coded across two frameworks (e.g. attitudes and stance).

4.2. Analysis

As discussed in this chapter thus far, the initial coding book for the thematic analysis was devised through both inductive data-driven and theoretical analyst-driven approaches – guided by initial observations from the data and the thematic categories used by Woodhams et al. (2021). The coding taxonomies applied to the data in stage two of the analysis (e.g. community roles) were also developed following existing research but many were adapted to this data type (e.g. legitimisation). Some analysis tools already had established taxonomies that could be applied without adaptation (e.g. speech acts), while others had to be developed bottom-up from the literature (e.g. stancetaking and openings/closings). All adaptations to taxonomies were the result of the same iterative coding and revision process used for the thematic framework, following Braun and Clarke's (2006:87) six phases of analysis: (1) 'familiarising yourself with your data', (2) 'generating initial codes', (3) 'searching for themes', (4) 'reviewing themes', (5) 'defining and naming themes', and (6) 'producing the report' (the last being a stage after data analysis has taken place). In the second, fourth, and fifth stages, themes and coding categories were checked with the project's supervisor as well as the fourth reviewing stage involving a trained second analyst to address reliability concerns.

The initial thematic categories were created as hierarchal parent and child nodes in *NVivo* and tested out on a pilot file. The pilot file, comprising 5.9% of the total dataset, was selected due to it being a longer file (but by no means the longest) and a 1-2-1 DM chatlog from *Kik* like the majority of the dataset. Common topics noticed throughout the redaction process had been observed in the file, so it was deemed appropriate for the pilot.

Throughout the coding of the pilot file, questions and possible framework adaptations were noted down and reviewed, which led to the additions of some sub-themes and the revision of some terminology choices. Themes were defined with specificity and the appropriate nomenclature was decided upon. Guest et al. (2014:11) outlined this constantly evolving process, explaining that 'a codebook, while systematic, is iterative; a codebook is never really finalized until the last of the text has been coded'. Once the framework had reached a saturation point and phases 1-5 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide were completed, the thematic analysis coding could begin in full on the remaining files and the fourth stage revisited throughout.

Two additional changes were made during the main body of the coding process. In order to discuss specifically access routes to the community, an 'Access' node was required under the 'In-Group Community Building' node. Thus, there was some double coding across the 'Online Criminal Access' node and this newer one. The former node consisted of coding for access to any form of online criminal activity (such as CSAM, OG, victims, the dark-web, etc...). However, the Community Building Access node included mainly coding for gaining introductions to other offenders, names of group-chats, invitations to private message other offenders, and how to gain entry to offender groups. Double coding in *NVivo* is when one unit of analysis is coded to multiple nodes: for example, if one message contains an offender recounting past contact abuse they committed, this would be coded for both Sexual Identity Construction and Offline Criminal Activity. This does not affect the coding frequency counts and it sometimes occurred when two nodes overlapped semantically, such as these Access nodes. The second change related to the In-Group

and Out-Group sub-themes within the Community Building theme. These initially contained all of the same child-nodes, but those which were not applicable to the Out-Group (e.g. community roles) were eventually removed as the coding book developed. The coding was completed against the finalised thematic analysis framework (see Appendix 10) and reports were drawn, as in Braun and Clarke's (2006) sixth phase.

The thematic analysis acted as a guide to aid an understanding of the dataset and a sampling process for undertaking the subsequent CMDA. Groupings of themes which related back to areas of interest established with law enforcement and the literature review were gathered together to form the four main chapters of analysis: Chapter 4 covering A Bird's Eye View of the dataset through the thematic analysis; Chapter 5 on Criminal Activity and Security; Chapter 6 on Constructing a Community; and Chapter 7 on Social Identity and Ideology. Following the thematic results discussion in Chapter 4 (which begins to address RQ1), Chapter 5 provides an overview of the offenders' online and offline criminal activities as well as the offender's risk assessment and trust practices. In this chapter, coding books for self- and other-oriented facework, speech acts, and self-disclosure were applied alongside coding books of inductive, thematic subtypes for crimes, crime access methods, motivations for crimes, and security measures (to begin addressing RQ2).

Chapter 6 is concerned with how these communities are formed and participated in (predominantly addressing RQ2). It discusses how offenders access these communities, build relationships with one another, and perform their member identities (beginning to address RQ3). The coding books applied in these studies included speech acts, self- and other-oriented facework, and stance; as well as inductive, thematic subtypes for community roles, community rules, slang, and openings/closings. Chapter 7 is focused on the ideologies proliferating in the community and the normalisation of paedophilia (addressing RQ3). This is conducted through analyses of offender attitudes and how they construct sexual identities. The coding books applied in this chapter included those for stance, self- and other-oriented facework, legitimisation, speech acts, propaganda, and

stylistic devices. This is accompanied by inductive, thematic coding books for attitude types, othering, sexualisation subtypes, and sexual interest subtypes. The discourse analysis tools applied throughout will be evaluated to answer RQ4 and conclusions of this are discussed in Chapter 8 Section 2.4.

5. Ethical Considerations

5.1. Research Ethics

Grant and MacLeod (2016:61) astutely noted 'it is hard to think of a dataset that is more ethically sensitive than conversations between paedophiles and their victims' – this also extends to conversations between solely paedophiles. Thus, many ethical considerations needed to be made in the conception and execution of this project: from good ethical practice in the data handling and research methods, to the ethics of studying paedophiles, and considerations about researcher wellbeing. Firstly, ethical approval was sought for this research project from the Swansea University Research and Integrity Board, which was granted after laying out the ethics measures taken that will be outlined here and in the subsequent section (5.2). Downes et al. (2014) noted broadly that ethical approval for studies using sensitive data has been harder and harder to get, affecting how much evidence can be produced from studies in these areas and consequently how informed policy makers are when making crucial decisions.

Downes et al. (2014) also discussed the necessity of confidentiality and safeguarding in domestic violence research, referring to the importance of anonymising identifying information like names and storing sensitive data in secure locations. Similarly, good ethical practice and the requirements of the data owners (law enforcement) in this project dictated that the present dataset had to be fully anonymised before analysis could take place. This perspective was echoed in Grant and MacLeod's (2020:53) OCSAE research where they stressed that 'in addition to our concern for protection of victims in the research we also wish to give weight to appropriate protection for suspects and convicted offenders'. They justified this by explaining how 'the intent of our analyses is

to draw some research benefit out of the conversations we analyse and in this regard no additional benefit is achieved through the naming of otherwise anonymous or low profile offenders' (2020:53). Data anonymisation is the norm in this field due to the highly sensitive nature of the content; the risks of re-traumatising victims; and the risks of endangering on-going cases or revealing personal information. For a similar reason, the careful storage of the data is also important so that it cannot be viewed by anyone not working on the research. Hence the data for this project was stored in a Trusted Research Environment (TRE) at Swansea University until the data had been fully anonymised and could be extracted to another secure server within the University (also with restricted access and password protection).

As the offenders producing language in the chatlogs did not know their data would then be used for any research studies (due to it being naturally occurring chats), many of the issues with data collection bias and experimental data (e.g. the researcher influencing language production) are not relevant here. However, elements still to consider are that of objectivity during data analysis and good practice in presenting findings. These were addressed through reflexive practices in creating and using coding frameworks, secondary reviewers checking coding, and a sound theoretical base for coding decisions. Issues of informed consent from online subjects is a growing quandary in areas where 'such consent is manifestly impracticable', like big data projects or those using anonymous internet forums for example (Franzke et al., 2020:10). Given the nature of the dataset containing no metadata and being gathered by law enforcement not the researcher, there was no viable way to seek consent from the offenders present. Consent was instead provided by the data owner and alternative means of protecting the identities of participants were employed, e.g. anonymisation (see Franzke et al., 2020).

More specific ethical concerns with this project arose in the moral quandaries of conducting research in this field at all. One could argue that studying paedophiles could feed into any desires for fame or recognition they may have – but this particular issue does not seem to have

been addressed in existing research, possibly due to deciding that the benefits of studying paedophiles outweighs this negative overwhelmingly (with anonymisation of data aiding this). This type of concern fits into what Georgakopoulou (2017:179) described as 'ethical discomforts and clashes' – something she noted when her analysis of a political event on social media appeared higher on the search results for the event than results about the perpetrators' subsequent imprisonment (regarding an attack on female MPs in Greece by a right-wing male MP-candidate). Some may take the view that research such as this, seeking to understand and outline what takes place within online paedophile communities, may inadvertently provide an offending handbook for paedophiles – this concern was mitigated through careful consideration of examples provided and choices made during the redaction process (such as removing website titles, group names, and search terms).

Another concern could be that research like this project assists with the normalisation of paedophilia. However, the consistent framing of CSA as a serious problem that needs to be addressed, the condemnation of the abuse of victims, and the consistent referral to the offenders as criminals and abusers should mitigate this possibility sufficiently. Logistical impacts on law enforcement are another factor to consider in this type of research, such as whether the project could reveal policing tactics and thus hamper their efforts. In Grant and MacLeod's (2020:52) data-sharing agreement for law enforcement-provided CSA data, the focus was 'mostly on the security of the data and the protection of policing tactics used in this domain'. However, due to the absence of case files/metadata, this is not a concern here.

Scourfield and Coffey (2006) raised a further ethical issue while discussing a particularly unique dilemma within the field of studying child sex offenders – that of the researcher being accused of being a 'paedophile'. They detailed an instance involving a social services manager, who was working with one of the authors on a potential ethnographic study, voicing their concern over the possibility that the researcher could be themselves a paedophile using the study to gain access

to others. This incident raised an interest in the authors to examine the issues researchers face attempting to conduct studies in this field and what the effect was of the researcher's gender in this instance (who was male) – as well as highlighting the emotional impacts for the researcher of that line of questioning and suspicion. Okami (2002) additionally noted that some outside of the field assume that research areas are always chosen for personal reasons and thus a CSA researcher must be a victim of abuse or a paedophile themselves. These studies essentially reveal a further well-being concern for the researcher – that of receiving stigma as a result of conducting this research. A similar incident occurred during the present project when an acquaintance questioned the motivations for the research and asked if the researcher was 'for or against' paedophilia. While a disconcerting question to be asked of anyone, this may take a particular toll on an individual who regularly views and closely analyses sensitive/distressing data in order to contribute towards preventing CSA. The methods implemented to ensure researcher wellbeing are explored in the next section.

5.2. Researcher Wellbeing

Researcher wellbeing was a high-priority ethical consideration in this project due to the sensitive nature of the dataset and its graphic content. Through a review of the implications for the researcher in sexuality and sexual issues studies, Poole et al. (2004:85) found that 'it is evident that the consequences of carrying out sexuality research are typically negative', suggesting that many have experiences that 'have proved detrimental on both a professional and personal level'. Similarly, Reeve (2023:889), who looked at Internet Child Exploitation (ICE) investigators and counter-terrorism research, noted that 'human assessors and COs [case officers] are extensively and repeatedly exposed to material that has been deemed to not only be illegal, but also harmful'. However, 'the impact of ICE investigation on investigator wellbeing is currently under-researched and poorly understood' (Wortley et al., 2014:7). In fact, Dayal et al. (2018), who examined the ethical considerations in 51 child sexual violence studies, observed that not one study discussed

safeguards used to address or minimise the negative emotional or physical effects on the wellbeing of the study teams. Steps may have been taken in these studies but, if so, they were not mentioned.

Coles and Mudaly (2010:56) argued that, though ‘there is increasing recognition of the value and benefit of research in sensitive areas such as violence and abuse’, there has been little research done into the wellbeing of researchers in this area (or indeed other professionals/law enforcement) in comparison to participants. Notably, the overwhelming majority of discussions about the effects on the researcher of undertaking studies into CSA were concerned with the effects of interviews with participants/victims – or entirely about the participants’ wellbeing. This is not to take away from the importance of wellbeing studies on participants and victims as this too is paramount, but the effects on researchers have been somewhat overlooked. In the instances that these impacts were considered, the research was usually specific to interview data and did not extend to self-produced data by offenders or written accounts.

Despite the gaps in the field, some research has discussed the harmful effects of working with CSA (or similar) data on the researcher or, more commonly, law enforcement officer. The negative impacts found included ‘secondary trauma’ (Coles and Mudaly, 2010:63; Duran and Woodhams, 2022:905), sometimes called ‘vicarious trauma’ (Bell et al., 2003:463), and ‘burnout’ (2003:464). A study by Wortley et al. (2014:2) found that the ICE participants in their survey ‘were generally free from psychological, social or physical problems that may be attributed to their potentially traumatising work roles’. However, there were a small number of participants who ‘returned clinically significant profiles for posttraumatic stress’ and reported adverse effects (2014:2). The authors concluded that, despite the lack of harm reported in the majority of their participants, working with CSA data should not be seen as risk-free. Reeve’s (2023:890) more recent study echoed these conclusions as well as finding that ICE investigators reported feeling ‘nausea, sadness, anger, frustration, shock, pity, being mentally drained and demoralized’ and desensitised when looking at data.

In a recent study, Duran and Woodhams (2022) investigated the impacts of traumatic material (e.g. CSA, murder, terrorism, human trafficking, etc.) on law enforcement professionals in analytical and secondary investigative roles. They concluded that it was 'evident that these secondary investigators and analysts are at significant risk of developing STS [secondary traumatic stress] (e.g., uncertainty about the world, loss of trust, hyper vigilance, cognitive avoidance of situations, precautionary behaviors, negative emotions, and recurring thoughts) and burnout (e.g., cynicism, hopelessness, and sleep problems)' (2022:6). The authors observed that 'constant exposure to distressing content was negatively influencing participants' thoughts and feelings about the world, home, and social life' to the point that 'some perceived danger to be everywhere' (2022:10).

Having established that this kind of research can have a negative impact on researcher health and wellbeing, the next step was to examine what coping and support mechanisms have been suggested to mitigate this. For example, Coles and Mudaly (2010:65) described themselves using 'field notes, reflective journals and peer groups' to understand the emotional impacts of CSA data on them as researchers, as well as mentioning limits to time dealing with data to minimise the cumulative effects of this. Having a mechanism for minimising data exposure as well as considering the setting where data is worked on are important aspects of supporting researcher wellbeing. Dickson-Swift et al. (2007:342) commented that 'researcher vulnerability may be related to the setting of the research, particularly if the research is taking place in people's homes'.

In line with the data-sharing agreement and following these ethical practice suggestions, the data for this project was never analysed from home. The data was accessed on the University campus in secure rooms which enabled a separation of home-life and viewing the chatlogs. This access was especially important during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, as research suggests home-working during this time had negative effects on law enforcement professionals undertaking similar sensitive data analyses (see Duran and Woodhams, 2023). In addition to this,

time limits were set for the amount of time spent working with data each week. These limits changed throughout the project via regular self-assessment and discussion with the supervisor. Duran and Woodhams (2022:913) found that ‘high caseloads with time-related targets [...] were causing mental and physical exhaustion and sleep problems’ in the law enforcement professionals they interviewed – highlighting the importance of always maintaining flexible deadlines and time-management with the data analysis so that pressure to meet targets and increase exposure can be avoided. Time spent in secure rooms with other researchers was also prioritised to minimise lone-working (though this was not always possible due to Covid-19 restrictions).

Alongside controlling data exposure, ICE investigators in Wortley et al.’s (2014:4) study suggested ‘concentrating on the procedural and analytical aspects of the job’ was advantageous: e.g. maintaining a focus on the linguistics-researcher perspective. Reeve (2023:891) proposed one way of looking at the coping mechanisms suggested for ICE investigators: in terms of ‘the Team’, ‘the Role’, and ‘the Individual’. They explained that ‘the Team’ was the group of ‘individuals who perform the same or similar role, in the same environment, who develop a culture together’; whereas ‘the Role’ involved ICE officers finding pride and meaning in their work and focusing on the positive outcomes of their role like preventing future crimes (2023:891). Finally, ‘the Individual’ referred to the various coping mechanisms that could be employed by the investigator in both work and home. These included healthier mechanisms like exercise, hobbies, ‘distraction, forgetting, and physical health as a way to bolster mental health, and promoting compartmentalization between the working day and home-time’ (2023:892); as well as unhealthy mechanisms participants discussed like alcoholism or overeating.

Professional help, good supervision, and support networks were regularly discussed in studies in this area as beneficial mechanisms. Bell et al. (2003:468) asserted that ‘effective supervision is an essential component of the prevention and healing of vicarious trauma’ (2003:468) for CSA researchers. Dickson-Swift et al. (2007:344) suggested that ‘researchers and research

supervisors should also ensure that researchers are well armed with appropriate contact details of possible sources of professional advice and support for those participants who may need ongoing therapeutic support'. The importance of access to professional counselling resources for CSA researchers was echoed by many other studies (e.g. Bell et al., 2003; Poole et al., 2004; Wortley et al., 2014; Dayal et al., 2018; Reeve, 2023; Markwei and Tetteh, 2021). Alongside professional help, personal support networks were praised, whether from family and friends or from colleagues engaging in 'gallows humour' together (Wortley et al., 2014:4). The participants in Dickson-Swift et al.'s (2007:345) study on sensitive data stressed how important informal peer-support was to them, particularly emotional support, and support from family members – but the authors added that, 'while access to an informal network is valuable, researchers should not rely solely on family, friends and colleagues to provide support'.

The reliance on a support network of family and friends has been called into question by further studies, with Coles and Mudaly (2010:65) calling this recommendation 'problematic'. They pointed out that prioritising protecting participants' identities and privacy means it is difficult to discuss the topic with an informal non-work support group. Johnstone (2005) astutely explained that 'the ethical obligations of researchers may be in tension with their legal obligations'. Other complications emerge due to concerns about 'traumatising family members (particularly children) and friends' (Coles and Mudaly, 2010:65), which can impact on the effectiveness of personal support networks. Reeve (2023:892) reiterated this point, saying that while 'supportive family and friends is a critical coping mechanism [...], it is unlikely that ICE officers pursue this due to the distressing nature of the role and the desire to protect others from it'.

One way in which these concerns were addressed in the present project was regular access to other researchers working with similar material, through weekly well-being meetings and shared workspaces. This allowed for informal debriefing to take place amongst researchers, without the fear of traumatising family/friends not familiar with the type of data, and facilitated discussions

of effective coping mechanisms. These working conditions also allowed for use of some of the coping strategies discussed in Duran and Woodhams (2022), such as taking breaks; emotional detachment from the material; awareness and preparedness; compartmentalisation; peer support from co-workers; and relaxing activities. Table 3.3 details the wellbeing measures that were implemented in line with the recommendations by Coles and Mudaly (2010:66-67), whose suggestions also aligned with the conclusions of the other research papers mentioned in this section.

Table 3.3: Wellbeing measures.

Recommendation by Coles and Mudaly (2010:66-67):	Was it met?	How?
Arrange supervision with someone who is aware of and can respond effectively to research-related trauma and its effects.	Yes	Formal and informal in-person and online supervision/debrief sessions were attended with the project supervisor, who has extensive expertise in this area, throughout.
Examine literature related to the topic of research with a particular focus on the potential impact on researchers. List the potential researcher impacts.	Yes	Ethical considerations were made and literature on this subject was reviewed while applying for ethical approval prior to starting the project, while planning data analysis, and while planning the methodology (as shown in this chapter).
Undertake methodology training paying particular attention to possible effects on the researcher.	Somewhat	Training in analytical tools was undertaken alongside vetting and checks for accessing and redacting the data in the TRE.
Keep workloads manageable at the time of undertaking the research.	Yes	Any additional roles taken on during the research, such as research assistant roles, met all standards set by Swansea University for part-time work (not exceeding 6 hours a week). Additionally, self-imposed deadlines for work completion and thesis writing were regularly reviewed and adjusted with the supervisor to ensure additional stresses and pressures were not present.
Identify and list researcher safety strategies in ethics applications.	Yes	An ethical application was created and approved.
Prepare family and friends for possible physical and emotional impact of the research.	Yes	Personal support groups were informed broadly of the topic of research and possibility of wellbeing impacts.
Limit exposure to interviews, transcription and analysis, for example, one interview per day.	Yes	Aforementioned limits on amounts of time spent working with data each week were adhered to.

Build in debriefing and time out after each research interview and/or analysis.	Yes	During data analysis, regular breaks were taken, screens were switched off or breaks were taken in a different room to ensure a complete separation from the data. Personal wellbeing steps were taken such as keeping up sociable hobbies. See earlier description of debriefs.
Ensure ongoing formal supervision while undertaking these tasks.	Yes	See earlier description of supervision.
Use peer support by setting up a peer research network or PhD support group.	Yes	Lone working on data was minimised by working in a shared office with other researchers viewing sensitive data. This peer-support group met for weekly online wellbeing sessions during Covid-19 lockdowns and had in-person debriefs during the data analysis period for this project.
Presentations to conferences and workshops help to process and manage the emotional impact of the research.	Yes	Presentations at conferences were delivered, both as a panel of similar research projects and as an individual, throughout the project.

6. Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology for the thesis, outlining the dataset used; the approaches and frameworks deployed; the procedure; and the ethical concerns which were recognised and addressed. The dataset of offender-to-offender interaction chatlogs were analysed on *NVivo* through a two-stage process which began with thematic analysis through an inductively developed coding book (influenced in part by Woodhams et al. (2021), and was followed by a qualitative CMDA (Herring, 2004; 2013) which investigated different aspects of the community using a range of tools to answer the research questions of the thesis. The next chapter (4) delves into the results of the thematic analysis to reveal what activities and discussions took place within the chatlogs. It also considers what these themes mean for the classification of the community (relative to RQ1) and shows how the themes guided the subsequent discourse analysis discussed in Chapters 5-7.

Chapter 4: A Bird's-Eye View

“What I need is perspective. [...] Perspective is necessary. Otherwise there are only two dimensions. Otherwise you live with your face squashed up against a wall, everything a huge foreground”

— Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on providing an overview of the content within the dataset, discerned through a thematic analysis. It also primarily addresses the first research question of the thesis – determining what types of communities these are, whether that is Communities of Practice, Affinity Spaces, or something new. The concepts of CoPs and AS were discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.2.1, where their definitions and applications were reviewed. Additionally, arguments for and against approaching online paedophile communities through these lenses were briefly evaluated. Throughout this thesis, aspects of the online paedophile community in this dataset which impact this debate will be identified. A list of features (in Appendix 11) was amalgamated from existing research for each community type, including their shared characteristics. For CoPs, as Lave and Wenger (1991) provided no list of features, this was developed from features included in Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999), Eckert (2006), Roberts (2006), Li et al. (2009), and Wenger (1998). For AS, this list was predominantly sourced from Gee (2005), as well as later additions from Davies (2006) and Gee and Hayes (2012). Evidence which supports or challenges the classification of the paedophile community as either AS or CoP (through presence, absence, or variation on these features) will be evaluated where applicable in this chapter and the rest of the thesis. This chapter begins with an overview of the thematic analysis results, before delving further into these themes and how they influenced the areas of interest for Chapters 5-7.

2. Overview of Thematic Results

“Climb the mountain just a little bit to test that it’s a mountain. From the top of the mountain, you cannot see the mountain.”

— Frank Herbert, *Dune*

The first stage in analysing this online paedophile community data was the application of the thematic analysis coding book to the chatlogs. As discussed in Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 3, these themes were developed during the data redaction stage of this project, tested on a sample chatlog, and finalised during the data coding process. The main themes (referred to in the *NVivo* coding software as “parent nodes”) were ‘Community Building’, ‘Sexual Identity Construction’, ‘Behaviours’, ‘Risk Assessments’, and ‘Redacted Media’. The Redacted Media theme was used to capture CSAM trading and any other media (images, videos, URLs, etc) present. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 4.1, Redacted Media messages often included multiple URLs/images or appeared to be a link to a folder of multiple files – but were redacted as just ‘[image]’ or ‘[URLs]’ due to not having this metadata, so their frequency counts would be inaccurate for the actual number of media being shared (which is unknown). Thus, the frequency counts for Redacted Media will not be discussed in this section as results. This leaves the other four main themes.

The Community Building theme, which contains 21 sub-themes (referred to in the *NVivo* coding software as “child nodes”), encompassed actions and talk that built up relationships and community between offenders; created connections and established networks amongst them; and constructed shared group identities. The Sexual Identity Construction theme, which has 13 sub-themes, captured instances of offenders discussing sexual topics or sexualisation in any form. The Behaviours theme (with 10 sub-themes) was created to include any activities or actions taken by the offenders on and offline, criminal or otherwise. Lastly, the Risk Assessments theme (containing 6 sub-themes) comprised any discussions by offenders of risks, security measures, evading detection by law enforcement, and advice on this topic. The full coding book, including all sub-themes and

definitions, can be found in Appendix 10. Table 4.1 shows the frequency counts for the four main themes as well as what percentage out of the 97 files contained coding for them.

Table 4.1: Coding counts and file-coverage percentages for each theme.

Parent nodes:	Percentage of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Community Building	100%	3,250
Sexual Identity Construction	96%	2,754
Behaviours	89%	860
Risk Assessments	53%	354

These results indicated a strong salience across chatlogs for the first three themes (appearing in $\geq 89\%$ of files), and a lesser salience for Risk Assessments (which appeared in just over half). However, Community Building and Sexual Identity Construction were notably more frequent than the Behaviours and Risk Assessments comparatively speaking (with the former two themes appearing over 2,700 times, and the latter two less than 900). Coding for the Community Building theme appeared in 100% of the 97 chatlogs – which is somewhat surprising due to the diversity of these data files. Though many contained lengthy detailed conversations, a few of the files contained only very brief exchanges of messages (with the shortest file being just four messages and seven words) and even these contained some evidence of Community Building (e.g. Sociability through greetings and Exchanges of Personal Information like ‘How old r u’). As well as being the most widespread theme across files, it was also the most frequently occurring out of the four themes. Sexual Identity Construction and Behaviours were similarly widespread across 96% and 89% of the chatlogs, respectively, but there was a considerable difference between their total number of codes. This suggests that, though Behaviours was almost as popular a topic of conversation amongst offenders as sexual themes, those conversations were substantially shorter in length or less engaged with. This conclusion is supported by the commonality of lengthy sexual gratification discussions between offenders in the dataset, including sexual fantasy storytelling and multi-party interactions concerning CSAM content.

Risk Assessments coding was found in 53% of the chatlog files; less than the other themes, but still showing this to be a common topic of conversation in the online paedophile community. Offenders often indirectly discussed security measures by demonstrating they had taken actions themselves, such as maintaining anonymity or providing reassurances they were not law enforcement. They also explicitly discuss this topic, whether by providing advice or instructions to others on security measures or by chastising those who were careless. It is logical that Risk Assessments would be a common theme in these communities due to their criminal nature and the illegal activity occurring/being discussed in them. That almost half the files did not contain this theme is therefore surprising, but may be due to security measures being automatically taken by many offenders and so it may only be discussed when concerns are raised or advice given. As stated by Huikuri (2022a:29), 'all members of darknet communities of paedophiles share one distinguishing characteristic: distrustfulness', and this appears to also be applicable to this clear-web dataset. Offenders partake in the online paedophile community at their own risk and so part of what keeps these communities afloat is their avoidance of identification, their secrecy, and knowledge of how to reduce risks to themselves.

The Behaviours theme, which predominantly contained coding for criminal activities, was unsurprisingly present in the vast majority of the chatlogs. Criminal behaviour was discussed by offenders who were amongst other things planning crimes, engaging in CSAM-trading interactions, and disclosing past abuse. Additionally, non-criminal activity was captured in this theme – the sort of day-to-day activity that would likely be present in non-offender interactions and small talk. CSAM trading is amongst those criminal activities discussed and undertaken in the chatlogs. Although Redacted Media was not explicitly coded under the Behaviours theme (unlike requests for CSAM, disclosures of viewing CSAM, or storage of it etc, which were coded there), this is the theme which relates most to it. Table 4.2 shows what percentage of the 97 files contained media that was redacted, whether CSAM or media that was purportedly not CSAM. The small number of Other Media contained instances of offenders sending mundane or non-sexual media which was

determined by the descriptions offenders provided of this media or context-clues. Sexual media, on the other hand, appeared in 67% of the files and, although the exact number is unknown, the number of individual images/videos being shared was in the thousands.

Table 4.2: File-coverage percentages for the redacted media theme.

Parent and child nodes:		Percentage of files codes appear in:
Redacted Media		67%
	Sexual Media	67%
	Other Media	5%

The Sexual Identity Construction and Community Building themes were the most common in this dataset. Offenders discussed sexual topics often: whether through comments on CSAM being shared, recounting of past experiences committing sexual abuse, sexual fantasies for sexual gratification, or debating sexual preferences. This theme also specifically concerned offenders constructing sexual identities, which were realised by these sexual discussions, and involved constructing identities not just for themselves but for each other, out-group individuals, and child-victims. The Community Building theme also contained offenders constructing their identities, but this time as paedophile community members. This prevalent theme comprised of coding for the in-group, who were the online paedophile community/paedophiles, and the out-group (non-paedophiles). In-group Community Building amongst offenders captured instances of them establishing connections, maintaining and regulating their community, cementing membership identities, and expressing opinions on the community. Out-group community building referred to when offenders constructed the identities of non-paedophiles and wider society.

In the remainder of this chapter the thematic analysis results will be explored in more detail. The various sub-theme will also be discussed to build up a picture of the content of these chatlogs and thus the salient themes in them. These results will be presented in three sections which align with the three subsequent analysis chapters (5-7), grouped by which themes will be further explored through linguistic methods in each. The first chapter, and likewise section of this chapter, will be centred around criminal activity (behaviours) and risk assessment practices. The next will look

at community, and the last will be on sexual identities, ideology, and attitudes. The three sections (and chapters) do not align 1-2-1 with the four main themes but draw upon the relevant aspects of them to the chapters which will be outlined in each section. For the complete list of thematic coding frequency counts shown as they were grouped in the thematic analysis coding book during the coding stage, see Appendix 12.

2.1. Criminal Activity and Security

The themes that will be explored in greater depth and linguistically analysed in Chapter 5 can be seen in the tree diagram in Figure 4.1. The chapter will investigate all sub-themes from the Risk Assessments theme, all sub-themes from Behaviours, and one sub-theme from In-Group Community Building ('Exchanges of Personal Information'). There is a clear link between the chapter's subject matter and the Behaviours and Risk Assessment themes (of criminality and security measures). Though perhaps less obvious, the Exchanges of Personal Information sub-theme also strongly ties to the chapter as it is an element of trust-building between offenders (and thus a risk-taking practice).

Figure 4.1: Diagram of thematic analysis parent and child nodes relevant to Criminal Activity and Security.

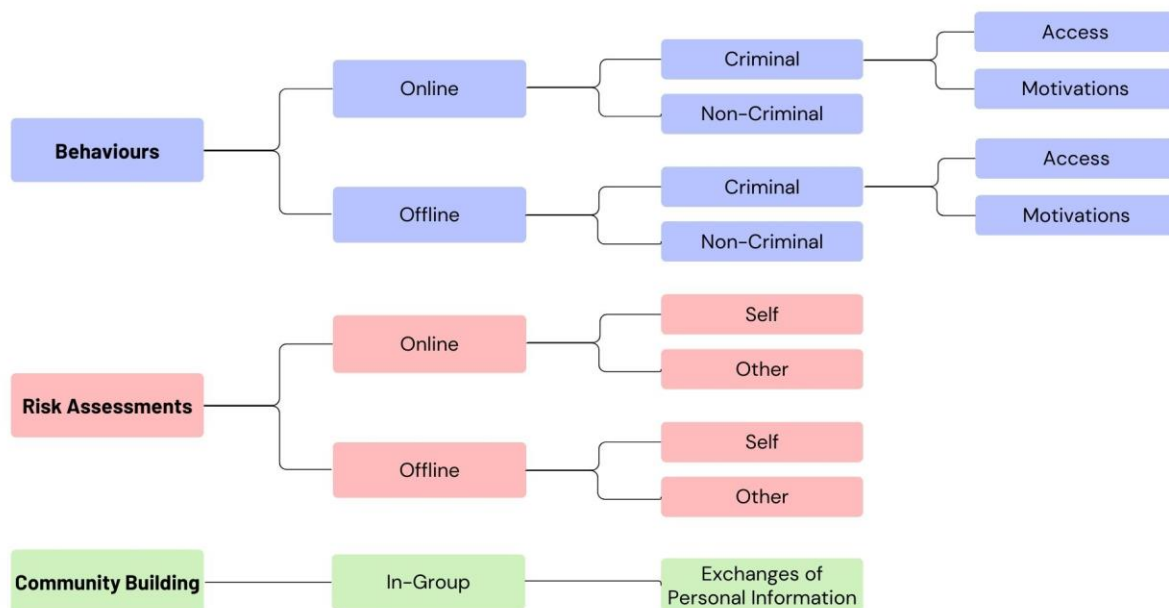


Table 4.3 shows the coding frequency counts for these sub-themes and what percentage of the 97 chatlogs coding for them appeared in. Due to how NVivo aggregates coding counts for parent and child nodes (themes and sub-themes here), all sub-themes at the different levels do not add up to be the count for the main theme. Therefore, coding counts for sub-themes may appear to be more than the overall totals for themes. This is not erroneous, but because of the software’s aggregation which includes all references coded directly to the node and the first-level child nodes (but not further), as well as counting the same reference coded multiple times as multiple counts.

Table 4.3: Coding counts for thematic analysis parent and child nodes relevant to Criminal Activity and Security.

Thematic Analysis nodes:		No. of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Behaviours		89%	860
Online		86%	549
	Criminal	86%	531
	Access	39%	184
	Motivations	27%	63
	Non-Criminal	6%	18
Offline		46%	311
	Criminal	34%	196
	Access	27%	91
	Motivations	16%	65
	Non-Criminal	27%	115
Risk Assessments		53%	354
Online		49%	311
	Self	48%	188
	Other	27%	123
Offline		14%	43
	Self	13%	33
	Other	8%	10
Community Building/ In-Group			
	Exchanges of Personal Information	68%	514

Offline Behaviours and Offline Risk Assessments were the least salient sub-themes. It is expected that these themes would garner less coding than their online counterparts given that the data comes from online chatlogs of offenders interacting via social media. However, there were still

discussions of offline activities across nearly half of the chatlogs and offline risk assessment practices appeared in 14% of the chatlogs. Learning about risks and how to implement security measures was one of the core topics present in online paedophile community interactions (Quayle and Taylor, 2002; Chiang, 2020b). As can be seen in Table 4.3, the Offline Risk Assessments sub-themes were split into ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ sub-themes. The coding was divided between offline security pertaining to personal risk to the speaker and that pertaining to risks for others. There were around three times as many instances of concerns about personal offline risks than for others. Table 4.4 shows a summary of coding for these themes, broken down into risks mentioned and security measures taken/advised.

Table 4.4: A summary of self and other offline risk assessments.

Risks:	Present in Offline Risk Assessments	
	Self	Other
Fearing arrest, the sex-offenders register, or prison (like other known offenders).	✓	✓
Travel, airport security, customs.	✓	✓
Meeting up with other offenders offline.	✓	✓
Being caught doing contact abuse or other paedophilic activities by others.	✓	✓
Private information shared between offenders getting shared more widely (e.g. images of family, appearance).	✓	
Keeping paedophilia secret from partner/wife/husband/family.	✓	
Viewing CSAM in public, on public transport, or at work.	✓	
Risk of victim speaking up.	✓	
Security Measures:		
Taking steps to limit visible signs of harm to victims of contact abuse to avoid detection.	✓	
Choosing victims less likely to report abuse (e.g. too young to understand).	✓	

Isolating victims to reduce risk of being caught doing contact abuse.	✓	
Not saving CSAM to devices (phones, laptops) or using memory sticks instead.		✓
Not being a stereotypical offender profile (e.g. young offenders are less likely to be suspected).		✓

Offenders expressed concerns about several aspects of their criminal behaviours risking detection by law enforcement. Fears about possession of CSAM or others finding out about their online activities were raised, sometimes in terms of when they were viewing CSAM around others (e.g. on public transport or in the family home) and sometimes in terms of travelling through airport security in possession of the material. There were also discussions of contact abuse, whether via offenders recounting experiences or fantasising about future actions, and how this poses risks of observation by others or victims disclosing the abuse. For example, one offender suggested to another that public swimming baths were a good place to approach potential victims and view partially clothed children – but the other offender expressed concerns because they ‘get boned so easily’ (physically aroused) and would likely be caught. The fear of arrest, imprisonment, and being placed upon the sex-offenders register was also raised by members of the community, often in the context of discussing other apprehended offenders.

Offenders took steps to protect themselves from these risks, which were discernible in both their actions and explicit discussions of security measures. In the offline context, offenders talked about how they limited risks to themselves when doing contact abuse by victim selection practices that chose victims less likely to report abuse (such as very young victims who would not understand what is being done to them) and using coercive control to isolate victims from friends/family. This also included offenders abusing their own family members, to take advantage of their position, and limiting any visible signs of the abuse on the victim to evade discovery. Offline

Risk Assessment coding was predominantly concerned with contact abuse as well as offenders having their paedophilia revealed to family or law enforcement.

The Offline Behaviours theme was split into Criminal (n=196 codes) and Non-Criminal Activity (n=115), with the former containing sub-themes for ‘Access’ (n=91) and ‘Motivations’ (n=65). Offline Non-Criminal Activity appeared when offenders referenced their daily activities, work, and hobbies etc., which would be commonplace in other online interactions as part of small talk. The Offline Criminal Activity theme, however, contained conversations very specific to the paedophile online community: such as disclosures of committing crimes like indecent exposure, of contact CSA, and planning to do contact abuse in future. Offenders mentioned meeting up with other paedophiles offline to view CSAM together for sexual gratification and sex between offenders. This sub-theme also included coding for individuals disclosing past abuse they themselves experienced when they were minors. The Access sub-theme, which here refers to access to enacting criminal activity offline, mostly related to proffering advice on accessing potential victims (e.g. ‘bet the [refugee] mother or father would give any [child] away to cross the fucking border’).

The Online sub-themes for Risk Assessments and Behaviours were far more salient than their Offline counterparts. There were 311 codes for online security measures and these, like the Offline sub-themes, were split between the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ considerations. Table 4.5 provides a summary of the content of this coding.

Table 4.5: A summary of self and other online risk assessments.

Risks:	Present in Online Risk Assessments		Security Measures:	Present in Online Risk Assessments	
	Self	Other		Self	Other
Fearing arrest, the sex-offenders register, or prison (like other known offenders).	✓	✓	Encryption and security on platforms and automatic chat history deletion.	✓	✓
Travel, airport security, customs.	✓	✓	Manual deletion of message history, leaving groups regularly, deleting and reinstalling apps, and making	✓	✓

			multiple accounts to cycle through and delete.		
Private information shared between offenders getting shared more widely (e.g. images of family, appearance).	✓	✓	Not saving CSAM to devices (phones, laptops) or using memory sticks instead.	✓	✓
Suspicion of other offender's unusual behaviour (e.g. being removed from groups, not reciprocating CSAM, being offline, being subdued, asking too many questions, being secretive).	✓	✓	Sharing trusted contacts with each other and discussing how long they had known them.	✓	✓
Fear of platforms and groups being monitored or infiltrated by law enforcement.	✓	✓	Asking for recommendations between offenders, like a reference.	✓	✓
Dark-web access and risks.	✓	✓	Explanations of how offenders got each other's contact information/found them.	✓	✓
Keeping paedophilia secret from partner/wife/husband/family.	✓		Dark-web and Tor anonymisation.	✓	✓
Being caught doing paedophilic activities online by others in public.	✓		Keeping CSAM in more exclusive/secure folders than other content, only sharing with vetted/known users.	✓	
Online viruses/trojans from dark-web.	✓		Having to post CSAM in groups so that they know you are not law enforcement and making a good impression on admins.	✓	
Storing/capturing images of offline abuse.	✓		Deleting/blocking suspicious users.	✓	
Risk of ostracization by less extreme offenders.	✓		Advice on how to access community platforms without risk (e.g. camera not on face on Zoom).		✓
Sharing CSAM or links from some groups to non-members can be punishable.	✓				
Needing a non-blank profile for access to some groups (e.g. risk some identifying information for access).	✓				

There was a considerable overlap between the Self and Other sub-themes as many security measures were implemented to keep the individual and the community safe simultaneously. There was also some repetition from Offline Risk Assessments as often security measures or fears involved both on and offline elements: such as storing CSAM, viewing CSAM in public, and concerns about being caught by law enforcement. Unique to these Online sub-themes were offenders expressing suspicion over other's unusual behaviour (e.g. when someone is removed from a group, not reciprocating CSAM trading, or asking too many questions). Members were also advised to block or delete suspicious users, sometimes by group-chat administrators. Furthermore, offenders worried about the anonymity and security of the dark-web (e.g. computer viruses) and about law enforcement possibly infiltrating or monitoring their online groups. Very specific risks mentioned included a fear of being ostracised by other offenders based upon their sexual preferences (if they were viewed as too 'extreme') and the prerequisite in some paedophile group-chats that some identifying information be disclosed in order to gain access (like a photograph or name).

As with the offline risks, offenders advised each other on how to mitigate these problems and the steps they took to counter them. Commonly discussed methods for anonymity were the use of platforms that enabled encryption (such as end-to-end encryption) or had functions that automatically deleted chat histories after a period of time. These were often lauded as the safest social medias or websites to use. Where this was not available, some offenders advocated for manually deleting chat histories regularly, and even having multiple accounts with different profiles to cycle through for extra levels of security. References from other offenders were also a way of building trust with one another or gaining access to groups. In the *GigaTribe* file, this was a built-in function of the platform where users could request a 'recommendation' from one user to another. Elsewhere this was done manually by offenders noting how long they had known the offender they were recommending and confirming they had previously traded CSAM (something which eliminates law enforcement). Risk assessment practices were discussed and referred to in the chatlogs more so in relation to online security than offline. Interestingly, there was not a huge difference between the

coding counts for Risk Assessments Online directed towards the security of the self or for the other – confirming that offenders regularly advised each other on security measures and looked out for the safety of their community.

Online Criminal Behaviour was the most salient individual sub-theme in the Criminal Activity and Security chapter themes, with 531 codes across 86% of the chatlogs. In stark contrast, Online Non-Criminal Behaviours were only coded for 18 times and appeared in just 6% of the chatlogs. This coding was predominantly made up of online hobbies (like gaming and music) or other legal activities. There was also some overlap with the non-sexual media theme, with users sharing online news articles. The Online Criminal Access sub-theme, which was concerned with the method for enabling the online criminal act, was coded for 184 times across 39% of the chatlogs. This theme mainly consisted of how to access, locate or store CSAM; identify victims online; and access the dark-web. Avenues for access to criminal activity on and offline will be explored in Chapter 5, which looks at victim and CSAM access methods in more detail.

It is unsurprising, given the unifying interest of users participating in this online community, that the Online Criminal Behaviour theme was so prevalent. As was covered in Chapter 2, the offenders' very participation in the online paedophile community is itself criminal because of the illegal CSAM being shared/downloaded/viewed, as well as breaches of the CA 2003 and OPA 1959. Much of the online criminal activity here related to these crimes: CSAM trading and explicit language about CSA. Other criminal activity online which was disclosed by offenders included predated victims on dating apps, soliciting CSAM from victims, livestreamed abuse, and accessing illegal sites on the dark-web.

Within the Criminal Behaviour themes are two sub-themes that focused on the offenders' criminal 'Motivations'. There were a similar number of codes for Online and Offline Motivations, 63 and 65 respectively. There was much overlap between the two Motivations themes (and thus double coding in *NVivo*) as many offenders provided their reasonings for being

paedophiles generally and did not specify that this was a motivation for contact abuse or online criminal behaviour. Self-reported motivations ranged from victim-blaming rationalisations to CSAM addiction. These claims often seemed to enable the offenders to remove their own agency from their actions, as if they did not have any choice: e.g. 'I am almost impotent without', 'I need it', and 'nothing else matters'. Some offenders also disclosed that they were themselves victims of abuse in childhood and directly named this as a reason for their sexual interests in adulthood.

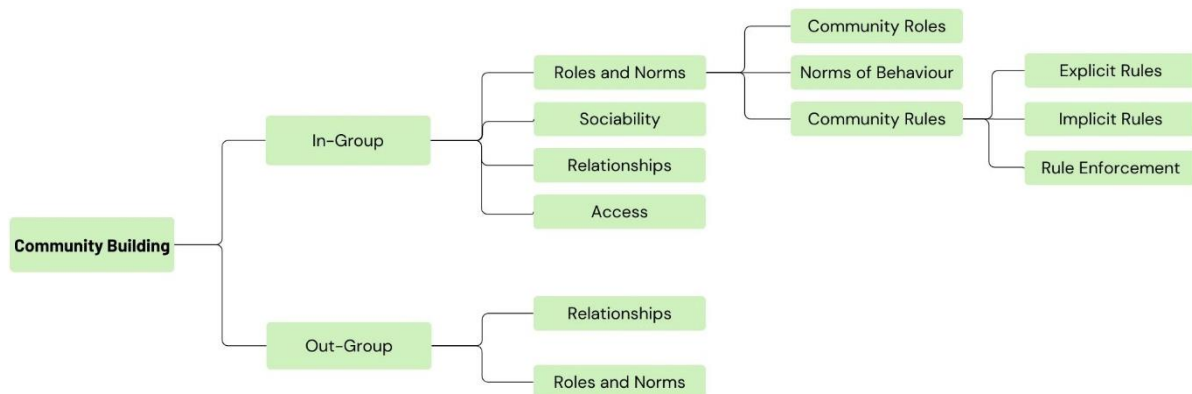
The final thematic sub-theme addressed in Chapter 5 is the Community Building sub-theme of Exchanges of Personal Information. This theme emerged partially from the 'suspects demographics' theme used by Woodhams et al. (2021:5), as well as preliminary observations of the dataset, and got its nomenclature from a similar theme in Lorenzo-Dus et al.'s (2020) OGDM. The Exchanges of Personal Information sub-theme refers to when offenders state/discuss/request personal, demographic, or identifying information (e.g. age, gender, location, name, employment, appearance, contact information, or relationship status). Such disclosures in the context of an illegal (perceived to be anonymous) online paedophile community demonstrated notable trust and relationship-building practices between users. It revealed the offenders' willingness to connect with one another and put them at risk from law enforcement in order to become part of the community and reap the subsequent benefits. For this theme there were 514 codes across 68% of the total chatlogs. Self-reported stable identity features (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity) were interpreted entirely as claims rather than factual due to the inability to verify these statements. As mentioned in Chapter 3 Section 4.1, demographic metadata was not provided with this dataset and therefore these self-reported stable identity features are open to scrutiny as perhaps embellished, inaccurate, or provided to perform a certain character online. The result of this is that they cannot be analysed at face-value. However, the purported disclosures alone are notable to investigate further due to the implication that the offenders are claiming to expose identifying information, and self-reported personal information will be referred to during the analysis with the caveat of its unverifiability.

For this collection of themes Behaviours were the most salient, followed by Exchanges of Personal Information, and then Risk Assessments. The online sub-themes for both Risk Assessments and Behaviours were more commonly occurring than their offline counterparts, and criminal activity coding far surpassed non-criminal. These themes will be further explored in Chapter 5. The chapter will include linguistic and non-linguistic methods in discussions of the criminality of these offenders and what patterns of behaviour may be discerned from their CSAM trading or username choices.

2.2. Constructing a Community

The thematic categories that will be further investigated in Chapter 6 are those in Figure 4.2. Most, but not all, of the Community Building sub-themes will be explored in this chapter – with the exceptions of Exchanges of Personal Information and Attitudes, as these are more pertinent to the topics of other chapters.

Figure 4.2: Diagram of thematic analysis parent and child nodes relevant to Constructing a Community.



Community development and maintenance is a focal area of this present research as it is precisely what has been understudied previously and has rarely been examined linguistically. The need to fill this gap in the field is also reinforced by the fact that Community Building coding appeared in 100%

of the chatlogs in this dataset and has the highest number of individual codes of any theme. The coding counts for the sub-themes addressed in Chapter 6 can be seen in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Coding counts for thematic analysis parent and child nodes relevant to Constructing a Community.

Thematic Analysis code book nodes:		No. of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Community Building		100%	3,250
	In-Group	100%	3,175
	Roles and Norms	57%	1,215
	Community Roles	41%	657
	Community Rules	23%	211
	Explicit Rules	20%	73
	Implicit Rules	9%	10
	Rule Enforcement	14%	64
	Norms of Behaviour	36%	88
	Sociability	76%	475
	Relationships	56%	402
	Access	36%	154
	Out-Group	24%	75
	Relationships	19%	50
	Roles and Norms	0%	0

Table 4.6 shows that In-Group Community Building appeared in 100% of the chatlogs and garnered 3,175 codes, whereas Out-Group Community Building only appeared in 24% of chatlogs and was coded for 75 times. In this dataset, the *in-group* refers to the online paedophile community and paedophiles generally. Despite being seen as a fringe group by the rest of society (Holt et al., 2010), these offenders operating within their own community have a different perspective and build up their own supportive in-group. The *out-group* from the offenders' perspective are non-paedophiles. It is conceivable that a community so focused on building up connections, self-regulation, and supportive messaging – which is so alienated from public discourse – would focus primarily on itself and discuss community-specific topics far more than those of their perceived out-group. Furthermore, given the central focus on criminal activity/paedophilia, there seems to be little reason to discuss non-members or at length discuss wider society in these chatlogs. However, this behaviour contrasts with existing research into public pro-paedophilia

advocacy websites that showed offenders often discussed themselves in relation to non-paedophiles and wider society (Nielsen et al., 2022). The private nature of the dataset in the present study may explain this disparity: offenders are free to communicate somewhat confidentially with each other without the expectation that their messages are being read by non-paedophiles and so do not need to position themselves in relation to these others and make argumentations that appeals to outsiders.

The Out-Group Relationships sub-theme is the only Out-Group Community Building sub-theme discussed in this chapter that garnered any coding at all (as Out-Group Attitudes are discussed in Chapter 7). It appeared in 19% of the chatlogs and was coded for 50 times. This coding consisted mostly of offenders mentioning, usually briefly, their family members or partners who were non-paedophiles. The In-Group Relationships sub-theme was far more salient, with 402 codes across 56% of the chatlogs. This sub-theme was comprised of discussions about, and the building of, relationships between offenders: sharing further contact information, praise/complimenting each other, commenting on the relationships, and arranging future contact together. Members of a CoP are said to have sustained, mutual relationships (as per the feature list in Appendix 11), and so the presence of these strong bonds between offenders supports the CoP classification.

The community Access sub-theme (n=154 codes in 36% chatlogs) has much overlap with the coding for Relationships, as well as the crime Access coding, because of the focus on gaining entrance to the exclusive group that is the online paedophile community. Integration could be undertaken by forming relationships with other offenders who were established in the community and had the connections to invite another offender to group-chats or inform them of where to access CSAM. The way in which offenders attained membership of the online community can influence how these communities are classified. In AS, the feature list suggests that there are many different methods and pathways to participation/status – which is somewhat true here as offenders could join many different sub-groups in the community on different platforms (forums, group-chats,

video-calls, etc.). However, as will be explored in Chapter 6 Sections 2 and 3, there is a general pattern to how offenders attain access to the community or achieve status. Holmes and Woodhams (2013:278) argued that in a CoP, 'membership may be analysed as comprising a number of inter-related dimensions, including transactional knowledge of how to do the job alongside socio-cultural competence and appropriate relational or interpersonal'. This rings truer with the offenders' efforts to gain and maintain membership to the community (through establishing knowledge of its values, practices, rules, and norms of behaviour).

Roles and Norms was the most coded for sub-theme in the In-Group, with 1,215 codes across 57% of the chatlogs. It contained of three further sub-themes: 'Community Roles', 'Community Rules', and 'Norms of Behaviour'. Community Rules (n=211 codes in 23% of the chatlogs) covered all instances where regulations or rules were discussed overtly and indirectly in the community. This theme also contained three additional sub-themes which captured different types of rules coding: 'Explicit Rules', 'Implicit Rules', and 'Rule Enforcement'. These were created to differentiate between when rules were explicitly stated, when rules could be discerned from the context or behaviours, and when rule-breakers suffered consequences. There were more Explicit Rules (n=73) than Implicit (n=10), which may be explained by the fact that the paedophile group-chats often had overt rules for membership that would be posted by admins regularly. There were other Explicit Rules asserted by regular members (not just administrators) in the group-chats and DMs: such as clarifying that CSAM trading required offenders to send material themselves in order to receive any back and reiterating what specific types of CSAM were permitted in a particular group.

Rule Enforcement (n=64) predominantly consisted of offenders being removed from group-chats for breaking the rules of conduct (shown in system messages) and then subsequently complaining about said removal. This sub-theme also included administrators threatening or describing enforcement by issuing deadlines for compliance: e.g., 'all inactive members will be

kicked today' and 'post or get booted [out]'. Chiang (2018) focused on the rules and behavioural etiquette elements of CoPs to classify online paedophile forums – stating that offender communities have strict rules for behaviour and common practices that are encouraged or discouraged. Community rules and regulations are part of what keeps these group-chats alive and appealing for offenders (as they regularly decried inactive groups), however, rule enforcement also gets its fair share of critique when disgruntled members are kicked out or they feel their removal was unjustified.

Similarly, offender Norms of Behaviour are good indicators of common habits and practices within these online communities, which Bowman-Grieve (2009:997) also found in online extremist communities because 'community members often construct their own set of community norms through a process of in-group monitoring'. The coding for this sub-theme appeared in only 36% of chatlogs, with 88 codes, but its purpose was predominantly for capturing offenders directly *stating* behavioural norms (as the entire Thematic Analysis coding book functions to code for patterns of behaviour in the community). Grant and MacLeod (2020:117) argued that 'for genuine [paedophile] offenders, a familiarity with the norms of these communities of practice, and acceptance from existing members, brings rewards in the form of enhanced access to abusive media'.

The Sociability sub-theme could also be viewed as capturing the behavioural conventions of these interactions as it consisted of small talk like greetings, pleasantries, and signoffs. This theme appeared in 76% of chatlogs, with 475 codes. Offenders, through their adherence to community rules, norms, and sociability customs, appear to be indexing their in-group identities – similarly to how Kádár and Bax (2013:73) describe the aforementioned phenomena of the 'in-group ritual'. In a CoP, certain styles can indicate and be recognised as displaying membership, which could in this community be an adherence to generally accepted rules and norms of behaviour (as well as any linguistic indicators of this membership, like slang terminology).

The final Roles and Norms sub-theme was Community Roles, which was the most salient and appeared in just under half of the chatlogs (n=657 codes). Community roles were found in prior studies into online paedophile communities (Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon, 2011; Martelozzo, 2015; Chiang, 2018; 2020; Grant and MacLeod, 2020; Holt et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2022; Huikuri, 2022a), as has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. This sub-theme captured instances of offenders adopting roles in the community to present as certain identities, gain authority, or undertake duties. This could be explicitly stated or revealed through actions and includes discussions of roles: their responsibilities, criticisms of them, or praise/respect for them. As was discussed in the Methodology (Chapter 3) and will be explored in Chapter 6, a coding book was developed for the different types of community roles present (which can be found in Appendix 13). The adoption of these roles also cemented the offenders' membership in the community and established a loose hierarchal structure that users could attempt to ascend through their performance of shared community identities. This loose hierarchy, and the presence of distinct roles, resists the classification of these communities as AS where everyone is on equal footing and there is no segregation of users by skill, experience, or status.

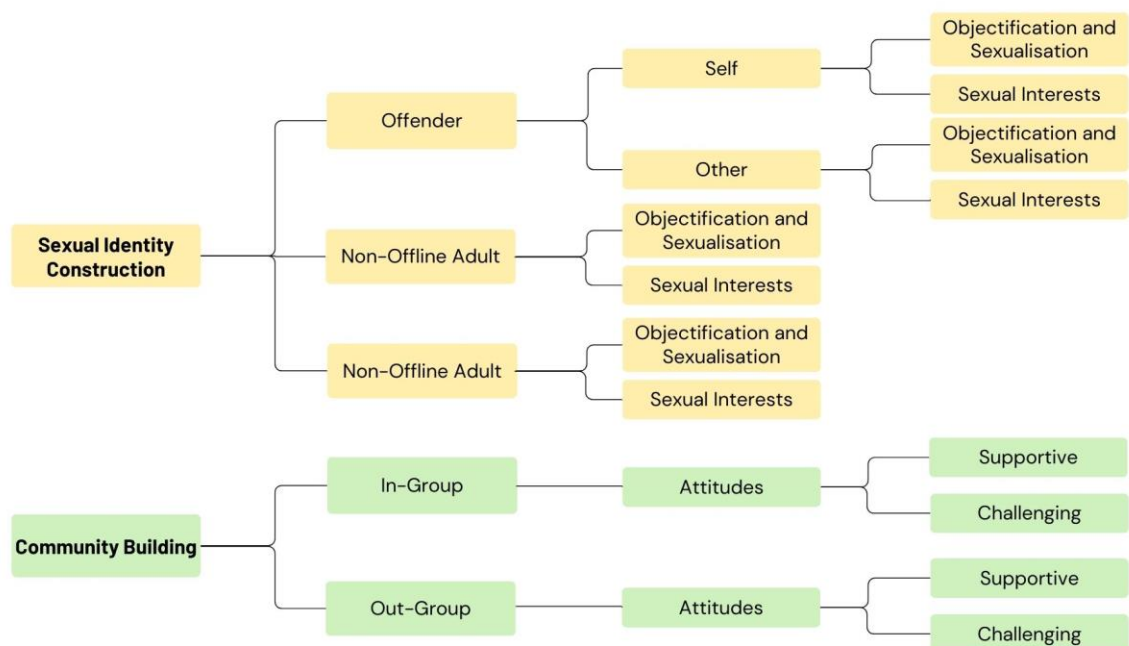
Despite these chatlogs coming from seemingly unconnected groups, 1-2-1 interactions, and separate platforms, in reality there is strong overlap between the different communication channels offenders use. They proliferate across these various channels, providing access to one another (e.g. 'I could do with some help and getting to know some groups on here if you could'), and expand their personal networks within a wider community (e.g. 'pleased to have connected with you'). The term "community" is used to encompass all of these smaller localities of offenders and their interactions together due to the behavioural expectations and etiquette of members that apply across the different platforms used (e.g. 'Loads of groups on here share but they usually want you to send first', and 'We ask members to post often'), as well as the movement of offenders. Membership to groups fluctuates constantly; offenders wander from platform/group to platform/group, taking with them their beliefs, CSAM collections, established friendships, and expectations for behaviour (which will

be explored in Chapters 5-7). Thus, these apparently unlinked groups/chats are in fact closely interwoven by the users who migrate around them, establishing new town squares for their community as frequently as others are shut down (e.g. ‘We are not the only ones’, ‘we can help each other ped to ped’, and ‘was told this would be the place to share all my Pervy taboos’).

2.3. Social Identity and Ideology

Sub-themes from several of the main themes are addressed in Chapter 7, which centres on how offenders present themselves and construct or disseminate attitudes (see Figure 4.3). The entirety of the Sexual Identity Construction theme is included, alongside both In and Out-Group Attitudes from the Community Building theme. These sub-themes all link through their focus on offender perspectives and the construction of paedophile identities within the community. The Sexual Identity Construction theme was divided up into three sub-themes: ‘Offender’, ‘Victim’, and ‘Non-Offender Adult’. The Offender sub-theme was further split into Offender Sexual Identity Construction of the ‘Self’ or the ‘Other’.

Figure 4.3: Diagram of thematic analysis parent and child nodes relevant to Social Identity and Ideology.



All of these sub-themes (Victim, Non-Offender Adult, Offender Self, and Offender Other) then contained two additional sub-themes to capture coding for ‘Sexual Interests’ or ‘Objectification and Sexualisation’. Coding for the Attitudes sub-themes were also split into two further sub-themes which differentiated the attitudes expressed as either supportive or challenging of the in/out-groups. The full coding counts for the themes within Chapter 7 can be found in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Coding counts for thematic analysis parent and child nodes relevant to Social Identity and Ideology.

Thematic Analysis code book nodes:		No. of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Sexual Identity Construction		96%	2,754
	Offender	95%	1,963
	Self	94%	1,245
	Objectification and Sexualisation	42%	158
	Sexual Interests	93%	1,087
	Other	64%	718
	Objectification and Sexualisation	39%	230
	Sexual Interests	57%	488
	Victim	66%	784
	Objectification and Sexualisation	65%	608
	Sexual Interests	28%	176
	Non-Offender Adult	6%	17
	Objectification and Sexualisation	5%	9
	Sexual Interests	3%	8
Community Building/ In-Group			
	Attitudes	62%	415
	Supportive	29%	245
	Challenging	38%	170
Community Building/ Out-Group			
	Attitudes	11%	25
	Supportive	0%	0
	Challenging	11%	25

The Attitudes sub-themes from the Community Building theme provided a rich insight into the offenders’ perspectives of each other, the online platforms they interact on, their views on their sexual identities, and any doubts or concerns they may have about their offending. There were perhaps a surprisingly high number of codes for Challenging Attitudes which criticised the in-group

(n=170), but an even higher number of Supportive Attitudes (n=245) that showed how offenders encouraged one another. Interestingly, though there were more codes for Supportive Attitudes, these appeared in less chatlogs and there was little overlap between the chatlogs containing critical attitudes and those containing supportive ones. Supportive Attitudes towards the in-group were defined as statements praising/complimenting/portraying positively behaviours, identities, talk, or actions in the paedophile community and this included offence-supportive beliefs. Challenging Attitudes were classified as those that challenged or criticised others in the in-group as well as behaviours, talk, practices, identities, or ideas in the community. The subjects of offender attitudes included sexual preferences, other offenders, the quality of group-chats, the community support network, community regulations, and the defence of paedophilia, amongst others. Huikuri and Insoll (2022:5) suggested that 'one can find in the peer-support discussions the tone that the community helps one to accept his deviance' – which Chapter 7 investigates.

There were some instances in the dataset where the out-group was evaluated and discussed. However, only Challenging Attitudes towards the Out-Group were found. No coding was present for Supportive Attitudes towards the Out-Group. Offenders seemed to have little motivation to discuss outsiders and the wider public, except in these few disparaging instances. Out-Group Challenging Attitude coding contained some derogatory comments about others along the lines of established prejudices like racism, sexism, and xenophobia. However, these were rare, and other instances came from offenders warning each other about law enforcement or discussing relationships with non-offenders in a negative light (often compared with offender-to-offender relationships, e.g. 'With a no perv the problem is sex, u know. And keep the secret'). These sentiments support a CoP classification, as one feature suggests that boundaries are maintained in CoPs to contrast the community with out-groups.

Coding for the Sexual Identity Construction theme, the second most common of the four themes (appearing in 96% of the chatlogs), revealed that sexual identities were a highly

discussed topic within the dataset. The sub-themes within it distinguished whose sexual identities were being constructed in the coding: resulting in themes for the offender, the victim, and non-offender adults. The last of these was by far the least salient theme but was created to capture the few instances of offenders' constructing the sexual identities of other adults who were not paedophiles (such as family members or partners). This coding occurred only 17 times, in just 6% of chatlogs, and predominantly included the offenders discussing negative sexual experiences with sexual/romantic partners who were not paedophiles. In contrast, the most salient of these sub-themes was the Offender sub-theme (n=1,963 in 95% of chatlogs). Offender Sexual Identity Construction of the *Self* (n=1,245, 94%) was defined as when offenders discussed their sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, or evaluated sexual practices/interests for themselves. The *Other* (n=718, 64%) sub-theme was defined in much the same way but was for when offenders discussed/evaluated these aspects of another offender.

All of these Sexual Identity Construction sub-themes were further split into two sub-themes: one for 'Sexual Interests' and one for 'Objectification and Sexualisation' (see Table 4.7). These captured different aspects of sexual identities, with the former containing instances of offenders discursively constructing sexual preferences (likes, dislikes, past sexual experiences, and interests) and the latter covering when offenders sexualised or objectified others physically. Offenders also objectified and sexualised their own physical bodies (n=158, 42%), but to a lesser degree than with each other (n=230, 39%). This sub-theme contained offenders discussing their sexual arousal and anatomy, such as their erections and masturbation, as well as other conversations likely for sexual gratification surrounding physical cleanliness and hygiene.

Sexual Interests were more salient than Objectification and Sexualisation in the both the offenders talking about themselves and each other – by a particularly high margin within Self Sexual Identity Construction. The sexual interests of other offenders (n=488) appeared in 57% of the chatlogs and included instances of offenders taking pride in their shared paedophilia: e.g. 'pedo

brother' and 'we are proud peds, bro'. The offender's own sexual interest construction appeared in 93% of the chatlogs and had a coding frequency count of 1,087. This sub-theme was extensively present in the chatlogs as offenders generally started conversations by stating their sexual preferences with victims (e.g. ages and gender), as will be detailed further in Chapter 6 Section 4.2. They also disclosed stories about contact abuse they had committed, engaged in sexual fantasies, and debated preferences amongst themselves.

The final subject of Offender Sexual Identity Construction was the 'Victim' sub-theme, where offenders discussed their fantasy/potential/real victim's sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, sexual enjoyment, or evaluated sexual practices/interests they perceived that their victims had. This coding appeared 784 times in 66% of the chatlogs and was also divided into the two sub-categories of Sexual Interests and Objectification/Sexualisation. Unlike with the offenders, the (real or fantasy) victims were more commonly sexualised or objectified (n=608, 65%) than having their sexual preferences constructed (n=176, 28%). Offenders constructed the sexual interests of victims sometimes directly by stating what they thought they liked or wanted (e.g. 'he really likes it' and 'he's hungry'), and sometimes indirectly where the meaning can be derived implicitly from a statement: for example by calling child victims 'sluts'. Victims were dehumanised as objects, demeaned or alienated, and hyper-sexualised as exclusively for use as sexual gratification. This occurred through descriptions of real victims, fantasy victims, children generally, and victims in CSAM. This sexual identity construction was being done entirely by offenders in their private community (with no victim voices present), removing any agency from victims and resisting the societal view of children as innocents in need of protection to justify themselves.

3. Conclusions

The thematic analysis process uncovered four main themes in the content of this dataset: Behaviours, Risk Assessments, Community Building, and Sexual Identity Construction. Sub-themes which teased out the Behaviours theme revealed that offenders frequently engaged in criminal

activity online (e.g. CSAM trading), as well as disclosing offline criminal activity like contact abuse. Offenders also self-reported their motivations for criminal activity and readily discussed or engaged in access-methods to commit crimes. Due to this criminal activity, risk assessments were discussed and security measures were implemented to evade law enforcement and maintain anonymity. In almost all chatlogs the offenders constructed sexual identities for themselves, each other, and victims through establishing their sexual interests and objectifying or sexualising bodies. Victim sexualisation was more prevalent than offender, despite victims overall having their sexual identities constructed less than offenders (who more frequently asserted their sexual preferences). In every chatlog, community building was engaged in to form and maintain this congregation of paedophiles online. Attitudes towards the out-group separated offenders from non-paedophiles, while in-group attitudes promoted a pro-paedophilia sentiment. Community building took place through relationship forming, enforcing rules, expectations for behaviour, and users taking on roles in the community to index membership identities.

The results of this thematic analysis indicated what the features were of the online paedophile community in this dataset. This enabled an initial review of how they aligned with the existing CoP and AS approaches – beginning to address the first research question of this thesis (which the subsequent chapters will continue to contribute towards, and Chapter 8 will resolve). The themes established during this chapter leaned more towards viewing it as a CoP than an AS, when compared with the features list of each community type. For example, Gee and Hayes (2012:5-6) assert that in an AS ‘one of easiest and best ways to answer the question of “who belongs” is simply to say that whoever enters the space [...] is in the group and belongs’, as opposed to users having membership status. Contrastingly, in this dataset, offenders construct membership identities through their adherence to rules and norms of behaviour, their demonstrations of community-specific knowledge (e.g. slang, security measures, CSAM trading practices), and their sexual identity construction as paedophiles. In short, non-paedophiles who enter the community would not be considered to belong. Unlike in an AS, in a CoP participants have ‘mutually defining identities’ and

share similar ideas about 'who belongs' in the community, as well as a 'shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world' (Roberts, 2006:625). This is demonstrated in the online paedophile community through the offenders' Attitudes sub-themes and Sexual Identity Construction, where they establish themselves as paedophiles who qualify for membership within the community and express communally held beliefs.

However, as will be illustrated in the subsequent chapters, though many of the features of a CoP align with this community: the CoP classification appears to be too rigid (or tied with offline communities) to completely encapsulate the changeable, varied dynamics of online paedophile communities. They have some of the same traits as a CoP, some of AS, and some that are unique from both. Thus, it is possible that existing classifications for community types are insufficient in describing the newer context of the online paedophile community, which will be revisited in Chapter 8.

The thematic analysis stage of this project built up a picture of these communities which revealed commonly discussed topics and trends in behaviour. It exposed which themes were present and this then guided the areas of investigation in the three following results-focused chapters. These chapters will apply the linguistic frameworks discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3 to the data to address the main research questions of the thesis. This will begin with a chapter looking at criminal behaviours and risks (RQs 2 and 3); followed by a chapter focused on the maintenance and formulation of the community (RQs 1, 2, and 3); and finishing with a chapter looking at sexual identities and offender beliefs (RQs 2, 3, and 4).

Chapter 5: Criminal Activity and Security

“What evil is practised here?”

— *Virgil, The Aeneid*

1. Introduction

The offenders taking part in this online community committed crimes through their participation, whether by trading/viewing CSAM or by breaches of the Communications Act (2003) and Obscene Publications Act (1959) in their explicit discussions of sexual topics and violence involving children (as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2). They also discussed and planned past or future crimes amongst their peers. Intertwined with these criminal behaviours were conversations about risks and security measures to avoid detection by law enforcement and protect the spaces where these offenders congregated from prying eyes. As illustrated in Chapter 4 through uncovering the key themes in this dataset, CSA was the shared purpose that connected these offenders and drew them to the online community. Thus, this chapter investigates how offenders discussed facilitating criminal behaviours, planned or disclosed past/future crimes, and negotiated the trust building that enabled the community to endure despite its illegality.

This chapter begins to address the second research question of the thesis: how the online paedophile community is formed, maintained, and participated in. It also starts to address the third research question, which asks how linguistic methods like discourse analysis can contribute to investigating online paedophile communities. The chapter firstly explores how offenders discussed access routes for doing crimes (Section 2), then the criminal activity itself (3), and their self-reported motivations for committing these crimes (4). Subsequently, risk assessments and trust-building practices are examined (5), including the offenders’ disclosures of personal identifying information in the community (5.1) and a closer look at offender usernames (5.2).

2. Crime: Access

“I have vowed with hollow words, I have lied my way to the stars.”

— Catherine Fisher, *Incarceron*

Offenders have been shown, through the research discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4, to use the online paedophile community to enhance their knowledge of offending methods and practices. Part of this learning process is finding out how to better gain access to CSAM, child victims, and further entry into the paedophile community. How offenders gain this access is a key area of interest for law enforcement and child protection organisations who can use this knowledge to improve safeguarding for children and attempt to cut off access routes. With the aim of contributing towards this goal, the sub-themes of On and Offline Access from the Behaviours main theme were coded in NVivo to a thematic coding book of victim and CSAM access methods (the nodes of which arose from the data in an inductive manner as described in Chapter 3 Section 3.1). Access was also coded against the speech acts framework and face coding book to investigate the identity and politeness negotiations taking place. These linguistic analysis tools were chosen because criminal access conversations between offenders involved them requesting information, trying to build rapport with each other, and demonstrating their value to the community by what they could contribute. These types of interactions involved individuals constructing their own identities in an attempt to be perceived in a certain way by others and manifesting their personal goals (e.g. of accessing CSAM) through these encounters.

The methods used and discussed by offenders to gain access to victims and CSAM were split into On and Offline Access methods, the latter of which can be seen in Table 5.1. Access method subtypes were also coded as Access to CSAM or Access to Victims. The coding book is located in Appendix 14.

Table 5.1: Coding summary of the methods discussed for accessing victims or CSAM offline.

Offline Victim and CSAM Access Methods	Percentage of Files Codes Appear In	No. of Codes	Data Examples
Access to Victims:	27%	148	
Family/Relatives	16%	47	5.1. <i>P_169</i> Had 5/6/10/12 molested and got inside their mouths <i>P_152</i> Family? <i>P_169</i> Yes cousins
Isolation	7%	21	5.2. Can't be left alone with the lil one enough to to have some fun grrrrr
The Difficulty of Access	8%	15	5.3. <i>P_154</i> Would love to see in buff <i>P_001</i> It is so difficult as he is so clever and talks a lot
Childcare/Fostering/Adoption	7%	14	5.4. babysitting him tonight try get pics
Public Facilities/Shops/Schools	6%	12	5.5. Would have loved t have grabbed something in the supermarket and fucked it in the toilets
Abroad/Travel/Refugees	2%	12	5.6. <i>P_001</i> Bro so easy to snatch few from over Syria now <i>P_003</i> Thinking on it every time I see them on tv. Could be easy to snatch and abuse how we like
Kidnapping/Abduction	4%	8	5.7. Let's abduct a couple
Payment/Gifts/Coercion	4%	6	5.8. I did have a taste of it , I gave [him] a 20 and show him what to do , how to wank me
Perceived Consent	5%	5	5.9. I got a few that we like up for it!
Positions of Responsibility/Employment	4%	4	5.10. Teach English to drink right from the tap
Friends/Neighbours	3%	3	5.11. it was a group who was getting friendly with couples as soon as they knew the gf or wife was pregnant
Blackmail	1%	1	5.12. Take tons of vids so we can blackmail him into giving us his baby brother
Access to CSAM:	4%	9	
Sharing CSAM Offline	4%	9	5.13. <i>P_001</i> Film it !!! For everyone to see <i>P_003</i> Yah showing the vid to other ped bros. A party where the vid is showed and we all ped wanking together

In the offline context, there was a markedly higher proportion of Victim Access methods than CSAM – a ratio that was inverted in the online context (which correlates with the low occurrence of OG discussions in the dataset, as will be discussed in Section 3.1). There were 148 codes for Offline

Access to Victims and only 9 for Access to CSAM Offline. These Access to CSAM codes all corresponded to one Access method subtype of 'Sharing CSAM Offline', where offenders fantasised about or suggested meeting in person to watch CSAM together for sexual gratification. This can be seen in example 5.13 in Table 5.1 where offenders suggest hosting a 'party' for this purpose. It is important to note that these Access methods coding counts are of how many times this method was used or discussed during an access-based interaction and does not represent how many times these methods were undertaken by offenders not explicitly for access purposes.

There were twelve types of Offline Victim Access methods found in the data. Several of these methods discussed by offenders related to where potential victims could be located (outside of the home). Offenders disclosed public places like shops, bathrooms, and schools where they had found children and suggested types of locations to others like swimming baths where children would be more exposed (n=12). They also suggested travelling internationally for this purpose (n=12) – which aligns with existing research on sex-tourism and trafficking (see Chapter 2 Section 2.3). Example 5.6 in Table 5.1 shows an offender suggesting that the ongoing Syrian migrant crisis could provide an opportunity for offenders to gain access to victims undetected amongst the confusion. This sentiment appeared a few times in the dataset (often brought up by P_001) where the possibility of abducting and/or abusing children of refugees was discussed as a lucrative option for offenders if they were having problems accessing children locally. Issues with accessing victims offline was a theme that appeared in these discussions (n=15), where offenders vented about problems they encountered while trying to do contact abuse or identify possible victims. These usually arose when the offenders had issues with any of the other access method sub-types listed. For example, one offender (example 5.3) voiced concerns over a victim reporting the abuse and this deterred them from committing further abuse for fear of law enforcement involvement.

Offenders also accessed victims offline through isolating them away from others (n=21). Example 5.2 shows an offender complaining that they were unable to carry out planned abuse

because they could not get any time alone with their nephew during a family gathering. Physical and mental isolation was also found to be a tactic used by offenders in OG research by Lorenzo-Dus et al. (2016; 2020) to facilitate the grooming process. There were several further access methods mentioned which also related to producing an environment where potential victims would be vulnerable to abuse, these included kidnapping or abduction (n=8); coercion or gifts to convince a child to agree to the sexual contact (n=6); blackmail (n=1); and ‘Perceived Consent’ (n=5) where the offender had supposedly procured willing consent from the victim for sexual contact (despite the impossibility of this “consent” due to them being underage).

The most common Victim Access method was through family or relatives. This, alongside several other methods (through childcare/fostering (n=14), through positions of responsibility like teachers (n=4), and friends/neighbours (n=3)), reflects prior research that indicated the vast majority of CSA is enacted by someone the victim knows (Richards, 2011; NSPCC, 2019). One offender stated that their reason for staying with their wife was because they were ‘24/7 with kids’ – implying that they had access to abusing their children and others due to their position as the father and husband.

The methods for Online Access to Victims and CSAM that offenders discussed can be seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Coding summary of the methods discussed for accessing victims or CSAM online.

Online Victim and CSAM Access Methods	Percentage of Files Codes Appear In	No. of Codes	Data Examples
Access to CSAM:	38%	308	
Groups and 1-2-1 Chats	31%	113	5.14. although was lucky to find a good z r all about < 3, 4
Trading/Exchanging	12%	48	5.15. Well i chat and trade via clear and dark net
The Difficulty of Access	15%	36	5.16. been trying to reconnect to the T0r with great difficulties
Livestreamed CSAM/ Video Calling	10%	26	5.17. You know that last Christmas Day I hosted a room with 5 pedos while [name/site name] showed all Nepi vid

Dark-Web	12%	29	5.18. If you ever find yourself in the dark web make your way to [website name] can find tons of stuff there
CSAM Storage	11%	21	5.19. Is there a way to save that above on a memory stick, nite that I did find this last year on Tor but I need now to buy a new Microsoft as I am using Apple
Laptop/Computer	6%	9	5.20. If you put the memory stick into your computer, you can then send to your email, look the email up on your phone, download the pic from your email to your phone then send to kik.
Encrypted Apps	3%	8	5.21. <i>P_111</i> Telegram app? <i>P_001</i> I don't know that one <i>P_111</i> Automatically deletes chats both ends <i>P_111</i> Secure
Non-Specific Online Access	6%	7	5.22. How long have you been lurking the net yesterday or already today looking for others pedos , child or baby b porn
Phone/Mobile Device	5%	6	5.23. Same bro , had even to buy more data has with all this porn I used it all
Community Rules	4%	5	5.24. ALRIGHT FOLKS THIS IS THE ADMIN SPEAKING! I will be cleaning up this group THIS WEEKEND. You all better start posting or pm by Monday with a couple of pics and or videos to stay in the group. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!
Access to Victims:	6%	7	
Dating/Relationships	2%	3	5.25. I have a couple of a girl 16 I was talking to
Dating Apps	2%	2	5.26. The faggot was hunting for cock on Grindr already
Through Other Offenders with Access	2%	2	5.27. Man, I skyped with a guy and his 5 y/o son the other night. Very, very hot!!

The few methods mentioned which related to accessing victims online centred around OG: entering into relationships with victims (n=3), using dating apps to find them (n=2), and accessing livestreamed offline abuse through other offenders they built relationships with (n=2). While there were only 7 instances in total of methods for gaining Online Access to Victims, there were 308 codes for methods to Access CSAM Online. One way that the online community facilitated offender's Access to CSAM was via rules for the groups that incentivised trading (n=5). Example 5.24 in the table shows an administrator for a group chat warning that anyone not trading CSAM by a certain deadline would be removed from the group, thus encouraging a flurry of members posting videos

and images so that they did not have this access route to CSAM cut off. This incentivisation also fostered the attitude in the community of CSAM as currency and possession of it as making an offender an asset to the group. Trading illegal CSAM was also done via encrypted apps that add another level of security to the offender interactions (n=8); apps like *Wickr* and *Telegram* were touted as having end-to-end encryption or a timer that deleted message histories regularly. These attracted some offenders who would make contacts on more common apps like *Kik* and, once trust had been built, would ask the contact to move onto a more secure app.

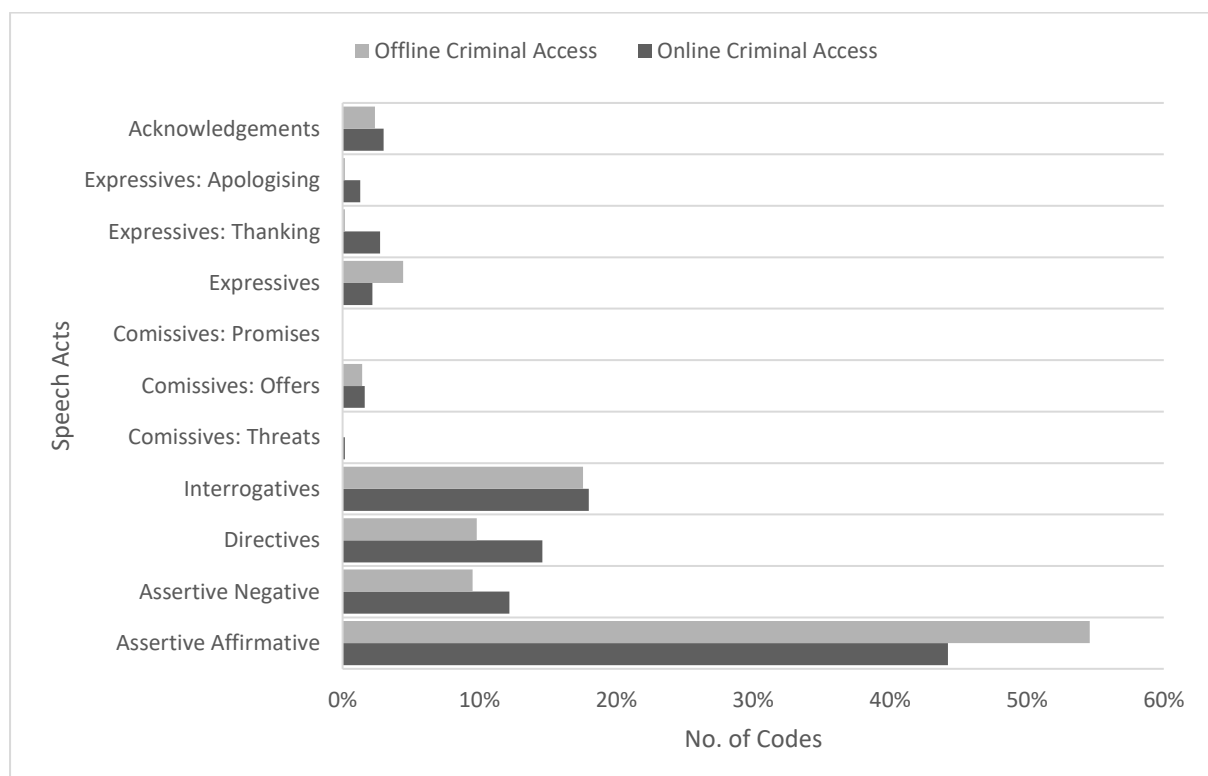
Storage of CSAM, once acquired, was another element of access discussions because of the risks surrounding being found in possession of such material by law enforcement or family/friends (n=21). This could involve storing it online in cloud storage or on a phone/computer, but these methods were generally discouraged in favour of using physical storage devices that could be discarded and less easily linked with the owner. Most of these methods for storage required some technological skill and knowledge, especially for those who wished to mitigate as much risk as possible, and so offenders openly shared advice on this topic.

The dark-web was often used to locate and view CSAM (n=29). Offenders in clear-web social media apps discussed site names to look for (as in example 5.18) and linked to CSAM trading forums on the dark-web, demonstrating that access pathways were shared and disseminated amongst offenders on one platform that then enabled them to proliferate to others. Similarly, media could also be accessed through the community via links to livestreaming platforms like *Zoom* and *Skype* (n=26). These live video streams could show contact abuse in real time or involve offenders sharing CSAM together and masturbating with one another on camera. Despite these many access routes, offenders still complained about the difficulties of accessing CSAM online (n=36). They lamented the quality or type of CSAM available, and the struggle of having to make so many accounts on various apps and platforms to maintain security. Access problems also related to storage, getting started with trading, and complaints about inactive group-chats.

The most common Online CSAM Access methods involved gaining access to CSAM through the online paedophile community. The highest coded for method was by using 1-2-1 DMs or group-chats to access this media (n=113). Much of this was done through Trading/Exchanging (n=48) where offenders often insisted on only sending from their library when others were willing to send some in return. Coding overlapped across these two methods, but using group-chats or DMs was cited the most as an avenue for attaining CSAM.

These types of access interactions have the potential to be contentious (due to carrying interpersonal risks) and needed to be navigated carefully through both identity performances and politeness negotiations between offenders to successfully gain access to CSAM or victims. Thus, the coding for On and Offline Criminal Access was also coded against Searle’s (1969) aforementioned speech act framework (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2). Figure 5.1 shows a visualisation of these results, a table of which can be found in Appendix 15. Due to there being less Offline Access codes than Online, the coding counts for each type have been converted into percentages of all speech acts used here to make them comparable.

Figure 5.1: Coding matrix for criminal access and speech acts.



Assertive affirmatives were the most common speech acts on and offline, which aligns with these access interactions involving offenders describing their experiences or providing information to others. The context of these exchanges also explains the high numbers of interrogatives, which capture the times when offenders asked for access information or advice (e.g. 'You got any good meeting numbers?'), and directives, where offenders were instructing others on how to gain access or requesting others took actions to grant them access (e.g. 'lets get sharing'). Expressives, offers, and acknowledgements occurred far less often and promises never appeared in these interactions. Interestingly, threats appeared twice in the online context and these two instances took place during a group administrator telling the group members that they must post CSAM by a deadline or risk removal (see example 5.24 in Table 5.2).

The results for On and Offline Access follow a similar distribution pattern between speech act types. However, the speech acts of thanking and apologising only appeared once in Offline Criminal Access, while they appeared 34 and 16 times respectively in Online Criminal Access. When speaking about Online Access methods, offenders thanked each other for providing assistance (e.g. 'Dear [P_246] thank you for passing your info'), whereas the apologising speech act involved offenders apologising for not being able to provide this help.

Im/politeness can be employed across all speech acts but interrogatives, offers, and apologies often involved the use of politeness features to mitigate face-threatening actions and contribute to face-enhancing ones. Others, like threats and some directives, often incorporated impoliteness for offenders to convey their negative emotions towards the listener. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show how the other-oriented facework coding book of im/politeness strategies (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2) appeared within the Criminal Access coding (also converted into percentages for comparability).

Figure 5.2: Coding matrix for criminal access and politeness.

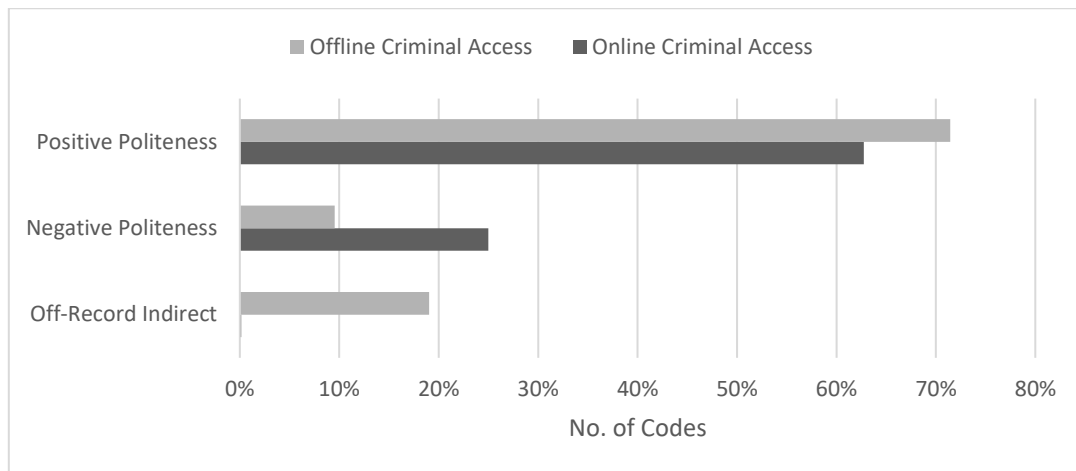
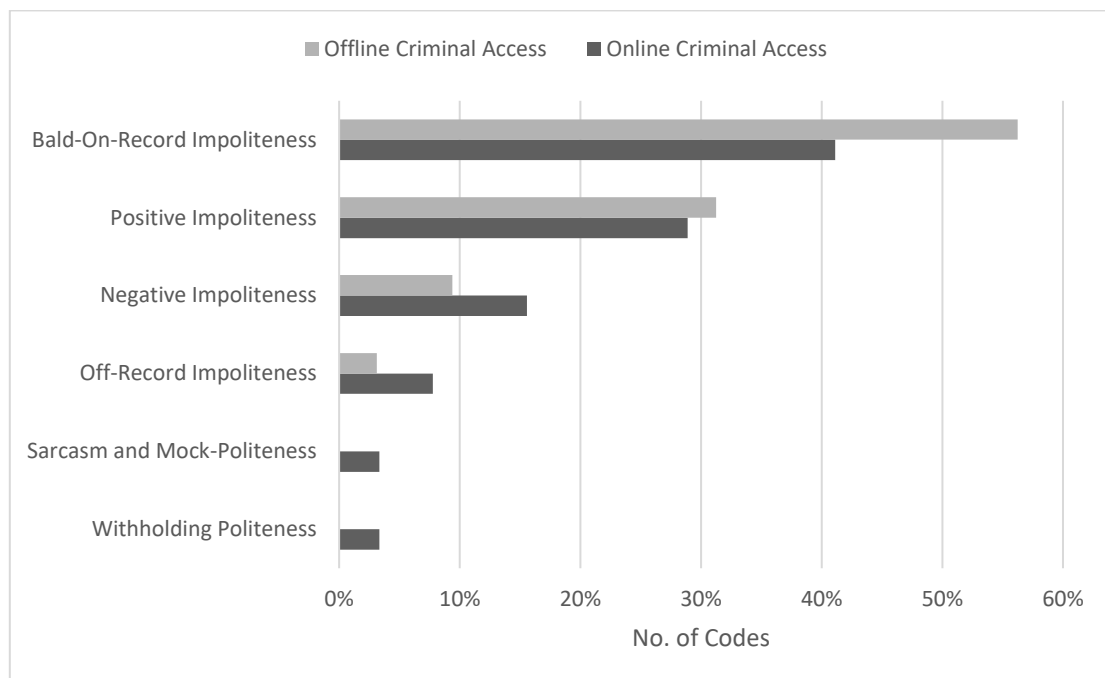


Figure 5.3: Coding matrix for criminal access and impoliteness.



There were more codes for politeness ($n=196$ online and 42 offline) than impoliteness ($n=90$ online and 32 offline), but this difference was greater in Online Access interactions where far more politeness features appeared. Positive politeness features were the most common politeness category on and offline, followed by negative politeness online and off-record indirect politeness offline. Extract 5.28 from a 1-2-1 DM chatlog exemplifies politeness being used by two offenders who were discussing how to access CSAM online. One offender, P_314, shared knowledge with the

other about how to mitigate risks/detection while locating CSAM and they discussed platforms for gaining this access.

5.28.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_314]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Wow you know your stuff wish I was so much computer knowledge as you
2	P_314	[URL]
3	P_001	You are a great geezer
4	P_314	On this page there is REALLY IMPORTANT INFO ON HOW TO AND HOW NOT
5		TO, SET IT UP AN RUN IT !
6	P_001	Thanks !!! I mean it . It will take me ages to understand it all but thanks fir
7		the help , wish I could return the favour . I can only pass you done Tor links
8		or buy you a drink in the future
9	P_314	YOU Will need to save the page read it 10 or 20 times... A snitch in crime
10		sends you down for some time! Lol
11	P_001	I can imagine !! I would find it easy learning one to one
12	P_314	Don't worry and its been written for the man on the street!... Wait
13	P_001	I wound not like to happens what Happened to the ring last year
14	P_314	"Icuii omelette Skuoe Xoom Zoom! Are these word the correct spelling?"
15	P_001	I hope I am not taking much time off you

This extract is a thanking speech sequence, where P_001 expressed gratitude to P_314 for providing them with access to CSAM. The head act in line 6 is surrounded by self-oriented facework strategies from both parties. In lines 1 and 3, P_001 used compliments to enhance their gratitude to the other offender for helping them, flattering their technical expertise in comparison to their own and calling them a 'great geezer'. P_001 also used self-effacing language to portray themselves as less literate with technology ('It will take me ages to understand', line 6) and again repeated their gratitude by offering to repay the offender. P_314 also used the positive politeness strategy of joke in their responses to P_001 in lines 9-10. In line 11, P_001 hints through a conditional clause that they would want 1-2-1 tutoring on the technical side of things in person or over a video call. This is a display of minimising imposition through indirectness, and the same offender used this negative politeness strategy in line 15 to express a hope that they were not encumbering P_314 despite then continuing to ask for assistance. This strategy was also used by P_314 to reassure P_001 that the instructions they sent them were comprehensible (line 12).

Impoliteness, though to a lesser degree, also appeared in these access-centred interactions. As can be seen in Figure 5.3, bald on-record impoliteness was the most common on and offline impoliteness type (followed by positive, negative, and off-record), while sarcasm/mock-politeness and withholding politeness were the least common (not even appearing in Online Access at all). Bald on-record impoliteness refers to the use of direct, concise language when conveying a face-threatening act where the speaker has no intention of maintaining the listeners' face. Examples of this in the Access coding can be seen in blunt requests like 'pass 4 pass' (without any sociability preamble), 'Call me now then.' (a dismissive demand), and 'You really need to help me with Tor' (a demand where no effort was made to mitigate imposition).

The following extract (5.29) from a *Kik* group-chat illustrates some of these impoliteness strategies. This interaction about trading, and therefore accessing, CSAM on a group chat devolved into insults and hostility when one user who was asking for more CSAM to be sent refused to send any in return themselves and gave an excuse for why they did not have anything to share (which another offender did not believe). This extract does contain some duplicate messages, which appear a small number of times in the dataset and are likely due to a glitch on the sender's phone as they do not appear to be intentional for emphasis from context clues, are never discussed, and only appear for the messages of certain users. These have been shaded in grey to indicate that they are unintended duplicates to be disregarded.

5.29.

[3_PP001_PP_07]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_403	Nice anymore?
2	P_409	You first
3	P_409	You first
4	P_403	Unfortunately I don't have any left on any of my sd cards
5	P_409	I do you expect to find anything when you have nothing in return
6	P_409	I do you expect to find anything when you have nothing in return
7	P_439	Trades
8	P_403	No need to be a douche about it I was one of the first people in this group I lost everything when my house caught fire
9		

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 10 | P_409 | Worst excuse story ever |
| 11 | P_409 | Worst excuse story ever |
| 12 | P_403 | Ok sure no need for me to explain anything to somebody I don't know |

An unmitigated directive request containing an imperative where the verb is elided appears in line 2 where P_409 insisted that the other offender send them CSAM first before they continue to send themselves – demonstrating how CSAM trading was expected to be a reciprocal exchange. Lines 5 and 10 exemplify two instances of the negative impoliteness strategy to scorn/ridicule where P_409 used a rhetorical question with P_403 and then called their justification for not having any media to share the ‘worst excuse story ever’. In response to the rhetorical question in line 5, P_403 used positive impoliteness strategies in line 8 through name-calling P_409 a ‘douche’ and condescension by suggesting they were a veteran of the community (‘I was one of the first people in this group’). They also attempted to invoke pity for themselves, saying the reason they could not trade was that they lost their CSAM library (line 9) and, when the other offender dismissed this excuse (through the scorn in line 10), they used negative impoliteness by belittling P_409 as just ‘somebody I don’t know’ or need to explain themselves to (line 12).

Despite complaints in the community about the difficulties of gaining access, many offenders did access CSAM, victims, and the resources to commit crimes. It is this subsequent criminal activity that is explored in the following section, which begins by looking at what crimes were committed/reported in the community and then examines online CSAM trading and community engagement more closely.

3. Criminal Activity

“To commit a crime is to break a law that offends not just those directly affected, but strikes at the heart of our communal values so deeply that we agree that organized, coercive action is required to mark the affront.”

— Anonymous, *The Secret Barrister*

3.1. Crime: The Act

Offenders in the online paedophile community discussed illegal acts they committed as well as planning out possible future crimes. They also committed crimes online during their time as members of the community through not just their interactions with CSAM, but also their use of language in their interactions with one another (breaching the CA 2003 and OPA 1959). The main areas of interest in this section are what crimes were committed or discussed by offenders and what were the purposes of talking about crime in the community. The different types of on and offline crimes offenders discussed were captured by a coding book of crime sub-types, which was developed inductively from the dataset (see Appendix 16 for coding book) and coded within the On and Offline Criminal Behaviours thematic sub-themes. Table 5.3 shows the different subtypes of offline crimes in the dataset.

Table 5.3: Coding summary of crime subtypes for offline crimes.

Offline Crime Thematic Subtypes	Percentage of Files Codes Appear In	No. of Codes	Data Examples
Contact Abuse:	30%	155	
Past	22%	82	5.30. Yea when I was younger.wheni was 17 I was at s camp and sucked a lot of 12-15 yo boys
Planned/Future	11%	44	5.31. U know, I'd join u in a real rape if we ever had the chance. With pleasure
Ongoing	10%	29	5.32. Nice got my 15mo choking on my big cock
Incest	16%	53	5.33. For everyone who wants to see me fukkng my grandson, ... Fukkin it now .. There fukkng now
CSAM Production	11%	25	5.34. U do any play, make sure u take pics ?
Exhibitionism/Public Indecency	9%	22	5.35. ... Even during work , had my Pedo stinking cock out stroking it
Other Crimes	14%	19	5.36. The family dog was my lover when I was a teen
CSAM Offline Storage/Dissemination	6%	12	5.37. I'm at a neighbours place He's a perv too We're drinking and watching porn
Livestreamed Contact Abuse	4%	12	5.38. Man, I skyped with a guy and his 5 y/o son the other night. Very, very hot!!
Non-Contact Sexualisation	5%	10	5.39. Saw some lovely little preteens yesterday , wanted to fuck them hard

Kidnapping/Abduction	4%	10	5.40. Then I'll snatch a nb for you
Battery/Assault	7%	9	5.41. I only saw one vid ones when a man fukked a little boy and the led cock was red in blood , but that really blew my head
Travel for CSAM or CSA	7%	7	5.42. We could take a holiday to [name of country] or [name of country] or somewhere

Contact abuse against child victims was the most discussed offline crime, appearing 155 times in the dataset. Many of the offline crime categories overlapped with the contact abuse category: such as incest (n=53), CSAM production through filming or photographing contact abuse (n=25), kidnapping/abduction (n=10), and battery/assault (n=9). These were instances where offenders were committing multiple crimes simultaneously. Exhibitionism and public indecency also appeared in the dataset where offenders were doing contact abuse (n=22), fantasising about/viewing CSAM while masturbating, or engaging in sex acts with other offenders in public places. Section 71 of the Sex Offences Act (2003b), discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2, details the illegality in the UK of engaging in a sexual act in a public lavatory – a specific crime that appeared at least seven times in the dataset. Examples 5.43-45 show offenders either admitting to committing this crime or planning to do it.

5.43. horned as always, two loads in work toilet for the moment

5.44. Fuck, need to go to the coffeshop toilet and wank

5.45. Would have loved t have grabbed something in the supermarket and fucked it in the toilets

The offender in example 5.43 brags about their sexual activities and seems unbothered by confessing to a crime in the interaction.

The second most common offline crime was incest (sexual contact with a family member). This aligns with the results of the access methods coding and prior research (see Radford et al., 2011; Richards, 2011; NSPCC, 2019 in Chapter 2 Section 2) that indicated offenders often targeted victims in their own families and most victims were abused by someone they knew. Contact abuse offline, as mentioned, was the most prevalent crime here. Despite this, it only occurred in 29

out of the 97 chatlogs because, though a common topic amongst offenders, offline crimes appeared across less chatlogs than online crimes did. The offline contact abuse category contained three sub-categories that distinguished if the abuse described was a past event, ongoing, or a planned future event. The majority (n=82) were past crimes that offenders disclosed committing previously. Planned/future crimes were mentioned 44 times, and these ranged from offenders making off-hand comments about possible future abuse (as in example 5.31) to in-detail conversations where offenders talked about future abuse with specific children. Purely fantasy discussions of abuse that took place during fantasy conversations for sexual gratification between offenders were not coded for here as only incidents that went beyond fantasy to practical planning where offenders purportedly intended to commit the discussed crimes were included.

Ongoing crimes were disclosed 29 times and this coding comprised of offenders talking about abuse they were claiming to be committing in present day, as well as abuse some claimed to be committing in real-time while messaging other offenders. Extract 5.46 illustrates an offender disclosing committing contact abuse. It shows P_012 bragging about abusing a victim since they were 15 and then claiming in line 2 that the contact was ongoing.

5.46.

[3_PP001_PP_02]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_014	When did you have that 16yo?
2	P_012	I fuck him regularly
3	P_012	Started when the little slut was 15
4	P_014	Where did you find him?
5	P_012	The faggot was hunting for cock on Grindr already
6	P_014	Hot!
7	P_012	He wanted to try poppers
8	P_012	And get fucked raw

The offender used derogatory language ('the little slut', line 3) and a homophobic slur ('faggot', line 5) to degrade the victim, suggesting they were promiscuous/sought out the abuse and implying agency and consent on behalf of the victim. The latter phenomenon is explored in more detail in

Chapter 7 Section 2.2.1. One analysis by Kloess et al. (2017:621) of transcripts from sexually exploitative interactions between offenders and victims found that the majority of young people in their sample ‘appeared to engage in such interactions for reasons of curiosity and sexual exploration/ experimentation’. Lines 5, 7, and 8 of this extract exemplify this: the offender claimed that the victim expressed interest in sexual exploration (‘The faggot was hunting for cock on Grindr already’, line 5, and to ‘get fucked raw’, line 8) and trying out drugs (‘He wanted to try poppers’, line 7), which the offender used to gain access to them.

One slightly different category of crime types was the ‘Other Crimes’ category, which appeared in both the on and offline coding books and amalgamated categories that had less than 5 codes. For offline crimes (n=19) this category included taking illegal drugs, soliciting, and bestiality – while online (n=8) this included illegal online purchases and the few instances where OG was mentioned. The online crimes that appeared in this dataset are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Coding summary of crime subtypes for online crimes.

Online Crime Thematic Subtypes	Percentage of Files Codes Appear In	No. of Codes	Data Examples
CSAM:	73%	661	
Dissemination	61%	257	5.47. I sent 105 vids on that link
Eliciting	52%	186	5.48. Please keep me going for tonight with some more vids?!?
Viewing	45%	143	5.49. Great posting Would have been horny with sound
Storage	20%	48	5.50. I have 300 GB worth of stuff
Production	15%	27	5.51. [image] Someone I coaxed into being bad....
Offender Group Chats/Platforms	42%	160	5.52. Post a pic by midnight please so you can stay in the group
Dark-Web/Tor	13%	53	5.53. Tor is a smorgasbord All you can eat 5.54. Man, those Tor links are wild!!
OPA 1959/CA 2003 Violations	12%	23	5.55. Recent dead, his lil eyes still open , his face in pain and his legs brutally broken and spread. His lil guts showing by asshole and we both raping that whore piece of meat
Livestreamed Abuse	5%	15	5.56. Till last year it was so good in the zoom rooms all pedos together even live shows

Other Crimes	7%	8	5.57. Oh I took care of it last night when I cammed with a 16 y/o
Bestiality Media	5%	8	5.58. Where do you go for your bestiality vids

The most prevalent were CSAM crimes, participating in the paedophile community, and using the dark-web – while the least prevalent were viewing/trading bestiality content and the other crimes category. These were followed by livestreamed abuse, which appeared 15 times. Livestreaming CSAM/CSA appears in both the on and offline crime subtypes as this involved elements of contact abuse offline and filming the abuse to broadcast to others. Though not amongst the most prevalent crimes occurring, live abuse shows were mentioned by offenders who claimed to have seen them or helped others gain access to them by providing URL links or meeting numbers on livestreaming/video-calling platforms.

A *Europol* (2016:10) report found that, in recent years, the ‘use of end-to-end encrypted platforms for sharing media, coupled with the use of largely anonymous payment systems, is facilitating an escalation in the live streaming of child abuse’. Insoll et al. (2021:17) reiterated this point, claiming that livestreamed CSAM has become increasingly prevalent partially because of the Covid-19 pandemic where travel restrictions decreased the opportunity for contact offending outside the home so offenders without access to children paid online for ‘made-to-order CSAM’ through livestreaming. They also suggested that this increased the demand for ‘fresh’ material and a ‘customisable experience’, as well as finding that almost half of their survey respondents said they had watched livestreamed CSAM (2021:17). In this present dataset, offenders could even be seen to reminisce about times that they had the opportunity to watch ‘live shows’ (see example 5.56), emphasising the rarity and high value in the community of access to this type of CSAM. One offender not present but infamous in this community, who offenders shared news articles about, was praised by others for having produced livestreamed contact abuse often. Their arrest led other offenders to mourn the loss of access to that type of CSAM (e.g. ‘I MISS his style and his entertainment’, ‘shame he got caught’, and ‘Wish we recorded [name of an offender] was good wish he was still about’).

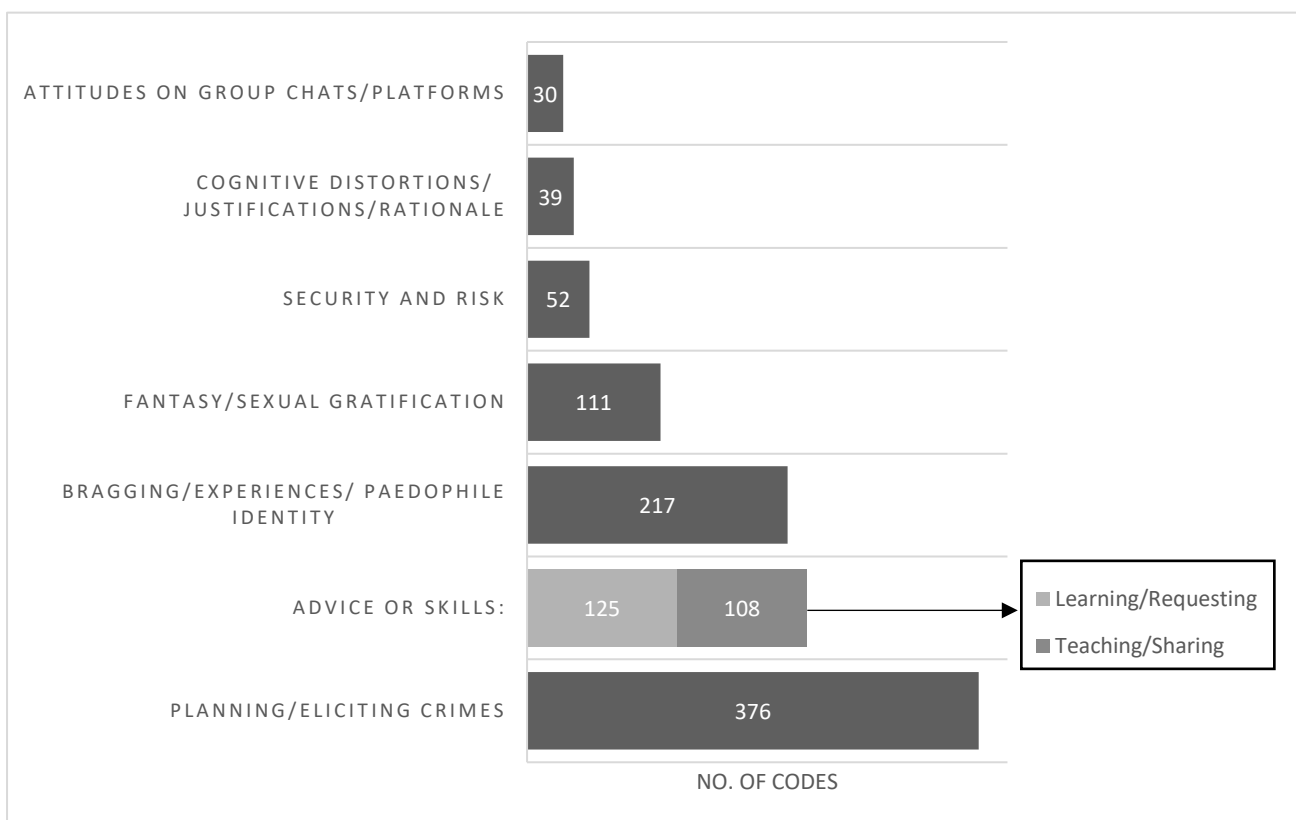
Offenders engaged in illegal activity relating to trading CSAM while using the dark-web or *Tor* (n=53) and paedophile group chats/DM conversations (n=160). However, it was not just through CSAM trading where offenders engaging in these groups committed crimes – but also their language (n=23). As discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2, when offenders plan out abuse or fantasise about children in graphic or violent terms in these chats, they are breaking laws set out in section 127 of the Communications Act (2003) and in the Obscene Publications Act (1959). It was shown that in modern times these laws include communications/publications by individuals through social media sites and text messaging. Thus, when offenders use language to sexualise children and describe past or future violent/graphic abuse (as in example 5.55), they are committing crimes just by transmitting these messages online. These types of graphic messages could be deemed ‘grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character’ (CA, 2003).

The most common category was crimes relating to CSAM, which appeared 661 times and included sub-categories for whether this was disseminating, eliciting, viewing, storing, or producing CSAM online. Disseminating (n=257), eliciting (n=186), and viewing (n=143) were the most common crimes involving CSAM and are the components of CSAM trading. The content of this CSAM ranges from seemingly innocuous images of children to extreme material. A ReDirection survey report by *Protect Children* found that 43% of their respondents claimed to view CSAM of girls aged 4-13, while 18% viewed boys of the same age bracket and the remaining respondents ‘said that they view violent or sadistic and brutal material, CSAM related to infants and toddlers aged 0-3 years, and other violent material’ (Insoll et al., 2021:15). Though this may not be the same distribution between types in this dataset, these offenders did purport to share material from all of these types in their trading activities. The sexual preferences of offenders seeking CSAM will be discussed in Chapter 7 Section 2.1.1.

A coding book was created inductively to investigate why offenders discussed crimes in the community. Despite the possible argument that some reasons for discussing crimes may be

obvious, like to plan future crimes or elicit CSAM sharing, there were a variety of purposes for conversations about criminal activity in the dataset and these necessitated being uncovered. Figure 5.4 shows the different reasons of discussing crimes in the community and their coding frequencies (more than one purpose may be expressed within a single message and would thus be double coded). The breakdown of this coding book with definitions can be seen in Appendix 17.

Figure 5.4: The purposes of discussing criminal activity.



Some of the less common reasons found were offenders discussing criminal activity when voicing opinions about group chats/platforms (e.g. ‘Listen I use to go on. Menchats , but no longer good’), expressing cognitive distortions or justifications for paedophilia (‘Little girls love to feel daddy cock in there cunts and ass’), and talking about security risks to themselves or others (‘it’s a slow long process if you don’t want to be caught’). Considering these chatlogs come from the clear-web, it is interesting that risks/security as a purpose for mentioning crimes would be amongst the lower reasons. Similarly, it is illuminating which reasons were the most frequent as this reveals what the community was most focused on when it comes to crimes: planning/facilitating them, gaining or

sharing skills, and bragging about crimes committed to cement or build prestige membership identities.

A common reason for discussing crimes was sexual gratification or during sexual fantasies (n=111). Extract 5.59 shows an interaction where offenders discussed the crimes of necrophilia, contact abuse, and exhibitionism for the purposes of sexual gratification and fantasy.

5.59.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_003]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	... Ready to fukk a cold hole
2	P_003	Fuck , could shoot here at work just reading u bro, u fukka depraved bby
3		butcher
4	P_001	Same here got me perv cock out: stinking of old piss and dry pedo cum

The offenders engaged in a type of sexual fantasy storytelling while masturbating, which is explored further in Chapter 7 Section 2.1.3. The following examples (5.60-62) demonstrate the next most common purpose for discussing crimes: bragging about/disclosing sexual abuse experiences and expressing pride in their paedophile identities (n=217).

5.60. You are The best bby butcher , pedo bro , LUV YA

5.61. My pedi cock has been inside 0-7

5.62. Love the first vid!! Looks like a boy and has a cunt. I have done this lots

Coding for this purpose captured the times that offenders discussed crimes to recount their history of committing crimes (like contact abuse) to each other, sometimes to distribute knowledge or sometimes just to boast about their perceived achievements. These boasts often appeared alongside the other component of this coding: instances of users establishing/cementing their paedophile identities through claims to having done paedophilic crimes (like CSAM trading, contact abuse, OG, or viewing livestreamed abuse), as examples 5.60-62 illustrate.

The second most common reason to discuss criminal activity was for providing advice or skills-sharing (n=233). This category contained sub-categories for whether the instance involved an

offender requesting advice/learning skills, or when it involved teaching/sharing them.

Learning/requesting (examples 5.63-64) appeared 125 times, while teaching/sharing (5.65-66) appeared 108 times.

5.63. I could do with some help and getting to know some groups on here if you could

5.64. How did you get kids sucking your cock and wife being licked and fucked by kids i love it

5.65. Try to put [group name], [group name] or [group name], [group name] etc on Search.

There are some good groups

5.66. You have to get them on your side, then slowly introduce ur cock in to the playtime, then play fight etc and then easily try to fuck them

However, the purpose which appeared most for why offenders were discussing crimes was when they were doing so to plan or elicit them happening. This was the case in 376 instances, where (among other actions) offenders requested that CSAM trading occur and discussed future abuse they wanted to enact. Offenders sometimes encouraged others to commit contact abuse, for example, one incited another offender to abuse a child-victim and create CSAM from the incident: 'U need to do that to him [name] and video it for us'. Offenders also planned out jointly enacted abuse, e.g. 'Our honeymoon, trip to a country to rape kids', and asked for extreme CSAM from others, e.g. 'Show me your worst porn, brother'.

A wide range of on and offline crimes were discussed or committed in the online paedophile community. There was more coding for online crimes than offline, which is likely because of the online medium of the communication and presence of CSAM trading online as well as the barriers to contact offending (like risks of discovery and victim access issues). The next two sections explore two aspects of online crimes through a more quantitative lens, with the aim of discerning any possible trends in their occurrences. These are community engagement, which refers to the offenders' activity in the community (e.g. joining or leaving groups and sending messages), and CSAM trading.

3.2. Online Crime: Community Engagement

Offenders engaged online in the community by exchanging messages, sending CSAM or other media, and joining/leaving groups. In the dataset, these engagements all possessed a corresponding timestamp of when the action was taken in UK time and on what date. Thus, these community engagements were mapped out into visualisations that could enable an analysis of trends in participation and times of high or low activity. The *Kik* group-chats were primarily analysed for this activity, as DMs involved only two parties. Additionally, some individual users and the dataset as a whole were also examined, as will be discussed shortly. Table 5.5 shows metadata about the nine group-chats from this dataset.

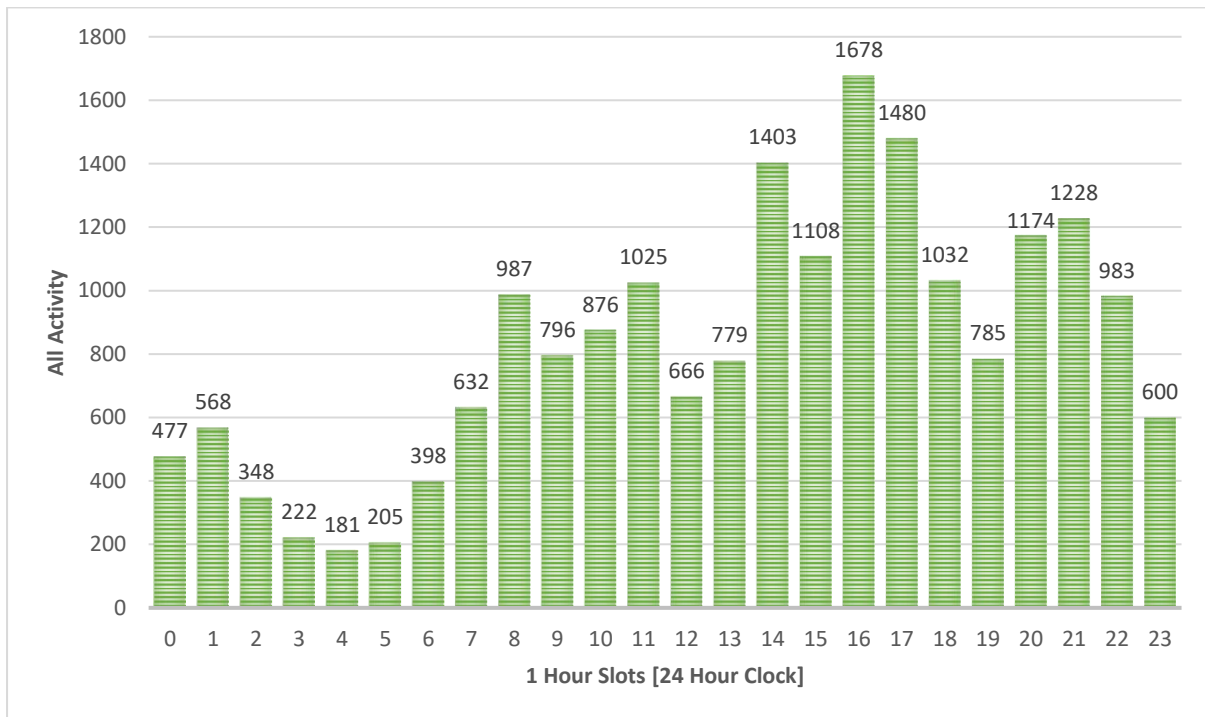
Table 5.5: Metadata for all Kik group-chats in the dataset.

Group Chat Number	No. of Participants Recorded	Word Count	No. of Messages	Approximate Duration
PP_01	9	164	26	21 days
PP_02	193	8,660	2,051	77 days
PP_03	58	1,665	486	14 days
PP_04	101	3,435	1,087	10 days
PP_05	31	463	104	2 days
PP_06	5	43	16	2 hours
PP_07	74	1,435	406	2 days
PP_08	41	948	207	3 days
PP_09	73	2898	390	1 day

As Table 5.5 shows, there was variation in the lengths and durations of these chatlogs. The files do not contain the entire lifespan of a group-chat and are instead snapshots of the groups for the period of time that the source offender was a member (see details of data origins in Chapter 3 Section 2). The source offender, as it will be termed here, is the offender from whom it is believed the chatlog was attained. For example, the first eight group-chats appear to have been sourced from the account/device of P_001, due to this offender being the only user which appears in every group and system messages at the start of files often indicating his joining of the group, and thus show only the period of time in which he had joined the group.

Community engagement by hours of the day was measured in the dataset to determine if there were trends in the times offenders were active in the groups. This involved grouping all messages sent into categories for each hour in the 24-hour clock using their corresponding timestamps, as can be seen in Figure 5.5 which shows the number of messages sent by hour in the entire dataset. *Activity* and *engagement* here refer to all messages, system messages, and CSAM messages sent in the chatlogs.

Figure 5.5: Activity by hour in the entire dataset.



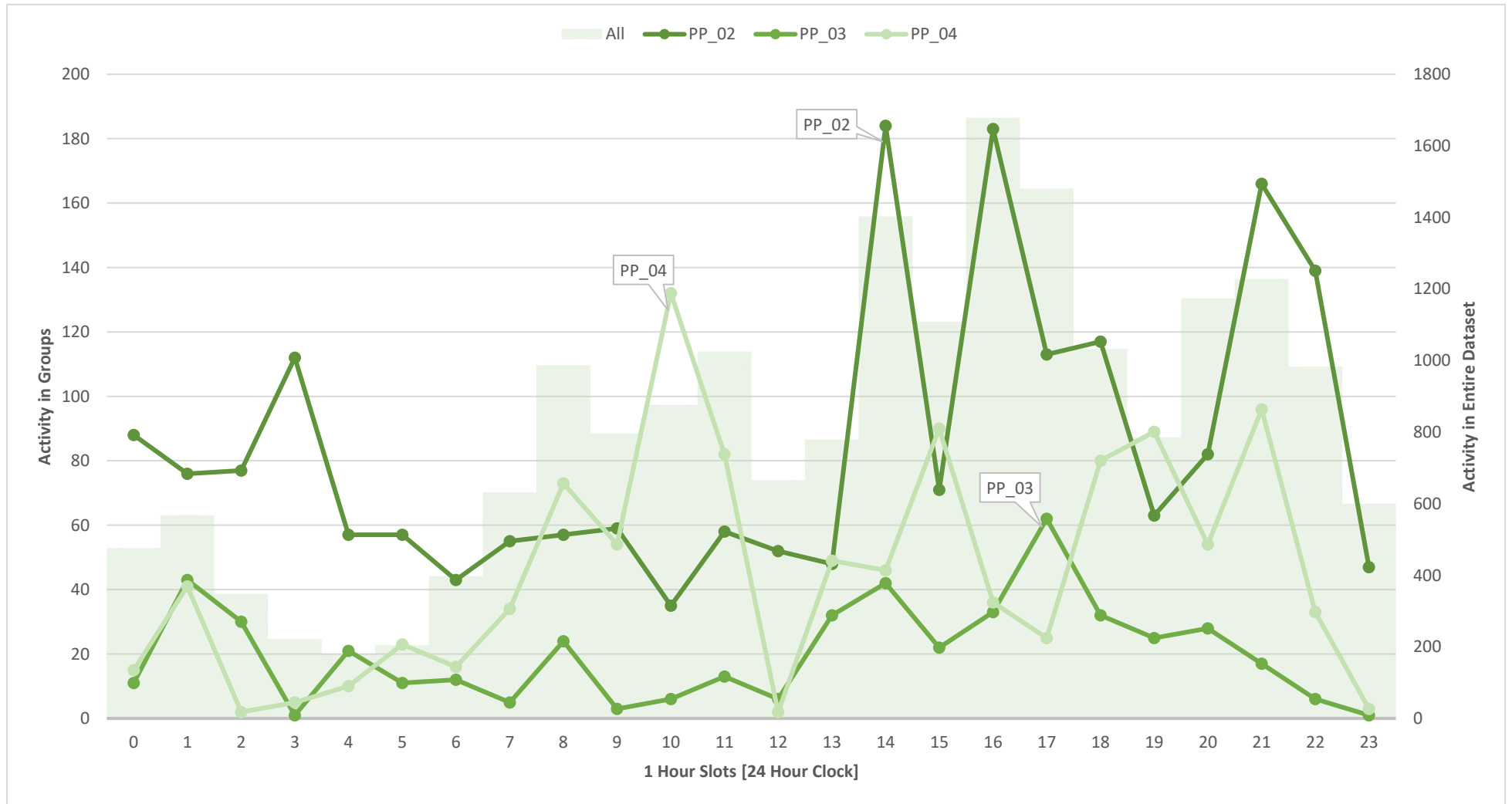
This graph shows a decrease in the amount of activity during 11pm-7am when offenders could be asleep in comparison to daytime hours: with the busiest times of day being 4pm, 5pm, and 2pm (peaking at 1,678 messages from 4-5pm) and the quietest times being 4am, 5am, and 3am (with a low of 181 messages between 4-5am). However, there was still high activity during the night and evening between 8pm and midnight (peaking at 1,228 messages between 9-10pm) – more so even than during the morning hours (8am-12pm). There seems to be little correlation between standard UK working hours and the community activity as, despite there being a small dip in activity between 8am and 11am, the highest points of activity were in the mid-afternoon before 5/6pm.

The slight spikes at around 8am and 4/5pm may suggest offenders engaged with the community while commuting to/from work, as was mentioned in the dataset (e.g. an offender responds 'Jesus! Lol I'm on the train!' after being sent CSAM by another offender). However, based on discussions in the dataset and this graph, it appears that offenders regularly engaged in the online paedophile community all hours of the day: while they were at work (e.g. 'Even during work , had my Pedo stinking cock out stroking it'), while they were at home alone or with others ('When engineer goes will get harder'), and well into the night ('Btw you miss a good night Thursday night , I only slept one hour it was so good'). The community was also international, and the UK-based offenders that were the source of these interactions were communicating with other offenders from all over the world in different time-zones. Thus, a caveat must be included for any observations made from the patterns of community engagement by hour as these results are likely affected by this factor.

Engagements by hour were also visualised for each group-chat that lasted over 1 week (7 days) and contained sufficient messages so that the results for how many messages/system messages sent in each hour were not skewed by the short lengths of some group-chats. The three groups which met this criterion were divided up by hour of the day and these results can be seen in Figure 5.6. The groups followed a similar pattern to the dataset, but PP_02 in particular spiked in the night (12am-4am) and dipped substantially in the morning (5am-12pm) unlike the rest of the dataset. The variety in these groups further demonstrates that offenders engaged with the community all hours of the day and were not seemingly restricted by standard working hours, nighttime, or times when they may be around family. The overall higher activity in the afternoon/evening is an interesting result that may align with some offender attitudes expressed in prior research (e.g. Kloess et al., 2019b) that CSAM viewing is stress-relieving for addicted offenders who may use it after stressful workdays.

Figure 5.6: Activity in all groups by hour of the day.

[The peaks in activity for each group are labelled in data-callouts. The data is category-based and not continuous, thus the lines connecting data-points demonstrate changes by hour (not over a time continuum).]

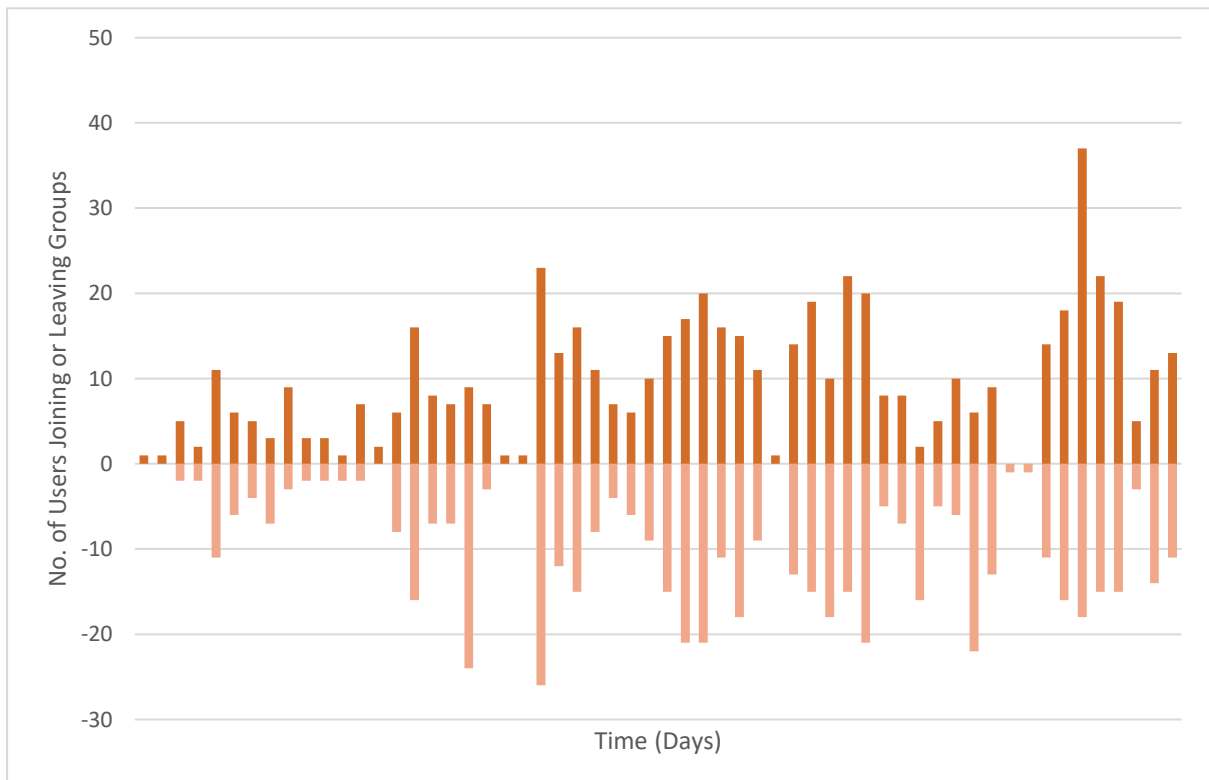


Trends in activity by days of the week were also investigated (see Appendix 18A for visualisation of results) which revealed that Monday was the busiest day of the week in the community, while Wednesday had the least activity. Contrary to expectations that there would be a difference between the amount of engagement on weekdays and weekends, there seemed to be little fluctuation between these. This metric, unlike the hour of the day categories, was relatively unaffected by the internationality of the online community so it is notable that this also does not show any correlation between workdays/weekends and activity levels.

The results from examining the times of day and days of the week offenders engaged in the community showed some patterns in behaviour: namely offenders being online in the community during the night, working hours, more often in the afternoon/evening than morning, and more so at the start and end of the week than the middle. However, it is difficult to assert why these trends were the case beyond speculation from prior research about offenders using the community as a coping mechanism for stress or addiction to CSAM (see Kloess et al., 2019b and Quayle et al., 2006). Furthermore, due to the size of this dataset and the heterogeneity of social media platforms and internet users, these results cannot be projected beyond the specific context of this study to make a broader point about offender community engagement outside of the groups/platforms examined here. What can be concluded is that offenders regularly engaged in the community all hours of the day and days of the week from around the world. The flurries of activity in these groups could be due to offenders attempting to build trust with one another and establish themselves in the community as it has been suggested by an offender in prior research that 'responding intensively back-and-forth on a particular forum topic with people gives you a good idea of whom you are dealing with' and helps to ascertain if individuals can be trusted (Van der Bruggen and Blokland, 2021a:273). Trust building practices, like frequent activity and responsiveness, are explored in Section 5 of this chapter.

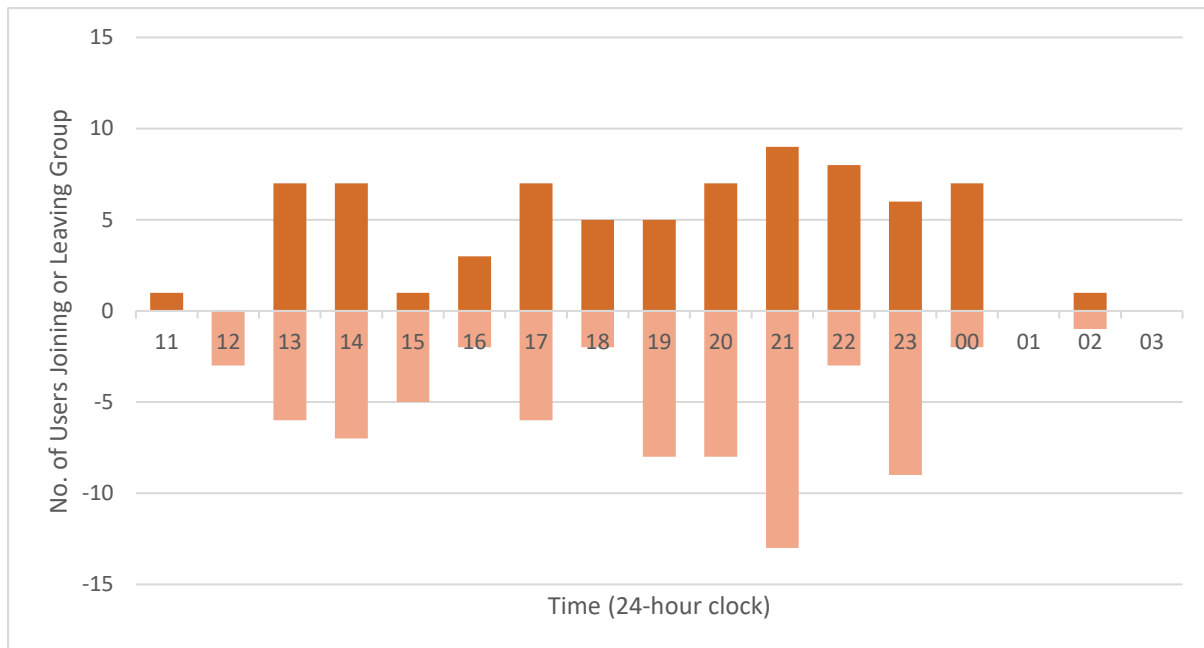
System messages in these groups often indicated when users joined or left them through automated messages like '[P_016] has left the chat'. All system messages that related to users joining or leaving groups specifically in the nine group-chats were translated into +1 or -1 numbers and input into graphs to show the fluctuations of group membership over time. As metadata about exact group sizes was unavailable in the datasets, these numbers show deviations from a baseline (which would be the unknown number of group members from when the chatlog began). Notably, some system messages relating to membership changes were of users being banned or removed from groups and these have been included in the 'leaving' bracket due to them having the same effect on the number of members present. Figure 5.7 shows these results for the first eight *Kik* groups (PP_01 to PP_08), while PP_09 appears separately in Figure 5.8 due to it taking place in a different year than the other groups (which would affect the graphs' time axis).

Figure 5.7: System messages of users joining or leaving PP_01-PP_08 groups over time in days.



Both graphs show users regularly joining and leaving groups, by day in Figure 5.7 and by hour in Figure 5.8. Despite some instances of more joining than leaving and vice-versa, overall, the

Figure 5.8: System messages of users joining or leaving PP_09 over time in hours (13-14th October 2017).



graphs appear almost mirrored – demonstrating that bouts of users joining group-chats also coincided with similar numbers of users leaving them. The number of users joining/leaving ebbs and flows over time with some peaks in this activity and some periods where the membership number only minimally changes. Often the peaks in users joining/leaving that can be seen in the graphs were due to group administrators ‘cleaning up’ the groups by removing a bulk of supposedly inactive users or those who had joined but not posted anything, and subsequently some of those users re-joining the group. This sort of user-management made group-chats more appealing to offenders as they were reassured that they contained active users who would contribute access to higher quantities/qualities of CSAM. Offenders often made comments about the quality or attractiveness of a group-chat based on this activity, whether to recommend (‘Very active cp group’) or critique (‘the chat is dead. No ones posted in a month’).

In contrast, those users who were removed for inactivity could be examples of users ‘lurking’, supported by the high number of users in the dataset whose usernames appeared in system messages only and never messaged themselves (334 users). Prior research suggested that as offender status ‘is judged by the relevance and creativity and format-matching of one’s postings,

lurking is so low status as to attract derision and censure – or at the very least, nervousness’ (Neuge, 2005:401). Additionally, a *Europol* report (2021:27) found that ‘the online absence of one of the members can be a worrisome development to be flagged within the community’. Inactive users are therefore removed due to lack of engagement making them low-value to the community and likely raising alarm-bells that they could be undercover law enforcement (e.g. ‘ok im going to delete you because i have tried for times to chat with you..if you wish to trade with me you can ask for another invite...bye’).

The community engagement of individual prominent users in this dataset was examined to compare the activities of certain offenders with that of the community as a whole, addressing part of the second research question (how these communities are participated in). The two source-offenders from Batch 1 of the data, P_001 (Kik) and P_0463 (GigaTribe), were chosen because the most data was available for them. Time of day graphs were created for the chat histories of these users across the entire dataset, as can be seen in Figures 5.9 and 5.10.

Figure 5.9: Activity of P_001 by hour of the day.

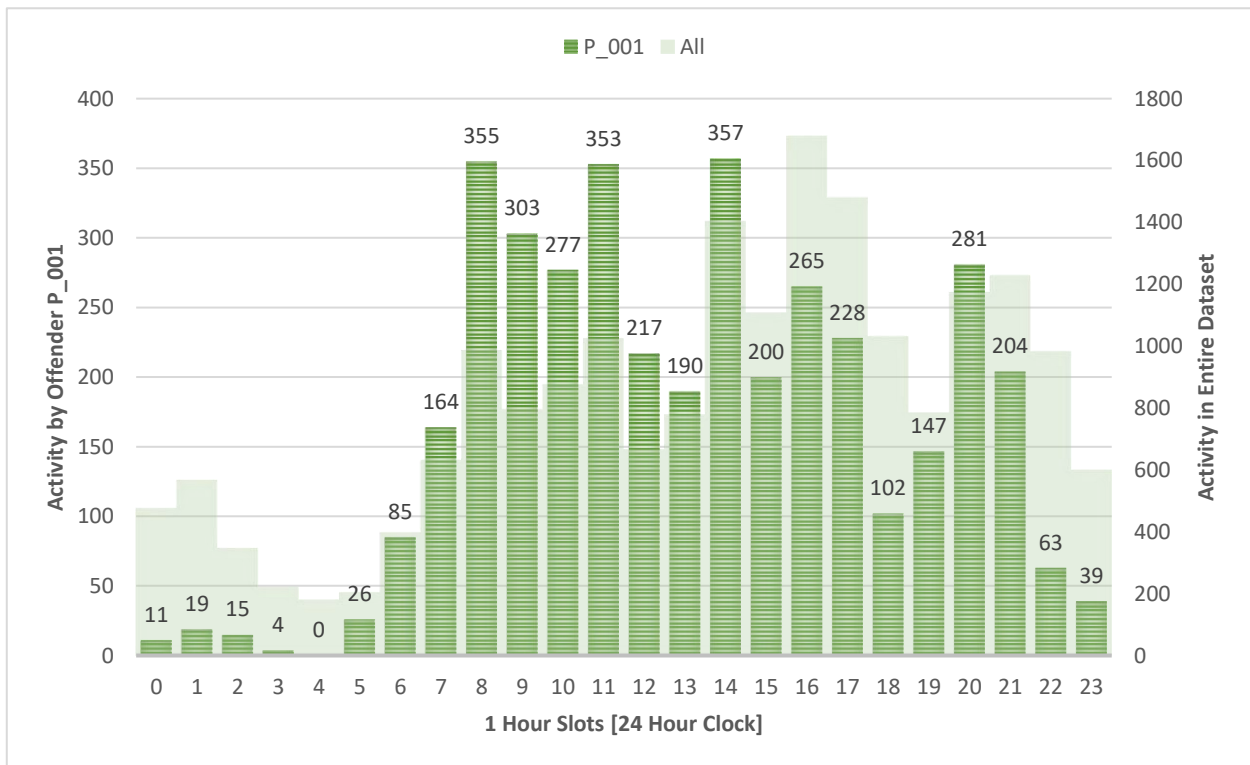
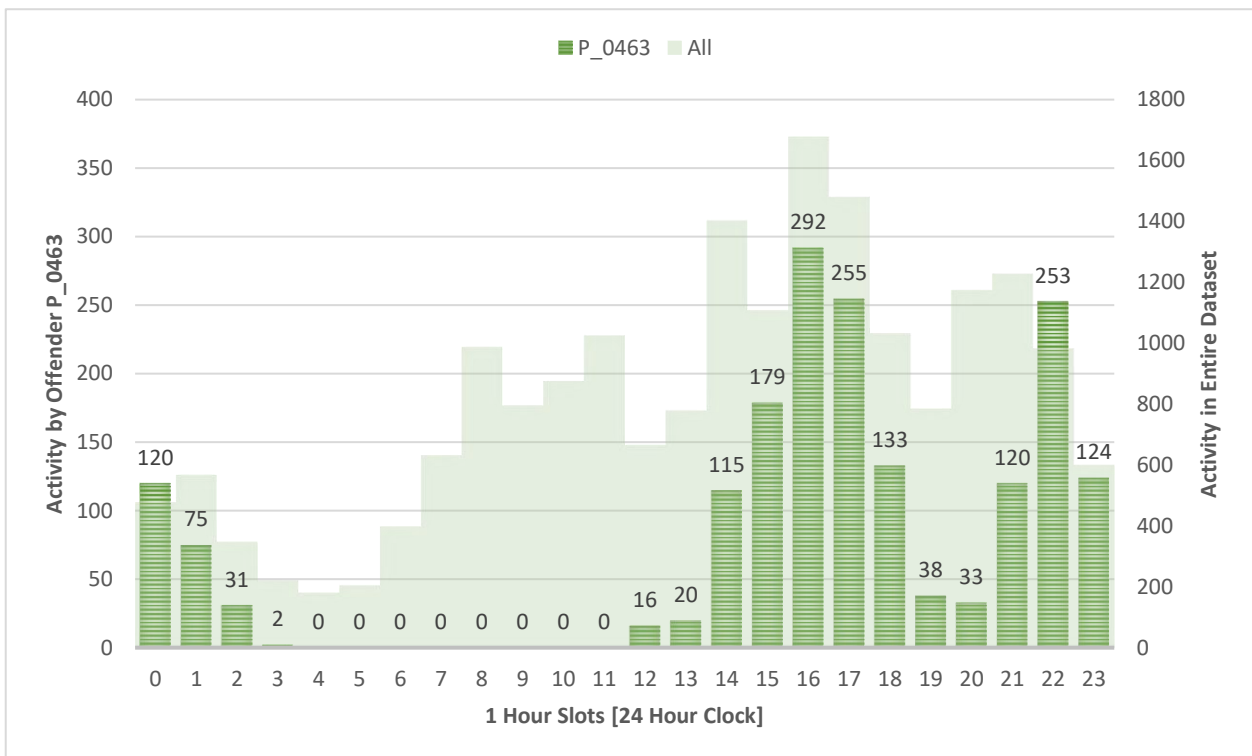


Figure 5.10: Activity of P_0463 by hour of the day.



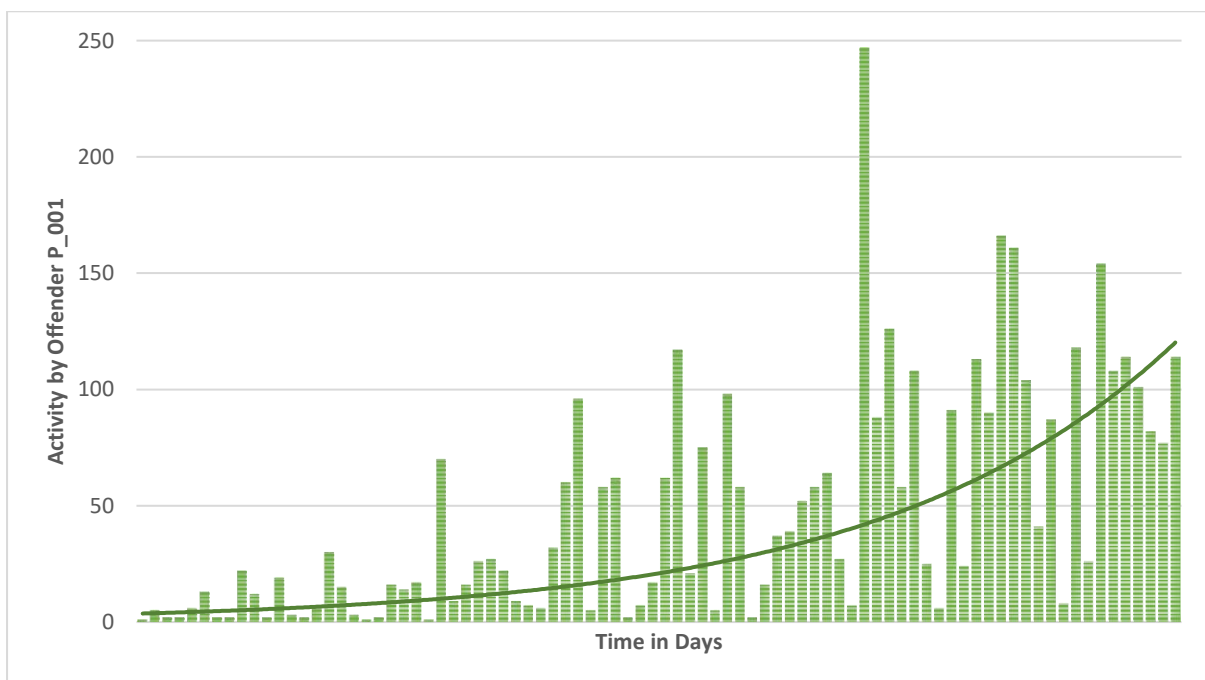
Graphs for messages sent by days of the week were also created but yielded little variation from the rest of the dataset, these can be seen in Appendix 18B-C. There is an immediately noticeable difference between P_0463’s behavioural patterns and P_001’s, as well as the rest of the dataset: P_0463 never sent any messages between 4am and 12pm. This indicates a clear habit of not engaging with the community in the morning or middle of the night (4am-12pm) when the offender was likely sleeping. The offender mostly engaged with the community in the afternoon and evening, with their peak activity occurring at 4pm, 5pm, and 10pm.

In contrast, P_001 is the most active online in the mornings between 8am and 12pm, as well as a spike in engagement around 2pm. Despite their consistently high activity throughout the day, this engagement fell off around 11pm and remained low until 6 or 7am – also indicating a somewhat regular sleeping pattern at night that they sometimes deviated from. Both offenders were UK-based and so these timings corresponded with UK night-time hours, but again there was no noticeable link between activity levels and UK workday timings (9am-5pm), which suggests these offenders either had non-standard working hours that varied; were unemployed (which is

undermined by claims to employment in the data); or were happy to engage in the paedophile community while at work.

The most prolific user in the dataset (P_001) sent 3,875 messages in total, while P_0463 sent 1,806. However, the former was active in these chatlogs across 93 days (just over 13 weeks), while the latter was active across a 990-day span (just over 141 weeks). P_001 was thus averaging 41.7 messages a day (to 1dp), and P_0463 averaged 1.8 messages a day. There was huge variety in when the offenders sent messages, sometimes being very active on one day or in one hour and then going silent for a time. In addition, P_0463 only appeared in the *GigaTribe* chat history file which had been sampled (outlined in the Chapter 2 Section 4.1). This sampling process was unlikely to strongly affect the time of day and day of week graphs because of the length of time the chatlog spanned. However, this sampling did preclude the user from the following visualisation that was conducted on P_001's engagement history. Figure 5.11 shows all community engagement in the dataset by P_001 chronologically over time from the first chatlog this offender appeared in until their last appearance.

Figure 5.11: All activity by P_001 chronologically (23.07.15-23.10.15).



There was an observable, steady increase in activity as time progressed over the three months of online communication by P_001 that was available for study. Though this data was only a

snapshot of the offender’s engagement in the online paedophile community, on just one of the many platforms they claimed to make use of for this purpose (*Kik*), there appeared to be an escalation of offending behaviours as they became more involved in the community. The number of messages sent per day spiked and fell at times, showing variation in P_001’s commitment to the community, but their overall participation increased as time went on to the heights of sending up to 247 messages in a single day at one point. This escalation of involvement with the community does not *alone* indicate a radicalising trajectory or increased threat to real-world victims. However, when combined with the criminal activity that transpires amongst those messaging on these platforms, and the discussions taking place between offenders (explored throughout this thesis), it may be indicative of an escalation of other behaviours (e.g. contact abuse, CSAM usage, and offence-supportive beliefs).

3.3. Online Crime: CSAM Trading

The crimes of trading, disseminating, viewing, or eliciting CSAM were the most common online crimes that took place within the paedophile community in this dataset, and they present a prominent problem for law enforcement and child-protection efforts. Much like with the offenders’ community engagement, CSAM trading behaviours in group-chats were examined for patterns in when the media was sent and what instigated the activity. Table 5.6 shows the number of messages containing CSAM that were sent in each group-chat.

Table 5.6: CSAM trading in groups.

Group Chat Number	No. of Messages Containing CSAM
PP_01	0
PP_02	241
PP_03	105
PP_04	432
PP_05	45
PP_06	8

PP_07	130
PP_08	52
PP_09	42

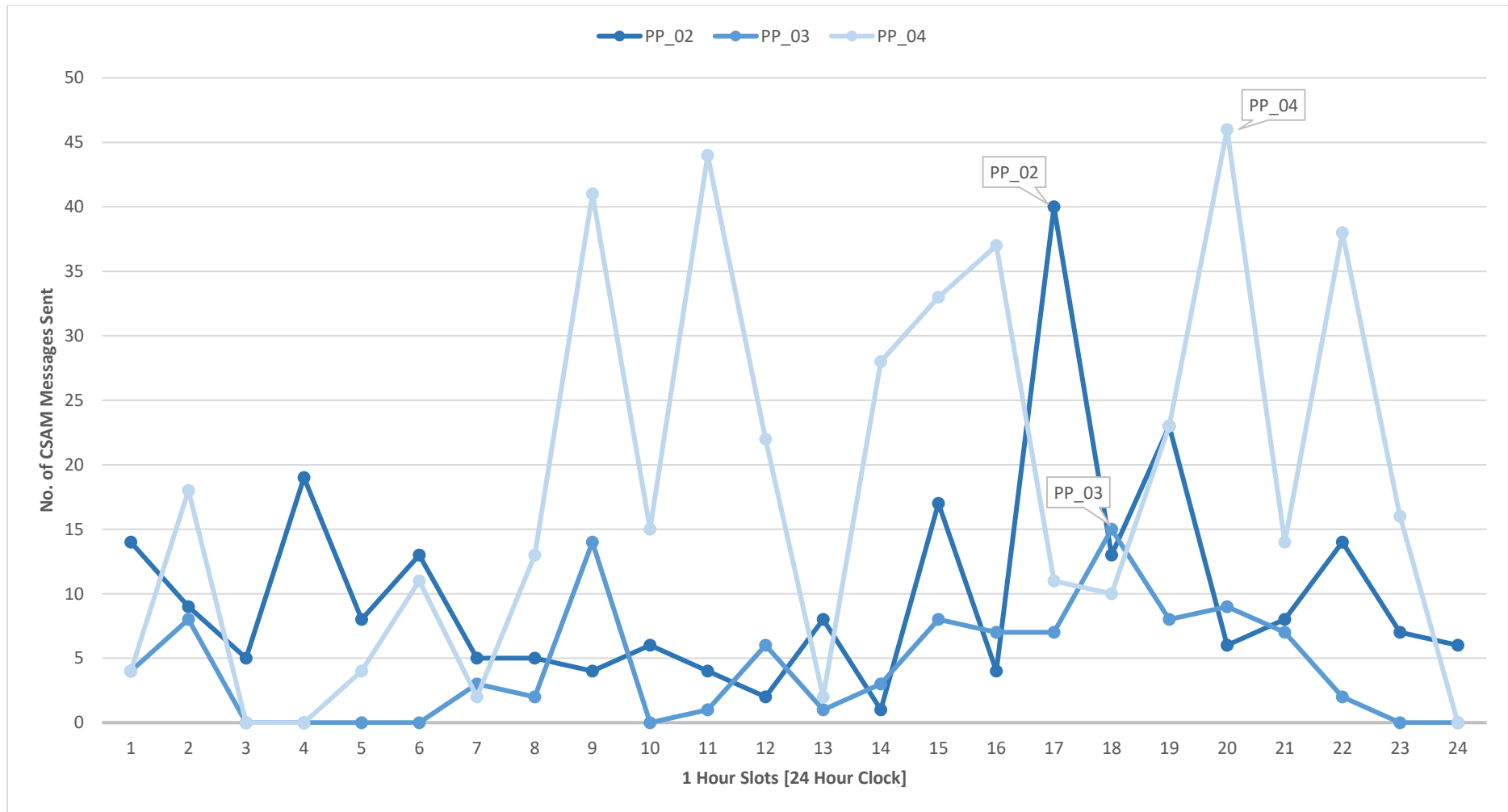
As was detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, the exact number of media files sent is unknown due to the necessary CSAM redaction of these files by the data owner ahead of this research. However, the number of messages that *contained* CSAM (where one message could for example contain one image, multiple videos, or links to entire folders of CSAM) can be counted. There was little or no CSAM trading in groups PP_01 and PP_06, but these two chatlogs contained the least messages out of the nine groups. The groups with the most messages containing CSAM were PP_04 and PP_02, with 432 and 241 CSAM messages respectively. CSAM trading by hours of the day for the three group-chat chatlogs which took place over more than a week and contained trading (PP_02, PP_03, and PP_04) can be seen in Figure 5.12 overleaf.

The CSAM trading activity in PP_02 peaked in the afternoon/evening, with the highest point at 5pm, after a lull in activity between 7am and 2pm. There were also spikes in activity around 1am and 4am, but there was a clear increase in CSAM trading during the daytime which did not occur during the night. In PP_03, there was also minimal activity during the night (except for some activity at 2am) and CSAM trading was busiest in this group at 9am and 6pm. PP_04, which contained the most messages that conveyed CSAM in the nine groups, showed high activity throughout the day: with peaks at 9am, 11am, 4pm, 8pm, and 10pm. However, there were also dips in this activity throughout the day, with a drastic lull around 1pm. Less trading took place during the night, but there was a small flurry of activity around 2am in the group.

To reiterate, these results are affected by the internationality of the community, but they do appear to show the possible influence of UK daytime and night-time in terms of levels of activity. In PP_04 there appears to be little correlation between 9-5 work hours and trading, but PP_03 shows a dip in activity between 9am and 5/6pm – which could be due to some offenders wanting to avoid illegal activity while at work. Insoll et al.'s (2021) survey of CSAM-offenders

Figure 5.12: CSAM trading activity in group-chats by hour of the day.

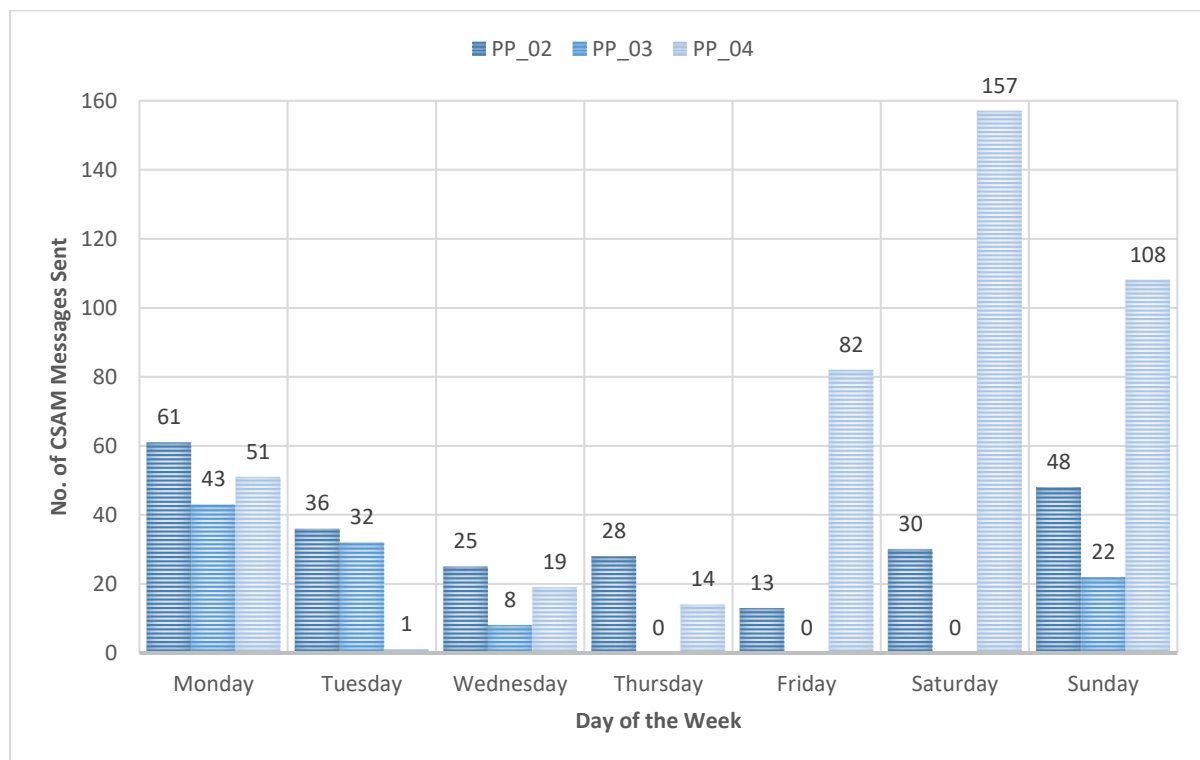
[The peaks in activity for each group are labelled in data-callouts. The data is category-based and not continuous, thus the lines connecting data-points demonstrate changes by hour (not over time).]



revealed that 44% of offenders viewed/searched for CSAM while at home and 36% did so only when they were alone. However, 11% of respondents did claim to view/search for CSAM while at work.

Figure 5.13 of CSAM trading in these three groups by days of the week also demonstrates the diversity in offender habits. In PP_04, more CSAM trading occurred on the weekend than all weekdays combined, but in PP_02 the highest points of activity were on Monday and Sunday. In PP_03, Monday was also the busiest time for CSAM trading, and all three groups have lulls in activity mid-week.

Figure 5.13: CSAM trading activity in group-chats by days of the week.



Peaks in CSAM trading activity in groups were triggered by different types of instigating events. Chiang (2020a) described offenders offering CSAM online as them ‘demonstrating value’ and showing ‘how they can benefit the community’. As well as improving their relationships with other offenders and their status in the community, engaging in CSAM trading also reassured users that the trader was not an undercover law enforcement officer. Many of the biggest peaks in activity can be traced back to administrators ordering members of a group to post CSAM within a set timeframe or

they would be removed for inactivity, as was mentioned earlier, but regular members without this designated role also elicited trading. Sometimes this was done by requests for CSAM (e.g., ‘Any more pics gentlemen’); by the suggestion that more trading should happen in the group or that they should all pitch in (e.g., ‘Damn guys lets just start posting and keep it going. Who's going to start?’); or by a user sending CSAM themselves and initiating a reciprocal exchange (e.g., one user sends ‘Hey’ followed by 7 messages containing CSAM).

The ease of access to CSAM through membership of these groups is a concerning problem that can likely only be addressed by efforts to identify, infiltrate, and dissolve them so that the access pipeline is cut off. The secrecy and concealment of these criminal groups and their members are a huge barrier to these combating efforts. Risk taking behaviours and security assessments made by offenders in the online paedophile community are examined shortly in Section 5. However, it is important to establish what these offenders claim drives their criminal behaviour and engagement with the community. The offenders in this dataset at times professed their motivations for committing crimes, and it is these disclosures that the next section explores.

4. Crime: Motivations

“The devil can cite scripture for his purpose.”

— *William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice*

The offenders’ self-disclosed motivations for CSA crimes can reveal what pathways led to them offending as well as the risk factors or experiences that may lead to individuals becoming CSA offenders. The research of Steely Smith (2023) examined the rationalisations of male child sex offenders who had a history of being victims themselves in childhood. She asserted that cognitive distortions such as these rationalisations ‘are thought to influence an offender’s motivation to offend, while others believe they are post-hoc rationalizations that minimize culpability and preserve self-image’ (2023:2). While it is possible, even likely, that many of these offenders’ self-reported

motivations are being used to justify their behaviours to themselves – they still provide an insight into the motivating factors behind the offenders’ sexual interest in children and what they believe causes them to act on these desires through criminal activities like abuse or CSAM trading. Furthermore, these motivations have been disclosed by offenders to each other within supposedly private, unmonitored chats. Unlike many of the prior studies mentioned which analysed offender motivations gleaned from police/researcher interviews with outsiders/non-paedophiles, these motivations have been provided to others sympathetic to their actions and may thus be more honest. Therefore, this dataset enables a unique look at CSA motivations disclosed in offender-to-offender community interactions.

Motivations detailed in the chatlogs were coded for thematically in the first analysis stage as a sub-theme in the Behaviours theme, which found 63 disclosures of motivations for Online Criminal Behaviours and 65 for Offline Criminal Behaviours. These motivations were then coded against a coding book of sub-categories for the different types of motivations present (established inductively); the definitions of coding book categories can be found in Appendix 19. Some offenders disclosed being victims of childhood sexual abuse in the chatlogs, which could correlate with other factors such as veracity of offending or sexual interests – thus, it was important to capture these disclosures and assess how offenders described this past abuse. These were coded for here only if the past abuse was directly linked by the offender to their current paedophilia/offending behaviours. Motivations were also coded against the stance coding book (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2) and disclosures of past childhood abuse were analysed to determine if they were being portrayed positively or negatively. This section will begin by examining the different types of motivations disclosed from least to most salient, followed by a closer look at the offenders providing past abuse as a motivating factor.

As Table 5.7 shows, there were nine different motivation types expressed by offenders in the chatlogs, as well as a tenth category for miscellaneous other motivations (which subsumed the

least common motivations: cementing community membership, CSAM to prevent contact offending, and being under the influence of alcohol). Paquette and Cortoni (2020:12) found that most of their child sex offender dataset (through a thematic analysis of police interviews) ‘tended to blame their specific online sexual offending behavior on their misuse of drugs and alcohol’, which was only cited once in this dataset. Similarly, Steely Smith (2023:1267) suggested that ‘it is possible these offenders felt powerless and little control over their own lives, therefore, consciously or subconsciously, sought relationships with children where they could exert increased power and control’. Evidence of this specific reasoning appeared also appeared only once in the present dataset where, when asked why they liked to sexually abuse children, an offender responded ‘I don't know, just do. I think it's because u have all the control’.

Table 5.7: Coding summary of the motivations disclosed by offenders for committing (or intending to commit) crimes.

Crime Motivations	Data Examples	Percentage of Files Codes Appear In	No. of Codes
Sexual Gratification	5.67. But even if it is slow what a pleasure !!!!	26%	60
Addiction/Reliance/A 'Need'	5.68. It's like my morning coffee	9%	31
No Alternative/Impotency	5.69. my cock is always soft if not a extreme nepi porn watching	16%	24
Pro-Paedophilia/Abuse Ideology	5.70. That's what it deserves.. What it was made for.	10%	19
History of Childhood Abuse	5.71. That remind me of my youth	7%	12
Supporting Others/ Relationships	5.72. Wow , we could be so good together , enjoy each other company , flesh , cum , desires and be pedophile unity	3%	12
Create Own CSAM	5.73. <i>P_001</i> Film it !!! For everyone to see <i>P_003</i> Yah showing the vid to other ped bros. A party where the vid is showed and we all ped wanking together	5%	9
Fame/Popularity/Boasting	5.74. <i>P_154</i> [image] <i>P_154</i> Someone I coaxed into being bad.... <i>P_225</i> Mmmm Niiice <i>P_225</i> Mmmm Niiice <i>P_154</i> 14	4%	6

Relaxation/Wellbeing	5.75. need to shoot to relax a bit	4%	5
Other Motivations	5.76. came home after a night out with friends drunk son was still up I was falling about	5%	5

Following the miscellaneous ‘Other Motivations’ category, the least common motivations cited were claiming that CSA crimes aided the offenders’ wellbeing or relaxation (n=5) and committing CSA crimes for fame, popularity, or to boast to others (n=6). In example 5.74 of the latter motivation, P_154 sent proof of their contact abuse to a group chat ([image]), bragged about their coercion of a victim (‘Someone I coaxed into being bad’), and mentioned the victim’s age to boast about this achievement (‘14’). Offenders also suggested that they committed/would commit contact abuse crimes for the purpose of creating CSAM to then share with others (n=9) and to support each other in committing CSA crimes (n=12).

A pro-paedophilia/abuse ideology was evident in motivating some offenders to commit crimes (n=19), as they were able to rationalise their offending through cognitive distortions that negatively portrayed victims. Example 5.70 illustrates an offender victim-blaming and justifying abusive behaviour, suggesting that their motivations were destiny (‘What it was made for’) or retaliation/justice (‘what it deserves’). Another motivation was denying the notion that there was an alternative to paedophilia for them (n=24), which again perpetuated an offence-supportive ideology, often manifesting in claims of impotency unless viewing abusive CSAM (see example 5.69).

The second most common motivation cited for CSA crimes was when offenders portrayed it as an addiction, a reliance they had, or called it a ‘need’ (n=31). Kloess et al. (2019b:872), who also investigated the motivations CSA offenders disclosed, observed them claiming that they were ‘fulfilling an unmet need’ and it was an addiction or an escalating habit. In another study, offenders blamed the ease of access to CSAM on the internet as a ‘facilitator or even a provider of uncontrollable temptations to commit online sexual crimes’ (Paquette and Cortoni, 2020:13). In the present dataset, offenders referred to paedophilia or sexual offending as something

they 'Cannot function without', were 'hooked' on, and a 'craving' that 'keeps following' them – all suggesting an addictive relationship where they felt a compulsion to view CSAM or abuse victims.

Example 5.67 demonstrates an offender minimising the negative connotations associated with paedophilia through a simile comparing it to his 'morning coffee', suggesting it was a habit or a part of his everyday routine and was (like a morning coffee is often claimed to be) essential for the start of his day. Extract 5.77 exemplifies two offenders discussing this addictive behaviour, the habitual nature of viewing CSAM, and experiencing it as an unavoidable need.

5.77.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	I wake up n think about it, the desire follows we all t day long.
2	P_154	I understand
3	P_154	I think about boys all the time
5	P_154	Always going through my library
6	P_001	I crave for pd porn , likeminded to relate to n with

P_001 and P_154 described how they were constantly thinking about CSAM/CSA (lines 1 and 3) and it caused compulsive behaviours like revisiting their 'library' of CSAM. The feeling is referred to as a 'desire' (line 1) or a craving (line 6) which motivated their offending behaviours.

The most disclosed motivation by offenders in the dataset was offending for sexual gratification (n=60). This coding captured the times when offenders explicitly talked about why they committed CSA crimes and cited sexual pleasure as the reason. Example 5.67 in Table 5.7 came from an interaction between offenders where one described how they had previously abused a child, qualifying that it was a 'slow' process in order to avoid being caught and the other offender eagerly replied, 'But even if it is slow what a pleasure !!!!'. They indicated that the sexual gratification from sexually abusing a child-victim was enough of a motivation to out-weigh the negative aspects in their view. Some coding for this motivation overlapped with the category of having no alternative/impotency because offenders cited the sexual gratification they could get only from CSAM/CSA as a motivator for doing these crimes (see example 5.69).

Sexual gratification was unsurprising as the most common motivation given that this community brings together individuals with a shared sexual interest in children. It was perhaps even surprising that it was not directly named as a motivation more often in more chatlogs, however, explicitly disclosed motivations were not very widespread in the dataset (only appearing in 36% of chatlogs) possibly because this was a community of likeminded individuals who thus did not often feel required to explain the genesis of their paedophilia. Furthermore, Insoll et al. (2024a:12) concluded in their dark-web survey of undetected CSAM-offenders that 'individuals who search for and view CSAM do not always do so because they are sexually interested in children; there are different reasons and motivations behind this behaviour'.

One motivation which appeared 12 times in the chatlogs, that has not yet been addressed here, was offenders citing a past history of childhood abuse as a cause for their offending. In one instance an offender directly linked their experiences of victimhood in childhood with their offending, 'You know how I got started, you know why I got and where I started to enjoy it', suggesting that they enjoyed being sexually abused as a child and this led to them sexualising children themselves in turn. Briggs's (1995) book *From Victim to Offender* compiled the stories of individuals who had been victims of sexual abuse in childhood that then went on to become perpetrators of CSA themselves in adulthood. Similar stories can be found in child sex offender research where offenders directly link their experiences of CSA with their subsequent perpetration of abuse against child-victims (e.g. Winder et al., 2015). A survey of offenders by Insoll et al. (2021:14) found that '70% of respondents say that they first saw CSAM when they were under the age of 18' and this exposure to CSAM at a young age 'can be defined as an adverse childhood experience (ACE), with potentially far-reaching negative and harmful impact on wellbeing and development'.

There were 22 individual disclosures of past childhood abuse by offenders. It is notable that 12 out of the 22 disclosures were directly linked by offenders as having been a motivation for

their later offending because it shows an awareness by offenders of the pathway between victims of abuse and subsequent perpetrators. Past abuse experiences were overwhelmingly portrayed in a positive light, with 17 instances of positive portrayals (74% of the total), 5 instances of a neutral portrayals (22%), and one negative portrayal (4%). The single negative portrayal came from an instance of an offender disclosing their childhood abuse in mentioning that their 'dad got me bleeding at 10' and the other offender they were interacting with in DMs responding with sympathy ('I'm sorry') and saying that they 'Don't want to bring up bad memories for u'. The sympathetic offender perceived that the abuse must be a negative, painful memory due to the description of violence/harm ('bleeding' at aged 10) – however, the offender making the disclosure countered this sentiment immediately and asserted that these were 'Not bad memories and no regret' to shift the portrayal to be positive.

Neutral portrayals occurred where offenders did not make any evaluative comment on the abuse when it was disclosed by others or while disclosing it themselves. Notably, Insoll et al. (2024a:21) encountered different responses from CSAM-offenders who were questioned via a survey about their past histories of abuse (ACEs), finding that 'while many respondents were willing to share detailed information about their sexual interests and behaviours and the crimes they had committed, they were reluctant to talk about their adverse childhood experiences' and over 45% of respondents chose not to answer questions on the topic.

The prevalence of portraying a history of childhood abuse positively in this dataset could be because these offenders were engaged in similar acts of abuse against children, and thus wished to minimise harm or give themselves moral exoneration by suggesting their own experiences of it were positive. It could also be a consequence of the offenders coping with their past trauma by denying the harm it did to them or simply as a mechanism for glorifying paedophilia and perpetuating their offence-supportive ideology. Positive portrayals of childhood abuse manifested through offenders describing their experiences as something they were fortunate to have: e.g. an

offender called themselves 'lucky' and claimed that they had their 'stepdad to thank' for their abuse experiences. One user messaged in group-chat PP_02 asking if anyone has anything 'hot' to share and another responded 'A story when my friends brother seduced me. I was 7'. Their own past sexual abuse story was being offered up here as a form of erotic fiction (or, purportedly, fact) for the sexual gratification of others in the community.

Extract 5.78 depicts two offenders (P_001 and P_003) who discussed their experiences of childhood sexual abuse and cited this directly as a reason for their paedophilia and CSA crimes.

5.78.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_003]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_003	Ah ok . We are all hooked , bro. Who was ur corrupted?
2	P_001	My step dad when I was 9, 10
3	P_003	Was started by fam here too but forgot it till my teen age
4	P_001	Then via Icuui I rediscover the pleasure , at rim got me moreover into it ,
5		now as you know il one < 5 , both g & b , rape blood corpse
6	P_001	I have no regrets , I wish my stepdad was pervier
7	P_003	Were u raped when child?
8	P_001	I did have a 17 relationship but I had to terminate it you know the
9		reason bro
10	P_001	Not much raped but abused and fukked hard: I did bleed which I loved
11	P_001	I need and like to be honest with you bro
12	P_003	I know bro. Was penetrated here by older uncle, he desappears from my
13		family and I forgot it but when early teen started to get horned looking
14		at lil ones arses and dicks and couldn't stop wanking on it. Then when
15		Icuui times went down till <5 and no back
16	P_001	I am the same , only like v v v y , babies n nb

In line 1, P_003 asks P_001 who their 'corrupted' was – referring to the person who first abused them as a child and thus 'corrupted' them into becoming a paedophile. Both offenders shared that they were abused by older male family members ('step dad', line 2; 'fam', line 3; and 'older uncle', line 12) before they were teenagers. This past victimisation was portrayed entirely positively by P_001 who asserted that they had 'no regrets' and 'wish my stepdad was pervier' in line 6. They also refuted P_003 characterisation of this abuse as non-consensual. In line 7, P_003 asked if P_001 was 'raped' as a child and P_001 replied that they were 'Not much raped but abused and fukked hard: I

did bleed which I loved’ – denying the statutory rape and reframing the abuse as a positive, arousing experience through the use of sexual slang (‘fukked hard’) and assertions of enjoyment (‘which I loved’). P_003 also avoided focusing on the non-consensual nature of their childhood abuse when describing how he ‘Was penetrated here by an older uncle’, not using terms like *rape/abuse*. In lines 4-5, P_001 described seeking out CSAM in adulthood as ‘rediscover[ing] the pleasure’ and detailed an escalation of their sexual interests to seeking out CSAM of younger and younger victims (< 5’) as well as violence and necrophilia (‘rape blood corpse’). P_003 described a similar pathway in lines 12-15, claiming they began experiencing paedophilic attraction while still a teenager and their age preferences also decreased over time to more extreme CSAM. Both offenders cited the use of a video-conferencing platform similar to *Zoom, Icuui*, as a contributing factor towards their escalation of offending (likely due to it enabling easier access to CSAM and the online paedophile community).

A stance analysis was applied to the Motivations sub-theme to examine how pro-paedophilia beliefs were attributed and expressed within the disclosures of motivations (see Appendix 20 for coding results). For example, in the prior extract 5.78 when P_001 asserted they enjoyed the abuse in line 10, they were taking a stance about the abuse and positively evaluating it (‘I did bleed which I loved’). However, stancetaking and other-stance attribution of collective stances in Motivations heavily overlaps with the stance analysis of offenders’ offence-supportive beliefs in the Attitudes sub-theme, which will be addressed in Chapter 7 Section 3.2. As a consequence of the strong overlap, to avoid repetition, the stance analysis of motivations will not be discussed here.

The offenders in this community navigated accessing CSAM and victims; committed crimes through their CSAM trading and language; discussed past crimes; planned future abuse; and discussed their motivations for these behaviours. Whilst engaging in an online criminal space, running the risk of detection by law enforcement and interacting with others anonymously, offenders built trust with one another to sustain mutually beneficial relationships and retain

membership of the community. It is these risk assessment and trust-building practices which concern the next section.

5. Risks and Trust

“...their vows of silence and their habits of secrecy had made them suspicious and distrustful of one another...”

— *Salman Rushdie, Haroun and the Sea of Stories*

5.1. Security and Trust Building

The Risk Assessments main theme was identified in Chapter 4 and linked with the Community Building sub-theme of Exchanges of Personal Information (EPI), which was also a risk-taking behaviour. The types of risks and security measures offenders discussed/took in the community were listed in Chapter 4 Section 2.1. This section explores further the contexts in which these risk-based conversations emerged, what their purposes were, and illustrative examples of common security practices and concerns. The following contexts for discussing risks are examined: teaching or advising others of how to minimise risks (often by demonstrating what security measures offenders themselves implement), discussing the uses of secure technologies (like encryption tools, anonymisation, secure apps, or the dark-web), and warning each other of potential threats to their security (as well as how to deal with them). Additionally, trust-building efforts through disclosing personal information (EPI) were investigated to understand how and why offenders provided potentially identifying details in an illegal online community.

Huikuri (2022a:34) suggests that ‘for most pedophiles, anonymous online communities are the only places to safely socialize with their peers’ and there, ‘individual perpetrators search and find advice on how to remain anonymous, but also on how to safely advance into contact sexual violence against children’. Offenders used the community to teach each other how to commit child sexual abuse with minimal risks of detection by recounting their own personal success stories and advising others on the potential risks they needed to counter. Extract 5.79 illustrates this behaviour.

It depicts an offender (P_001) explaining how they managed to isolate their victim away from the rest of their family without arousing suspicion (an offline risk-minimisation technique to keep abuse from being detected).

5.79.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_154	Why is he sleeping with u??
2	P_001	I was at dinner to my sister and the kids but after when j was due to leave
3		the nephew gone totally quiet , asked him why the change of mood and he
4		started crying saying he want me to stay over and sleep with him , so I
5		suggested for him to stay over mine
6	P_154	Awwwww

The offender had previously described building a close relationship with their nephew, the victim, to groom them for this kind of abuse so that it appeared to just be the nephew wanting to spend time with his uncle. The other offender in the conversation showed interest in how P_001 had managed to get alone with the victim and share a bed with them. They asked for an explanation (line 1), which lead to them learning techniques for enacting offline abuse without discovery through P_001's successful account (lines 2-5).

Offenders also taught others about security measures surrounding CSAM storage through referencing the steps they took themselves. For example, the offender in example 5.80 used their own security measures when travelling as a benchmark to suggest that another offender should replicate that behaviour because they have not been caught before and are 'careful'.

5.80. Can i ask one very special thing . Please be careful as you satisfy your need . I travel.alot so I never have things on me .pics etc and am careful not to load or do things . I want us to.openly be pedo together but safe together . My special friend

This offender justified the request by saying that the motivation was out of affection for the offender, so they could be 'safe' together and 'openly' paedophiles in the online community they viewed as a safe space. They used the off-record politeness strategy of indirectness (by describing their own security measures) as well as the positive politeness strategies of statements of friendship

and compliments ('My special friend') to hedge their request that another offender be more careful offline. Positive politeness was the most common form of politeness used within the Risk Assessments theme, likely to foster a friendly relationship between offenders trying to build trust and sharing information.

One of the most common online security measures discussed by offenders was the use of secure technologies. *Europol's Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (2016:26)* found that offenders (contemporaneous to this dataset) used 'IP anonymisation tools, encryption for both devices and communications, wiping software or operating systems, virtualisation and cloud storage'. The report suggested that in the past these technologies were only really associated with 'sophisticated' offenders, but today 'such techniques have been reported by some countries to be found in 'almost all cases'' and have become 'the norm' (2016:26). Chopin et al. (2022) studied the cognitive and behavioural factors affecting child sex offenders' acquisition of technological expertise online through analysing law enforcement case files in Canada between 2001-2020. They found that there was a continuum from inexperienced users who lacked technological knowledge (the majority) to the minority of users who were committed to developing technical skills to avoid detection by law enforcement. Chopin et al. (2022) linked age with an offender's ability to acquire technological skills, suggesting that younger offenders may just be more tech-savvy when it comes to online tools for anonymisation and security (meaning the technological expertise of offenders overall will continue to increase as time goes on and older offenders without these skills are replaced by the ageing younger offenders). A later *Europol (2021)* report added the uses of VPNs, cryptocurrencies, encrypted phones, and encrypted applications (like *Telegram* and *Wickr*) to the portfolio of tools offenders made use of.

Furthermore, discussions of storing CSAM on physical or online storage tools were rife in the chatlogs examined here. Offenders also queried the risks of sending CSAM via email and were swiftly discouraged by other offenders who called this 'not so safe', advocating instead to 'watch,

stroke and delete' rather than saving the illegal files. The security tools provided by different platforms, apps, and websites were also evaluated. Extract 5.81 from a *Kik* chatlog shows two offenders negotiating which platform/social media was best for them to communicate on to minimise risks to themselves.

5.81.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	I see will do that later, shame you haven't got Skype to cam with on 1 to 1
2	P_111	Prefer not to use Skype
3	P_001	Any reason?
4	P_111	Message me on telegram
5	P_111	On [P_111's username]
6	P_001	Ok will do
7	P_111	Did u choose a username?
8	P_001	It is asking for the mob number ,
9	P_111	Ok you don't have to bother then mate. Wickr is the same secure kinda app
10		but without the mobile number thing if you wanna do that
11	P_111	Chats there automatically delete securely at both ends
12	P_111	After a set period

In line 1, P_001 complained that P_111 did not use the video-calling site *Skype* and P_111 instead requested that they talk on *Telegram*, an encrypted app (line 4). Upon attempting to make an account on this app, in line 8, P_001 expressed concern about the risk of using *Telegram* because it asked for a mobile phone number to create an account (line 8) – this would link any illegal activity from that account participating in the paedophile community back to P_001's phone. P_111 responded with understanding, employing the negative politeness strategy of minimising imposition and the positive politeness strategy of statements of friendship in line 9 ('Ok you don't have to bother then mate'). They then offered another similar app, *Wickr*, as an alternative (again using negative politeness to minimise imposition) that they claimed did not carry the same risk, while still being 'secure' (lines 9-11).

Despite their extensive knowledge of technologies to increase their security, offenders participating in the online paedophile community still ran the risk of identification by law

enforcement and infiltration by undercover officers. Offenders often warned each other about new risks (e.g. ‘Bro just been told on line that zoom as been monitor and infiltrated , they have started doing arrest in [name of country] , be careful’) and discussed concerns in private messages when there was suspicion a group-chat had been compromised, as in extract 5.82.

5.82.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_409]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Hey just seen the warning message about cops , and you left the room too
2	P_409	People get paranoid, even me at times
3	P_409	Yeah don't think I'll be back

This extract shows two users discussing the risk-minimisation steps they took as a consequence of being informed that law enforcement may have infiltrated a group-chat they were both members of. P_001 began the conversation by referencing the ‘warning message’ in the group and indicated that the two of them had left the group in response (line 1). P_409 attributed this response to paranoia (line 2) and demonstrated how important security was to these offenders by asserting they will not be returning to the group (line 3) as a result of this security breach, even if it is unconfirmed.

Van der Bruggen and Blokland (2021a:273) found that, much like other types of criminals online, ‘their need for security leads them to screen their transaction partners and check whether they are “in the know”’. Their research included an offender who claimed that being online 12-14 hours a day enabled him to recognise other offenders’ ‘writing style, English and typos which fed his belief that he was talking to genuine co-offenders’ (2021a:273). In the *GigaTribe* chatlog from the present study, due to a mechanic of the site, users can ask for references from other offenders to vouch for them with new contacts. The system messages that appeared, e.g. ‘[P_0676 has requested a recommendation. Would you like to recommend him?]', asked a user if they would recommend them to someone else and this enabled offenders to build new relationships based off the existing good credit they had in the community. In *GigaTribe* this good credit was usually earned

by sharing one's own folders of CSAM with other offenders and those offenders appreciating the content.

The process of trust-building between offenders before they reveal identifying information is an important one in this community. For example, in extract 5.83, P_001 suggested the possibility of meeting up for sex with P_314 (referred to as a 'likeminded') and P_314 asserted that the offenders would have to build a trusting relationship over time before that could happen.

5.83.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_314]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	It get me boned instantly with y ,v y and with likeminded
2	P_314	Tbh there will have to a lot of water under the bridge b4 that happens
3		matey!
4	P_001	I never rush and need. To build trust first

The snub of refusing to meet offline for 'likeminded' sex is hedged by P_314's inclusion of 'Tbh' and positive politeness ('matey!'). P_001 reassured P_314 that they aligned on this stance to avoid disagreement (a positive politeness strategy) when they asserted their shared need to 'build trust first' (line 4).

Disclosing identifying information between offenders, captured in the Exchanges of Personal Information (EPI) sub-theme, was a risk-taking behaviour in itself due to the illegal activity these offenders engaged in and the possibility that this behaviour could consequently be linked back to them. Linguistic analyses of these interactions can examine how issues of trust and risk were broached by offenders. For instance, applying Kou and Gray's (2018) self-disclosure framework can discern whether personal information is given freely or traded in response to questioning. How, why, and when self-disclosures happened in the dataset helps build a picture of how offenders gained membership and what personal information they felt comfortable sharing with others in order to retain access to the online community.

Table 5.8 shows results from when the NVivo coding book created to capture self-disclosures was applied to the EPI sub-theme. Alongside Kou and Gray's (2018) Self-Disclosure Types framework (outlined in Chapter 3 Section 3.2), the coding book was expanded to capture what topics of personal information were being disclosed and the times when offenders *requested* the disclosures from one another (regardless of whether this request was met). The full coding book with definitions is in Appendix 21. Within the EPI sub-theme, there were far more users of politeness features than impoliteness (667 to 59, respectively) and the most common type of politeness employed was negative politeness, where the speaker was trying to avoid imposition of the hearer. This occurred due to the number of indirect or mitigated requests for personal information by offenders: e.g. 'Love to keep in touch' (asking for further contact information) and 'may I have your password please' (to gain account information). The full coding counts for im/politeness and EPI are in Appendix 22.

Table 5.8: Matrix coding query results for exchanges of personal information and self-disclosure.

	No. of Exchanges of Personal Information Codes	Data Examples
Request for Disclosure	1,074	5.84. How old are you?
Self-Disclosure	803	5.85. I'm 38 M in [name of city].
Self-Disclosure Types:		
Question Answering	703	5.86. <i>P_003</i> Where u from? <i>P_001</i> [name of country]
Reciprocity	122	5.87. <i>P_371</i> 53,m,[name of country] <i>P_001</i> 41 m[name of country] here
Unprompted	94	5.88. hi, [name] here
Evidence-Based Reasoning	17	5.89. Shame I am to sensitive and with the [name of country] blood
Credibility Adjusting	3	5.90. Going to prison made me very paranoid
Empathy	1	5.91. I am [name of nationality] and i no have files please
Self-Disclosure Topics:		
Account Logins/Passwords	298	5.92. hello may i have your password plz
Location/Nationality/Ethnicity	282	5.93. Where online would an [name of nationality] perv go?
Age	180	5.94. I lied I'm 50. Born in 1964...

Gender or Sex	92	5.95. 18 [name of region] male
Family/Home/ Relationships	50	5.96. I have my wife and kids at home also now
Appearance	39	5.97. Can I see a pic of you right now ?
Contact Information	37	5.98. Text me all the time ? [phone number]
Employment	22	5.99. I'm in IT for gov
Sexual Orientation	20	5.100. bi here.
Name	13	5.101. My name is [first name]
Other	3	5.102. Off to the [name of city] tomorrow got my hospital visit , hopefully everything if going to be ok

There were 1,074 requests for personal information in the dataset, and 803 instances of self-disclosure of this information by offenders. Self-disclosure types were coded within these 803 instances and often involved double coding where long self-disclosure exchanges took place. There were some examples of offenders disclosing personal information to give themselves credibility (n=3) or as evidence to support a point (n=17), but these appeared far fewer times than the other types and are likely more appropriate categories for the argumentative forum environments where Kou and Gray (2018) originated this framework. Offenders also disclosed identifying information Unprompted (n=94), often at the beginning of a chatlog to initiate the trust-building exchange (as in example 5.88). The second most common type was Reciprocity (n=122), where the self-disclosure was a mutual exchange between offenders. This highlights the focus on trust-building between members of the community who were both mutually putting themselves at risk by providing information so that a relationship could form between them. Due to the volume of requests for disclosure, it is unsurprising that the most common type of self-disclosure was Question Answering (n=703). Example 5.86 in the table (as well as 5.84) shows this direct request for information which is followed by a response disclosing the information requested.

Offenders disclosed information about their (supposedly) real names (n=13); sexual orientation (n=20); job titles (n=22); further contact information like phone numbers or usernames on other platforms (n=37); physical appearance through descriptions or sending images (n=39); and

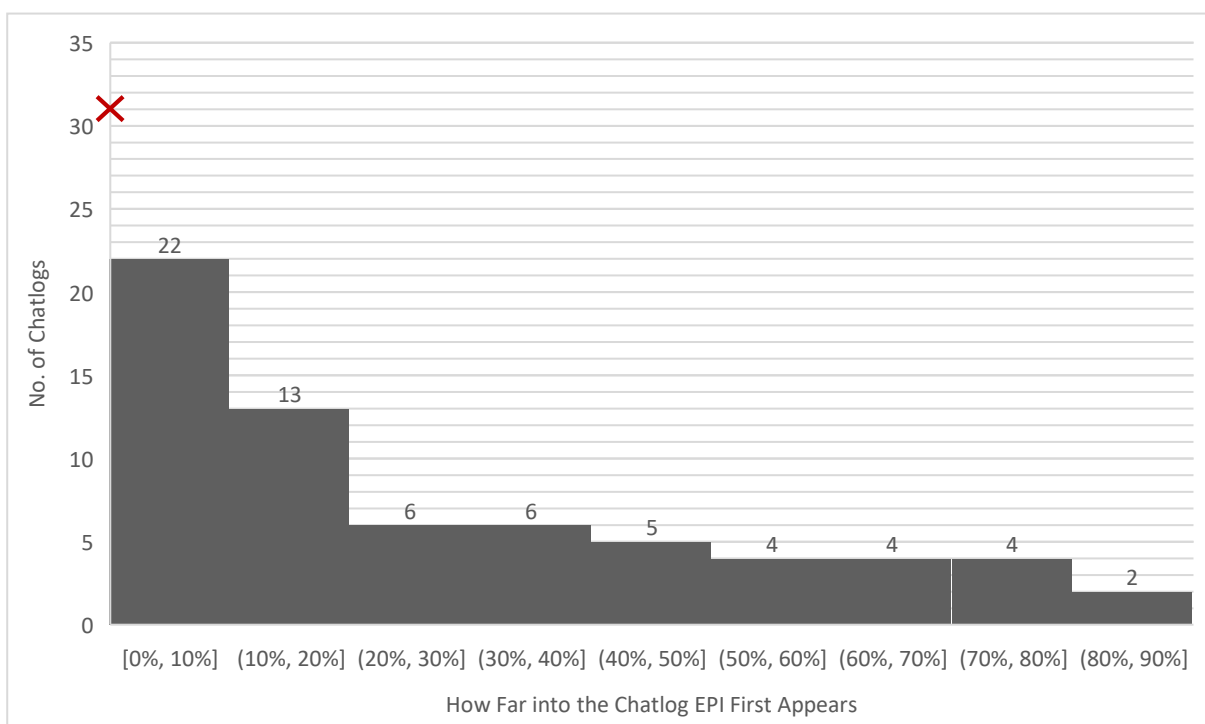
their family, marital status, or living situation (n=50). The most common category of personal information disclosed was account information/passwords (n=298), but this result can be almost entirely attributed to the one *GigaTribe* file where password sharing was a key function of the platform. There were some examples of this happening elsewhere in the dataset, such as one user sharing their account login for using *Tor* to access the dark-web with a less technologically savvy offender, but these instances were minimal. Thus, the most common self-disclosure topic across the whole dataset was information about Location/Nationality/Ethnicity. It is possible that offenders wished to know where each other were to better plan offline crimes together, but a likely explanation is that location information is one component of the common internet terminology 'A/S/L' (or age/sex/location) which is often used in online interactions. This is reinforced by other common disclosure topics being Age and Gender/Sex. Examples of formulaic responses to the 'asl' question can be seen in 5.85, 5.87, and 5.95 in Table 5.8. Despite their concerns over security and risk minimisation, offenders who built up trust between each other were sometimes very open about their (purportedly) real identities.

One important question that arose from this openness about personal information was how long it took for offenders to feel comfortable taking this risk. Although much self-disclosure was ongoing in the chatlogs and emerged throughout conversations between offenders who had established a relationship, sometimes personal information was shared very early on. As Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011) found in paedophile email exchanges, offenders often started the interactions with incriminating topics like asking what paedophilic sexual interests the offender had ('what are you into?'). This was suggested to be a way of determining if the conversation would continue if interests were shared, but it may also have been to build up trust between two offenders initiating a relationship as it incriminates them both from the start – so they are, in a sense, in the same boat if things go south. This could also be the case with offenders in this dataset disclosing personal information early on, not just to establish some baseline information

about the person they were interacting with, but also as a show of trust in the community that they were willing to take risks for establishing new connections.

Figure 5.14 shows how far into the chatlogs EPI (this includes disclosures and requests for EPI) first appeared, as a percentage of the chatlog’s length to ensure that the range in lengths did not affect the results. The red marker indicates that 31 of the 97 chatlogs did not contain any EPI (represented as 0%).

Figure 5.14: Histogram of how far into the chatlogs exchanges of personal information first appeared (in %).



Out of the 66 chatlogs where EPI was present, it occurred most within the first 10% or 20% of the chatlogs. Personal information being disclosed this early on in a criminal context supports the aforementioned theory that offenders offered up personal information as symbolic trust gestures to forge mutually beneficial relationships. The few chatlogs where EPI first appeared very late into the file were predominantly group chats where they were a snapshot of many conversations and did not have as linear a start/end as the DMs. Extract 5.103 depict the first eight lines of a typical chatlog which contained EPI very early on.

5.103.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_169]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Great post
2	P_169	Thanks man which room?
3	P_001	Nepi . How many rooms you use
4	P_169	A few lol Asl?
5	P_001	51 m [name of country]
6	P_169	Nice 33 m [name of country] hung?
7	P_001	Hung u/c perv and PA
8	P_169	Like b or g Nepi?

The offenders messaging initiated contact as a result of being on the same group-chat where one of them sent CSAM that the other liked and consequently complimented them for it (in line 1). They established which group they had in common and, by line 4, P_169 asked 'Asl?'. This example shows both Question Answering and Reciprocity as, when P_001 replied with their self-disclosure, P_169 followed this message up with their own information before shifting the conversation to sexual topics. However, some offenders disclosed personal information even earlier than at the beginning of the chatlogs – they took the risk of revealing information about themselves within their online usernames. Usernames can be viewed by anyone and so risk-taking by including personal information within them is a particularly surprising choice in a criminal context. The offenders risk taking and identity construction through their usernames is explored in the next section.

5.2. Risk Taking in Usernames

The advent of the internet 'changed human communication in multiple ways, including the use of proper names [...], in many online communities, we are known by self-chosen usernames' (Hämäläinen, 2022:36). A username is 'the name that a user of a certain website or web service uses as their personal identifier on that site' (2022:36) and it can potentially provide 'clues about users' personality, age, gender, nationality, ethnic or other cultural background, hobbies, and interests' (2022:42). Despite the necessity from the data-sharing agreement to redact all usernames, it was possible to gain some knowledge from the content of usernames here that were examined prior to

redaction. Research exists into usernames from illegal dark-web forums (e.g. Arabnezhad et al., 2020; Hämäläinen et al., 2021), but there is almost none on paedophile online usernames that goes beyond cursory observations within more general studies (with the exception of ongoing work by Schneevogt, 2022) and none on paedophiles' usernames on clear-web social media platforms.

A username-focused study by Hämäläinen et al. (2021) looked at how users represented themselves through their usernames on a dark-web Finnish online marketplace for illegal drugs. Despite finding personal information and lexis relating to the subject of the forum in usernames, they found that the users 'told relatively little about themselves in their usernames' (2021:11), which contrasted prior research by the authors into usernames on another illegal drugs forum. The authors also stressed that 'the information on a user's real-life gender, age, or location', which they disclosed in their username, 'might be genuine, but it might just as well be false' (2022:12). In this area of research, unless metadata about individuals is provided with the data, there is no way to tell for sure – and this caveat must be applied to the present study.

Unlike with Kersten and Lotze (2019), Hämäläinen et al. (2021), and Schneevogt (2022), the actual usernames of offenders could not be broken down into their components and analysed here for their contents due to the necessary anonymisation that took place. However, some features of these usernames were noted down as present or absent during the redaction process which correspond now to their anonymised numerical usernames (e.g. P_046). This information formed the basis of the smaller-scale username study that is presented here to further investigate the offenders' risk-taking practices and identity construction.

Before delving into the results of the username data that was captured, the prolificacy of individual offenders was established to discern whether there were any links between username contents and the most active offenders. There was wide variation between how many messages were sent by offenders in the chatlogs: ranging from 0-3785 overall, 0-3682 in DMs, and 0-257 in group-chats. The bulk of offenders were on the lower end of this range, as can be seen in Figure

5.15, resulting in the average number of messages sent by offenders being 11 overall, 9 in DMs, and 2 in group-chats.

Figure 5.15: Numbers of messages sent by all individual offenders in the dataset.

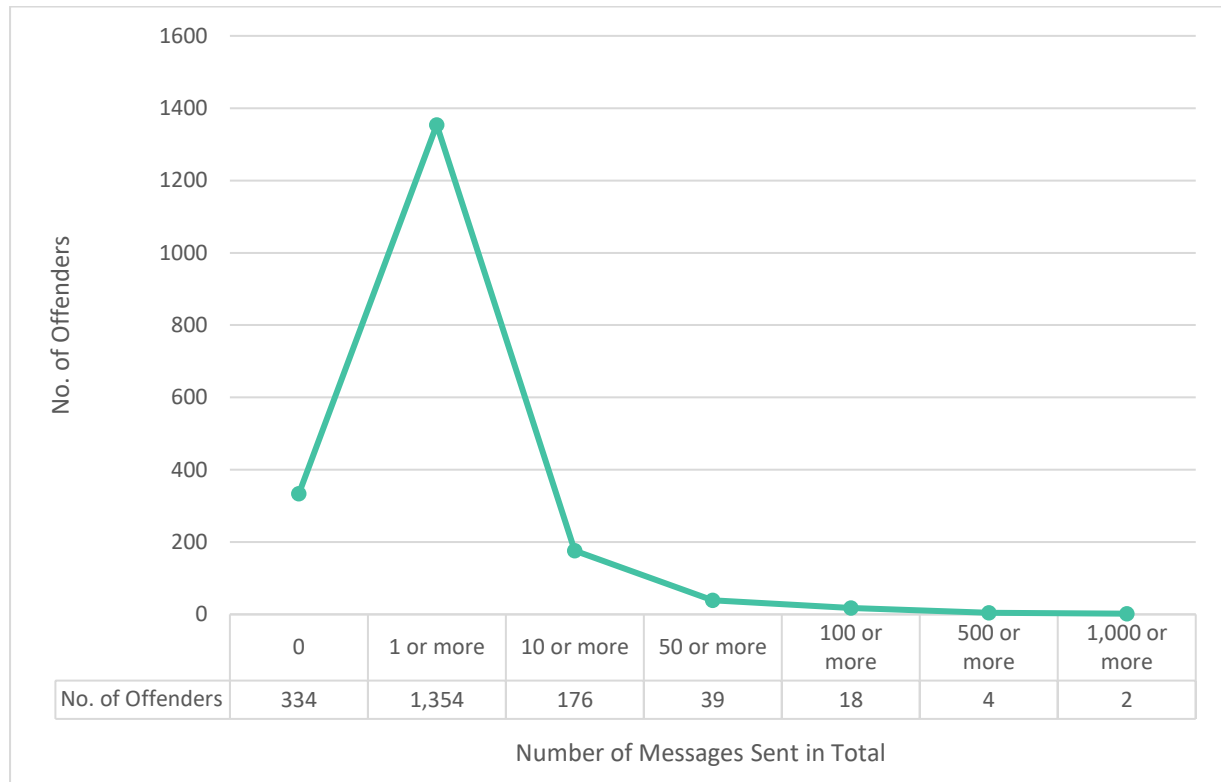


Figure 5.15 depicts a steep drop in the number of offenders sending more than 10 messages, as opposed to between 1 and 10. There were 570 offenders who only sent 1 message and 334 who were just recorded in the chatlogs through system messages that never actually messaged in the groups during the time these chatlogs were from. Some of the most active offenders in the dataset were the 176 who sent 10 or more messages, with there being 18 very prolific offenders sending over 100 messages and only two offenders who sent over 1,000 messages.

Table 5.9 reveals which offenders were the top 10 most active users in DMs, group-chats, and overall. In bold are the only two offenders who appear in all three categories: P_001 and P_154. As shown in this chapter, high activity was associated in the community with trustworthiness and being of high-value because it meant an offender was active in the group-chats, trading CSAM, invested in the community, and had built relationships over time with a network of other offenders.

Lurking users, in contrast, might struggle to make headway in the community without building up these relationships through regular interaction and trading CSAM.

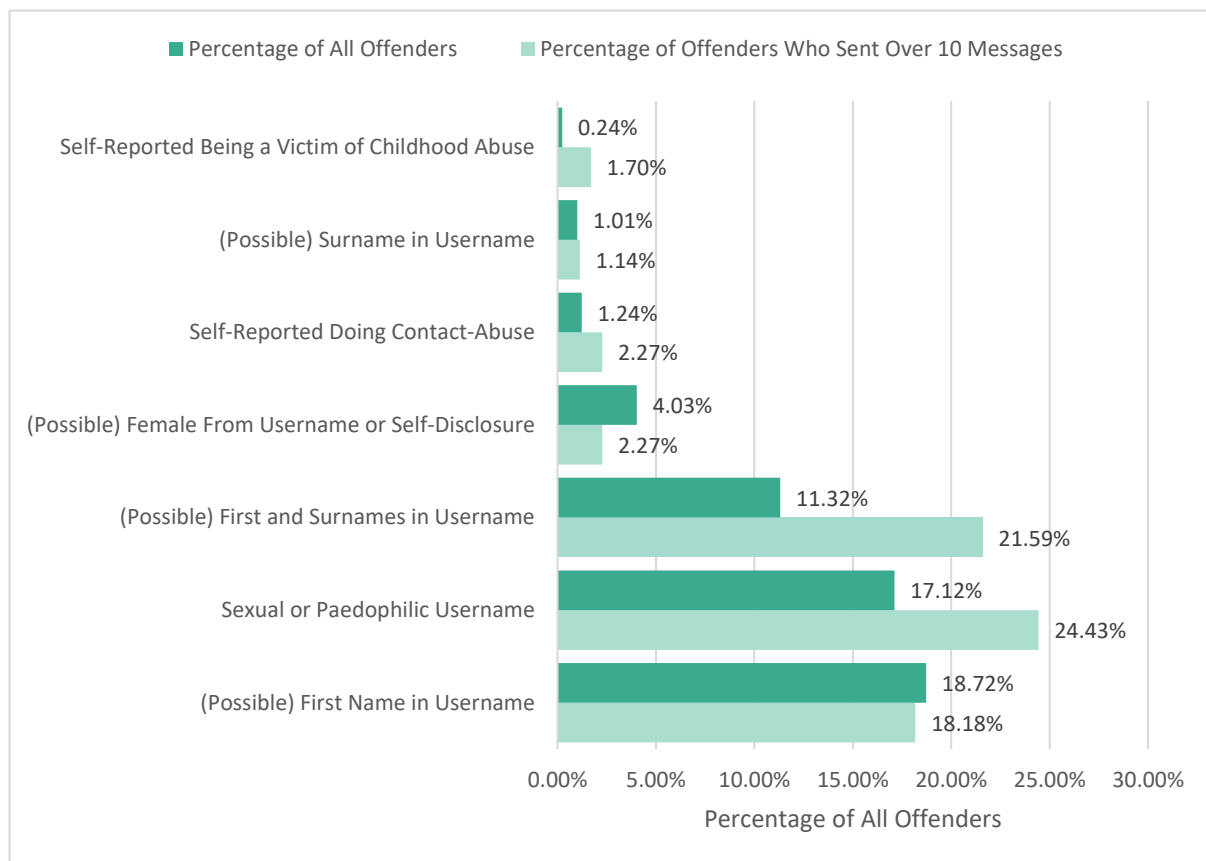
Table 5.9: The top 10 most active users.

Top 10...	Offenders
...Most Active in Direct Messages	P_001 , P_0463, P_154 , P_1583, P_003, P_111, P_1592, P_246, P_074, P_112
...Most Active in Group-Chats	P_225, P_001 , P_154 , P_314, P_142, P_201, P_041, P_1580, P_014, P_079
...Most Active Overall	P_001 , P_0463, P_154 , P_1583, P_003, P_111, P_1592, P_246, P_225, P_074

Balfe et al. (2015:8) observed that, in contrast to the expectation that they would be secretive and cautious online, ‘offenders sometimes reveal a surprising amount of real-life information in their internet ‘handles’ such as details about their real-life names, initials, occupations and birthdates’. The features that were recorded as being present or absent in the unredacted offender usernames here were the inclusion of a (possible) first name, surname, or first name and surname; any indications that the user was a woman (e.g. gendered names, nicknames, disclosing gender); and whether the username was sexualised or paedophilic in any regard. Names which were blatantly celebrity or joke names were discounted during this process so that only names which appeared authentic were counted as (possible) first and surnames in usernames. In addition to these features, it was noted whether they self-reported doing offline contact-abuse, and whether they self-reported being a victim of childhood sexual abuse themselves.

Figure 5.16 shows the number of offenders with usernames containing those features as percentages of all offenders in the dataset. The secondary bars show the percentages of offenders who sent over 10 messages (176 offenders) that contained the features, to examine the proportions in offenders who appeared to be more active in the groups. There were low occurrences for offenders who self-reported doing contact abuse (1.24%) and being victims of childhood abuse

Figure 5.16: Findings from the username study.



(0.24%). These percentages were higher, however, amongst the more active user population (2.27% and 1.70% respectively). Although the vast majority of child-sexual abuse perpetrators are men (see Lambert and O’Halloran, 2008; Elliott and Ashfield, 2011; Kramer and Bowman, 2011 in Chapter 2 Section 3.1.2), there were some usernames in the dataset that suggested the user was a woman and sometimes users claimed in messages to be mothers or wives. Nevertheless, this percentage of suspected women was still low at 4.03%, and only 2.27% of more active users.

Around 17% of all usernames included sexual or paedophilic language, which was 24.43% amongst the more active users. These types of usernames included references to sexual acts, genitalia, abuse, children, victim’s names, love or attraction towards children, and paedophilia (or colloquial synonyms for it). These usernames indicated to others in the community that they had shared interests but ran the risk of raising alarm bells on social media sites and removing deniability from the offender if they were caught with a paedophilic username online. Thus, it is possible that offenders adopting these pseudonyms had taken other steps to ensure that these accounts would

not be easily linked back to themselves. They also appeared to be demonstrating pride in their paedophilic or hyper-sexual identities, often having usernames that bragged about virility or used community-specific slang terms to show they were in-the-know.

First names were used in around 18% of all usernames, which could be to facilitate easier identification in conversations as offenders can be referred to by this first name and not have to reveal a surname that is likely more identifying. However, 11.32% of all usernames contained potentially real first names and surnames, which increased to almost 22% in more active users. Given the illegal activity taking place and the risk assessments offenders undertook, it was surprising that so many would include this identifying information and, it seemed, use their real social media accounts to enter the paedophile community. That the percentage almost doubled amongst the group of more prolific users in the community was certainly intriguing because these were users who were actively partaking in the community and could not be discounted as just passing through or accidentally stumbling across the criminal groups.

Of the two most prolific offenders across group-chats and DMs, P_001 self-reported doing contact abuse as well and being a victim of abuse themselves in childhood, while P_154 appeared to use their first name and surname in their username. The small study here reveals there were some instances of risk taking by offenders who chose to use their own names or adopt a sexual/paedophilic pseudonym, and it was found that this occurred slightly more amongst users who were more active in the community.

6. Conclusions

This chapter began to answer the second research question of how an online paedophile community is formed, through looking at why offenders tried to gain membership for the purposes of accessing CSAM and skills/advice on offending or evading detection by law enforcement. It revealed some aspects of offender participation in the community through their CSAM trading habits, engagement patterns, and criminal behaviours. The risk assessment negotiations and security measures

discussed/implemented by offenders also began to show how the community was maintained (e.g. through early EPI disclosures, sharing knowledge, and risk-taking in usernames).

Offenders in this online paedophile community interacted with one another to gain access to CSAM and victims on and offline, as well as discussing methods for access and sharing their knowledge of the topic. During access interactions, offenders used speech acts, politeness strategies, and self-oriented facework to gain this access/information and mitigate any face-threatening actions that could cut them off from this source. They predominantly discussed CSAM trading online (mostly through online groups and other platforms) or discussed offline contact abuse and other sex-related crimes like incest/exhibitionism. The offenders discussed crimes to coordinate them together, shared advice on committing criminal activity, extracted sexual gratification from abuse descriptions, and constructed their identities as paedophiles through bragging about past experiences committing crimes. The motivations offenders disclosed for committing CSA and acting on their paedophilic desires revealed a predominantly sexually driven imperative. However, they also demonstrated an awareness of other aspects which may have put them on an offending pathway – such as being victims of childhood abuse themselves, viewing CSAM as an addiction, and their inability to get sexual pleasure elsewhere.

The offenders' criminal activity, and their choices to compromise or reinforce their security online, begins to construct a picture of how members behaved in the online paedophile community – as well as bringing to light areas where the community could be vulnerable to counteraction efforts. However, a shared interest in committing crimes does not alone bind together these offenders online. Thus, the next chapter investigates how offenders built a sense of community around their activities, took on roles, and regulated their space.

Chapter 6: Constructing a Community

“It’s always easier not to think for oneself. Find a nice safe hierarchy and settle in. Don’t make changes, don’t risk disapproval, don’t upset your syndics. It’s always easiest to let yourself be governed.”

— Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

1. Introduction

Offenders interacting online describe a sense of community and supportiveness offered by these spaces where they can communicate with each other (see Holt et al., 2010; Chiang, 2018; Nielsen et al., 2022). This chapter focuses on how the community was constructed, maintained, and regulated – as well as how offenders behaved within this setting. In the previous chapter, how offenders accessed, committed, and discussed crimes within the community (as well as their motivations for doing so) was explored; as were security measures and risk assessment practices employed by offenders to avoid detection whilst operating illegally online. However, a mutual interest in child sexual abuse alone is not enough to take these offenders from lone anonymous users to an established, functioning community which can facilitate these crimes as well as provide support, encouragement, and skill-sharing. Due to the claim that involvement in offender communities may directly cause harm to child-victims through propagating cognitive distortions, disseminating CSAM, and escalating offending behaviours (see Europol, 2016; Huikuri and Insoll, 2022a; Insoll et al., 2022), it is imperative to understand how offenders connect with each other and construct shared community identities. Thus, this chapter will predominantly address the second research question of the thesis by examining participation in these communities and how they are formed. The third research question will also be engaged with through the discourse analysis methods employed in this process.

During the thematic analysis, as was discussed in Chapter 4, coding for the Community Building theme was divided into In-Group and Out-Group sub-themes. It was decided that (despite

the argument that the online paedophile community is an out-group from the perspective of the rest of society) to the users in this dataset, the online paedophile community is their in-group which they aspire to membership of and operate within. Therefore, the out-group in this study refers to the rest of society, or non-paedophiles, who are unlike the members of the in-group community. Further mentions of the in-group in this chapter refer to paedophiles/members of the paedophile community, and the out-group refers to non-paedophiles/everyone else. This chapter begins by looking at how offenders formed connections with one another online, how they attempted to access the in-group community, and how they forged relationships with one another (Section 2). Subsequently, what roles offenders performed and constructed for themselves in the community are investigated (Section 3). The remainder of the chapter explores how the community was regulated, what the behavioural norms and practices in it were, and how offenders used community-specific language to indicate membership (Section 4). Section 5 will summarise these findings and revisit the research questions addressed.

2. Forming Connections

“Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.”

— Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*

Offenders gain access to the online paedophile community through building trust with others who can provide this access and forging relationships with likeminded individuals. As Chiang (2024:8) observed, ‘active participation may also see users rewarded with higher membership ranks along with increased access to certain areas’ of the community – thus incentivising them into ‘de-lurking’. The consequence of them congregating in online spaces to trade CSAM, share skills, and discuss paedophilia is a criminal community that can manifest in a variety of ways: dark-web forums, video-calling networks, group-chats, 1-2-1 DMs, and more. As explained in Chapter 4, the thematic coding in NVivo overlapped across In-Group Community Access and Criminal Activity Access (to

CSAM/victims). Although in Chapter 5 Section 2 the methods offenders used to access CSAM and victims were discussed, the methods for accessing the online offender community were only briefly mentioned. In this section the focus is on access specifically to the in-group paedophile community, and not access to CSAM/victims (see Chapter 5 Section 2). This coding revealed that offenders predominantly attempted to gain further access to the online offender community through each other, ever expanding their networks to build trust with other offenders that they perceive to be useful to them.

This DM from P_001 exemplifies a typical message from an offender trying to increase their connections: 'just looking to connect with more like us , do if you know anyone even local [name of country] me please send my addi, thanks pedo'. In this message the offender initiates the topic of access through a request for assistance in the head act ('do if...'), pre-modified by a grounding assertive affirmative statement ('just looking to connect with more like us'), which is heavily modified throughout by hedges ('just', 'if', 'even'). They also modify using positive politeness strategies like 'please' and 'thanks', to request that the other offender pass on their contact information to any other offenders they know online, especially those in the same country as themselves so that they could meet offline.

Often offenders expanded their networks in the community through DMs and group-chats in a symbiotic relationship. Offenders gained access to groups through hearing about their names or how to find them while speaking to other offenders 1-2-1, and many offenders whilst in group-chats would message 'pm me' or similar requests for private messages (DMs) so that other group members would contact them 1-2-1. Sometimes there were built in functions for access through other offender connections, like the previously mentioned recommendation requests on *GigaTribe* and requests to add new group members on other social media sites (e.g. '[P_1588] requested to add P_1589'). In some groups, on some platforms, any member could add another group member (e.g. '[P_1679] has joined the group using an Invite Link from [P_1624]'). Extract 6.1

shows an instance where one offender (P_001) discovered that they had been added into a new group-chat by a friend of theirs as the two talked in 1-2-1 DMs.

6.1

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	I have found myself in a group, (at the minute I am not signed into any) 0
2		to 20 and in the conversation between [name] and [name] , am I that
3		popular?
4	P_154	I added u
5	P_001	Oh that's why!! Was worried!!! THANK YOU SEXY PEDO , Much appreciated
6	P_154	Lmao

Initially, P_001 was concerned about how they managed to gain access to the group without knowing: they sceptically asked in lines 2-3 'am I that popular?' and in line 5 mentioned that they were 'worried' about this suspicious new contact. However, P_154 reassured them that they had established the connection and they expressed gratitude as a consequence (line 5). P_001 used compliments ('SEXY PEDO') in their thanking expressive speech act and reinforced the thanks (a positive politeness strategy) by adding 'Much appreciated'. Offenders who provided others with high-value CSAM or (as in extract 6.1) inroads into groups where this CSAM could be accessed, were viewed as important users to build relationships with because of how CSAM is a desired 'commodity' (Grant and Macleod, 2020:133).

As a result of the commodification of high-value CSAM and the main routes for access to this material being through the online paedophile community, offenders were often persistent, desperate, and demanding when eliciting access. The following extract (6.2) illustrates an instance of an offender (P_078) seeking further access to the paedophile community to attain CSAM, which they were attempting to gain from another offender (P_001) in DMs.

6.2.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_078]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Anything?

2 P_078 Hey
3 P_078 I gave it a look
4 P_078 It's all live guys jerking off and smoking...?
5 P_078 One small group fucking
6 P_078 Where do you find the beast?
7 P_078 Etc?
8 P_078 Where do you find the room numbers?
9 P_078 This room is full. Are there others?
10 P_001 I am sorry that rooms is full most of the gone , you just need to be
11 persistent
12 P_001 I am driving so I have b not got any other numbers with me that o might
13 remember
14 P_078 Let me know when you do. Or how to find them
15 P_001 Do you know of " Menchats" ?
16 P_078 I do not
17 P_078 Do tell
18 P_001 It is in chat format or cud format , you might t get to chat with likeminded
19 and they might post some room numbers
20 P_078 I'll search it out

The extract begins with P_001 asking if P_078 got what they were looking for out of links they had given to them for accessing CSAM on a video-calling platform. P_078 complained in line 4 that the links did not contain any livestreamed CSA or CSAM and asked a flurry of interrogatives (lines 6-9), which were common speech acts used in access interactions (see Appendix 23 for full coding results), to get more information/help from P_001 in finding bestiality media ('the beast') and more offender community platforms ('room numbers'). The rooms that they were referring to are usually video-calling chatrooms which were accessed through knowing a specific code to find them, or a 'room number'. In response to these questions, P_001 began with an apologising speech act (line 10) and proffered more advice to P_078 that they needed to be 'persistent' with trying to access the rooms. However, even after P_001 provided justifications for being unable to help them at that time, P_078 continued to seek further access. In lines 14 and 17 they used directive speech acts to instruct P_001 to follow-up with them about more room numbers once they were available and to expand on what 'Menchats' (another communication platform used by the community) were. The shift from using interrogatives to using directives shows the offender becoming more insistent with their attempts and suggests desperation.

Interactions focused on attaining something, like these conversations between offenders seeking access, contain self and other-oriented facework strategies as users negotiated requests, demands, questions, refusals, and other potentially volatile exchanges like the times when access was denied. The full coding results of this can be found in Appendix 24. Overall, there were more politeness strategies used in these types of interactions than impoliteness (130 codes to 61), which is likely due to offenders using politeness to attain help/access from others. In trying to gain access to the community, one offender used the negative politeness strategy of 'please' and a positive politeness term of endearment ('bro') to insinuate the two had a friendly relationship: e.g. 'Tell me on here if one day there is another good nepi room, bro please'. Positive politeness appeared sometimes in users expressing gratitude for receiving help/access to the community, in order to encourage this to continue: e.g. 'Thanks for the invite to your new group still in work but can't wait to get home and get on line'. The offender used a thanking speech act to make the hearer feel positively about their actions and demonstrated their enthusiasm ('can't wait').

Impoliteness in contrast usually appeared when these exchanges turned sour: e.g. an offender refused to help another, they got irritated by their persistence, the help was not reciprocal, the CSAM/links were not seen as good enough, or access was denied. In instances like these, politeness was sometimes abandoned and messages containing bald-on record impoliteness could be sent: e.g. 'ARE YOU IGNORING ME?' and 'Why did I get kicked out already?'. Suspicions about risks and security also triggered offenders to send messages that were face-threatening to the others they were talking to (e.g. 'Hope you are not a cop'). However, sometimes politeness also featured in exchanges where access was denied or not provided, though usually on the part of the offender who failed to help the one seeking access: e.g. 'Sorry pal' (exemplifying impoliteness through denying the request alongside the positive politeness strategy of using a term of endearment and apologising).

Self-oriented facework was observed in these interactions (see Appendix 24). The most common categories were offenders portraying themselves as demanding (n=53), inexperienced (n=50), or friendly (n=48). As mentioned earlier, offenders were often demanding in their hunt for access to the online paedophile community and appeared friendly due to their uses of the politeness features discussed above. Offenders presented themselves as inexperienced in order to elicit help from others who were more knowledgeable in the community (e.g. 'this is my first time using this site. learning my way around. glad that you connected so I could see something work'). The next most common after these three were the categories for being helpful (n=42), knowledgeable (n=41), virile (n=40), and inquisitive (n=36). Offenders who were presenting themselves as knowledgeable and helpful were the counterparts to those who were claiming inexperience or demanding assistance in gaining access. Shows of virility were common throughout the chatlogs seemingly to index a users' paedophile identity and could appear here due to offenders seeking to demonstrate they could be trusted enough to share information with (due to them holding community membership). Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011:22) called this in-group relationship building between 'likeminded-persons' the 'primary objective' of offender-to-offender communication – which may in part be due to the access it provides offenders to the community.

In addition to offenders forming connections with each other for access purposes, they also did so for the supportive element of these relationships. Huikuri and Insoll (2022:5) described this 'feeling of closeness among the members' despite their apparent anonymity as 'a fundamental characteristic of the darknet communities'. Offenders in this clear-web social media dataset also seemed to form relationships with each other for reasons of emotional support and the community feeling. They cited the value of this support-system within the In-Group Relationships sub-theme: e.g. 'bro thanks fir you understanding help and support', 'We always help each other no matter what', and 'Agree we need keep more in touch. Only way to express ourselves how we real are'. The last example demonstrates a recurring sentiment that the offenders could only 'be really open' amongst other paedophiles in the community and that they had to hide their true identities from the

out-group. Offenders used compliments to reinforce their statements of gratitude for in-group relationships: e.g. 'You know you are one of the very very few that are real and I am glad we are connected'. Offenders also expressed appreciation for these friendships as well as affection for each other throughout the dataset via terms of endearment (e.g. 'Luv ya pdo bby fucker bro'), praise or commendations ('Always good and happy to see and ear from you great pedophile X'), and shows of generosity or assistance ('Btw you always welcome to stay at mine when ever you wish , I would adore having another good pedo under my roof').

Relationships within the in-group were not always just friendships formed for the purposes of access to the community or a support group but were sometimes romantic or sexual in nature. In these instances, some offenders went beyond the compliments and shows of affection mentioned above to more extremes (e.g. 'I wanna marry you !!') and expressed their sexual interests in other paedophiles (called 'likeminded'): e.g. 'I am honest with you around that you like it or not , always fancied you from the very first time when we were Pedo perving face to face'. The sexual incentive for forming relationships in the community also extended to building connections that increased access to CSAM or victims for the purposes of contact abuse. In one chatlog, an offender told another how he began sexually abusing his children at home and claimed that it started when he and his wife were sexualising their children playing – it was a marital relationship to another paedophile offline that enabled the offender to commit the abuse. The offender receiving this information then proceeded to elicit CSAM from the husband and wife, directing the content of the abuse as it happened for their own sexual gratification. In-group relationships between offenders in the online community directly facilitate offline harm to children.

However, offenders in the community also voice their frustrations with relationship-forming and describe some of the difficulties they encountered in this process: e.g. 'Is it always so hard to connect with other like us on here?'. One user expressed their disappointment to another in DMs that they 'have been try to connect with others but it never worked', complaining that 'when

ever I see I am pending or there is no response I feel hurt that's all'. Due to the risks of offenders building relationships with each other, not knowing if a user could actually be law enforcement, and the security measures the community put in place to exclude outsiders (discussed in Chapter 5 Section 5.1) – it is unsurprising that they encountered difficulties in this process.

The offenders' relationships with members of the out-group were commented on, but these mentions were minimal as the out-group was rarely discussed in the dataset. Prior research (Quayle and Taylor, 2002; Briggs et al., 2011) suggests that those who turn to CSAM online may do so because they are struggling with real-world (out-group) relationships. Despite there being some evidence of normal relationships being maintained by offenders in the dataset (e.g. 'On the train heading to my mama's', 'Bf arrives tonight.', and 'yes a gf'); there were also instances where offenders cited problems with their out-group relationships. For example, P_001 claimed that their only focus was on paedophilia, that they were searching for/viewing CSAM '24/7' because 'otherwise I am almost impotent' and they 'can't help it'. This had direct consequences on their relationships with members of the out-group as they admitted they 'did have a 17 relationship but I had to terminate it you know the reason bro' (with the 'reason' referenced being that their partner was not a paedophile like them).

This offender also commented on other out-group relationships that would be affected in future as a consequence of them being a paedophile, saying that 'My sister will kill me' because they had sexually abused her son and intended to continue doing so. Coding for the Out-Group Relationships sub-theme was low, appearing 50 times in only 19% of the chatlogs while relationships in the in-group were discussed 402 times in 56% of the chatlogs. The times that these relationships were mentioned showed that some offenders managed to maintain real-world relationships during their membership of the online community, while others struggled due to their paedophilic interests (seeming to hinder themselves by prioritising the online community, their quest for CSAM, or fears over being discovered).

In the In-Group Relationships sub-theme, 54% of all speech acts used were assertive affirmatives (with 1,251 codes and the next highest, directives, being far lower at 320 codes). The full coding counts for Relationships and speech acts are in Appendix 23. In the Out-Group Relationships sub-theme, assertive affirmatives also dominated with 44% of the speech acts coding. Extract 6.3 depicts two offenders speaking 1-2-1 about their paedophilic interests, their relationships with other offenders, and with each other. This extract illustrates how conversations about relationships were conducted mostly through assertive affirmative speech acts.

6.3.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_074]

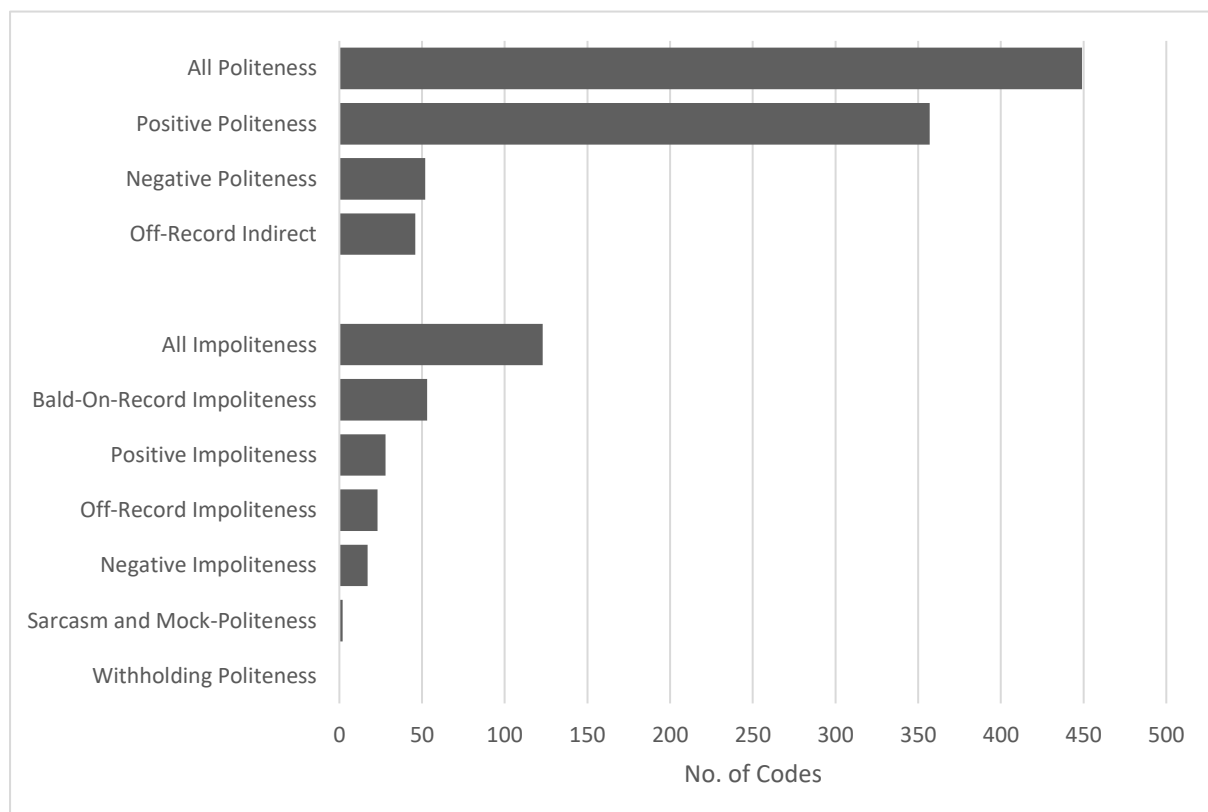
Line No.	User	Message	Speech Acts
1	P_074	I want to watch and enjoy your pedo arousal. Share your	AA, AA
2		need	
3	P_074	Need to be 225hysical as pedo men	AA
4	P_001	Same here mate. And as I said never feel ashamed	AA, D
5	P_001	Do you know many?	Int
6	P_074	Had contact once while ago BUT they run away from.it . I	AA
7		want other man totally wanting contact and both total	AA
8		pedo. Enjoy each other as pedophile men	AA
9	P_074	I want more than cam jerk.off . Want total 225hysical	AA, AA
10		connection	
11	P_074	How do I save you as a contact but can we both make	Int
12		sure our chats are not saved. I'm.very discrete and	AA
13		carefully. Need same please	D
14	P_001	I will try to help and do my best as to have you as a mate	AA
15	P_074	Thanks I want that so.much	Th, AA
16	P_074	When you share your pedophile needs with others hope	D
17		I can be part of it with you	

In this interaction 12 assertive affirmatives (AA) are used, 3 directives (D), 2 interrogatives (Int), and 1 thanking (Th) speech act. The offenders were predominantly making assertive affirmative statements to each other about their wants, their past experiences, and sharing information. Sometimes directives or interrogatives were used (as in lines 4, 5, 11, 13, and 16) to inquire about those experiences/wants, to ask for advice, or request actions from each other. In lines 15-17, P_074 expressed thanks for P_001 providing help, they followed this with a directive speech act but

mitigated some of the potential imposition to P_001 with negative politeness. By saying ‘When you share your pedophile needs with others hope I can be part of it with you’, P_074 expressed the request by ‘scope stating’ (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984:202) and showing their desires/feelings about P_001 doing the action rather than making an explicit request, minimising the imposition and demand on P_001’s negative face.

Politeness strategies were frequently used in interactions concerning offender relationships, far more so than impoliteness was used. As can be seen in Figure 6.1, politeness appeared 449 times in total, while impoliteness strategies were used 123 times (see Appendix 24 for self and other-oriented facework coding). Offenders used impoliteness strategies when someone did not behave in a way that was expected of them due to their established friendship/relationship dynamic with another. For instance, one offender expressed suspicion or insult through bad-on-record impoliteness because another had not messaged them in some time when this contact was expected: ‘had not have a note from you’.

Figure 6.1: Coding matrix for in-group relationships and im/politeness.



Elsewhere, due to CSAM trading usually being a reciprocal exchange as discussed in Chapter 5 Section 3, one offender drew attention to this known norm in an interaction with another where they had been sending CSAM repeatedly without reciprocation: 'Oi Oi greedy'. The offender called the other 'greedy' as an insult to make them feel guilt for this behaviour. They also snubbed (a positive impoliteness strategy) the offender's request for more CSAM by this insult and refused to send any more. Negative impoliteness was used, for example, when one offender said to another 'You sound all over the place' – spotlighting a negative quality of the person to harm their negative face through ridiculing/belittling them by dismissing them as not making any sense or being unstable.

Friendliness (n=492) was the most common self-oriented face category present in the In-Group Relationships sub-theme, which aligns with the fact that positive politeness (of which friendliness in a strategy) was also by far the most employed politeness type in this theme (80% of all politeness). Much relationship building between offenders was done through the positive politeness strategies of using address-forms to signal in-group membership by calling each other affectionate nicknames like 'buddy', 'bro', and 'my dear pedophile friend' – which also feature the self-oriented facework category of friendliness.

Offenders who were engaging in the online paedophile community were constantly forging relationships with others and using these connections to expand their access to CSAM, victims, advice/skills, potential co-conspirators, and likeminded individuals. This process is an ongoing one for members of the community rather than just an initial stage in their membership pathway because of the illegality of this community: offenders are regularly deleting accounts, leaving groups, concerned about detection, or being arrested, and the platforms themselves which host the community are unstable. With law enforcement and other agencies working to take down dark-web CSAM forums, websites or groups getting banned/shut-down by host platforms, and infiltration into the community by undercover law enforcement officers – the community is an ever-

changing landscape with fluctuating membership. Thus, even offenders who have successfully accessed the online paedophile community are always trying to expand their networks and build new relationships while other connections or access pathways are lost. In maintaining this unstable, heterogeneous community some offenders perform particular roles, while others regulate behaviour through rules of engagement (which will be explored in Sections 3 and 4 respectively).

3. Community Roles

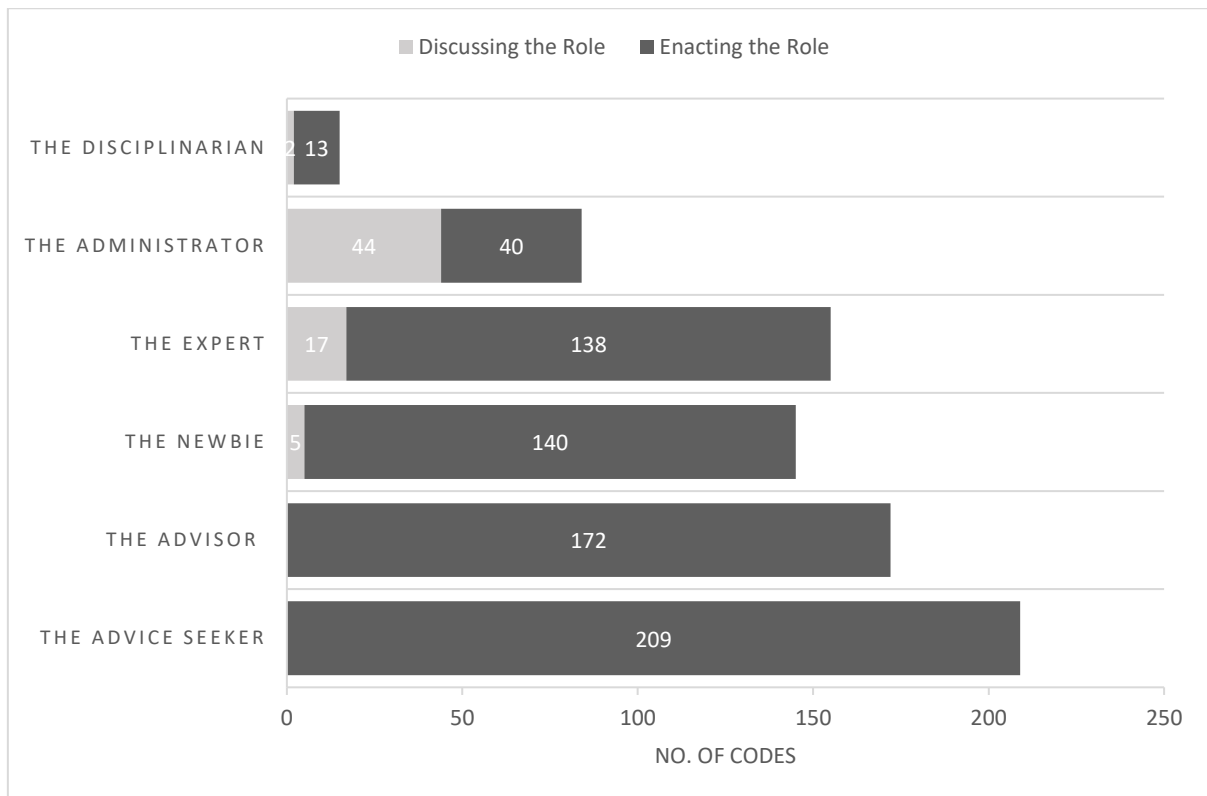
“We have to be more reflective about what power is, what it is for, and how it is measured.”

— *Mary Beard, Women & Power: A Manifesto*

As was discussed in earlier chapters (Chapter 2 Section 4.2.2 and Chapter 3 Section 3.2), community roles have been observed within online paedophile communities – prompting these to be investigated within this dataset. The six roles present in the community were the Advice Seeker, the Advisor, the Newbie, the Expert, the Administrator, and the Disciplinarian. The roles which offenders take on can provide insight into how these communities are maintained and regulated (a point of interest in RQ2), as well as how offenders choose to perform different community identities and for what purposes. Coding for community roles was not widespread in the dataset (the most prevalent still only appeared in 26% of chatlogs), but there were substantial enough instances of roles appearing to require further investigation (reinforced by prior research having also found many of these roles in paedophile communities).

Figure 6.2 depicts the results of the *NVivo* Community Roles coding. For each role, the values are shown for how many times offenders were found to be enacting a role or discussing it. Offenders enacting roles were presenting themselves to others as that particular role, embodying the traits/responsibilities/behaviours of said role, while those discussing a role were commenting on others performing a role or on the role in general.

Figure 6.2: The presence of roles in the community.



The most common role in the dataset was the Advice Seeker, specifically offenders enacting this role (n=209) as there were no instances of the role being discussed amongst users, which also appeared across the most chatlogs. As shown in Figure 6.2, the next most common community role was enaction of the Advisor role (this role was also never discussed by users, only performed). The Newbie was the third most common role enacted (n=140), followed closely by the Expert (n=138) – but the Expert role was discussed by offenders more than the Newbie (17 times to 5), so the Expert was overall more prevalent in the community.

The last two roles appeared far less than the other four, with the Administrator being enacted on 40 occasions and the Disciplinarian on only 13. However, the Administrator was by far the most discussed role out of the six (as can be seen from the light grey bars in Figure 6.2), being discussed more times than it was found to be enacted by offenders. The presence of community role identities being performed by the offenders exemplifies Grant and MacLeod’s (2018; 2020) resource-constraint model as, though these roles are functionally mostly open to all, only some

offenders would have the resources to linguistically perform them: e.g. one cannot adopt the role of an expert in the community if they do not possess any expert knowledge with which to demonstrate their identity. The following sub-sections in this chapter (3.1-3.6) will go into more depth for each role from least to most salient: establishing how the roles appeared in the community, how they were discussed by offenders, and how a role can be performed by users. Subsequently, the impacts of these roles being present on RQ1 (determining what types of communities these offender communities are) will be discussed (in 3.7). Uses of speech acts and facework during community role enactment is also discussed (see Appendices 25 and 26 for full results).

3.1. The Disciplinarian

The Disciplinarian, also found in Grant and MacLeod (2020), acts to enforce the rules or etiquette of the community separately from administrators. While administrators have power vested in them by the platform they are operating on (such as access to restricted functions on an app/website like banning users) and are appointed to this role, the Disciplinarian role can be taken on by any member of the community who chooses to regulate the space. This regulation is usually conducted through language only, as they do not have the managerial capabilities to punish users in the same way as administrators, but can sometimes go beyond chastisement to actions like removal from groups if the platform has this option available to all users. In this dataset the Disciplinarian was not discussed directly by name, but they were referred to indirectly by two offenders who indicated that they disapproved of or disliked actions taken by Disciplinarians punishing users.

Alongside these two instances of the role being mentioned, there were a few times where the Disciplinarian role was enacted by offenders. Those who performed this role did so through banning users from groups, telling off others who did not follow the rules or conventions, and belittling those users. In the *GigaTribe* file, a user taking on the role of the Disciplinarian chastised another for their apparently poor quality CSAM folders on the site, saying 'its our own

responsibility to make sure the files we are sharing are of good quality and actually work, otherwise we will end up being blackballed and ppl wont share with us, word of mouth travels far on gigatribe'. They informed the other user that their failings to meet the standards of quality on *GigaTribe* would reflect badly on the community and discourage trading with the group, cutting off their access pipeline to CSAM. They employed positive politeness to mitigate this face-threatening act, through their uses of deixis and providing reasons for the chastisement. The Disciplinarian here asserted that it was a self-regulating community because it was a user's 'own responsibility' to meet the standards of practice, and they emphasised the consequences of ones actions on not just themselves but the community as a whole through the use of collective pronouns. The final sentiment expressed was an implicit threat, used to elicit a change in behaviour from the user they were disciplining.

3.2. The Administrator

The Administrator role is one found in many online communities, often with designated powers and functions that can be built into the functionality of a platform: such as admins in *Facebook* groups, on *Reddit* forums, or in live-chatting platforms like *Discord* and *Twitch* (sometimes alternatively called "moderators"/"mods"). Admins have been observed before in clear and dark-web online paedophile communities (Martelozzo, 2015; Holt et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2022; Huikuri, 2022a). Huikuri (2022b) described admins as the 'centre of the small universes' of online paedophile communities. They play a principal role in regulating, hosting, and maintaining the various platforms, forums, and groups that form the community. They are also seemingly the only *designated* structural power within many of these communities (though some users enacting other roles may adopt powerful styles), such as in the present study, with access to additional mechanisms on platforms due to their status. One offender in a *Kik* group-chat informed another that they could recognise who the admins were due to them having 'the crown' on their profile: indicating that they have built-in identifiers in the *Kik* software which designate administrators. Due to their importance in community maintenance, it may be surprising that the Administrator role only appeared enacted

in 10% of the chatlogs and discussed in 14%. However, this is likely because of the higher number of DM files than group-chats in the dataset (90% of the files and 80% of messages sent in the dataset were DMs) as administrators would be operating in multi-party dynamics like forums or group-chats and not 1-2-1 settings (though the role was sometimes discussed by offenders in DMs).

The Administrator role was discussed more than enacted and the comments expressed were often negative. Despite Huikuri's (2022b) suggestion that admins get the most admiration from other users, in this dataset they often seemed to elicit derision from others due to their regulatory behaviours. For example, two offenders in DMs complained about being removed from a group-chat by an admin and one described the 'host' (admin) as a 'faggot who want just people who trade material'. This sort of group management, where administrators remove inactive users who do not trade enough CSAM to maintain the perceived quality of the group, was sometimes praised to keep groups 'active' but also provoked criticism from said banned users: e.g. an offender complained that they were 'booted' from a group for not posting and claimed they 'Don't trust in host prefer being a voyeur'. Depictions of admins by other users included them being called slurs, untrustworthy, and dictatorial (e.g. 'Kik groups are booting people out Being bullies'). This negative response may be linked with the fact that those enacting the Administrator role used by far the most threatening speech acts out of the six community roles (ten times by Administrators, once by a Disciplinarian, and never by the other roles) and they were the joint highest (with Disciplinarians) in portraying themselves as the irritated self-oriented facework category.

As well as platform-specific indicators like the *Kik* 'crown', users performing the Administrator role also self-identified in group-chats: 'ALRIGHT FOLKS THIS IS THE ADMIN SPEAKING!'. In one instance, an admin messaged in a group-chat to instruct the other admins to remove inactive users, reminding them of their responsibilities: 'Admins, start kicking. And getting people in here that will remain active'. This was coming from an offender who was also an admin, publicly to the other group members reiterating the threat of banning for inactivity which was a

power they wielded. Administrators used the most negative impoliteness out of the six roles, as well as being the second highest users of self-oriented facework to appear authoritative. This could be due to their employment of threats and/or commands for members to obey the community rules and norms. It is possible that their perceived power and superiority to other members made them feel like they did not need to avoid impoliteness and confrontation as much as other users – there was no threat that they would be removed for bad behaviour or struggle to build relationships like the average community member.

However, there were positive responses to admins in the community and some users expressed appreciation to them for their work in maintaining the groups: e.g. 'glad you still one of the administrators'. Offenders sometimes directed queries about the community towards admins due to their status and sought help from them in understanding how to behave in a way that conformed to community standards. In the coding for discussing the Administrator role offenders described the responsibilities and expectations of admins, which primarily appeared to be policing membership and welcoming new users (e.g. 'All inactive members will be kicked today' and 'Welcome to the group'). Admins were sometimes referred to as 'hosts' due to their ability to create groups and decide which users gained/retained membership. Removing members was referred to as 'cleaning house' and an admin in one group was called 'good' at their role because 'He WILL kick you if you're inactive', reinforcing how fundamental to this role the action of regulating membership was. Membership was usually rescinded by admins if other users did not trade enough CSAM or actively participate in the groups: e.g. 'We ask members to post often.... Inactive members are kicked out' and 'Welcome! As long as you share stuff you shouldn't get booted out!'.

How exactly an offender is chosen as/becomes an admin was not described in the dataset, but this likely varies from platforms to platform. In one chatlog a system message indicated that existing admins could give admin status to other offenders ('[P_041] has been promoted to an admin of this group by [P_042]') and, in another, an admin said they were looking for a replacement

(‘So... I will be leaving kik for good. Some show me who wants to be admin in my place’). This makes it unclear if any specific criteria determined who can adopt this role, which again likely varies by platform as a prior study found this elevation of status had far stricter requirements needing to be met (see Martellozzo, 2015). Huikuri (2022b) has suggested that targeting admins is an effective way of combatting these online communities, which have a tendency to pop up again shortly after law enforcement takes them down, because of their central role in maintaining and regulating the community.

3.3. The Expert

The Expert in paedophile communities is someone who portrays themselves as an experienced offender who is knowledgeable about the community, that seeks respect from others, and boasts of their expertise. The role exists in other online communities under different nomenclature, e.g. Kou et al.’s (2018b:12) ‘experienced practitioner’ or incel community ‘elders’/‘leaders’ (Bates, 2020:32), and the presence of ‘expert offenders’ was observed in paedophile online communities by Chiang (2018:204). In this dataset, famous/prolific offenders who fit the description of the Expert role were discussed with admiration and reverence by other members: ‘we need another [name of an offender]’, ‘[name of an offender] would be proud of you !!!’, and ‘[name of an offender] was a hero’. Furthermore, being apprehended by law enforcement seemed not to impact these offenders’ reputations as experts. In one chatlog, two offenders discussed a notable famous offender and his paedophile ring that had been arrested, with one of the users referring to the sexual abuse as ‘Such a clever way of doing it : he was on live 4, 5 time every week for 2 years that I know of’. The criminal activity was described as ‘clever’ despite it leading to the arrest of the paedophile ring and their detection by law enforcement.

This veneration of Expert offenders suggests that they can do no wrong in the eyes of the community members, and results in other offenders aspiring to achieve this status (e.g. ‘I wonder if you will ever be famous one day’). Users in the dataset who performed the role of the

Expert offender bragged about their experiences committing sexual abuse and imparted knowledge to others with an authoritative tone. Out of all six community roles, offenders enacting the Expert role accounted for 88% of the coding for users presenting themselves as the self-oriented facework category 'Confident'. Often this confidence was conveyed through boasting statements like 'Love the first vid!! Looks like a boy and has a cunt. I have done this lots', where the offender brags of their prolificacy in a matter-of-fact assertive affirmative statement. Woodhams et al. (2021:7) found in their research that there were different motivations for offenders making demonstrations of expertise, 'with some suspects engaging in posturing and attempting to show superiority' and others expressing 'shared interests, and the potential for creating new [CSA] material'.

Extract 6.4 shows an offender bragging about their experience level (lines 1-2) which they then used to legitimise their subsequent advice on how to offend. P_112 was portraying themselves as an Expert offender in this interaction through their claims of abusing (what was seen by the users in this chatlog as) high-value victims: very young male and female victims, including infants.

6.4.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_112]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_112	Had 0-7 yrs
2	P_112	Boys and girls
3	P_001	I seen yer perv boner bet it felt like NOTHING ELSE
4	P_001	I would have slurp and dull you dry straight after
5	P_112	It's very tight and don't believe what you hear about an easy fuck!! It isn't ,
6		it's a slow long process if you don't want to be caught
7	P_001	But even if it is slow what a pleasure !!!!
8	P_001	How did you get to find and to get buy
9	P_112	You have to get them on your side , then slowly introduce ur cock in to the
10		playtime, then play fight etc and then easily try to fuck them. It's an
11		awesome feeling but a long road to hell if ur caught

In lines 5-6 and 9-11, P_112 dispensed advice to P_001 about how to physically commit sexual abuse as well as how to coerce victims and avoid being detected. They used instructional language (typical of expertise stance-taking) in lines 9-11 to teach P_001 this method. Due to their claimed experience

doing this kind of abuse, their knowledge was seen as valuable and elicited admiration and appreciation from the offender they were talking to. P_001 expressed awe at P_112's exploits in lines 3 and 7, giving compliments on P_112's 'perv boner' and adding exclamation marks to indicate their excitement. P_112's response in lines 9-11, after P_001 asked how they managed to commit the abuse, includes understatement to convey that P_112 was an expert in that kind of abuse: claiming they 'easily try to fuck them' after grooming the child for abuse. This assertion contradicts their earlier comment (line 5) that P_001 should not 'believe what you hear about an easy fuck!!' because 'It isn't'. These duelling statements demonstrate that P_112 was both trying to put down the advice of other offenders to negatively contrast these with his supposedly superior knowledge, while also bragging about his capabilities regardless of the statements conflicting.

The following extract (6.5) shows what happens in a 1-2-1 interaction where both offenders were trying to perform the Expert role simultaneously.

6.5.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	My biggest fantasy and desire is to share one with someone like you : seen
2		the ecstasy n pleasure in your eyes while at it
3	P_154	Need to find one first
4	P_154	Find some meth head who is willing to rent out their son
5	P_001	Sure there must be a dad about happy to pass him over
6	P_001	Some crack head will do it I am sure : here in the [name of country] it easier
7		with scallies boys , for money beer or cigarettes I am sure
8	P_154	U ever try?
9	P_001	For some tabac and some vodka had once the pleasure to stroke and
10		drench it
11	P_154	How old?
12	P_001	8
13	P_154	What did u do to him?
14	P_154	[image]
15	P_001	Stroke his cock and spunk over his boner
16	P_154	I would have done more....
17	P_001	I know , I chickened out
18	P_154	Why?
19	P_001	Had some of its mate coming and looking for him

20 P_154 I would have done them too....lol
21 P_001 If I would have been with another pedo why not

The conversation begins with the two offenders fantasising about how they could carry out the contact abuse of a victim together. P_154 suggests they could do this by taking advantage of a drug-addict with a child and P_001 in lines 6-7 agreed with this suggestion, claiming that it is 'easier' to do so abroad because of child-poverty. P_154 asked if P_001 knew this from experience and P_001 then proceeded to detail a time when they committed contact abuse in that way. The Expert role was the role which contained the second highest instances of offenders portraying themselves as knowledgeable. Initially both offenders were imparting their knowledge of contact abuse and access to victims in lines 4-7.

After this speculation, when the conversation shifted to P_001's experience doing abuse (line 9 onwards), the typical Expert offender trope of boasting about sexual exploits appears. The Expert role was responsible for 78% of all boasting facework coding out of the six roles and 48% of coding for virility (the highest numbers for both categories in any role). P_001 claimed that they managed to coerce a child victim into sexual contact, to which P_154 responded by asking what age the victim was and what sexual acts were performed (lines 9-15). P_001 bragged about their experiences, portraying themselves as the Expert, but was snubbed by P_154 in line 16 who suggested that they 'would have done more' – instead positioning themselves as the Expert by diminishing P_001's experience. This was repeated in lines 17-20 where P_001 explained that they 'chickened out' because the victim had others looking for him and P_154 dismissed this by bragging that they 'would have done them too'. In response to P_001 presenting themselves as an Expert, P_154 started to enact that role themselves and used positive impoliteness strategies to put down P_001. They denied common ground, snubbed P_001, were unsympathetic, and positioned themselves as the superior paedophile (lines 16 and 20). These are all positive impoliteness strategies and illustrate why the Expert role contained the most coding for this type of impoliteness out of the roles. Elsewhere in the dataset, users adopting the Expert role employed obscure

language to mystify and exclude other offenders as well as emphasising their superiority through boasting and shows of their extensive knowledge of the community.

3.4. The Newbie

The Newbie role captures the persona in many online communities of the newcomer, that has also been observed in online paedophile communities (Chiang, 2018; 2020a; Grant and MacLeod, 2020; Huikuri, 2022a). There were instances of the word 'newbie' being mentioned in the dataset (in lists of community rules for example) but just using the word was not coded for here unless the role was actually commented on. However, there were instances of newbies being discussed: when offenders welcomed new members into the group referring to them by that label (e.g. 'Welcome newbies!' and 'Hello Newbies') and one administrator who called them 'Good people who I trust', which could be a welcoming greeting or a sarcastic statement to suggest that newbies have not yet earned their trust. Newbies are a potentially contentious element in the online community because they would be seen as higher-risk, due to lacking experience in security measures, and seen as lower value, because they are unlikely to have much CSAM to trade or any offending skills to impart to other members. In contrast, the online paedophile community is likely very desirable to newbies because it can enable them to upskill their offending knowledge, improve security measures, learn criminal behaviours from more experienced offenders, access CSAM, engage in a support-group, build connections, and rationalise their paedophilia.

Thus, users performing the Newbie role were often characterised by requests for help, advice, or access from others while emphasising their newcomer status. Chiang (2020a) described this behaviour as 'demonstrating newness': showing that newbies openly make 'explicit statements about being new to the community' through highlighting how they lack experience in offending, and then requesting 'tolerance' from the other members. Demonstrating newness was found in the behaviours of users enacting the Newbie role in these chatlogs, with some offenders introducing themselves through messages like 'New to this but hope to make the most of it', 'my first day', and

'Hi, thanks for adding, I'm new here'. By openly indexing the Newbie role as their identity when entering into interactions with other offenders, newbies attempted to elicit help through sympathy from more experienced members who may recall the difficulties they faced when they had been newbies in the community. Chiang (2020a) called this behaviour 'seeking support' as newbies are trying to gain access to guidance or help in offending, moral support, and how to become more advanced members of the community. This manifested in messages like 'Because I am new to lol can you let me know it tell me more about the groups' but was differentiated from the Advice Seeker role as this user explicitly signalled their newbie status before asking for assistance.

Seeking support was also be conducted more indirectly though implying a lack of experience, e.g. 'I've only fantasized ever Wish I knew firsthand'. Some offenders trying to progress beyond their newbie status used indirect avenues when requesting they be sent CSAM like 'How many vids u got there. What's your favourite?' or 'Did you find any new porn you enjoy more than others?' – using interrogatives rather than directives to minimise imposition or possibly to signal their lack of confidence. Others who claimed to be newbies also appeared to be more persistent with requesting CSAM from others despite not having any/much of their own to trade (e.g. 'More please quick!'). This nagging behaviour could cause negative responses in other community members who expected a reciprocal exchange (see Section 4.2) and, in some instances, got angry with the newbie or even ended their chat/interaction as a consequence. A *Europol* (2021:27) report affirmed that 'new users have to gain the trust of the community in order to be accepted in the group, for example by contributing with newly created or posted CSAM', and so failing to do this could cause the newbie to struggle entering the community.

Offenders enacting the newbie role often portrayed themselves as inexperienced and/or grateful, using the second highest number of thanking speech-acts out of the six roles, and were found to be the most demanding (being responsible for 53% of all demanding coding within roles). Newbies were relentless in seeking CSAM because they lacked a supply, and it enabled them

to trade in the community and advance. Chiang (2020a) observed that newbies ‘explain how they might be unable to meet community expectations or requirements, often by stating a lack of specific skills or possession of indecent images’. She referred to this behaviour as ‘stating limitations’, suggesting that it was something ‘they may be apologetic about’ (2020a). Out of the six community roles, users performing the Newbie role invested heavily in other-oriented facework: using the most positive politeness strategies, negative politeness strategies, and the most politeness overall. This is due to their need to mitigate the imposition they are causing other users by seeking assistance and asking for lenience when it comes to community rules/etiquette. They also expressed gratitude for help when it was given to boost the positive face of the more experienced offenders, possibly in the hopes that they would be happy to assist them again.

In extract 6.6, P_230 entered a *Kik* group-chat and initiated an interaction by stating newness in line 1 (‘kind of new to this’), as well as justifying their membership of the group by saying they had been told by ‘some guy off whisper’ (line 9) that their interests aligned with the groups’. Another offender (P_225) welcomed them in line 3 before outlining the fundamental rule of behaviour in the group: trade CSAM to retain membership.

6.6.

[3_PP001_PP_02]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_230	So kind of new to this never really shared stuff I've done but was told this
2		would be the place to share all my Pervy taboos ?
3	P_225	Welcome! As long as you share stuff you shouldn't get booted out!
4	P_230	Oh ok that's cool and by stuff we talking experiences or like videos and pics
5	P_225	Pics and vids I'm guessing lol
6	P_230	Oh hahaha guess I should boot myself out I have experiences but no pics
7		haven't been able to find any I'm fairly new as I said lol by its
8		understandable why they'd give someone the boot
9	P_230	Well that's what I was hoping lol some guy off whisper told me to search
10		some so I said ok why not lol

The user adopting the role of the Newbie sent a message (lines 6-8) which contained them stating their limitations, seeking support, and then reiterating stating newness. They portrayed themselves

as inexperienced and used self-deprecating language and humour in suggesting they should ‘boot’ themselves out of the group-chat because they were unable to trade CSAM, which they justified by stating again in line 7 that they were ‘fairly new’. They implied a need for support and upskilling in accessing CSAM (lines 6-7) when saying that they had ‘no pics’ because they ‘haven’t been able to find any’. P_230 used internet slang and humour to mitigate the possible conflict of them not being able to comply with the rules (‘hahaha’ and ‘lol’) and employed the negative politeness strategy of protecting the hearer’s negative face in line 8 when suggesting that ‘its understandable why they’d give someone the boot’ for behaviour like his. He was minimising the imposition of the other members who could remove him from the group by impersonalising the issue and showing agreement, likely in an attempt to endear himself to the other users so that they did not remove him. This was reinforced in line 9 by another expression of seeking support, saying that they were ‘hoping’ to have a place to share their ‘Pervvy taboos’ (line 2) potentially in an attempt to elicit sympathy.

3.5. The Advisor

The Advisor was identified as a role in dark-web CSA communities by Grant and MacLeod (2020) and had been observed, described more as a behaviour than a role, in other research into online paedophile communities (e.g. Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon, 2011; Huikuri, 2022a). Though there was no coding for offenders discussing this role, it was the second most enacted role in the dataset: consisting of users dispensing advice and guidance to others in the community on a range of topics. Woodhams et al. (2021:8) commented on ‘cooperative behaviors’ in online paedophile communities, suggesting these included ‘providing assistance and expert advice, as well as problem solving’ – which reflect the behaviours of users performing this Advisor role.

Advisors portrayed themselves the most out of the six roles as the self-oriented facework categories of ‘Knowledgeable’, ‘Authoritative’, and ‘Helpful’ – with 83 instances of helpfulness, while all other roles combined only did this 26 times. However, users taking on the

Advisor role employed the most impoliteness strategies (n=37), primarily using bald-on-record impoliteness. As some impoliteness strategies include using obscure language, disagreement, denying common ground, or being condescending, these aligned with the behaviours of more experienced offenders dispensing advice to less knowledgeable users and so may not necessarily have been received negatively because they occurred due to them being par for the course of providing superior knowledge.

Users who enacted the Advisor role gave practical guidance on technology and security measures, which Grand and MacLeod (2020) claimed was the main purpose of advisers. They also educated other users on how to behave in the community from a position of a fellow member and not the elevated Administrators or Disciplinary members who carried the threat of consequences for not conforming correctly. One offender adopting the role of the Advisor informed another user in *GigaTribe* how they should format their CSAM folders so that they were more organised and usable for others (using instructional language which was prevalent): ‘sorry to lecture lol..one more tip, sort your files into different folders..IE..movies, pics, sex vids, boy//girl etc...you have alot of files that are just numbers and duplicates as well, ppl like to know what they are downloading’. They hedged this suggestion with negative politeness strategies and an apologising speech act (‘sorry to lecture lol...one more tip’) which protected the addressee’s negative face to mitigate the notion that they were doing something wrong, while also deploying self-deprecation for their self-oriented facework to suggest that they were lecturing and imposing on the addressee.

Advisors also provided guidance on criminal activities like CSAM trading, contact abuse, and accessing the dark-web. One offender performing the Advisor role for example suggested ‘Swimming baths are a great place to meet pedo daddies’ to a user who had been saying that they struggled to access child victims and other offenders. Advisors often interacted with Advice Seekers because the two roles are counterparts to each other. They did not always co-occur, as Advisors can dispense advice to Newbies or without solicitation and Advice Seekers may request help without

response, but they frequently interacted and an example (6.7) of one such interaction will be examined in the next section once the latter role has been explored.

3.6. The Advice Seeker

The counterpart of the Advisor role, the Advice Seeker, was a role not previously included as a community role in prior online paedophile community research. However, the behaviours which characterise Advice Seekers (predominantly of users seeking guidance or help from other offenders) have been observed throughout this body of literature (e.g. Grant and MacLeod, 2020; Nielsen et al., 2022; Huikuri, 2022a). It is important to distinguish this role from the Newbie role as the enactment of both roles involves seeking support/knowledge from others, but they are performed by different offenders in the community. Users enacting the Advice Seeker role could be any level of experience/knowledge in the community and do not need to be new/inexperienced to perform this role. They may also seek advice from users who are on the same level of experience as themselves and not exclusively more knowledgeable offenders. The learning process in the online community is an ongoing one because even Expert offenders sought knowledge from others with different experiences to expand their own expertise. This is unlike the Newbie role where the users performing the role are newcomers who seek help from others that have the experience they lack.

There were no instances of users discussing the Advice Seeker role by name, which is because its nomenclature was created during this project and so this name was not explicitly mentioned in the data (it was decided that vague comments on users asking questions did not constitute discussing this role in the coding book). In contrast, this was the most enacted role – and most commonly occurring role overall – in the chatlogs. Due to the questioning nature of the role as users asked for help/guidance, offenders performing this role used the most interrogative speech acts (solely accounting for 41% of all coding for that speech act out of the six roles). Advice Seekers sought guidance on many aspects of the online community and offending. Often their queries concerned technology and online security measures, e.g. ‘How do I save you as a contact but can we

both make sure our chats are not saved', which aligns with users enacting the Advisor role often dispensing guidance on this topic.

Users sought help on how to access CSAM through other offenders (e.g. 'How do you get guys to send you camera pics?') and through the dark-web, such as this instance of an offender requesting teaching on how to locate paedophile forums on the dark-web using *Tor*: 'Could do with some classes starting on Thursday & Friday (I am off)'. Advice Seekers also used the most assertive negative statements and thanking expressive speech acts out of the six roles. This was usually to express gratitude for help being provided and, similarly to newbies stating limitations, to convey what they did not know which results in them needing help or advice (e.g. 'OK thanks dunno how to even use dark web tho lol').

The following extract demonstrates an interaction between a user (P_001) performing the Advice Seeker role and another user (P_052) taking on the Advisor role in response. Their interaction began with P_052 in line 1 expressing a greeting and asking if the other offender had any CSAM to trade with them, to which P_001 conceded they did not have much and then asked questions of P_052 concerning technology, security, and access to group-chats.

6.7.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_052]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_052	Hey. Have anything to trade?
2	P_001	Very little and have it stuck on a mem. stick so have to figure out how do it
3		on Kik
4	P_001	How about you? And maybe some help will be greatly appreciated
5	P_052	Help for what?
6	P_001	How to send pic from a memory stick
7	P_052	If you put the memory stick into your computer, you can then send to your
8		email, look the email up on your phone, download the pic from your email
9		to your phone then send to kik.
10	P_001	Thanks will do
11	P_001	Do You know why I a have been removed from the group?
12	P_052	Do you post often?
13	P_001	Not as often as I want as I am just gathering more staff from Tor
14	P_052	Okay.

15 P_052 If it happens again, just let me know.

Advice Seekers were often found to be self-deprecating (containing the most coding for this self-oriented facework category out of the roles), as can be seen in P_001's message in lines 2-3. They professed to not have technical knowledge of how to store CSAM or transfer it from storage devices to the social media sites being used as well as admitting to having 'Very little' CSAM which is seen as a negative trait in the community. This message also exemplifies a user portraying themselves as inexperienced.

Advice Seekers accounted for by far the most coding for the self-oriented facework category 'Inexperienced', with 80 instances of this coding (while newbies accounted for 44 instances and all other roles combined only accounted for 6). P_001 in extract 6.7 portrayed themselves as inexperienced to perform the role of the Advice Seeker in lines 2-4, 6, 11, and 13. In line 4 they requested assistance from the other offender after explaining earlier that they lacked CSAM and technical knowledge, which they clarified in line 6 by asking specifically how to transfer CSAM from a storage device to social media. In lines 11 and 13, they then asked why they had been removed from a group-chat and admitted that they did not trade CSAM in the group as much as was required due to their inexperience and lack of material. Advice Seekers also accounted for most of the 'Grateful' self-oriented facework category coding and ranked second highest on their uses of politeness strategies out of the six roles, which aligns with the high usage of thanking speech acts (e.g. P_001's message in line 10). The Advisor in extract 6.7, P_052, dispensed their guidance to P_001 in lines 7-9 and answered their technological questions. At the end of the conversation, they also used a commissive speech act to offer their help to P_001 in future if they encountered the same problems with group-chat access.

3.7. Structures of Power

Several of these six community roles showed offenders performing identities which gave them power or placed them in a position of powerlessness. For example, Disciplinarians and

Administrators punished other offenders and potentially even removed them from group-chats or decided what was/was not acceptable behaviour. Experts and Advisors portrayed themselves as possessing superior knowledge or more experience than others. Advice Seekers and Newbies on the other hand positioned themselves as less knowledgeable, less experienced, and in need of the help they were seeking. As discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.2.2, formal hierarchies of power have been found in online paedophile communities: e.g. the Virtuous Paedophile forum in Nielsen et al. (2022) or the 'pyramidal' hierarchy in Hidden Kingdom (Martellozzo, 2015). However, this was not the case with every online paedophile community. Van der Bruggen and Blokland (2021a:270) found, when examining several dark-web fora, that they 'may be structured differently'. In some fora they found a "democratic" structure in which various moderators and admins were involved in the decision-making process', while in others 'one admin had full decision-making power and only received operational support from others' (2021a:270). Structures of power are diverse in online paedophile communities and there is variation in how rigid a hierarchy may be, as well as the mobility members have within that hierarchy.

Grant (2022) described how he approached hierarchies of power in dark-web paedophile communities through investigating 'claims to power', where users index power in their identities through their language. These claims to power included asserting power through 'community expertise', 'technological expertise', 'veteran power', 'private knowledge', and so forth. Some of these claims to power could be seen in offenders who were performing community roles in this dataset, such as Expert offenders claiming veteran power and Advisors claiming technological or community expertise. Despite the assertions of power (or the lack thereof in some of the other roles), there was no formal hierarchy in the offender community from this dataset and no rigid structure of the members' trajectories from Newbie to Admin or Expert. There appeared to be a more informal hierarchy where Newbies, due to their lack of currency (CSAM) to exchange, were seen as less valuable than Expert offenders who had a wealth of CSAM to trade and knowledge to impart – but this assessment was down to the individual user to deduce, and many offenders did

establish relationships with Newbies or treat prolific Expert offenders as they would any other. The community appeared to have more of a free-for-all, democratic structure with some groups within it that had more maintenance and regulation through administrators or platform hosts, though these ranged from having domineering roles to very minimal involvement.

This picture of how the online paedophile community was structured impacts the first research question of this thesis: determining what types of communities these are. The presence of hierarchies of power in some community roles (e.g. Admins, Disciplinarys, and Newbies) counters the classification of the community as an Affinity Space. It appears more similar to a Community of Practice, where Newbies start out as 'peripheral' members and potentially progress to 'core' members or remain peripheral (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999:174). Furthermore, the presence of identifiable Newbies in the community who are directly called thus goes against the AS classification, as Gee (2005:225) has argued that AS do not segregate Newbies and instead have them on equal footing with 'masters'. Much like the other online paedophile communities explored in prior research (see Chapters 2 and 3, e.g. Martelozzo, 2015; Chiang, 2018; Grant and MacLeod, 2020; Nielsen, 2022; Huikuri, 2022a), the explicit presence of Newbies precludes an automatic classification as an AS. However, the community in this dataset is predominantly democratic, and allows for the 'flexible [...] participation across multiple spaces' (Sharma and Land, 2019:248) that is characteristic of AS. Thus, the presence of roles in the community alongside the absence of a rigid hierarchy reinforces the proposal from Chapter 4 Section 3 that this community is neither a CoP nor an AS – but instead falls somewhere in a Venn diagram of the two. This will be revisited in Chapter 8. Another element of the community which impacts the communities' classification is the presence of rules, as these influence structures of power and restrict the behaviours of members. How these rules appear, how this regulation occurs, and what norms of behaviour are encouraged/discouraged will be investigated in the following section.

4. Etiquette, Rules, and Regulation

“...you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order.”

— William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night

The second research question of the thesis asks how these online paedophile communities are maintained and participated in, which necessitates an investigation of the members' patterns of behaviour, etiquette, and self-regulation. This section focuses on what community rules were established in the community, how these rules were received, and their subsequent enforcement. It also looks at what the community members viewed as normal behaviour (adhering to rules or etiquette) and abnormal behaviour that rang alarm bells amongst offenders. In the analysis of behavioural norms, formulaic interactions like openings and closings will be discussed as well as the offenders' use of community-specific slang terminology to index their membership identity. Nguyen and Rose (2011:76) asserted that 'becoming a core member of a community means adopting community norms', as the alternative risks ostracisation. Therefore, understanding these rules and norms, and the consequences of adhering to or flouting them, is essential to understanding how offenders obtained membership of the community and sustained it.

4.1. Community Rules

Evidence of community rules in the dataset were initially captured through a Community Building sub-theme in the thematic analysis stage. These instances were then separated to determine whether they were evidence of implicit rules, explicit rules, or rule enforcement. Implicit rules are rules which can be inferred to exist through a statement or behaviour but are not directly stated. Explicit rules are rules which are explicitly stated as things that can or cannot be done in the community, sometimes even being directly labelled as rules. Rule enforcement captures times when community rules are enforced through consequences for breaking rules, or threats of how they would be enforced. This may be when it happens visibly within a chatlog or when offenders

discussed enforcement they or others experienced. Lorenzo-Dus and Di Cristofaro (2018:609) claimed that, in developing 'cyber-trust' in criminal marketplaces, reassuring members 'that vendors who 'misbehaved' were openly exposed' (622) self-regulated communities.

Instances of implicit rules appeared only 10 times, while rule enforcement appeared 64 times and explicit rules appeared the most at 73 times. However, even explicit rules only occurred in 19% of the chatlogs so coding for rules was not widespread. Evidence of community rules also appeared more in group-chats than DMs, which is to be expected because groups have regulation and administrators to dictate rules, while DMs contained more of the offenders commenting on rules from group-chats or complaining of enforcement. Huikuri (2022a:29) suggested that rules in paedophile online communities 'are articulated by coordinators of the groups' like administrators, which was often the case in this dataset (especially for explicit rules) but not exclusively as any offender could assert (particularly, implicit) rules for behaviour.

The few instances of implicit rules demonstrated the offenders' knowledge that rules existed within the community and their casual references to them suggested that they were something that community members should be aware of. In one chatlog, an offender complained that an image of their penis (which they sent to a group chat) was called 'disgusting' and the offender they were speaking to replied 'Well it is a Nepi room...', suggesting that it was inappropriate to send non-related content to the group. This implies there was a rule within the group about what media should be sent (CSAM of interest to nepiophiles and not images of adult offenders, in this case). In *GigaTribe*, where password sharing to folders of media was one of its main functions, a user told others '[username] will not give password...del'. They suggested that everyone should delete this other user because they made the supposedly reciprocal trading exchange one-sided. This again implies that the behaviour was against the rules and was punished by being deleted or black-listed on the site because, they said, 'otherwise we will end up being blackballed and ppl wont share with us'. This is an example of what Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-

Waddon (2011:22) found when examining offenders building relationships with each other through email exchanges: offenders must follow 'accepted practices for this community' because a failure to do so could lead to them being excluded from the community.

Chiang (2020a) discussed the 'strict rules' offender communities are governed by to remain undetected, which were captured in the explicit rules coding in this study. The following examples demonstrate instances of offenders discussing the existence of community rules (6.8) and directly instructing others on the rules for behaviour (6.9-12).

- 6.8. Same, asked last night in the sk groups but full of vanilla idiots. One of them told me than <5 is holy forbidden lol
- 6.9. Follow the rules
- 6.10. Boys only please
- 6.11. 3 vids or 6 pics to stay !
- 6.12. ALRIGHT FOLKS THIS IS THE ADMIN SPEAKING! I will be cleaning up this group THIS WEEKEND. You all better start posting or pm by Monday with a couple of pics and or videos to stay in the group. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

In example 6.8, one offender complained to another in 1-2-1 DMs about a *Skype* group-chat where they were told that sharing CSAM of victims under five years old was wholly 'forbidden'. As the two offenders interacting in this exchange identified themselves as 'nepiophiles', who were interested in very young child-victims, the offender calls the group full of 'vanilla idiots' and receives an approving response from the other who suggested that victims under 5 years of age were not forbidden for them. Examples 6.9-12 show explicit rules appearing in *Kik* group-chats, coming from administrators, which included assertions about what types of CSAM to share and how much CSAM must be traded to avoid being expelled from the group. In example 6.11, the administrator described enforcing the rules as 'cleaning up' the group and affirmed that CSAM must be traded by all users by a certain deadline, which was one of the primary instigators for CSAM trading activity in the groups (as discussed in Chapter 5, Section 3.3). This 'active participation' was a community rule as 'inactivity may lead to loss of membership' (Europol, 2021:27).

Martellozzo's (2015) study, described in Chapter 2 Section 4.2.2, found strict rules for advancement in the *Hidden Kingdom* offender forum where users had to post 50 times a day to advance and administrators were the ones who regulated this. Evidence of similar rules can be seen in examples 6.11-12 and 6.13 where admins in the groups asserted that frequent CSAM trading was a requirement for remaining a member. Example 6.13 depicts a copy-and-paste list of rules that was sent by admins whenever new members joined a particular group chat (PP_09).

6.13. New Member Rules. 1. Send vid to owner or admin in 5 mins of receiving this post 2. Constantly keep sharing vids and pics and links 3. Don't send dick pics or personal info 4. The admins will kick anybody that is not active 5. If u are removed feel free to come back if u get content to trade. 6. Scammers WILL BE BANNED 7. Have fun ** all admins have [crown emoji]

This regularly reposted list exemplifies one of the more regulated, formal rule appearances in the dataset where an explicit list was presented to newcomers whenever they joined and failure to conform resulted in immediate removal. However, the list shows some flexibility in its enforcement as expelled offenders were told they could return to the group chat once they had 'content to trade'.

Bowman-Grieve (2009:997), in their research on radical right-wing online communities, asserted that 'community rules and behavioral norms can be identified, with these often being stipulated and enforced by the community moderators and administrators'. The most common self-oriented facework categories that appeared in the coding for rule-enforcement and explicit rules (of users portraying themselves as irritated, authoritative, and demanding) were the same as the top categories for administrators and disciplinarians – likely due to them being the ones did most of the rule pronouncements and enforcement (see Appendix 27 for full coding results). Users being demanding also came as a result of the many rules containing directives to send CSAM (like rules 1 and 2 in example 6.13). Rule enforcement in the dataset usually involved offenders being removed from groups or banned because many of the rules in place in the community acted to ensure users

were authentic and groups were active. Thus, if a user was not conforming to the rules, for example by not sharing CSAM, then they could accrue suspicion and be removed to ensure they were not members of law enforcement infiltrating the community. Several offenders commented on this form of rule enforcement, whether to complain it happened to them (e.g. 'I was kick out yesterday for not posting') or to express worry that it would happen to them unless they changed their behaviours (e.g. 'I have nothing to fukkng post as I came off the other Nepi group , I am gonna be booted').

The following example shows an administrator in a group explicitly outlining the consequences for disobeying community rules.

6.14. No girls. Next time any admin sees any girl stuff in here, the person is being kicked. And if they want back in, they have to obey they "re-entry fee"

Example 6.14 shows rule enforcement relating to a rule not about frequency of CSAM being posted, but about what *type* is allowed in the group. This followed a user sending a message containing CSAM depicting a girl in a group focused on male victims. The speaker called on their fellow admins to ban users who did this, going as far as to suggest there would be a 're-entry fee' for those wishing to regain access to the group after such a misstep. This re-entry fee may be monetary but from the context of the interaction and the supportive responses of other users to this suggestion, it is likely this fee would be a payment in the currency of the community: CSAM.

The 're-entry fee' rule enforcement was received well by users in the group-chat as it would result in them gaining access to more CSAM and aligned with their goals, but rules were responded to in differing ways in the community. Community rules were coded against the reception coding book to examine these reactions (see Appendix 28A for coding book and 28B for reception of rules results chart). The reception coding book captured whether the rules and rule enforcements were ignored by others in the chatlogs where they took place, whether the topic was actively discontinued, or whether they were engaged with. In instances where the rule/enforcement was engaged with, it was coded for if this was a positive, neutral, or negative response. Within the

few occurrences of implicit rules being expressed, these were mostly engaged with by others positively – which was also the case for explicit rules. More messages containing explicit rules were ignored than implicit, but again the majority were engaged with positively.

Bowman-Grieve (2009:997) in *Stormfront* found that ‘while some rules may be problematic for some community members, for the most part they are accepted and considered beneficial to the community as a whole’. However, there were some negative responses to explicit rules being stated or discussed as well as negative reactions to rule-enforcement. Rule enforcement was ignored in a few instances but mostly engaged with slightly more positively than negatively by others (though it was almost an even split). Extract 6.15 exemplifies a typical negative response to explicit rules within the paedophile community where their enforcement on an offender caused them to become disillusioned.

6.15.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_154	Am thinking about quitting kik
2	P_001	Why ? Something i should know ?
3	P_001	Would you mind keeping in touch via Skype ?
5	P_154	I'm just tired of everyone's rules
6	P_001	I know , I would like to continue connecting and helping each other out
7	P_154	For sure!!
8	P_154	I'm not leaving u pedoman!!
9	P_001	Because of all the rules the group will be dying out
11	P_154	Yep

P_154 claimed in line 1 that they were contemplating leaving *Kik* because they were ‘tired of everyone’s rules’ and they later asserted that the groups will be ‘dying out’ because of ‘all the rules’ (line 9). The offender directly blamed the presence of rules for their new attitude towards the *Kik* groups and highlighted the problem within the community that stringent regulation discouraged some users from joining the groups as well as causing drops in membership that could make them decline. However, this element was one that other offenders praised due to the focus on security to avoid law enforcement infiltration as well as encouraging users to be consistent CSAM traders that

improved the perceived quality of a group: shown in offenders often vetting groups they joined by asking if they were 'active'.

4.2 Norms of Behaviour

Establishing patterns of behaviour can reveal how offenders become and remain members of paedophile communities online as well as determining what is considered abnormal behaviour in comparison. Nguyen and Rose (2011:83), who studied socialisation in online communities, argued that 'the extent of conformity to group norms reflects commitment to the group' – suggesting that those following the rules and norms of expected behaviour are likely frequent engagers in the community and/or those who take on community roles. Several patterns of behaviour have been established thus far, including habits offenders had when seeking to access or trade CSAM; risk-minimisation and security measures that were expected to be adopted by members interacting in the community; types of behaviours undertaken by those performing certain roles; and rules that had to be followed to remain in the community. Conforming to these behavioural norms and not engaging in suspicious or abnormal behaviour built trust between offenders and increased their chances of accessing CSAM, accessing other offenders to learn from/commit abuse with, and accessing the support-network. Users who do not follow these practices can raise alarm bells amongst offenders (e.g. asking a lot of questions about personal information or the origins of CSAM that has been sent).

Many community rules and norms concerned CSAM trading behaviours because these are criminal acts which make the offenders vulnerable to charges if they were linked by law enforcement in real life to their online personas. As well as expectations for security measures offenders should undertake while engaging in CSAM trading with others (e.g. vetting that the offender they are sending CSAM to is an authentic community member), there were rules and behavioural norms that were encouraged as part of good etiquette in the community. Offenders in the dataset highlighted this etiquette in group chats (e.g. 'Loads of groups on here share but they

usually want you to send first’) and in 1-2-1 DMs (e.g. ‘Keep sending ill keep sending’). CSAM trading etiquette went beyond just ensuring a reciprocal exchange of files as it was deemed good form to provide new or unique material (e.g. ‘Had that one already Send a different one’), as well as conforming to the CSAM types required by certain group-chats or offenders (e.g. providing CSAM which meets the age or gender preferences of a group).

Bad etiquette in the community was perceived with hostility, suspicion, and criticism. When the reciprocal CSAM trading exchange was not honoured, offenders sometimes refused to continue sending material: e.g. ‘But I sent you so many vids so it's your turn’. In one group-chat where CSAM was traded by sending material to the administrators who then posted it in the group for all members to view (as dictated in the group’s rules), an offender complained that the admins of the group were keeping the CSAM for themselves and not reciprocating in the trade: ‘Admins are all collectors. They dont send anything back. Dont waste ur time folks’. Referring to other users as ‘collectors’ was a derogatory comment in the community as it implied they took CSAM from others without sharing any in return – thus flouting potentially the most recognised rule of etiquette in the community.

Newbies also ran the risk of disregarding the norms around mutual trading because of their dearth of CSAM. In extract 6.16, a new member joined a group-chat (P_302) and was welcomed by another user who may have been acting as an admin (P_299).

6.16.

[3_PP001_PP_04]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_299	Welcome to the group
2	P_302	Thank you
3	P_299	We ask members to post often.... Inactive members are kicked out
4	P_302	I dont have any pics
5	P_299	?
6	P_302	Yea
7	P_299	Not at all..... Wrong answer
8	P_302	Oky

9	P_299	Quit the group, get some material and join again
10	SM	[P_302] has left the chat

They were told that inactivity results in being removed from the group (line 3) because members must 'post often' (meaning to trade CSAM), and then admitted that they did not have any material to share. P_299 called this the 'wrong answer' and instructed them through directives in line 9 to 'Quit the group' until they had CSAM to trade, which resulted in P_302 leaving the group.

Consequences for abnormal or ungenerous behaviour in the community ranged from chastisement to full ostracism.

Offenders also conformed to norms of behaviour in the community through their methods for initiating conversations with other members. Extract 6.17 demonstrates an instance where an offender joining a group-chat was called out for not introducing themselves and messaging a greeting, because this was described as the norm in line 1.

6.17.

[3_PP003_PP_09]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_1581	Normally people say hi when joining a new group
2	P_1580	Well guess I'm not normal huh
3	P_1581	Read the rules

The user who calls them out (P_1581) used an assertive affirmative in line 1 to explain what was normal behaviour when joining a group and, when this was shrugged off in line 2 by the offender, they moved to using a directive in line 3 to instruct P_1580 to 'Read the rules' so that they conformed to community etiquette. In Chiang's (2020a) analysis of six dark-web CSA forums, she noted that 'greetings' and 'sign-offs' are 'typical' features of IM chats which appeared in these paedophile community interactions. A coding book to examine chatlog openings and closings was applied to the dataset to determine the patterns of how interactions began and ended. As has been demonstrated thus far, conforming to the communities' conventions enables offenders to maintain access to groups, CSAM, and each other – the openings/closing analysis sought to ascertain what these conventions were.

Table 6.1 shows the *NVivo* coding results for the openings/closings analysis (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2 and Appendix 29 for coding book). Closings were not coded for in the group-chats because these files contained a snapshot of a time from the group and not its entire history, thus there was no distinct beginning or end like in the DMs. However, openings were coded for in the group-chats because there were messages from offenders joining the groups and initiating conversations. The coding counts between DMs and group-chats are not comparable for this reason but were still all analysed for openings to establish what customary openings were in the community. There were often several opening sequences in some of the longer files where time had elapsed between the offenders messaging, so a new conversation was initiated, and there were many openings in the *GigaTribe* file where hundreds of 1-2-1 interactions were initiated with the one source offender (P_0463). Consequently, there were many codes for openings (predominantly in DMs) and far less for closings. As discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.2, closings were divided in to intentional or unintentional closings (of which almost the same amount were coded in the chatlogs).

Table 6.1: Coding results for openings and closings.

Nodes	No. of Codes
Openings	794
1-2-1 DMs	607
Group-Chats	187
Closings	209
1-2-1 DMs:	209
Intentional Closings	108
Unintentional Closings	101

Closing sequences appeared in 91% of the 1-2-1 DM chatlogs. Intentional closings sometimes occurred when offender interactions had turned sour (e.g. '[P_1588] blocked a user'), but these mostly consisted of offenders ending conversations due to having to go offline. Simple sign-offs (typical of IM communication) included 'bye' and 'Enjoy ur Saturday', while others provided a justification for the conversation ending like 'off to a meeting' (prior work commitments) and 'night for now, nasty Pedo dreams bro' (going to sleep). Offenders also shared further contact information so that they could be reached on other communication platforms/social media. Often

intentional closing sequences contained offenders assuring each other that there would be further contact in future: e.g. 'See you later on in about 8.5 Hours'.

Unintentional closings in DMs are harder to describe due to their inherent absence of any closing sequences. The following two extracts (6.18 and 6.19) demonstrate the two main types of unintentional closings in the chatlogs: where a conversation ends abruptly without explanation due to one offender no longer responding and when system messages indicate one offender has either left the platform or blocked/deleted the other user.

6.18.

[3_PP003_P_1592_P_1616]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_1592	How many more do you have
2	P_1616	A few
3	P_1592	Possible to see them
4	P_1592	?
5	P_1616	Ya
6	P_1592	Cool thanks
7	P_1592	Hello?
8	P_1592	You said it was possible

In extract 6.18, P_1616 stopped replying to messages sent by P_1592 while they were discussing CSAM trading – notably, when it was supposedly their turn to send CSAM in back. In extract 6.19, P_001 tried to reengage with P_002 using multiple openings at the end of their chatlog but system messages in lines 4-5 and 8-9 reveal that the offender's phone had been offline/disconnected and so they could not receive any more messages (suggesting that they left *Kik* without explanation).

6.19.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_002]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	You are not changing taste I hope
2	P_002	Hell no!! Hehe feel free to help [smiley face emoji]
3	P_001	Hi you about?
4	SM	Oops, it looks like [P_002's first name]'s phone has been off/disconnected
5		for a while. We'll deliver your message when they connect again.
6	P_001	Shame you have not been about !!!
7	P_001	Hi mate have not heard from you in some time hope you ok

8 SM Oops, it looks like [P_002's first name]'s phone has been off/disconnected
9 for a while. We'll deliver your message when they connect again.

The jarring behaviour of a user ending the conversation abruptly without a closing sequence, particularly in offender interactions where a relationship was being formed, was likely the reason for the prevalence of offenders providing reassurances that they would be back online/re-joining the conversation in future in their closing sequences.

Openings are crucial to offenders seeking to gain access to the community, to CSAM, and to forming relationships with others. If an opening is successful in establishing a conversation or relationship between offenders, this could lead to trading CSAM; expanding their networks through links to group-chats or dark-web forums; gaining/sharing advice or skills in offending and security measures; and developing a support-network to rationalise their behaviours through pro-paedophilic attitudes. Most opening sequences included pleasantries and basic greetings to initiate contact: e.g. 'Hi mate , how you doing?'. This was also common in group-chats (as was demonstrated earlier in example 6.15): e.g. 'Sup fellas'. Opening sequences in DMs also included attempts by offenders to initiate CSAM trading, such as 'Hey send nudes of girls' and 'Hi pass 4 pass'. In one instance, an offender presumed the success of the opening by messaging 'greetings, i look forward to trading with you'. Compliments like this one were also common within opening sequences to endear the interactants to each other. This praise could be for physical qualities like 'Hi mate, good spike' (complimenting genitalia), or through expressing admiration for the others' activities elsewhere the community (for example when initiating a DM after being in a mutual group-chat): e.g. 'YOU certainly have good taste mate, love yer posting on the room'.

Including sexual interests or topics specific to paedophilia was also common in opening sequences, like the prevalent question 'what you into?', as it demonstrated membership of the online paedophile community. Establishing sexual interests early in the chatlogs could appear due to offenders wanting to interact with those who shared their interests so that they could trade their desired CSAM, using this much like a vetting criterion: e.g. 'Looking for no limit sick nepi pervs Sick

nepi pervs get in touch’. Indexing their paedophile identities in the opening sequences (e.g. ‘Morning bastard pedophile’) may also be a security measure, one which demonstrates consideration of the other’s risk assessment practices by proving membership of the community and providing mutually compromising information (much like users sharing personal identifying information early on). This aligns with a CoP feature that suggests conversations between members occur without much set-up or introductory sociability.

The following extract, 6.20, exemplifies a typical opening sequence between two offenders in DMs.

6.20.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_111]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Hi fella
2	P_111	Hi mate
3	P_111	34 m bi here. U?
4	P_111	Where u based?
5	P_001	[name of country] here [name of region] but still , 51 m almost bi if g< 5
6	P_111	Cool man

The exchange began in lines 1-2 with both offenders using greetings (‘Hi’) and the positive politeness strategy of insinuating familiarity through affectionate nicknames (‘fella’ and ‘mate’) despite not having prior contact with each other. Next in lines 3-5 one offender, unprompted, proffered personal information (their age, gender, and sexuality) and asked where the other offender was based geographically. The other offender (P_001) provided their location in a question-answering self-disclosure and reciprocated P_111’s self-disclosure by also giving their age, gender, and sexuality. The offenders discerned that they had aligned sexual interests and the chatlog successfully continued on from there resulting in a 706 message-long file over the course of 53 days.

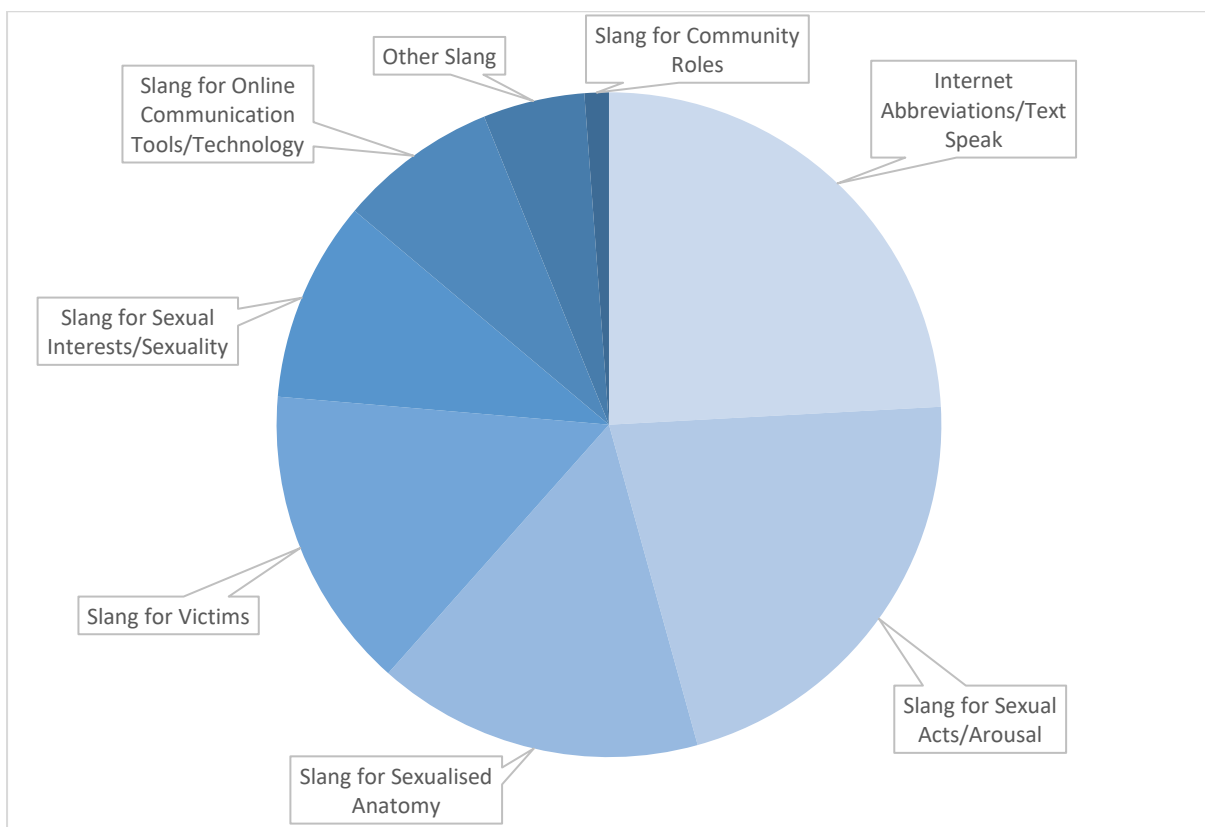
4.3 Being in the Know

Part of signalling membership through conforming to the community norms of behaviour – proving that one was “in-the-know” and performing a shared group-identity – included using community-

specific slang terminology as ‘slang is ascribed the two opposite purposes of keeping insiders together and outsiders out’ (Mattiello, 2008:33). Interviewees in van der Bruggen and Blokland’s (2021a:273) study revealed that members of dark-web CSA fora had ‘their own “slang” when discussing CSE material’, and community-specific slang also appeared in this clear-web dataset. Slang could be used by the offenders to signal their membership identity, to evade detection (by talking in code to weed-out outsiders or law enforcement), and to slip under the radar on social media platforms that might flag certain terms. The presence of slang in the community aligns with three features of a CoP (see Appendix 11 for full list): the development of a linguistic style (e.g. community slang), inside jokes and lore (which may involve or originate slang terms), and certain styles being associated with displaying membership.

Overall, there were 1,860 instances of slang usage in the dataset (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2 for a definition of *slang* and the identification criteria). Slang terms were divided up into the categories that can be seen in Figure 6.3, shown by prevalence (see Appendix 30 for coding book).

Figure 6.3: Proportions of slang types in the community.



The most common slang types were internet slang, slang for sexual acts/arousal, slang for sexualised anatomy, and slang for victims. The lesser-used types were slang relating to sexual interests, online communication tools/technology, slang for community roles, and other miscellaneous slang. Most slang types appeared in around half of the files (48%-59%), with the exceptions of community roles slang that appeared in 6% and the 'Other Slang' category which appeared in 35%. However, slang (of any type) appeared in 93% of the chatlogs. The ensuing section will detail the different slang types which appeared and demonstrate their usage within the community.

The least common type of slang used was slang referring to community roles like 'admin', 'adm', and 'newbie', appearing only 22 times, which aligns with the relatively low prevalence of discussing community roles across the dataset and the fact that offenders themselves usually did not formally define/name roles within the community. The second lowest occurring slang type was the miscellaneous slang which contained terms which did not fit into any other slang categories and did not appear enough to justify their own category. The 'Other slang' category contained 92 codes and included slang for criminal elements like 'the register' (sex-offenders register), 'Wud u snuff it?' (kill it), and 'U smoke? Sniff? Chems?' (do illegal drugs). This category also contained affectionate slang terms like 'bro', group-chat slang like 'Follow rules or get kicked' (removed or banned from group), and slang for security measures like 'Not sure how safe to chat clear on here either' (speak openly about paedophilia without using coded-language).

The next slang category was slang for online communication tools or technology (n=144). This category captured the offenders' uses of both common internet slang terms for technology and technology terms specific to the online paedophile community. The category included offenders using slang for usernames (e.g. 'your nick', 'addy', or 'addi') and calling social media platforms by abbreviated names (e.g. 'z rooms' or 'zooming' for *Zoom* and 'sk groups' for *Skype*). The offenders also used slang to refer to illegal online sites like *Tor* as 'T'/'T0r' and claimed to 'go on tour' when using the site, as well as referring to the dark-web as the 'Dnet' and 'Dweb'.

Technology-related slang included substitutions like 'pm'/'prvt' for private message as well as referring to removing inactive or problem users from groups as 'cleaning', 'spring cleaning', or 'cleaning house'.

The next four slang categories, which collectively took up 62% of the slang in the chatlogs, all related to sexual topics and abuse. The least prevalent of these was slang for sexual interests or sexualities (n=182). Slang for different sexualities was used like 'bi', but slurs also appeared in the chatlogs in users identifying their own sexuality or in name-calling of others (e.g. 'faggot'). Offenders used slang to describe their sexual interests in terms that it is likely only community members would understand, which proved their membership to each other. This included slang for different sexual preferences like 'vanilla' (non-extreme), 'beast'/'k9'/'zoo' (bestiality), 'pthc' (pre-teen hardcore CSAM), 'crush' (violence), and 'fam pleasure' (incest CSAM). Offenders also frequently referred to their own paedophilia through abbreviations or slang like 'pedo', 'pdophile', 'PD', 'perv', and 'likeminded'. In contrast, non-paedophiles were referred to as 'a no perv' in one instance. The different sub-types of paedophilic sexual interests were also included in this slang category: e.g. 'Nepi' (very young victims), 'Gayperv' (male victims), 'bby fucker' (babies), and 'BL' (boylove).

The next slang type was slang for victims (n=275) which included abbreviations like 'todd' and 'bbys'; metaphors like 'piece of meat', 'a tasty meal', and 'a bit sell by date for me' (too old); initialisms like 'nb' (newborn), 'v v v y' (very young), and 'b or g?' (boy or girl); metonymy like 'daiper ages'; and other substitutions like calling victims 'lil ones' or 'bald ones'. Slang terms for victims contained much variation, though some were more commonly adopted than others (like 'nb', 'v v v y', 'bald', and 'yng'), and generally focused on either their young ages or on sexualised parts of their anatomy. The names used to refer to child victims in the dataset will be explored in more detail in Chapter 7 Section 2.2.2.

The next two slang categories relating to sexual topics were slang for sexualised anatomy (n=295) and slang for sexual acts or arousal (n=401). Again, many of these slang terms are ones use by the wider internet like 'pussy', 'wanking', and 'snogg' – but there were others which appeared to be specific to CSA and paedophilia. Offenders used slang to discuss victim's sexualised anatomy (e.g. 'tight slut hole') and used it to describe their own sexualised anatomy, most commonly when referring to their genitalia as 'pdophile meat', 'a spike', 'perv pole', 'Pd rod', or a 'baby fucker'. Many of the slang terms in the sexual acts/arousal category related to arousal and masturbation like 'horned', 'dripping', 'Nepi workout', 'quick jerk fix', or 'solo'. These terms were used in the contexts of offenders describing their past experiences committing abuse, whilst engaging in sexual fantasy narratives for masturbation, and when responding to CSAM in the chatlogs.

Metaphors were prevalent in these sexual slang terms, particularly in describing sexual acts or abuse as 'spit roasted', 'impaling', 'wreck one', and 'stab me with your meat'. These examples all relate to semantic fields of violence, which correlates to many of the violent sexual interests expressed by offenders in this dataset. Benneworth (2018) observed offenders using colloquialisms or slang to describe sexual terms when recounting abuse they had committed to police, often minimising the harm/taboo through euphemisms. However, their research showed that suspects frequently adopted these terminology changes after the police initiated using the slang terms – terms which they discovered often originated from the police quoting victims. This harm-minimising slang used by victims (which the offenders appeared eager to adopt in a police-interview context) contrasts with the violent, graphic metaphors and slang terms used by offenders in the present dataset (when they communicate amongst themselves).

The type of slang which appeared the most in the chatlogs was internet slang abbreviations, or what is colloquially known as "text-speak" (n=449). A full glossary of translations for the internet slang abbreviations and all other slang which appear in examples throughout the

thesis is provided in Appendix 31. Some of the more common examples of internet slang in the chatlogs were the uses of 'asl' (age/sex/location), 'thx' (thanks), 'tbh' (to be honest), 'bf' (boyfriend), 'pos' (piece of shit) and 'ttyl' (talk to you later). General internet slang like these examples is non-specific to the paedophile community and more indicative of these conversations taking place in an online medium.

Tredici and Fernández (2018:1591) analysed slang in reddit communities and found that 'innovators (users who introduce a new term) are central members of a community, connected to many other users but with relatively low tie-strength', while 'strong-tie users (who belong to cliques or sub-groups within the community) effectively contribute to the dissemination of a new term'. They suggested that those introducing slang terms may be important members of the community who are connected with many users but not necessarily with strong links, which may mean administrators in the paedophile community. However, those who apparently disseminate the newly introduced slang terms are more likely to be normal community members who belong to more sub-groups and have stronger relationships with other users, which could apply to offenders enacting the Expert or Advisor roles in the paedophile community because of their influential status and/or experience in the community in-group.

Offenders taking on the Expert role used the most slang out of those enacting roles in the community. These offenders also used the most slang for sexualising anatomy, victims, sexual acts, and sexual interests – which demonstrates their thorough knowledge of the community due to their apparent veteran status as they knew the most community-specific terms related to paedophilia. Furthermore, in analysing broader online communities, Nguyen and Rose (2011:83) observed that 'long time participants' (like expert offenders) 'are characterized by informal language, containing many forum specific jargon, as well as showing emotional involvement with other forum members'. The offenders constructing themselves as advisers or advice seekers used the most slang relating to technology and online communication tools out of the offenders taking on

community roles. As can be seen in the following examples (6.21-24), this was due to the commonplace discussions of security measures and online criminal activity where offenders helped each other to better offend online and seek out this information in the community.

6.21. 'I miss you bro from the z rooms'

6.22. 'Very little and have it stuck on a mem. Stick'

6.23. 'I went on tour yesterday...'

6.24. 'A bit late for spring cleaning'

The administrators used the most slang terms for community roles, but this was predominantly with themselves announcing their administrator status ('admin') as well as referring to 'newbies' whilst carrying out their administrative roles (like announcing rules to newcomers). Tredici and Fernández (2018:1595) suggested that some slang terms 'can spread widely within the community', while others could 'be used by just a small sub-group' – for example, community roles slang appearing to mostly be used by those directly identifying themselves as those roles. In contrast, newcomers to the community who were constructing their newbie identities used the most general internet slang abbreviations and "text-speak" like 'pls', 'thx', 'tbh', 'pos' and 'atm' (though this was widespread amongst all users). This could be because newcomers to the paedophile community may be younger offenders who are not familiarised with the online community but are very familiar with using the internet in everyday life.

5. Conclusions

This chapter investigated the maintenance and regulation of the online paedophile community as well as how offenders gained and retained membership. Throughout the process of offenders participating in the community, norms of behaviour were followed to ensure trustworthiness, authenticity, and ongoing access. In addressing the second research question of the thesis, it was discovered that offenders primarily accessed the online community through forming relationships with each other and sharing knowledge of access routes like providing group names or vouching for others. Users who had gained membership of the community sometimes took on roles to regulate it,

exchange skills, request help, or improve their status. Despite some of these roles revealing imbalances of power in the community, overall, the system appeared democratic and lacked a formal, rigid hierarchy.

Rules and expectations of behaviour were observed in the chatlogs, which were met with mixed responses from group members – some of whom praised the regulation of the community to maintain its security and quality, while others criticised their behaviour being controlled and complained about rule enforcement. Nevertheless, falling in line with the etiquette of the community (such as following explicit rules, reciprocating CSAM trading, adhering to formulaic opening sequences, and using community-specific slang terminology) signalled to other offenders an awareness of the community's norms that appeared to reassure others and ensure ongoing membership. This aligns with the findings of Grant and MacLeod (2020:132), when applying their resource-constraint approach to identity, who argued that offenders were 'successfully performing their shared identity as members of the same community of practice' when they followed community norms and demonstrated community-specific knowledge.

The offenders in this dataset constructed a community around the purpose of criminal activity and a shared interest in paedophilia, however, they also established connections with one another. The congregation of likeminded offenders in these online spaces allows for these users to disseminate pro-offending ideologies and engage in the community as if it were a support network. Bowman-Grieve (2009:1005) assert that the ideologies promoted within communities 'can potentially exert increasing levels of ideological control on the individual, which may affect subsequent decision making and behavior, with the potential to facilitate commitment and potentially involvement, particularly through the activities suggested and encouraged within the community'. It is this concerning radicalisation trajectory that will be approached in the next chapter by looking at how offenders attempted to normalise the sexual abuse of children and constructed rationalisations for their behaviour.

Chapter 7: Social Identity and Ideology

“Self creates. Self destroys.

Self learns, discovers, becomes.

Self shapes. Self adapts.”

— Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Talents*

1. Introduction

Within online paedophile communities, offenders constantly construct and adapt their personal identities as well as their shared group-identity using the resources available to them. The previous chapter investigated how identities were negotiated and performed in relation to building a community (through adopting community roles, adhering to community regulation, and building trust, etc.). This chapter looks at predominantly the sexual identities constructed by offenders (for themselves and others) as they indexed their paedophile identities, and the beliefs they expressed to one another about the in and out-groups to cement or modify these identities.

O’Halloran and Quayle (2010:72) in their prior research on the clear-web paedophile support forum ‘boy love’ concluded the following:

‘Paedophiles are one of the most isolated groups in most societies, and as confronting social stigma is one of the most significant challenges facing members of deviant groups, such as those who have a sexual interest in children, it is necessary for them to carefully manage the impression they impart on society’.

However, the present dataset comes from private, unmonitored interactions between offenders – taking place on the clear-web, but not from forums where non-paedophiles could be part of the audience observing the postings. This makes the research a unique look behind the curtain at not the offenders curated, managed identities which they presented to society (as in O’Halloran and Quayle, 2010), but instead at their potentially more authentic interactions with one another where they shared their beliefs and sexual interests amongst likeminded supporters away from prying eyes.

Through their sexual identity construction these offenders engaged in attempts to normalise paedophilia, victim-blame, and rationalise their offending – contributing towards perpetuating an underlying pro-paedophilia ideology. This ideology also influenced the offenders’ attitudes towards themselves, each other, victims, and out-group non-paedophiles, as will be explored in this chapter.

Thus, the second and third research questions of this thesis will continue to be addressed in this chapter through the discourse analysis approaches which were applied to the dataset (see Chapter 3 Section 3.2) and an examination of participation/maintenance. Offenders participated in the community through constructing sexual identities and engaging in sexual fantasies with one another, as well as maintaining the community through propagating their ideology and expressing support or critiques of the community. Moreover, this chapter primarily addresses the fourth research question: ‘how do offenders construct their paedophile identities and proliferate their ideologies?’. The chapter begins in Section 2 by looking at offender sexual identities (their sexual interests, sexualising language, and sexual fantasy narratives) before looking at how offenders attributed sexual interests to their victims and sexualised/objectified them. Section 3 establishes what attitudes offenders expressed towards the in-group paedophile community and out-group non-paedophiles: beginning with challenging, critical attitudes and ending with supportive attitudes. The presence of a pro-paedophilia ideology within the community is also discussed. Conclusions of this chapter are reviewed in Section 4.

2. Sexual Identity Construction

“for words have the power to change us”

— *Cassandra Clare, Clockwork Angel*

Sexual Identity Construction was the second-most common main theme found during the thematic analysis, appearing in 96% of the chatlogs (with over 2,700 codes). Offenders constructed their own and/or each other’s identities far more than they did victims’ and there were more instances of

offenders constructing their sexual interests than there were of them sexualising or objectifying themselves/each other – this was the reverse for victims, who were more likely to be sexualised/objectified. The full breakdown of coding for these sub-themes appeared in Chapter 4, Section 2.3. Guided by the themes present, this section looks at offender sexual identity construction (in Section 2.1) and subsequently the sexual identity construction of victims by offenders (in 2.2).

2.1. The Sexual Identities of Offenders

Offender sexual identities served several key functions in online interactions between community members, from cementing group membership and building trust to bragging about sexual exploits/abuse and discussing CSAM. McManus et al. (2016:176) found in their study that the ‘largest thematic category that occurred within the investigated chat logs were sexually motivated chat towards the topic of children’. They stressed that public communications on this topic (giving Holt et al. (2010) as an example) were ‘constrained and discrete’, but within private communications ‘child sex was explicitly conversed through the themes of detailing sexual acts, questioning others of their sexual behaviours with children, and expressing fantasy and plans for future child sexual behaviour’ (2016:176). Section 2.1.1 will examine the offenders’ self-reported sexual interests and how they constructed themselves as members of the paedophile community through these interests. The next section (2.1.2) will look at how they sexualised themselves and one another, before Section 2.1.3 approaches the topic of sexual fantasies within the chatlogs.

2.1.1. Offender Sexual Interests

Chiang (2020a) observed that to demonstrate ‘alignment or affiliation’ with the online paedophile community, offenders can be seen ‘stating a sexual interest in children and sharing experiences of abusing’. Due to the communities’ unifying interest (paedophilia), the offenders’ identity construction as paedophiles and community members is intrinsically linked with claiming sexual preferences relating to children. These expressions of sexual likes and dislikes also aided offenders in

gaining access to their desired types of CSAM, group-chats, and likeminded users. A coding book was inductively created to capture the offenders’ self-disclosed sexual interests (divided into likes and dislikes). This found 92 instances of sexual dislikes being mentioned, and a far larger count of 1,988 sexual likes. Expressions of sexual interests took many forms, such as more direct claims like stating what they did/did not like or more implied preferences that could be gleaned from abuse stories and sexual fantasies that they constructed.

Table 7.1 contains the offenders’ sexual dislikes (see Appendix 32 for category definitions). The least mentioned dislikes were subsumed into an ‘Other’ category which included single instances of bestiality, self-degradation, masochism, bodily fluids, filth, sex acts with narcotics, and two instances of offenders asserting that they did not like offender-to-offender sexual intercourse.

Table 7.1: Coding counts and examples of offender sexual dislikes.

Offender Sexual Interests	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Sexual Dislikes:		92
Victim Age Preferences	7.1. shame too overgrown for me	27
Non-Abuse	7.2. my cock is always soft if not extreme nepi porn watching	20
Non-Violence	7.3. Shame doesn’t scream or bleed LOL	16
Rape/Forced/Violence/Abuse	7.4. not into abuse vids	9
Children’s Bodies	7.5. da face doesn’t do for me	8
Victim Gender Preferences	7.6. Yes I like only girls	6
Other	7.7. I’m not really into owls. ?	6

Other infrequent dislikes were negative assertions about victim gender (stating a preference by saying which gender they were not attracted to, n=6); aspects of children’s bodies they disliked (n=8); and expressing opposition to non-consensual/violent/abusive sex acts (despite the statutory lack of consent by the victims being underage, n=9). The last of these implies these offenders engaged in the cognitive distortion of believing children could consent to sexual acts.

In contrast, more common sexual dislikes included offenders claiming that they did not like non-abusive (n=20) or non-violent CSAM/sexual acts (n=16) – i.e., that they were exclusively interested in abuse/violence. Examples 7.2-3 show these dislikes being communicated through two

different means: by suggesting that they could not get sexual gratification unless it was from abusive/violent CSAM/sexual acts (7.2), and through making disparaging comments on CSAM being shared with them about what should/should not be depicted (7.3). The most common dislike concerned the ages of victims (n=27), with offenders making negative comments about victims in real life or depicted in CSAM being too old or too young for their preferences. Example 7.1 was from an interaction where the offender expressed dislike of another offenders' victim by calling them 'too overgrown' (too old), while elsewhere another offender complained they wanted CSAM of older victims: 'no little kiddies'.

Although sexual dislikes were voiced by offenders, they were far more likely to construct their sexual interests in a positive sense by detailing their sexual likes. Table 7.2 shows the different sexual likes of offenders (see Appendix 32 for the coding book). Many of these sexual interests were found in existing research into offender-to-offender communication (as will be noted throughout), but some (including the most common sexual interest) have not necessarily been commented on in prior studies despite their prevalence here. This does not mean that the sexual interests did not exist in these other datasets, but rather that it is likely they were not noted to be significant or categorised as their own type of interest. However, they were seen as notable enough in this study (due to the number of examples from individuals or widespread usage across chatlogs) to be captured here.

Table 7.2: Coding counts and examples of offender sexual likes.

Offender Sexual Interests	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Sexual Likes:		1,988
Paedophilia (Named)	7.8. horny to see you calling me " pedophile"	333
Fetishising Children's Bodies	7.9. As long as no pubes, I'm good	299
Victim Age Preferences	7.10. i like young... 11 - 17	240
Bodily Fluids/Filth	7.11. You can taste and smell all the piss fumes and dry Pedo cum, gonna make you puke bro	170
Violence/Sadism	7.12. Cutting, torturing, sikk raping, killing, raping again and eating	151

Masturbation	7.13. there just isnt enough good younger girls masturbsting	113
Incest	7.14. I want to see you play with daughter	101
Victim Gender Preferences	7.15. B but I like g if bald	97
Group or Shared Abuse	7.16. Wanna rape one with you in front of the fam and have daddy stroking and asking us to be harder	89
Self-Degradation/Masochism	7.17. so yes i will still do the requests of damaging my cock etc	80
Rape/Forced (Named)	7.18. Love diaper ages being raped	64
Sexuality (Named)	7.19. Yep I'm bi	39
Exhibitionism/Public Indecency	7.20. Wow shot my load, was intense, bro. Id let it on the floor to others can see it	37
Degrading Victims	7.21. Recent dead, his lil eyes still open , his face in pain and his legs brutally broken and spread. His lil guts showing by asshole and we both raping that whore piece of meat	36
Perceived Consent	7.22. I like when they're both into it	29
Necrophilia/Snuff	7.23. I want a corpse to use	27
Bestiality	7.24. Would love to see a dog raping one	25
Dom-Sub/Control	7.25. Being a sub is a fantasy of mine	23
Ethnicity Preferences	7.26. I much rather pure white skin	22
Fetishising Children's Innocence	7.27. Luv the innocent face drenched	12
Cannibalism	7.28. Seeing the lil cock hanging from ur teeth and say to u : chew and swallow it u bastard pdophile	10

The least salient sexual like which appeared in the dataset, Cannibalism, was somewhat still shocking to see appearing ten times due to the additional criminality and immorality associated with this act on top of the CSA. Many other sexual likes disclosed by the offenders carried additional criminality alongside the CSA crimes: e.g. bestiality, necrophilia, exhibitionism/public indecency, and incest. After cannibalism, the next sexual likes were of offenders fetishising children's innocence (n=12); asserting an ethnicity preference in victims (n=22); an interest in control over their sexual partners or lack of control (n=23); bestiality (n=25); necrophilia/snuff (killing the victim during sexual intercourse, n=27); and preferring sex where the victim was perceived to be consenting (n=29). The terminology of this last category was deliberate (*perceived* consent) because child victims cannot consent to sexual interactions, but some offenders expressed an interest in CSAM or abuse where

the victim was either portrayed as consenting or (incorrectly) believed to be genuinely consenting by the offender (as in example 7.22). This attribution of sexual agency to victims is explored further in Sections 2.2.1 and 3.2 of this chapter. Many of these more extreme, less common sexual likes originated from just a few individual users who had those sexual interests and discussed them frequently. However, none of the likes came from only a single user and so all had at least some prevalence within the community.

The next most common sexual likes were of degrading victims (n=36); exhibitionism/public indecency (n=37); referencing their sexuality (e.g. bi/straight/gay, n=39); rape/forced (referred to explicitly by name, n=64); masochism (n=80); and group/shared abuse (n=89). Exhibitionism/public indecency was one of the types of crimes addressed in Chapter 5 Section 3.1, where offenders detailed getting sexual gratification from masturbation or sex acts in public places where they could be observed by others (such as in a shared bathroom like example 7.20). Group or shared abuse was also found in Woodhams et al. (2021:7), who observed offenders discussing 'the sharing of their biological children for sexual abuse by others'. This was often fantasised about by offenders (whether involving their own children or other real/fantasy victims), as in example 7.16 where an offender fantasised about committing abuse in front of the victim's family and having those family members encourage the abuse. This fed into the fantasy or cognitive distortion that paedophilia was highly prevalent and many parents were secretly paedophiles, which was voiced in another offender's response to this fantasy: 'lots of dads are peds too, like to see their sons raped'.

The next most common sexual interests centred around offender preferences on victim gender (n=97) and incest (n=101), usually relating to offenders sexually abusing their own children/relatives or expressing desire to do so. Woodhams et al. (2021) and Owens et al. (2023) found that incest was one of the highest reported sexual interests by suspects in their studies. As shown in Chapter 5 Section 3.1, this was the second highest offline crime sub-type after contact

abuse in the dataset and its pervasiveness could be linked with the opportunistic nature of offenders abusing their own children/young relatives rather than strangers – they have easier access to their own children. This coding category also captured offenders who claimed to have been abused by family members when they themselves were children if they claimed to have had sexual gratification from this.

Masturbation was referred to as a source of sexual gratification in 113 instances, this included offenders citing sexual interests in viewing others masturbating (including child victims as in example 7.13) and doing so themselves. Sexual gratification was the most cited motivation for committing crimes in the dataset, and this went beyond contact abuse to also include offenders gaining this gratification from viewing CSAM or breaching the OPA 1959/CA 2003 during fantasy narrative construction for masturbatory purposes. Violence and sadism for the purpose of sexual gratification was the fifth highest sexual like reported by offenders (n=151). Sadism was also found by Woodhams et al. (2021) and Owens et al. (2023) to be amongst the highest reported sexual interests by offenders in their samples. Offenders expressed violent/sadistic sexual desires during sexual fantasies and in answer to questions about their sexual preferences, as well as claiming to be undertaking violent abuse of victims in the real world or viewing livestreamed/recorded violent abuse.

Akin to the self-degradation/masochism category, the next common sexual preference disclosed by offenders was a focus on filth and bodily fluids either to degrade themselves or during sexual acts (n=170). To construct this sexual interest, offenders foregrounded bodily fluids during their sexual fantasies or accounts of contact abuse: mentioning for example semen, urine, vomit, blood, and faeces. Woodhams et al. (2021:6) also encountered offenders citing this type of sexual preference, making reference to 'breast-feeding' and 'feces' as 'deviant sexual interests' in their dataset, while Owens et al. (2023) encountered frequent references to ejaculation. Example 7.11 in Table 7.2, which states 'You can taste and smell all the piss fumes and dry Pedo cum, gonna make

you puke bro', illustrates the sexual interest some of the offenders had in filthiness, a lack of hygiene, degeneracy, and physical unpleasantness. Coding of this type of sexual like captured offenders claiming to negate hygiene in pursuit of sexual gratification (e.g. 'Haven't showered in two days. My hairy trench is pretty fucking ripe') and revelling in describing in detail to one another how filthy or covered in various bodily fluids they were for the purposes of masturbation (e.g. 'Fuuuuck yessss. Smear your stink all over me'). These offenders were readily portraying themselves as unhygienic, unpleasant, and physically unattractive through these descriptions. It is possible that this (along with other deviant sexual interests condemned by wider society like incest, necrophilia, and cannibalism) was used to construct the offenders' sexual identities as highly contrasting to non-paedophiles and others they saw as 'vanilla'. There could be intersection between these sexual likes due to the individuals having generally deviant, extreme sexual interests which would encompass many taboos (from rape and murder to CSA and a sexual preference for bodily fluids/filth).

The second and third most common sexual likes provided by offenders directly concerned paedophilia: fetishising children's bodies (n=299) and having victim age preferences (n=240). As with the prior sexual likes related to victim preferences (such as gender, sexual agency/perceived consent, and ethnicity preferences), this coding centred around offenders constructing their desired victim typologies. Age preferences were more commonly occurring than gender preferences, which may be due to some offenders not having a specific gender preference if the victims were underage. This was noted in Woodhams et al. (2021:8), who observed that 'those who disclose no preference in terms of gender do express a sexual interest in younger, pre-pubescent children', but they emphasised that several of their offender sample did not fit this pattern. In asserting their age preferences for victims, the offenders often used numerical descriptors like in example 7.10 ('11 - 17'). However, they also often used coded terminology for different ages or stages of maturity like 'single digits' or 'nepi', as well as vaguer descriptors like 'young' to denote underage/children in contexts where a paedophilic interest was not necessarily guaranteed to be shared between interactants (i.e., when initiating conversations or during

conversations on platforms not solely populated by paedophile community members, like *GigaTribe*).

Offenders also emphasised the young ages of victims and their physical immaturity when they fetishised children's bodies. Offenders fixated sexually on the contrast between adult physical features and those possessed by children: 'As long as no pubes, I'm good'. The focus here was on a lack of pubic hair (a sign of prepubescent bodies). Much like with fetishising children's innocence, when offenders were describing what they found sexually attractive about victims they drew attention to their small size ('lil tight arse'), absence of physical development ('Horny for young bald pussy'), and lack of sexual experience/agency ('Omg loving that boy crying while getting fingered'). Offenders contrasted the sexual innocence and small size/lack of maturity of children with highly sexualised fantasy or real abuse descriptions to construct their paedophile identities in the community. This can be seen in the following examples (7.29-32).

7.29. Luv the combo on smooth n hairy , tiny and Boned perv

7.30. My thick long dick was made for tiny Bois

7.31. I luv gdad and lil boys , bigger the age gap the better

7.32. Nice got my 15mo choking on my big cock

It is the juxtaposition of the 'tiny' or 'lil' victims' bodies with the adult offenders which they established as their sexual interest. Example 7.32 illustrates something typical in offender descriptions of their sexual desires, explicitly mentioning victim ages to either brag about how young their victim was or to fantasise about sexual contact with children within their preferred age range.

In their fetishisation of children, the offenders also included lexis from the semantic fields of child-rearing, birth, and children's activities. The following examples (7.33-36) demonstrate offenders mentioning umbilical cords, prams, school uniforms, and nappies/diapers for the purposes of heightening their sexual gratification by highlighting the young ages of their desired victims.

7.33. better still on the cord , use some as a cock ring

7.34. Wang to snatch one even from a pram if you let me

7.35. If he wears school uniform and puts a Gimp Mask on I prob would lol

7.36. Nappy off and straight in

In example 7.33 the umbilical cord was fantasised about being used during the abuse as a replacement sex-toy and in 7.35 a school uniform was proposed to make an older child look younger to meet their age preferences.

The most common sexual interest was gaining sexual gratification from referring to paedophilia by name (n=333). This coding captured users calling each other paedophiles; using abbreviations or synonyms of paedophilia in the premodification of nouns and adjectives; and explicitly referencing how they were sexually aroused by hearing/seeing the word. Some offenders used 'pedo', 'ped', or 'perv' in front of a wide range of nouns and adjectives: e.g. 'ped arse', 'pdo mind', 'paedophile bby butchers', 'Pedo cocks', and 'Sweet Pedo dreams'. The frequency of these epithets, where they were often superfluous (such as messages like 'Id eat yours too bro, eat ur pedo hole and dick knowing it's horned for pedo watching and thinking. Want ur pdophile tongue deep inside my mouth'), demonstrated that offenders were using these for beyond just clarity of description. They repeated these terms purportedly for sexual gratification. In several instances, offenders confirmed this (see example 7.8 in Table 7.2), suggesting that even just seeing themselves being called a *paedophile* made them aroused.

The following examples (7.37-39) illustrate some of the different ways this sexual like was indexed by offenders explicitly within the chatlogs.

7.37. Bro, every time u tell or write The Word, my cock spunk a big drop of ped precum

7.38. I love to take you to the tattooist while I get inked " I am a Pedo "

7.39. Let's show up to the priest , flash our Pedo dicks and chant we are Pedophile !!! Bet he is gonna join in

The offender quoted in example 7.37 directly links being called/seeing the word *paedophile* with ejaculation, while another in example 7.38 suggested getting the identifier tattooed on them – literally branding themselves with this identity on their body. Interestingly they did not suggest

getting the word tattooed on them, but the identity claim ‘I am a Pedo’. Similarly, in example 7.39, an offender fantasised about shouting ‘we are Pedophile[s]’ after exposing themselves to a priest (who they said would join them – a further example of the aforementioned cognitive distortion that many people are secretly on their side). These claims to a paedophile identity are examples of users overtly asserting their membership of the online paedophile community. The behaviour of these offenders suggests that it was not just using the word *paedophile* that provided them with sexual gratification, but also their construction and performance of a paedophile identity in front of likeminded others.

One common phrase that was observed in the present study was the interrogative ‘what u into?’ (and nine total variations upon this) for inquiring about sexual preferences between offenders – a phrase that had also been observed prior in offender interactions by Luchjenbroers and Aldridge-Waddon (2011). Due to this phrase appearing repeatedly (n=35 instances) and generally at the beginning of interactions, it was investigated further. It occurred in 25% of the chatlogs, which was likely because simply asking if an offender was ‘into’ something or claiming to be ‘into’ something was not coded for. Only specific variations on the interrogative were captured and these can be seen in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Coding counts for ‘what you into?’ variants in the chatlogs.

‘what you into?’ Variations	No. of Codes
you into [...]	5
u into [...]	5
what are you into	7
what you into	7
what u into	6
wat u into	1
what else are you into	2
what else you into	1
what r u into	1
Total:	35

The most used variant was ‘you into [...]’ (n=21), such as ‘Are you into beast too?’, which shows a specific sexual interest being queried. The other more general queries like ‘what u into’ were more

likely to be open-ended questions which appeared early on in chatlogs to establish each participants' sexual interests.

Extract 7.40 below depicts the beginning interaction of a chatlog between P_001 and P_089.

7.40

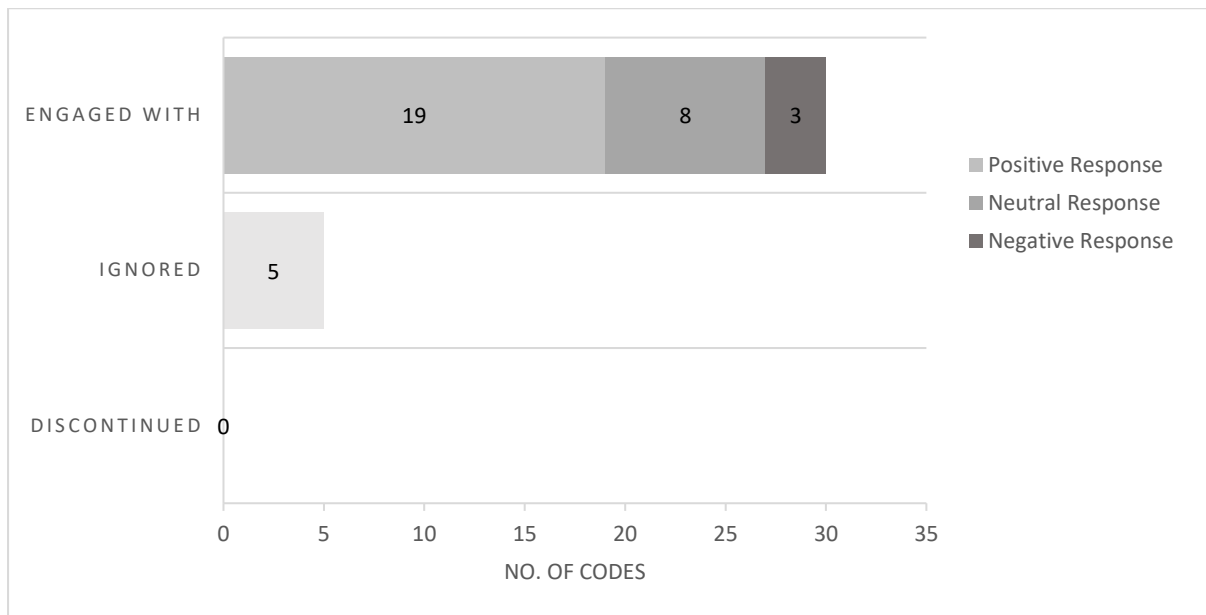
[3_PP001_P_001_P_089]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Hi mate, asl?
2	P_089	u into rape
3	P_001	That get me boned
5	P_089	I need it

The chatlog follows the conventions of typical opening exchanges in this community (as outlined in Chapter 6 Section 4.2): it started with a greeting containing positive politeness that used an in-group identity marker ('Hi mate'), followed by a request for EPI self-disclosure ('asl?'), then the topic of sexual interests was initiated ('u into rape'). Here the EPI request was ignored in favour of immediately discussing sexual interests due to this being a conditional for the interaction continuing. The offenders were seeking out likeminded individuals, so the immediate confirmatory response by P_001 that they too were 'into rape' enabled the conversation to continue.

The way offenders responded to the question 'what you into?' (and its variants) was investigated using the 'reception' coding book. As can be seen in Figure 7.1 (overleaf), the responses to this interrogative were coded to whether they engaged with, ignored, or discontinued the topic (see Appendix 33 for table of results). The question was predominantly engaged with by others, and 77% (n=27) of all responses were offenders engaging with it in a positive or neutral way. It was sometimes ignored in favour of other topics, but most reactions were to provide a positive direct response. The question sometimes elicited a negative response, which only occurred when an offender was asked if they were into a specific sexual interest (not a broader question about their preferences). For example, when asked 'You into [name of ethnicity]', one offender replied 'Sorry

Figure 7.1: The reception of 'What u into?' in the community.



to let you down on that , I like white skin only', while another who was asked 'are you into young boys?' responded 'if they are old enough to masturbate...not lil kiddies'. These offenders still engaged with the question and asserted their sexual preferences but did so by contrasting their sexual likes with those suggested by the questioner.

Extract 7.41 illustrates the more typical response offenders had to 'what you into?', that of a positive engagement. In this exchange, the two users interacting constructed their sexual identities through descriptions of their preferences, claims to possessing certain traits, and interests they had in common as paedophile community members.

7.41.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_128]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_128	what you into
2	P_001	V v y and both get me going
3	P_128	same love infant to toddler cunt and cock
5	P_001	Anything immoral works for me but have a good list
6	P_128	haha yeah me too I'm a sick pervert but proud of it
7	P_001	You have good taste I have to say
8	P_128	ty

P_128 asked what P_001 was 'into' in line 1 and they responded in line 2 with their age and gender preferences for victims, which P_128 claimed to agree with in line 3 ('same'). The offenders gave themselves identity labels like 'immoral' (line 5) and 'a sick pervert' (line 6), indexing their paedophile identities. At the end of the exchange, P_001 complimented P_128 (line 7), further showing approval of their sexual interests and P_128 replied with a thanking speech act (line 8). These positive politeness strategies highlight the positive tone of the interaction (e.g. the agreement of likeminded individuals: 'same', 'me too', 'good taste').

In asserting their sexual interests, offenders in the community took stances on different sexual acts, types of victims, taboo/deviant sexual interests, criminal activities, and paedophilia itself. The connection between stance and identity construction was explored in Chapter 2 Section 4.3.2, which discussed how individuals can construct their beliefs, values, and preferences through taking stances on various topics or can assign stances elsewhere through other-stance attribution. Moreover, Bucholtz and Hall (2005:595) posit that 'stances can build up into larger identity categories'. The stance framework was operationalised (as described in Chapter 3 Section 3.2) into an *NVivo* coding book to capture the offenders stancetaking choices in several aspects of this chapter (from sexual interests to attitudes). Stance analysis is interwoven throughout this chapter where it was applicable in examining the offenders' sexual identity construction and, more so, their expressions of attitudes and beliefs. Stancetaking has been present in most of the sexual interests' examples shown thus far, as offenders took up positions to evaluate (positively or negatively) various sexual interests they claimed to possess. The full coding counts for stance in offender sexual interests can be found in Appendix 34.

A closer stance analysis of offenders constructing their sexual interests (and thus their sexual identities in the community) revealed frequent stance alignment between users who would agree with or encourage others' sexual interests. This often took place following the 'what you into?' question which initiated some sexual interest exchanges. Extract 7.42 depicts two users messaging in

DMs about their personal victim preferences in terms of age, physical appearance, and physical maturity.

7.42.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_372]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Luv them bald as long as yung
2	P_372	Young n bald r the best
3	P_372	Younger the better
5	P_001	0+ <5 here
6	P_372	Nice hi five that shit

This exchange contained subject elision of all first-person singular pronouns which would be the stance subjects. These were the two offenders (P_001 and P_372), who left out the 'I' from their statements. The stance objects here were child-victims, referred to in line 1 as 'them', line 2 as 'Young n bald', and line 5 as '0+ <5'. The initial introduction of the stance objects as the generic personal pronoun 'them' in P_001's first stancetaking message (line 1) suggests that the object was assumed to be known to both parties – without explicitly saying *children* or *victims* the offenders were aware of who they were talking about and evaluating. The substitution of generic 'them' for a specific referent may be done to retain ambiguity in the messages for security reasons (to enable plausible deniability if the messages ever came to light with law enforcement) or it could be employed entirely as a dehumanising tactic for victims. The uses of numerical ages, slang terms, and vague pronouns for victims to dehumanise them is explored later in this chapter (Section 2.2.2).

In extract 7.42, the offenders positively evaluated traits of the stance objects while conveying their sexual preferences, indicating that they preferred younger 'bald' (lacking pubic hair) victims. In lines 2-3, P_372 used superlative ('the best') and comparative ('the better') adjectives to positively evaluate younger victims in comparison to the omitted alternative (older). Offenders used superlatives and comparatives often in the construction of their sexual interests as they sometimes did so through discrediting or distancing themselves from the interests of others. However, in this

extract stance alignment appeared throughout via their matching viewpoints. It was most explicit at the end of this exchange (line 6), where P_372 suggested they 'hi five that shit' to mark agreement.

Stance alignment could also be assigned to others through other-stance attribution. This commonly appeared when offenders assigned collective, shared stances to themselves and each other or the community as a whole. Statements like 'we are of a rare breed', which employed collective pronouns to assign this stance to the speaker and hearer, evaluated the offenders' sexual interests as superior to others/unique and assumed the alignment of the hearer having the stance attributed to them. Similarly, other-stance attribution without collective pronouns still assigned a perspective to the other and assumed their position. An offender saying, 'fella you have good taste', for example, involved the speaker taking the stance that the other's taste was 'good' (a positive evaluation) as well as assigning a paedophilic sexual interest to the hearer by assuming they had alike tastes. Offenders in the dataset regularly gave compliments such as this and were also found to sexualise each other within their interactions – which is discussed in the next section.

2.1.2. Offender Sexualisation

Offenders were found to sexualise each other within the community to construct their identities as sexual beings with attractions to other paedophiles; to compliment and flatter other offenders (for the purposes of relationship building); and to engage in sexual fantasy exchanges for sexual gratification. In a prior study, McManus et al. (2016) identified instances of offenders sexualising themselves in offender-to-offender chatlogs, noting that this was usually done during offenders describing themselves masturbating. This self-sexualisation was also evident in the present dataset, appearing in 42% of files (n=158), and offenders sexualised each other within the community in 39% of files (n=230).

The offenders' self-sexualisation included sexualising their physical bodies (e.g. 'Nepi get me boned and dripping'), foregrounding their sexual arousal/attraction (e.g. 'Damn bro...u as hard as I am? Lol!'), and attributing sexual agency to themselves (e.g. 'Arse is tight, but wanting to be

fucked’). The different types of sexualisation in the chatlogs were captured in an inductive NVivo coding book, the results of which can be seen in Table 7.4 (see Appendix 35 for the coding book). This included a miscellaneous category of offender sexualisation which did not fit into any other label and varied too much to be sub-divided. Due to the stancetaking interwoven in offenders sexualising themselves/each other, stance was also coded here (the full coding results can be found in Appendix 34).

Table 7.4: Data examples and coding counts for the different types of offender sexualisation.

Sexualisation Types	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Sexualised Anatomy	7.43. Bucket list: a blast of horse cum in my face and mouth	395
Offender-only Sex Acts	7.44. Want to dry your cock of cum	100
Sexual Flattery	7.45. You’re hot and sexy	95
Offender Sexualisation Misc.	7.46. Sexting men still	47
Dehumanisation:		34
Objectification	7.47. Great to spike one on yer hard pole bro	27
Reductive Generalisations	7.48. mrs	4
Zoomorphism	7.49. kissing and moaning LOUD like wild animals on heath	3
Sexualised Violence	7.50. Pound my mouth Really roughly	11
Perceived Promiscuity	7.51. Treat me like a proper slut	2

The least salient sexualisation types were offenders implying they or others were promiscuous (n=2) and sexualising violent acts on themselves or other offenders (n=11). The reason for the former category being termed *perceived promiscuity* is because this sexualisation framework was applied equally to both offender and victim sexualisation coding, thus this category captured instances of offenders attributing alleged promiscuity to victims (which will be discussed in Section 2.2.2). The next sexualisation type was dehumanisation (n=34), which manifested through the offenders’ use of objectification (n=27), reductive generalisations (n=4), and zoomorphism (n=3). There were a few instances of zoomorphism like example 7.49, where an offender compared himself and another offender to ‘wild animals’ in heat when doing sexual abuse, implying they were overcome by an animalistic, sexual ferocity. This may have been used to justify their criminal behaviours, suggesting it was a biological impulse or something uncontrollable, as well as these

particular offenders having expressed a sexual interest in bestiality elsewhere. Objectification, the most common dehumanisation strategy, predominantly consisted of offenders comparing their own genitalia (or that of other offenders') to similarly shaped objects (e.g. 'my morning wood'). Offenders also engaged in stancetaking during this objectification, generally when giving praise to other offenders by sexualising their genitalia: e.g. 'Guys you all have beautiful spikes' and 'Great looking Pd rod mate'. Here genitalia (the stance objects), referred to as 'spikes' and a 'rod', was evaluated by the speakers positively through compliments.

Sexual flattery, like these compliments, was its own category in the coding book and the third most common sexualisation strategy (n=95). It generally involved offenders praising the physical appearances of each other, as in example 7.45. Stancetaking also came into play here when offenders evaluated the attractiveness of each other (e.g. 'You're the hottest one for sure') and positioned themselves as having certain perspectives (e.g. 'These are sexy thoughts!'). A category which was exclusive to offenders and had no victim coding was the one created to capture 'Offender-Only Sex Acts' – when sexual acts were being described which did not involve child-victims or CSA, such as masturbation or sexual contact between offenders. This was the second most salient offender sexualisation strategy (n=100). McManus et al. (2016:173) in their research found instances of offenders expressing sexual interests in 'like minded' users, which was also the slang term used to refer to an interest in offender-to-offender sex acts in this study. Users would list 'likeminded' alongside their sexual preferences in child-victims to denote how they were also interested in engaging in offender-to-offender sexual fantasy narratives, as well as possible real-world rendezvous.

The most common sexualisation strategy, however, was offenders sexualising their own or each other's physical bodies (anatomy). This was coded for more times than all other strategies combined (n=395) and included offenders using sexualised slang for their genitalia, describing their states of arousal, and describing the use of their/others' bodies in sex acts. Much of the coding in

this category overlapped with prior categories (like sexual flattery, offender-only sex acts, and objectification) due to its prevalence in compliments and sexual fantasy interactions. The sexualisation of an offender's own body was a direct action to construct their sexual identity as it portrayed them from a sexualised viewpoint to others. Example 7.43, for instance, shows an offender constructing their aspirations (their 'Bucket list') as receiving 'a blast of horse cum in my face and mouth'. They aligned themselves with the communities' shared interest in sexualised conversations and fantasy, while signalling deviant sexual interests (bestiality) to index their societally out-group (and online paedophile community in-group) status.

The following example illustrates an offender sexualising another's body whilst attributing a sexual fantasy/interest to them: 'U bby raper, I know u want shove ur bastard ped dick inside one and feel it covered in blood. I know so well what u want'. The speaker here referred to the other's 'bastard ped dick' in the context of describing the fantasy rape of a child-victim (referred to as 'one') and positioned them as wanting to have 'it' (the stance object) 'covered in blood' during the abuse. This message contained both stance-taking and other-stance attribution as the offender asserted that they 'know' what the other wanted, even evaluating their knowledge as knowing 'so well', whilst assigning the sexual fantasy to the other in this interaction.

2.1.3. Sexual Fantasy Narratives

The offenders' engagement in sexual fantasies with one another about imagined, constructed abuse stories and/or sexual contact between offenders has cropped up throughout this thesis. This phenomenon was observed early in the preliminary data redaction and framework-piloting stages as it became apparent there was a difference between the offenders sharing (purportedly) genuine past abuse experiences they had committing sexual crimes against child-victims, and sexual fantasy storytelling about abuse they had not committed. Prior studies into CSA offender-to-offender communication mention sexual fantasy storytelling (not just fantasy-driven offender typologies) in varying forms (see Martin, 2000; Quayle and Taylor, 2002; Howitt, 2004; McManus et al., 2016;

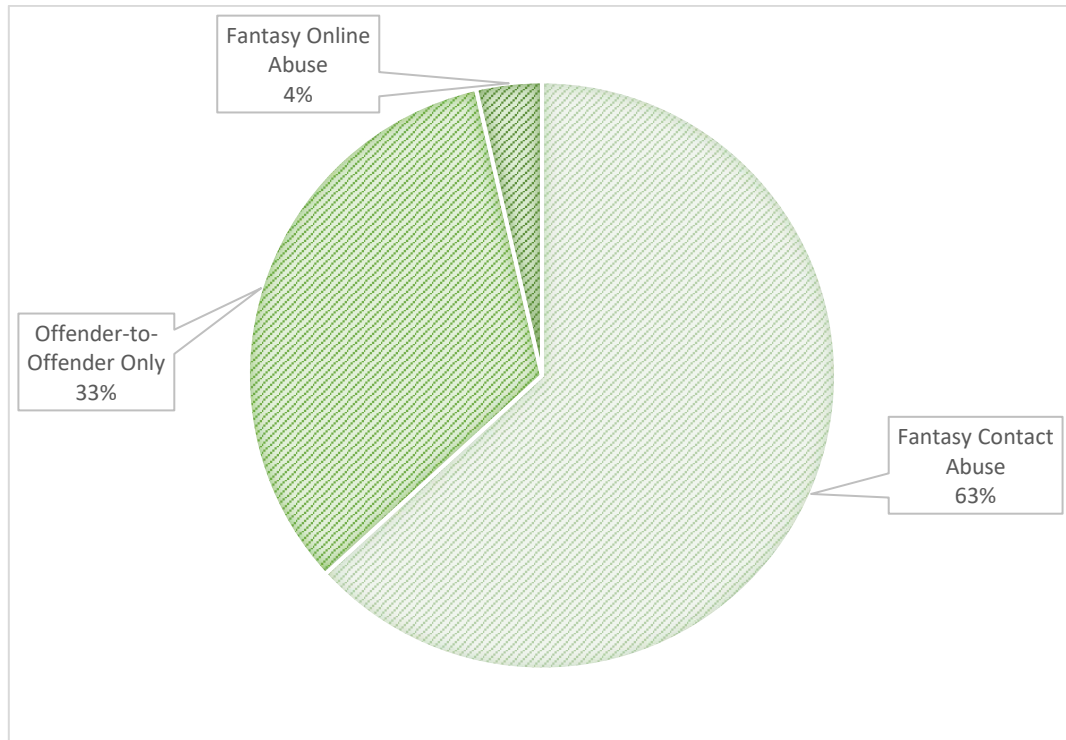
Chiang, 2020b; Woodhams et al., 2021). The nomenclature in these studies varied: Martin (2000:55) listed the ability to communicate anonymously with other offenders on 'fantasy literature pertaining to sexual relations with children' as one of the principal communication requirements of paedophiles; Quayle and Taylor (2002:358) discussed offenders exchanging 'fantasy (but presumably at times real) accounts'; Howitt (2004:187) referred to 'themes or stories in fantasy'; and McManus et al. (2016:168) mentioned 'fantasy sharers' and 'fantasy communications' (178), calling the originator of a sexual fantasy story 'a fantasy author' (169).

Fantasies portrayed as narratives the offenders produced appears to be a perspective emerging here (with them being characterised by terms like *literature*, *stories*, and *authors*). This contrasts the proposal of these as *accounts*. Arguably this would be more applicable to the stories offenders told about the abuse they claimed to have actually done (whereby they were providing an account of real events), rather than an imagined scenario that could be constructed by multiple users collaboratively. Furthermore, Chiang (2020b:1173) referred to these 'abuse stories' as 'detailed narratives of sexually abusive activity' (1181). Using the term 'narratives' throughout her study, she discussed offenders 'eliciting narratives' (1179) from one another and positively evaluating these. However, Chiang (2020b:1182) did state that she used 'fantasy narrative' to label 'the sharing of real or invented sexually abusive scenarios'. Due to the ways in which these fantasy-only stories were produced, engaged with, and constructed by one or more offenders in the present study, *narrative* was deemed the most appropriate terminology to refer to them. Hence, sexual fantasy narratives (SFNs) have been mentioned in the thesis thus far when referring to these invented scenarios and will be examined in this section in more detail.

In approaching these narratives, several coding books and frameworks were employed to classify them and investigate how/why they were constructed by offenders. Initially, the content of these SFNs was reviewed to determine broadly what these fantasies were about. Figure 7.2 shows

the results of this categorisation (see Appendix 36 for the table of these results and Appendix 37 for coding book).

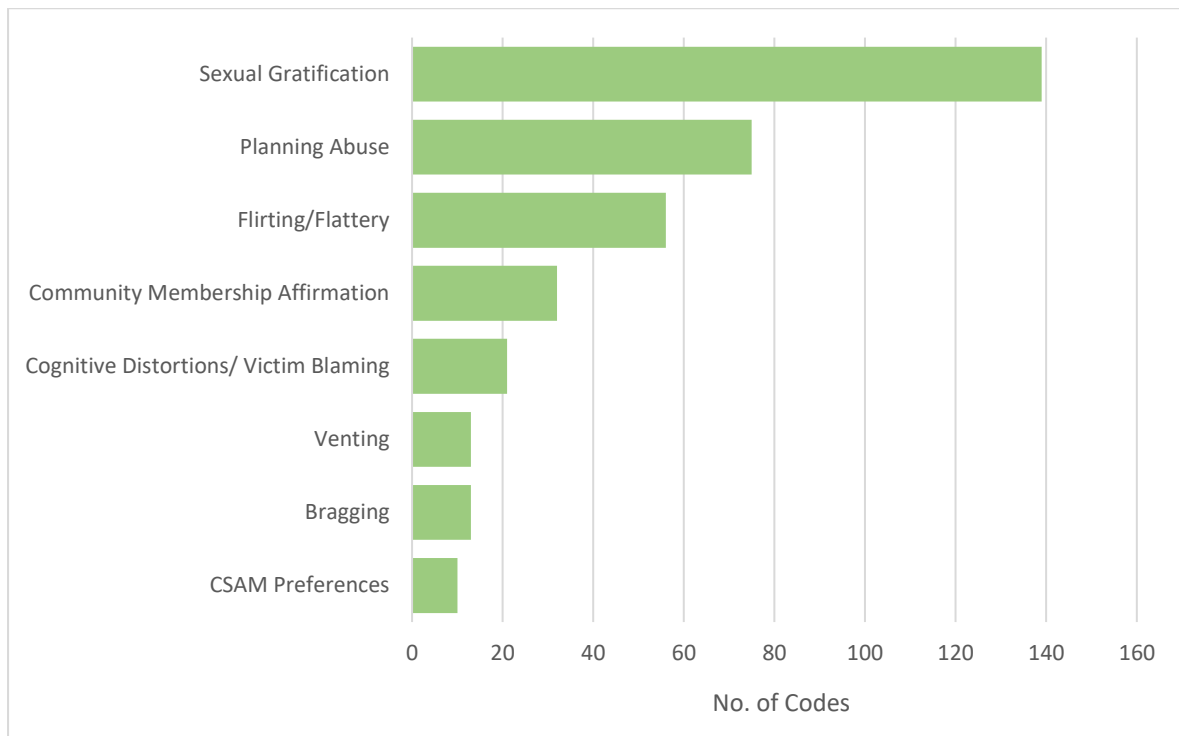
Figure 7.2: The content of sexual fantasy narratives.



The majority (63%, n=158) of all SFNs were fantasies about contact abuse, while 33% (n=83) concerned exclusively offender-to-offender sexual fantasies, and 4% (n=9) related to fantasy online CSA. Within the community, these SFNs served different purposes for offenders. The functions of this storytelling, meaning what the SFN construction was *for*, were captured in an inductive NVivo coding book. This coding book was used to ascertain the purposes of these narratives wherever it was clear from the content (coding was not done where the functions were unclear so as to minimise subjective interpretations). SFNs often served more than one purpose, sometimes including several of these functions, which caused overlap across the categories. The results of this analysis can be seen in Figure 7.3 overleaf (see Appendix 38 for table of results).

The least common reason for constructing sexual fantasy narratives was to divulge one's CSAM preferences and elicit CSAM of that type being sent (n=10). Slightly more common

Figure 7.3: The functions of sexual fantasy narratives.



reasons included offenders bragging (n=13), e.g. ‘I wanna slip into one and bury inch after inch until all 9 inches of my thick ped meat is balls deep in nepi hole’, or venting to each other (n=13), e.g. ‘Cannot stop thinking about my pedo need and my dick want more and more’. Offenders also engaged in cognitive distortions and victim-blaming practices through their SFNs (n=21). This sometimes appeared through attributing blame or willingness to fantasy victims, e.g. ‘Begging silently for you to wreck him’. In 32 instances, the purpose appeared to be cementing or signalling an offenders’ community membership status. Often this involved offenders directly naming paedophilia (e.g. ‘U ARE A PEDOPHILE’) and praising the community/their identity (e.g. ‘A life together as pedo n pos lovers brothers , free of confrontations and be able to enjoy pedophile life together’). SFNs were used as a vehicle for flirting or flattery in 56 instances, where offenders engaged in offender-to-offender sexualisation while complimenting each other and advancing their relationship: e.g. ‘I want to turn u on.... Please u’.

The second most common use of SFNs was to plan possible future contact abuse (n=75). This was done through describing intended sex acts, victim access or grooming, security measures,

offenders meeting, and other crimes like kidnapping or murder during the fantasy interactions.

Woodworth et al. (2013:153) previously found 'a significant relationship between offenders' violent sexual fantasies and their use of weapons during perpetrated offences', suggesting that the content of the offenders' fantasies may directly link to their subsequent criminal behaviours. Extract 7.52 depicts two offenders fantasising about doing contact abuse whilst considering the practical aspects of how they could undertake this fantasy in real life.

7.52.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_154]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_154	And I need a boy
2	P_154	[image]
3	P_001	Let's work on one together it will be so good
5	P_154	Oh yeah!!
6	P_154	And keep it
7	P_154	In a cage
8	P_001	Can't wait to cam n talk more dear friend
9	P_154	Same here
10	P_001	Let's abduct a couple
11	P_154	Sure
12	P_154	How long has it been for u?
13	P_001	With all these refugees over in [name of continent] [P_154's first name] it is
14		so easy to snatch any
15	P_154	Really??
16	P_154	Mmmm
17	P_154	Know u aroused my curiosity?

The two offenders engaged in constructing a scenario where they managed to abduct children (line 10) for the purposes of shared sexual abuse ('Let's work on one together') and illegally detaining them in 'a cage'. This shows consideration of how they would retain access to the victims and prevent their crimes being discovered. In line 13, P_001 made the claim that it would be 'so easy to snatch' the children of refugees due to the refugee crisis which triggered an interest in this access method from P_154 (lines 15-17). The offenders were engaging in (at this stage) entirely fantasy scenarios of abuse they would like to commit, which then lead into them discussing genuine strategies for accessing children offline.

The most common function of SFNs in the dataset, with 139 instances and an almost 40% share of the coding, was for sexual gratification. Offenders engaged in sexual conversations with others while masturbating to gain sexual pleasure and frequently commented thus: e.g. ‘Yah was hot. Wanked thinking about raping the lil piece of meat’. As is evident here, ‘the suspected offenders are likely receiving genuine pleasure from sharing abuse stories—perhaps in the form of sexual arousal or ‘bragging rights’ (Chiang, 2020b:1182). Extract 7.53 illustrates a SFN interaction between P_001 and P_003 that was plainly for the purpose of sexual gratification.

7.53.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_003]

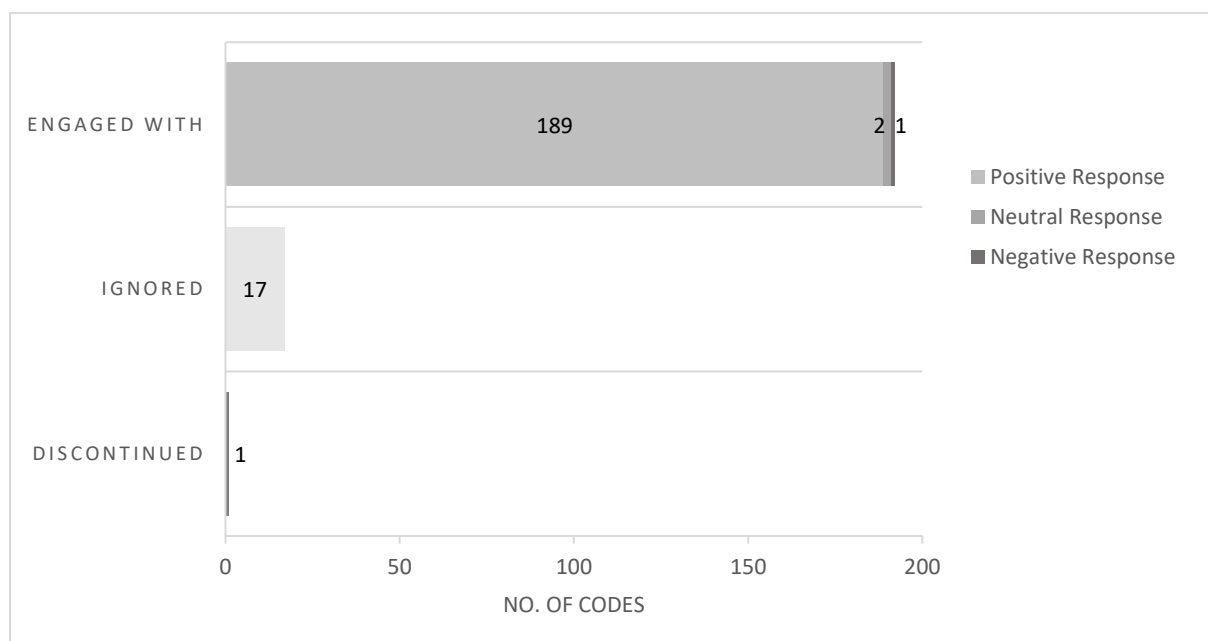
Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	Wish I had a cold baby arm to fukk you with
2	P_003	Fuuuuuuck
3	P_001	Pedo fist fukked by a baby arm cold and stiff
5	P_003	Want ur dirty dick inside mu mouth while u fuck me with the bby corpse arm
6		
7	P_001	You can taste and smell all the piss fumes and dry Pedo cum, gonna make you puke bro
8		
9	P_003	Id swallow all of ur pedo trash bro
10	P_001	We need to share it and snog together
11	P_003	Fuuuck cuming now
12	P_001	Let it dry on you bro but have a taste too like I have done, still tasting the sweet and sower ped cum in my mouth
13		
14	P_003	Wow shot my load, was intense, bro. Id let it on the floor to others can see it. Will let my dick soaked in briefs to again later
15		

The offenders here established an extremely graphic, violent scenario of them jointly abusing a child victim – which they were masturbating to simultaneously. This extract contained the offenders constructing their sexual identities through indexing deviant sexual interests: e.g. necrophilia in lines 1-5, filth/bodily fluids in lines 7-15, violence/sadism in lines 1-6, and exhibitionism/public indecency in lines 12-15. They also sexualised their own/each other’s physical bodies in detail to create a visual of the fantasy (e.g. ‘ur dirty dick’, ‘dry Pedo cum’, and ‘still tasting the sweet and sower ped cum in my mouth’). This explicit SFN resulted in the offenders reaching sexual climax (‘Fuuuck cuming now’, line 11), where they then continued the sexual interaction by describing how they apparently left

their semen in public bathrooms so that ‘others can see’ (14). Here the SFN functioned in the same way that offenders in the community used CSAM: for sexual gratification and as a simulation for sexually abusing children.

Now that the purposes and content of sexual fantasy narratives have been established (the *what* and *why*), one must examine the ways in which offenders linguistically constructed these narratives (the *how*). In ascertaining how offenders produced engaging, graphic stories that gained them appreciation from other offenders and clout within the community; the reception, stance, speech acts, and stylistic devices coding books were applied. Approaching the texts with the stylistic devices coding book in particular sought to investigate SFNs through the lens of a typical literary analysis. This established whether offenders made use of traditional narrative storytelling tools. However, it is first necessary to understand how offenders received attempts to initiate participation in constructing SFNs: whether they were willing contributors, reluctant, or even against the activity. The results of coding SFNs against the reception coding book can be seen in Figure 7.4 (see Appendix 39 for table of results).

Figure 7.4: The reception of sexual fantasy narratives in the community.



There were unsuccessful attempts by offenders to initiate sexual fantasy exchanges, which may have been shut down, ignored, or engaged with negatively. However, these failed attempts (n=19) were dwarfed by the number of SFNs met with a positive reception (n=189). Extract 7.54 illustrates one of the instances where an offender trying to begin a SFN interaction was ignored.

7.54.

[3_PP001_PP_02]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_026	big dicks in tight assholes..lubed of course
2	P_026	Doggy style ..slow at first ..then faster..and harder..then faster..then
3		harder...
5	P_026	A yone for chat hmu
6	P_026	?
7	P_026	Guess everyonee asleep or busy
8	P_026	Or jacking lol
9	P_026	Well have fun guys..

The extract comes from a *Kik* group-chat wherein P_026 in lines 1-3 initiated sexual fantasy storytelling and received no replies from any other group members, so they gave up the attempt.

The fantasy narrative here was launched into in a typical way – through graphic descriptions of sexual abuse being done to child-victims (e.g. ‘big dicks in tight assholes’, line 1) told as a chronological sequence of events in both the present and future tense. The offender described their desired abuse scenario seemingly in the hopes that other offenders would join in to validate their sexual interests or participate in the construction of the narrative (perhaps for the end goal of sexual gratification). In this instance though, their apparent attempts to reel in others (lines 5-9) were unfruitful.

Far more commonly, however, offender SFNs were engaged with – and engaged with enthusiastically. Extract 7.55 demonstrates one of these more typical interactions that made up the bulk of the SFN reception coding. This interaction involved two users (P_001 and P_409) constructing their sexual identities through asserting paedophilic sexual interests and developing several sexual fantasy scenarios together.

7.55.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_409]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	We have good taste and we both sikk fucks together
2	P_409	Yes, rape babies together. Make them scream and choke on our sperm
3	P_001	Love to see a nb getting done ... Still attached to the cord will be fukking ace
5	P_409	Ace indeed and so sikk as fuck
6	P_001	That what get me going man
7	P_409	Me too friend
8	P_001	Want to see one lil pussy getting pissed inside bloat the fukka up ... Looking
9		pregnant like
10	P_409	Lol that would be awesome
11	P_409	I love to see them stretched open and full of dad sperm
12	P_001	I love that too , the only thing is I would like to be there to slurp them both
13		clean
14	P_409	Me too bruv

The first sexual fantasy scenario was introduced in line 2 by P_409 who suggested they 'rape babies together', then elaborating to create a more specific fantasy scenario: 'Make them scream and choke on our sperm'. P_001 immediately picked up on the fantasy narrative and engaged with it in line 3 by describing an additional fantasy sexual abuse scenario. The offenders entered into a back-and-forth describing their fantasies (lines 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13), even expanding upon each other's stories (lines 11-13). Throughout this extract these offenders demonstrated stance alignment on the topic of their sexual interests (e.g. 'Ace indeed', 'Me too friend', and 'Me too bruv') and assigned shared stances to themselves and each other (e.g. 'We have good taste and we both sikk fucks together'). They also evaluated different elements of their sexual fantasies (e.g. 'Still attached to the cord will be fukking ace') and positioned themselves in relation to different sexual preferences (e.g. 'I love that too'). The full coding results for a stance analysis of SFNs are in Appendix 40.

As was evident in extract 7.55, offenders often introduced elements to sexual fantasies they were constructing together by asserting their wants/desires: e.g. 'I love to see' and 'I would like'. Assertive affirmatives like these were the most common speech acts used in the SFNs, generally to describe imagined events and matter-of-fact statements about the scenarios being constructed. Directives were the second most common speech acts, usually consisting of offenders

giving instructions to the others participating in the SFNs about what to include or requests of what they wanted to happen: e.g. ‘want u stroke looking at me whike I rape’ and ‘Be nasty’. Offers were used similarly in the interactions to steer the direction of the narrative: e.g. ‘Fancy tasting the split hole bro with me?’. Expressives and acknowledgements often featured where offenders engaged with the narratives by encouraging others to continue or expressing appreciation, much like backchanneling in spoken communication (e.g. ‘slurp slurp’, ‘Fuck yah’, ‘Uffffff’, ‘Mmm’, ‘Lol’, ‘WOW’, and ‘Damn’). See Appendix 41 for speech act coding results in SFNs.

Applying a coding book of stylistic devices facilitated an exploration of how offenders made use of traditional narrative techniques in their sexual fantasy storytelling. Table 7.5 shows the results of this analysis (see Appendix 37 for the coding book).

Table 7.5: Coding results and data examples for different stylistic devices used within sexual fantasy narratives.

Stylistic Devices	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Epithet	7.56. pdo bro	274
Metaphor	7.57. with a lil slut spit roasted between us	147
Hyperbole	7.58. I would have gone buckets	26
Onomatopoeia	7.59. moaning	21
Simile	7.60. the one bitch been drenched with so much spunk like a horse	10
Alliteration	7.61. big black boyfriend	9
Asyndeton	7.62. Need your pd cock, pd mouth, pd arms!	9
Juxtaposition	7.63. Full of lil ones feeling happy outside and some others being raped	8
Repetition	7.64. Over and over and over again	7
Anaphora	7.65. I drink , I perv . I get aroused been a Pedo , I like white flesh only and I have done filth	5
Personification	7.66. Look at my hole begging for you	5
Polysyndeton	7.67. when the home us so smooth bare and small and the pedo is big hairy and purple	4
Understatement	7.68. With all these refugees over in [name of continent] [P_154's first name] it is so easy to snatch any	4
Idiom, Cliché	7.69. happy hunting bro	3
Allusion	7.70. What a beauty n the beast !!!	2
Rhetorical Question		0
Humour		0

As can be seen in the two shaded rows, rhetorical questions and humour never appeared within the SFNs. However, all other stylistic features in the coding book were employed at some point by offenders. Allusion (n=2) and idioms/cliché (n=3) appeared in a few instances where offenders referenced established concepts or phrases, such as ‘happy hunting’ and mentioning the fairy-tale *Beauty and the Beast*. Some offenders made use of understatement (n=4), e.g. to imply carrying out contact CSA would be ‘so easy’ (see example 7.68). Grammatical stylistic features like polysyndeton (n=4) and asyndeton (n=9) were often used to elaborate on details in the narratives and to link together events or objects sequentially in the story. Similarly, anaphora (n=5) and repetition (n=7) were used to emphasise or foreground certain actions (example 7.64), as well as to add a more performative style to the storytelling that was reminiscent of oral tradition storytelling techniques in epic poetry (example 7.65). Other literary devices which appeared in only a few instances were personification (usually of body parts, n=5), juxtaposition (often to contrast offenders with child victims across various metrics like physical size or sexual enjoyment, n=8), and alliteration (which may be unintentional, n=9).

Onomatopoeia was amongst the more salient devices (n=21): the coding for which frequently overlapped with expressive speech acts and generally involved words for sexual noises (e.g. ‘slurp’). Hyperbole was also common (n=26) and appeared far more than its antithesis, understatement. Offenders employed hyperbole to exaggerate their sexual performance and describe abusive behaviours in the extremes: suggesting they would ejaculate ‘buckets’ of semen and claiming they would ‘destroy the toddler’ during the (fantasy) abuse. Metaphors and similes were present within the SFNs. Metaphor was the second most used stylistic device by offenders (n=147), dwarfing the 10 instances of similes. Metaphors were used for a variety of actions, objects, and concepts in the context of SFNs. For example, sexual acts were discussed metaphorically (e.g. ‘shot another load’ for ejaculating) and victims were referred to through a metaphorical representation (‘a little fucktoy’). Often the offenders’ sexualisation of themselves/each other involved metaphors as they described their genitalia (‘pole’, ‘meat’, ‘spike’) and sexual arousal or

ejaculate ('your seed', 'cum is boiling again in my sac', 'from the source'). Sexual abuse was spoken about in metaphors which sometimes aimed to minimise its harm ('love to play with him', 'give her lessons', 'Me doing the business') or sometimes foreground it ('double impaling that neck', 'Great to break in', 'We will feast').

The most salient stylistic device in SFNs was the use of epithets (n=274). This predominantly involved offenders using variations of 'pedo' in the premodification of other words – as has been referenced earlier in this chapter as the most prevalent sexual interest of offenders in this dataset. SFNs were used by offenders to index their paedophilic identities through constructing scenarios where they could assert their sexual interests, plan abuse, sexualise each other, and sexualise (real or fantasy) victims. In these chatlogs, offenders constructed not just their own sexual identities, but also the sexual identities of victims – often using their portrayals of child-victims to reflect back on their own claimed identities.

2.2. The Sexual Identities of Victims

As this data comes from offender-to-offender interactions and not offender-to-victim interactions, victims have no voice in these chatlogs. Their behaviours, thoughts, feelings, and identities were entirely produced by the offenders in this community, who projected their assumptions about victims onto them. Thus, victim sexual identity construction here was being done *by offenders for* victims and not by victims themselves, making it a fallacy they could use to rationalise their offending. Investigating how victims' sexual identities were constructed by the offenders is important because it can shed a light on how offenders viewed child victims, how they justified the abuse to themselves, and how they encouraged one another to share the same perceptions. As with offenders, the thematic analysis of victim sexual identity construction captured coding for sexual interests and sexualisation. Unlike with offenders, these themes were not for self-sexualisation or self-produced interests: they captured offenders assigning sexual preferences to (real or fantasy) victims (Section 2.2.1) and sexualising them (2.2.2).

2.2.1. Victim Sexual Interests

Victim sexual interests, their likes and dislikes (as perceived by offenders), were often conveyed implicitly through the offenders' descriptions of their reactions to sexual abuse. Consequently, and due to the lack of victims' voices, the coding for victim sexual interests entailed capturing purported *evidence* given by offenders of sexual likes/dislikes rather than statements of preferences by victims. There were far less victim sexual interests found than offender sexual interests in the chatlogs, and only slightly more victim likes were described (n=134) than dislikes (n=112). Table 7.6 shows coding results for the latter (see Appendix 42 for the coding book). Two types of evidence for victim sexual dislikes were found, these were evidence of violence/pain (n=55) and of lacking consent (n=57).

Table 7.6: Coding counts and examples of offenders assigning sexual dislikes to victims.

Victim Sexual Interest Types	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Evidence of Sexual Dislikes:		112
Non-Consensual	7.71. Forced is way better. 7.72. seems to be a good screamer while rape	57
Violence/Pain	7.73. No he cried and kicked.. But the dad didn't care just held him down 7.74. I crave the crying and pain sounds and unhappiness moans	55

The coding for evidence of violence/pain captured instances of offenders describing (real or fantasy) victims' responses to sexual abuse which suggested they were in distress and/or physical pain, often as a result of violence. Examples 7.73-74 include references to sounds of pain or distress which alerted the offenders to the victims' discomfort and implied they did not enjoy the sexual abuse: e.g. 'he cried', 'the crying and pain sounds', 'unhappiness moans', and 'screaming'. In example 7.73, the victim in a piece of CSAM was described as physically fighting off the abuse ('he cried and kicked'). Here the offender used other-stance attribution to assign a perspective to the abuser in the CSAM who he said 'didn't care' about the distress caused to the victim. The offender in example 7.74 used their description of the victims' discomfort to construct their own sexual interests simultaneously by taking the stance that they liked the sounds of distress from victims,

they ‘crave’ it. The coding results for a stance analysis of victim sexual identity construction can be found in Appendix 43.

Stancetaking also appeared when offenders described victims not consenting to sexual contact (thus, disliking the contact). This sexual dislike was conveyed predominantly through the offenders using terminology that presupposed a lack of consent when describing the abuse, such as ‘rape’. Due to rape (and synonyms for this) requiring a lack of consent from the victims, as examples 7.71-72 illustrate, the victims’ dislike of the sexual abuse was inherent. In example 7.71, an offender took the stance that ‘Forced’ (rape) was ‘way better’ than sex with consent – constructing their own sexual preferences whilst establishing an awareness that their victims did not have a sexual interest in them and had not consented.

Offenders also constructed sexual likes for victims. The four categories of this can be seen in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Coding counts and examples of offenders assigning sexual likes to victims.

Victim Sexual Interest Types	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Evidence of Sexual Likes:		134
Sexual Agency/Promiscuity	7.75. did the little slut cry or was he used to it 7.76. that boy is going ham sucking him off 7.77. we start developing our sexually at Age 4/5!	82
Perceived Consent	7.78. God yes. He really likes it	34
Physical Arousal	7.79. I watched a friend do this once to a girl and she was dripping after lol	15
Sexual Partner Preference	7.80. Looks like that kid likes his men black	3

In just three instances, offenders explicitly attributed preferences about sexual partners to victims. Example 7.80 is one of these few messages where an offender suggested that a victim in a piece of CSAM ‘likes his men black’, assigning a preference to the victim based upon their perception of the victim’s responses in a video. Elsewhere offenders used what they claimed to be signs of physical arousal (n=15) in victims to justify abuse by implying that the victims were getting sexual gratification from it – constructing the notion that child-victims had the sexual interests and agency

of adults. Example 7.79 illustrates an attempt to rationalise CSA and refute criticisms of paedophilia by manufacturing consent through assuming physical arousal.

The two most common suggestions of sexual likes for victims were offenders claiming there was consent (n=34) and perceiving victims as promiscuous or having sexual agency (n=82). This type of victim sexual identity construction was found in prior CSA research, where 'despite the victim's age or inability to consent, offenders reported believing the sexual acts were consensual and maintained that their victims were willing participants in the sexual activity' (Steely Smith, 2023:1267). One offender in Whittle et al.'s (2015:554) sample of offender-victim dyads 'demonstrated denial of any responsibility in sexualizing the relationship, pretending that he did not like it, and attributed blame toward the victim as a means of justifying his behavior' – claiming that she initiated the sexual interactions online between the two. Example 7.78 shows an offender perceiving in their view that the victim was consenting to the sexual abuse (in CSAM): 'He really likes it'. Other examples involving the offenders implying that children could consent included them suggesting that they 'like when they're both into it' (meaning the offender and victim) and making the broad claim that 'Little girls love to feel daddy cock in there cunts and ass'.

The coding for these two sexual likes categories heavily involved stancetaking as offenders assigned positions to victims. Offenders attributing sexual agency to victims were assigning thoughts and feelings to victims which suited their own perspectives as members of the paedophile community. This was evident in the claim from example 7.77 that children begin to develop their sexuality at ages '4/5' and the presumption of sexual autonomy in example 7.76 where an offender suggested that a victim in CSAM was 'going ham sucking him off'. Much of the sexual agency coding captured the times when offenders labelled victims as promiscuous through insults like 'whore' and 'slut' (see example 7.75). They were seeking to normalise sexual contact with children by implying those children were already sexually active and flipping the roles to suggest that the child-victims were the ones pursuing sexual contact with offenders.

2.2.2. Victim Sexualisation

Offenders sexualised child-victims far more than they sexualised themselves or each other (n=608). They made sexual comments about children to construct their own identities in the community, aligning with paedophilic perspectives and performing shows of virility through these characterisations. Again, as victim voices were not present in the dataset, no victims were sexualising themselves and this was exclusively done by offenders. Examining what terminology was used to describe and refer to victims illuminates what dehumanisation and objectification of children was present in the community, as well as whether sexualised portrayals of them appeared to be positive and flattering or negative and degrading. Furthermore, sexualised and harmful descriptions of victims could feed into offence-supportive beliefs and facilitate the offenders contact abuse of them. Using the same coding book as with offender sexualisation, the different methods for offenders sexualising victims were explored (see Table 7.8 for results and Appendix 35 for the coding book). Here there was of course no coding for offender-only sex acts (which is omitted from the table due to irrelevance) and the miscellaneous offender sexualisation category was replaced with one for miscellaneous victim sexualisation.

Table 7.8: Data examples and coding counts for the different types of victim sexualisation by offenders.

Sexualisation Types	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Sexualised Anatomy	7.81. Those pink puffy lips drive me insane 7.82. fuck me with the bby corpse arm	313
Dehumanisation:		261
Reductive Generalisations	7.83. y and < 5	133
Objectification	7.84. a lil piece of meat	124
Zoomorphism	7.85. Great to break in	4
Sexualised Violence	7.86. Want to feel it die with my dick inside 7.87. Want to look at father face and smile when my dick deep inside lil slut push harder and kill it 7.88. Wrecking it breaking the inner skin walls, blood , tears , screams and pedo cum gashing out	187
Sexual Flattery	7.89. Just been looking at a load of school girls ???????? little sexy preteens!!	143
Victim Sexualisation Misc.	7.90. kiddie sex	121

Perceived Promiscuity	7.91. Good, little whore probably was cock tease	29
------------------------------	--	----

The least salient type of sexualisation (n=29) was projecting promiscuity onto victims and thus implying they had sexual experience. This links with the aforementioned sexual like that offenders constructed for victims to suggest promiscuity or sexual agency. Example 7.91 shows an offender asserting a stance that a victim was sexually provocative and therefore deserving of sexual abuse. The stance object, the victim, was called a 'little whore' and evaluated as likely provoking the abuser by being a 'cock tease' in an attempt to shift the responsibility for the abuse to the victim (see Appendix 43 for stance and victim sexualisation coding results). The next sexualisation category was for miscellaneous sexualisation of victims that could not be grouped into sub-types. This included referencing terms which inherently tied children to sexual topics (e.g. 'kiddie sex') and offenders describing their sexual desires with children in varying ways (e.g. 'Love to feed babies sperm').

Sexual flattery of victims (n=143) captured compliments and positive evaluations relating to the children's appearance, especially if explicitly sexual (e.g. 'hot pussy on her'). Sexualised violence was the second least salient sexualisation tactic with offenders talking about themselves/each other, but one of the more common ones when discussing victims (n=187). Much of this coding took place within the SFNs that offenders authored, such as examples 7.86-88. These examples illustrate the graphic descriptions of fantasy scenarios offenders constructed to explore their violent desires for sexual gratification. In each of them, violence and sadism (e.g. 'feel it die', 'kill it', 'wrecking it', and 'blood , tears , screams') was tied alongside sexual language (e.g. 'my dick inside', 'my dick', 'lil slut', and 'pedo cum') to construct the offenders deviant sexual interests, demonstrating how they sexualised harm being done to victims as if they were not human.

Dehumanisation was the second most salient sexualisation type here, and appeared far more in the offenders' sexualisation of victims (n=261) than of offenders (n=34). Reductive generalisations were also the forefront dehumanisation tactic (n=133), followed by objectification

(n=124), and then zoomorphism (n=4). Offenders 'perceive children as sexual objects, intended to satisfy the offenders' sexual needs', they 'depersonalise children and detach victims from their bodies' (Huikuri and Insoll, 2022:6). This depersonalisation occurred frequently through reductive generalisations where victims were referred to by shorthand for their ages or genders (e.g. 'a 5' and 'b' for *boy*); by abbreviated descriptors like 'yng' for *young* or 'nb' for *newborn*; and by non-specific referents like 'one of those' or 'a few'. Referring to victims this way dehumanised them by removing their personhood and making their identity just one of their attributes (like their ages). It took away a victim's individuality, thus making it easier for offenders to justify to themselves committing harm against them.

Objectification similarly removed the humanity and autonomy of child-victims by instead portraying them as unfeeling objects that could be used by the offenders. Woodhams et al. (2021) found victim objectification to be prevalent in dark-web CSA forums. Examples in the present dataset included victims being referred to as 'something' (rather than someone), a 'piece of meat', and a fleshlight (sex toy for masturbation). The latter two examples constructed the child-victims as inhuman, inanimate objects who would not register pain or emotions and thus could be used (in the offenders' perspectives) as objects for their own sexual gratification purposes regardless of the damage caused by said abuse. Consent is also not required from objects, meaning that offenders could remove agency from their victims by suggesting that they were not real people who required consideration or care.

The most salient sexualisation strategy was of sexualising victims' anatomies (n=313). Sexualising bodies was the highest category for both offender and victim sexualisation, but notably with victims there was more overlap between this and the dehumanisation category. There was so much coding for sexual anatomy because, even though they were describing a person rather than an object, they disassembled the physical bodies of victims into more objectified portions that were in a way not seen as parts of an actual living human, but as sexual tools. Example 7.82 shows an offender

asking another (during a fantasy narrative) to use a 'bby corpse arm' during sex – literally rendering the fantasy victim an inanimate object by killing them and making use of their body to facilitate sex acts. Referring to victims by their body parts when sexualising them also detached the sexual abuse from the victim themselves, allowing offenders to potentially ignore that they were committing crimes against real children: e.g. 'My dream is eating out and breeding one of these sweaty smooth holes'. The way offenders described and referred to victims throughout the community revealed their attitudes towards them; it enabled a look at how they produced the cognitive distortions that then rationalised their offending behaviours.

The different terms offenders used to refer to victims throughout the chatlogs were investigated. These *synonyms* used by offenders to refer to victims were captured in *NVivo*: there were 415 codes found across just shy of half the files. Many of these synonyms were used multiple times in the dataset; they often varied in formatting and spelling; and they could be letters/numbers, single words, or short phrases. When counting spelling variations, different conjugations, and capitalisation variations as different unique uses, there were 274 individual unique synonyms used. Table 7.9 shows the child-victim synonyms which were used more than twice (in that exact formatting/spelling) across the dataset (the full list of all synonyms can be found in Appendix 44).

Table 7.9: Coding counts for child-victim synonyms with more than two uses across the dataset.

Child-Victim Synonyms	No. of Appearances
it	27
one	24
young	12
nb	10
them	6
toddlers	6
a toddler	5
teen	5
a boy	4
a little boy	4
teens	4
the boy	4

V v y	4
8	3
16	3
18	3
any	3
B n G	3
Boy	3
Lil boy	3
Lil boys	3
lil slut	3
Toddler	3

The most salient individual term for referring to victims in the dataset was *it* (n=27), with the second highest being *one* (n=24): e.g. ‘Wreck one so small we can finish it off’. Both terms depersonalised the victim and made it ambiguous who exactly the offender was referring to, possibly to retain deniability if the messages were found by law enforcement. Many of the popular synonyms related to victim age (whether in reference to them being ‘young’, ‘toddlers’, or ‘8’) and their small size (e.g. ‘little’ and ‘lil’). However, due to extensive variations in formatting and spelling, it is difficult to infer what types of victim synonyms were the most widely used by offenders from this list alone.

Thus, the frequencies of different features in the synonyms were counted to capture broader categories for types of synonyms – these were unaffected by spelling/formatting variation and involved grouping similar terms together. This allowed for a more comprehensive look at what synonyms offenders used for victims as well as revealing what traits they focused on when referring to them. Repeated themes within synonyms were observed during their initial coding and these were then marked as present or absent in each of the 415 synonyms. The results of this can be seen in Table 7.10, which shows how many times each feature was found in the synonyms and what percentage of all synonyms it appeared in.

Appearing in under 5% of synonyms were comments on victim attractiveness (n=13) and using the terms *teens/pre-teens* (n=15), *slut/whore* (n=17), *them/those/that* (n=19), or *bald*

Table 7.10: Coding counts for common features found in child-victim synonyms.

Does the Synonym Contain this Feature (or a Close Variant)?	No. of Occurrences	Percentage of All Synonyms (0dp)
"little/small"	79	19%
"newborn/infant/toddler/baby/child/kid/lad"	77	19%
Numbered Ages	75	18%
"boy/girl"	68	16%
Dehumanisation/Objectification/"things"	64	15%
"one"	47	11%
"young"	38	9%
Insult/Profanity	38	9%
"it"	31	8%
"bald"	20	5%
"them/those/that"	19	5%
"slut/whore"	17	4%
"teens/pre-teens"	15	4%
Comments on Attractiveness	13	3%
Total No. of Features Present:	601	

(n=20). Using *it* as a referent for victims appeared 31 times following the inclusion of conjugation and formatting variations. Insults and swear words appeared in 38 synonyms, which often corresponded to synonyms that also included *slut/whore*. Referring to victims as *young* (n=38) or *one* (n=47) remained prevalent, with this coding also capturing offenders calling victims 'yng' or just 'y'. Here, as with other child-victim synonyms offenders used, the adjective *young* was being used as a noun and offenders foregrounded this quality to make it the identifier for when they were talking about children.

Overt dehumanisation/objectification was found in 15% of synonyms (n=64), including offenders calling victims 'things'. Numbered ages (n=75) and referring to victims by their gender (n=68) were common in synonyms, potentially because the offenders frequently discussed their victim preferences in terms of age/gender. The numbered ages coding captured instances of victims

being called solely their ages in number format and not age categories like infant or toddler. Age categories were the second most common synonym feature, appearing 77 times in 19% of all child-victim synonyms. These categories included references to different stages of childhood development (e.g. 'newborn' and 'child'), as well as more colloquial terms like *lad* and *kid*. However, the most common feature across child-victim synonyms was the inclusion of *little/small* (and variations on these terms). This appeared 79 times in 19% of synonyms. Focusing on their smaller size when discussing victims showed that the offenders wanted to repeatedly distinguish them from possible adult sexual partners and were fetishising the victims' underdeveloped bodies: e.g. 'some little cuties', 'Just 9 yr old little boy', and 'the lil shit'.

Appendices 45-46 contain tables with the number of child-victim synonyms used in each chatlog and which features appeared in synonyms, grouped by chatlog. The five chatlogs which contained over 20 uses of child-victim synonyms were also in the top ten longest chatlogs, which likely explains their high usage. However, the chatlog which used the sixth most synonyms (3_PP002) was the longest file overall, with over 15,000 words and only 19 synonyms – while a c. 11,000-word chatlog (3_PP001_P_001_P_003) contained the most synonyms at 92 uses. This 11,000-word, 2015 chatlog (3_PP001_P_001_P_003) also contained the most uses out of all other chatlogs of *it, one, newborn/infant/toddler/baby/child/kid/lad, them/those/that, little/small/lil, slut/whore, insult/profanity, and dehumanisation/objectification/things* within the synonyms used by the two offenders in that file (P_001 and P_003).

Synonyms containing *young* or variations on this (e.g. 'yung') were used the most in 3_PP002 (the *GigaTribe* file), as were uses of *teens/pre-teens*. Synonyms which included numbered ages appeared the most in 3_PP001_P_001_P_154 (2015) and 3_PP003-P_1583_P_1586 (2018). Gender references in synonyms also appeared the most in 3_PP001_P_001_P_154 (2015). There were no synonyms containing the following features in Batch 2 (2016-2020), which did appear commonly in Batch 1 (2013-2015): *it, one, them/those/that, bald, and*

dehumanisation/objectification/*things*. Only two files, 3_PP001_P_001_P_003 and 3_PP001_P_001_P_112 (both from 2015), contained synonyms which included features from all fourteen feature-categories.

It cannot be suggested that the list of child-victim synonyms is in any way a complete collection of terms used by offenders for victims as those commonly used may change over time or even be used by just a few offenders and not the wider community. Thus, what these synonyms can reveal is how offenders chose to speak about child-victims in these chatlogs and what aspects of children they decided to focus on when referring to them (e.g. their small size). Their nomenclature reveals the offenders' attitudes towards victims (more derogatory and dehumanising than positive and admiring), as well as further illustrating the prevalent victim-sexualisation that took place in the community.

The normalisation of sexualising children here can facilitate offence-supportive cognitive distortions and feed into the supportive, encouraging nature of the paedophile community for its members – which they cited as part of the community appeal. Woodhams et al. (2021:8) found in their research that 'there was evidence of suspects making pro-child sexual abuse statements, normalizing and minimizing the harm caused to children as a result of sexual abuse experiences, as well as referring to children as sexual beings', which also appeared throughout this dataset in the offenders' sexual identity construction of themselves, each other, and victims. A part of the community members' paedophile identities that they were constantly maintaining was their adherence to communally held beliefs about children and CSA – aligning themselves with a pro-paedophilia ideology through sexualising, objectifying, and dehumanising victims. The next section takes a closer look at the beliefs offenders expressed within the community about the in and out-group, establishing how they perpetuated this ideology through their assertions.

3. Attitudes

"I hadn't fully realized just how powerful words could be before this."

— *Malorie Blackman, Noughts and Crosses*

Blommaert (2017:5) claims that 'online resources offer an incredible potential for the ultra-fast sharing of sentiments, instant reactions to events, images and symbols'. The offenders' attitudes are an important sub-theme from the thematic analysis to discuss because the opinions offenders expressed in the community can reveal their perspectives towards offending, each other, the community as a whole, and much more. Coding in this sub-theme was divided into In-group and Out-group Attitude themes that were Supportive or Challenging. Supportive attitudes were of particular interest because they could reveal what cognitive distortions were being undertaken by offenders, what aspects of the community attracted them to join, and evidence of pro-paedophilia messaging. Whittle et al. (2015:559) surmised 'it is widely accepted within literature that sex offenders use cognitive distortions to assist in justifying their offending and reduce the guilt and fear they are likely to feel as a result of offending'. Challenging attitudes, on the other hand, could unveil which aspects of the community deterred offenders or divided members. Attitudes towards wider society could also shine a light on offender identity construction, as how offenders positioned themselves in relation to the out-group can in turn show how they felt about the in-group they were contrasting it with.

Ideology, as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.4, is intertwined with identity performance within the online paedophile community where offenders were constructing their community membership, sexual identities, and aligning themselves with communally held beliefs. Van Dijk (2006:116) asserted that 'ideologies consist of social representations that define the social identity of a group, that is, its shared beliefs about its fundamental conditions and ways of existence'. Alongside an ideology, 'groups may also have more complex evaluative belief complexes, such as attitudes about immigration, abortion or euthanasia', but 'group beliefs are characteristically

ideological, in the sense that they are controlled and organized by underlying ideologies' (2006:123). Van Dijk (2006) drew the distinction that was discussed prior between attitudes and ideologies, which guided the analysis of the beliefs expressed by offenders in this dataset. Offenders stated their opinions on the in and out-groups, evaluating different aspects of them, but these were not all ideological. However, some beliefs shared between offenders were guided or influenced by an underlying pro-paedophilia ideology, as is discussed shortly.

It has been suggested by Huikuri and Insoll (2022:5), that 'darknet online communities of child sexual abusers provide offenders with spaces to maintain implicit theories' (described as their theories about the world around them/perspectives that may lead to confirmation bias in a paedophile community echo chamber), which may also be true for clear-web offender interactions. To investigate the presence of ideologies and perspectives in this clear-web dataset, coding books for attitude types, facework, stance, othering, propaganda, and legitimation were applied to the coding for supportive and challenging attitudes (see Chapter 2 Section 3.2). The attitudes and beliefs of offenders in the community were examined, alongside how they were conveyed, and evidence of an underlying pro-paedophilia ideology. This section begins by looking at the offenders' critical, challenging attitudes (3.1) and subsequently investigates the more prevalent supportive attitudes (3.2).

3.1. Challenging Attitudes

Huikuri and Insoll (2022:5) observed in dark-web paedophile communities that members 'rarely question their behaviour in open discussions and if they do so, their peers quickly run to the aid to rationalise it'. However, there were 170 instances of offenders expressing attitudes which criticised or challenged the in-group paedophile community/paedophilia in this dataset. In fact, Woodhams et al. (2021:7-8) found offenders expressing 'disapproval, disappointment, or dislike of one another', which often manifested through 'acts of dominance' where they would challenge other offenders and their actions. Van Dijk (2006:117), while writing about ideology, touched upon what could be a

possible motivator for some of this discord: ‘if ideologies can be gradually developed by (members of) a group, they also gradually disintegrate, e.g. when members no longer believe in a cause and ‘leave’ the group, when group grievances have been attended to, or under a host of other social and political conditions’. Offenders could become disillusioned with the online paedophile community, disagree with the behaviours and perspectives of other offenders, or no longer find the community useful to them for accessing CSAM/skills/support. They sometimes then voiced their qualms with others. An inductively produced coding book for types of attitudes (see Appendix 47) was applied to the Attitudes sub-theme. Table 7.11 shows the different categories of challenging attitudes expressed.

Table 7.11: Coding counts and data examples for categories of challenging attitudes against the in-group.

Challenging Attitude Types	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Group/Chat/Platform Quality	7.92. the chat is dead. No ones posted in a month	57
Objection to CSAM Content, Sexual Interests	7.93. Not very keen on the crying	53
Relationships	7.94. I spoke n chatted wit many , but very few are real stuff like you n me not just to have a wank	38
Security and Access	7.95. I would like to meet some for real everything I tried they all freakish out	36
Not Trading CSAM	7.96. gigatribe is for sharing, not for holding out for more	31
Removal from Groups	7.97. Seriously? Remove the only people posting videos	18
Self-Deprecating/Inferiority	7.98. I think sometimes I am too sikk	4
Criticism of Ideology	7.99. I just don't think this kind of porn is good for me anymore	3

The least common category of challenging attitudes was of offenders critiquing the pro-paedophilia ideology (n=3). One offender in example 7.99 asserted that they ‘just don’t think this kind of porn is good’ for them anymore, demonstrating an awareness of the negative impacts viewing CSAM was having on them and leading them to leave the group-chat they were an administrator of. Elsewhere, another offender who called child abuse ‘shit’ and said sexual media of

'kiddis is disgusting', claimed that 'all those pedomom and pedo family shit not for me'. He took these stances, negatively evaluating the other offenders who were different to him and criticising aspects of paedophilia, to construct more acceptability around his own sexual interest in teenagers. Unlike this offender who positioned themselves as above other offenders in the community, some users expressed self-deprecating beliefs and asserted their inferiority (n=4). Nielsen et al. (2022:604) also found this in the *Virtuous Paedophile* forum where some users had a 'monstrous self-image', and others 'expressed self-hatred'. Evidence of this can be seen in example 7.98 where an offender pondered if they were 'too sikk' (sick) due to their deviant sexual interests.

More common topics offenders evaluated critically included being removed from groups (n=18); users not trading CSAM (n=31); security measures or access (n=36); and relationships between offenders (n=38). In many instances where offenders discussed being removed from groups, they complained about what they viewed as unjust removals. Offenders cited their adherence to community rules as reasons why they should not have been removed (e.g. 'have been removed from the group again even if I post') as well as criticising administrators who removed them: e.g. 'A bit late for spring cleaning', 'Don't trust in host', and 'Kik groups are booting people out Being bullies'. Offenders also voiced criticisms of each other for not following community norms or etiquette by failing to mutually trade CSAM (e.g. 'you have nothing to share') or not taking security measures (e.g. 'Zooms are definitely a Nono').

Relationships between offenders were openly evaluated by the users. Critical comments on relationships generally involved offenders stating what failings there were in the relationships. This often concerned the difficulty in finding offenders who wished to connect for support or community rather than just for sexual purposes: e.g. 'I spoke n chatted wit many , but very few are real stuff like you n me not just to have a wank'. Other topics which caused frictions in the relationships that offenders mentioned were offenders not reciprocating CSAM trading, acting suspiciously, or not responding promptly to messages.

The second most common challenging attitudes category was of offenders objecting to the content of CSAM or others' sexual interests (n=53). Woodhams et al. (2021:6) found in their study of offender-to-offender communication 'discussions that contrasted individuals with sexual interests in children of different ages [...] as well as predilections for inflicting pain vs. sexual abuse'. Offenders in the present study also made disparaging comments about the sexual interests of others, sometimes in terms of the ages of victims or violence. They often did this by contrasting themselves with others, through selective disassociation: 'the selective distancing of themselves away from the sectors of the community that they see as to blame' for them being viewed negatively by society (Bedolla, 2003:266). For example, one user complained that offenders in a *Skype* group were 'vanilla idiots' due to them asserting that abusing victims under five years-old was 'holy forbidden'. This incident shows both sides of the offender divide criticising each other: the 'vanilla' (less extreme) offenders in the group saw abusing very young victims as too far in their view and positioned themselves as better than offenders who did that, whilst the offender recounting this dispute criticised them as 'idiots' for not being as much of a paedophile as he was (in his view). The offenders who expressed an interest in very young victims, identifying themselves as 'nepiophiles', then relished in the fact that they did not view victims under 5 as forbidden for them (positioning themselves as higher up the paedophile hierarchy than the 'vanilla' offenders). Both sides seemingly viewed the other as inferior, morally so for those offenders who looked down upon the nepiophiles and likely aligned themselves more with the *boylovers* or *virtuous paedophiles* which appeared in other studies (O'Halloran and Quayle, 2010; Nielsen, 2022) – while the nepiophiles viewed 'vanilla' offenders as not deviant enough.

The most salient challenging attitude type was offenders making negative quality evaluations of the group-chats/platforms being used (n=57). Offenders critiqued different elements of groups/platforms, from their security measures and rules to how active members were or what types of CSAM they focused on. Criticisms of groups/platforms appeared both within the groups/platforms and in private DMs or on other platforms; meaning that offenders were open

about their criticisms as well as privately expressing their views away from scrutiny. Often offenders complained that not enough CSAM was shared on specific group-chats (e.g. calling a group 'so fukkkng quiet'), as in example 7.92 where an offender discouraged another from joining a group because they said it was too inactive.

Offenders also expressed attitudes towards the out-group (non-paedophiles/wider society). However, these occurrences were infrequent and only challenging attitudes (n=25) were found to be directed towards the out-group, not supportive. Van Dijk (2006:126) suggested that ideological discourse is frequently 'organized by a general strategy of positive self-presentation (boasting) and negative other-presentation (derogation)' through emphasising the good traits of the group one is a part of (and de-emphasising the bad), whilst doing the opposite for the 'Others – whose bad things will be enhanced, and whose good things will be mitigated, hidden or forgotten'. This strategy can be seen in some of the challenging attitudes offenders expressed towards the outgroup.

Challenging attitudes towards the out-group contained othering in the majority of instances (20 out of 25). Lorenzo-Dus (2023:139) explains that 'othering dehumanizes an individual or a group on the basis of perceived negative attributes and behaviors by that individual or group', which here consisted of pointing out distinguishing factors between paedophiles and the 'no perv' (non-paedophiles) as well as disparagement based off these differences. One offender called sex with adult non-paedophiles 'ridiculous'; others warned users of undercover police officers infiltrating the in-group community under false pretences (e.g. 'block him. He's a cop'); some complained about adult romantic partners (e.g. 'shes not into the kinky stuff'); and several users make homophobic, racist, or xenophobic comments about victims or their parents (e.g. 'the faggot was hunting for cock on Grindr already', 'Very pure white skin', and 'Bet the mother of father would give any away to cross the fucking border'). However, overall, the out-group was very rarely discussed by offenders, who focused their comments far more on themselves.

Offenders in the online paedophile community making critical comments were entering into potentially contentious, hostile, and offence-causing interactions. They had to navigate the potential consequences of their critiques, evaluate the audiences reading their messages, and determine how they presented themselves to others in these situations. Therefore, to examine how they negotiated inter-group relations, the facework coding book was applied to the Attitudes sub-theme. Additionally, to look at how these challenging attitudes were asserted, how offenders persuaded others, and what underlying ideologies may be present – coding books for stance, propaganda tools, and legitimation techniques were also applied.

Self and other-oriented facework was analysed in the Attitudes sub-theme (see Appendix 48 for full results). While expressing attitudes critiquing the in-group, offenders often presented themselves as cautious (n=30, e.g. ‘for what I know you could be a copper if journalist’) and pessimistic (n=41, e.g. ‘I was expecting more out of it to be honest’). Offenders also demonstrated irritation towards each other (n=59), which was never found in supportive attitudes by contrast. This manifested through profanity (‘fuck off’), complaints (‘I’m just tired of everyone’s rules’), impatience (‘I have no time for this...bye’), or unmitigated disagreement (‘Not happy about that’). Impoliteness also played a role in these types of interactions and offenders used it far more in challenging than supportive attitudes (n=166 to 30 codes, respectively). The bulk of this impoliteness was done through bald-on-record impoliteness (n=69), followed by positive (n=41), negative (n=27), off-record (n=26), and sarcasm/mock-politeness (n=8). There were no instances of withholding politeness found in any attitude coding. Positive impoliteness was often used by offenders who denied common ground with others when criticising their sexual interests: e.g. ‘we dont like the same stuff’. Negative impoliteness generally involved offenders ridiculing or belittling others (e.g. ‘No one wants to see your tiny cock’) and the few instances of sarcasm/mock-politeness generally appeared when offenders were irritated by or suspicious of other users.

Offenders took stances when they expressed attitudes towards various topics in the chatlogs (see Appendix 49 for full coding results). Several examples thus far in this section demonstrated offenders evaluating stance objects (which could be anything from other offenders to sexual interests or group-chats), as well as positioning themselves in respect to what they were evaluating. When offenders positioned themselves and others within their perceived hierarchy of paedophiles, they were taking the stance that they were superior to those other kinds (such as the nepiophiles versus 'vanilla' offenders). Offenders also attributed stances to others during their critiques of the in-group to assign negative behaviours to others (e.g. 'Yah host is a faggot who want just people who trade material') and to suggest that the community as a whole held a negative view of something (e.g. 'No one wants to see your penis').

Van Dijk (2006:123) suggested that 'in some types of discourse, general group beliefs may influence discourse directly', for example in 'political propaganda, sermons, and other ideological discourses that feature general beliefs of a group'. Though the online paedophile community would not be categorised as political or religious, it does seem to contain a pro-paedophilia ideology which influenced the beliefs of its members (the facets of which will be explored in Section 3.2). Such an ideology must be persuasive or appealing to the group members to proliferate and so the methods for legitimising and crafting this ideology by those espousing it were investigated. Traditional propaganda tools, as used in political discourse, were found to be present within the attitudes coding. The propaganda coding book, discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.2, is located in Appendix 6. The results of applying the coding book to the offenders' challenging attitudes can be seen in Table 7.12. Though the coding book did not capture much coding here, it garnered interesting results in the supportive attitudes coding (as the same approaches were used for all types of attitudes) where the application of this framework is evaluated further.

Ten of the eighteen propaganda techniques were completely absent from the challenging attitudes expressed by offenders towards the in-group (shaded in grey in the table).

Table 7.12: Coding counts and data examples for propaganda techniques used in challenging in-group attitudes.

Propaganda Techniques	Data Examples	No. of Codes within In-Group Challenging Attitudes
Appeal to Fear or Prejudice	7.100. The problem I find if any contacts are from the Zoom prob are the Chems talking not the pervs	15
Name Calling or Labelling	7.101. Yah host is a faggot	9
Loaded Language	7.102. kiddis is disgusting	4
Reductio ad Hitlerum	7.103. asked last night in the sk groups but full of vanilla idiots. One of them told me than <5 is holy forbidden lol	2
Flag-Waving	7.104. Not the good hardcore like us	1
Casual Oversimplification	7.105. Because of all the rules the group will be dying out	1
Thought-Terminating/Cliché	7.106. Hit and miss really	1
Bandwagon	7.107. They are out there Pedos everywhere	1
Exaggeration or Minimisation		0
Repetition		0
Doubt		0
Slogans		0
Appeal to Authority		0
Black-and-White Fallacy/Dictatorship		0
Whataboutism		0
Red Herring		0
Obfuscation/Intentional Vagueness/Confusion		0
Straw Man		0

Additionally, four of the techniques appeared only once each (bandwagon, thought-terminating/cliché, casual oversimplification, flag-waving) and reductio ad Hitlerum appeared just twice. This may be due to many of these techniques often being used to present the speaker's side favourably while challenging attitudes involved criticising the community and in-fighting, in a way. However, there were a few more instances of the last three techniques: loaded language (n=4), name calling or labelling (n=9), and appeals to fear or prejudice (n=15). Loaded language appeared a few times alongside the offenders' uses of negative impoliteness (scorning or belittling others with

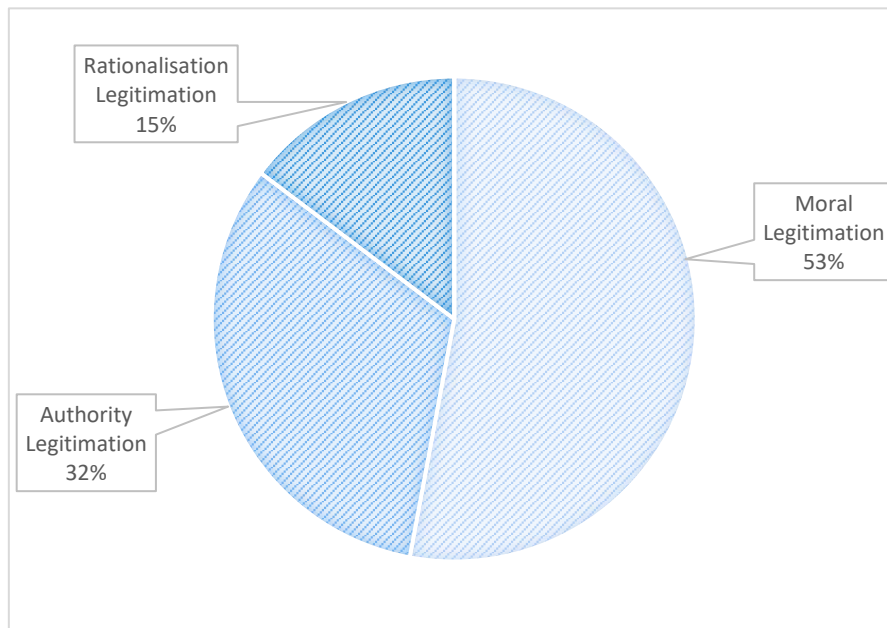
emphatic language). Various people or groups were targeted by the offenders' use of the name calling/labelling propaganda technique. In challenging attitudes, as can be seen in example 7.101, this was predominantly through offenders calling each other insults/slurs during criticism.

Appealing to fear/prejudice was the most prevalent propaganda technique here, often being used to facilitate the diminishing of some offenders to promote others. The offenders engaging in selective disassociation sometimes tried to ally themselves with others/their audience by appealing to their prejudices against other types of offenders (as in example 7.100 where the 'Chems' refer to offenders who take illegal drugs to facilitate abuse). *Othering* in challenging attitudes between the in-group appeared 15 times and often overlapped with this propaganda technique: e.g. offenders disparaged a group because it didn't contain CSAM of young enough victims; called a group too 'vanilla'; complained about the victim gender of some groups; and asserted that other offenders were not as 'real'/'likeminded'/'hard core' as them.

To confidently convey their stances to others and proliferate an ideology, the offenders sometimes made use of legitimisation techniques. The different ways in which offenders attempted to validate and reinforce their beliefs when expressing them to others can reveal what sources, rationale, and argumentation community members valued. Thus, Van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimisation framework (operationalised into a coding book as discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.2) was applied to the Attitudes sub-theme (see Appendix 7 for coding book). Figure 7.5 shows the overall distribution of the four main legitimisation techniques used in attitudes challenging to the in-group. As the chart shows, no forms of mythopoesis (legitimation conveyed through narratives) ever appeared in this coding. However, legitimisation strategies were used from the three other overarching types: rationalisation (n=5), authority (n=11), and moral (n=18).

Moral evaluation being the most prevalent affirms the existence of an underlying pro-paedophilia ideology in the community as this involved legitimisation by referencing value systems.

Figure 7.5: Legitimation usage in in-group challenging attitudes.



There were many legitimation strategies which fell under these four main types, as can be seen in Table 7.13. Alongside mythopoesis, the legitimation techniques shaded in grey were not found within the challenging attitudes coding.

Table 7.13: Coding counts and data examples for legitimation techniques used within attitudes that challenged the in-group.

Legitimation Type	Data Examples	No. of Codes within In-Group Challenging Attitudes
Authority Legitimation –		11
Custom:		0
Conformity		0
Tradition		0
Authority:		10
Personal	7.108. P_225 What is nepi anyway? ? P_230 Hahaha someone attracted to some nice tight smooth young boy and/or girl holes P_230 At least that's what I've come to learn lol	1
Impersonal	7.109. You want to stay [P_1665] Follow the rules	9
Commendation:		1

Expert	7.110. No need to be a douche about it I was one of the first people in this group I lost everything when my house caught fire	1
Role Model		0
Moral Legitimation –		18
Evaluation	7.111. Shame this room is too fucking quiet but great to connect	12
Abstraction		0
Comparison:		6
Positive	7.112. <i>P_111</i> I haven't really ever met a guy like you who's like me <i>P_111</i> All the others are lightweight <i>P_111</i> Too shy or boring <i>P_111</i> Not like you	3
Negative	7.113. So hard to find anybody trustly : missing [name of an offender]	3
Rationalisation Legitimation –		5
Instrumental:		1
Goal Orientation		0
Means Orientation	7.114. I like a joint now and then. Smoke fags aye Wouldn't mind some sniff to get me going too. Makes me superpervy.	1
Effect Orientation		0
Theoretical	7.115. One of them told me than <5 is holy forbidden lol	4
Mythopoesis –		0
Moral Tale		0
Cautionary Tale		0

Techniques which were used by offenders from the rationalisation legitimisation category were means oriented instrumental legitimisation (n=1) and theoretical legitimisation (n=4). The latter of these refers to when something was justified by providing a definition for it, using idioms, or referring to some kind of inherent truth (e.g. saying something was simply 'forbidden'). Authority legitimisation strategies used were expert commendation (n=1) and referencing personal (n=1) or impersonal (n=9) authority. Impersonal authority legitimisation referred to the authority of rules,

regulations, and behavioural guidelines – in the case of the online paedophile community this meant community rules for conduct which offenders were criticised for breaking.

Moral legitimisation (the most used type in challenging attitudes) manifested through positive or negative comparison and evaluation. There were an equal number of positive and negative comparisons (n=3 each) used to legitimise the beliefs of offenders criticising the in-group, often contrasting themselves with others. Moral evaluation was the most employed legitimisation strategy here (n=12), which aligned with the evaluation component of stancetaking in these interactions. Offenders used evaluative adjectives to critique aspects of the paedophile community. However, despite the presence of comments which challenged the offenders own community, attitudes in support of paedophilia which praised the community were more prevalent in the dataset.

3.2. Supportive Attitudes

Existing research into the online paedophile community has highlighted the danger presented by offenders congregating in online spaces where they proliferate cognitive distortions and offence-supportive beliefs that could escalate their criminal behaviours and facilitate rationalising abuse. Huikuri and Insoll (2022:6), when examining dark-web paedophile communities, identified ‘cognitive distortions with which child sexual abusers support each other’s deviant behaviour’ and consequently ‘maintain illegal actions’. The dissemination of a pro-paedophilia ideology within the community appeared alongside the offenders expressing their perspectives on the community, groups they were in, types of offenders, and their own self-image. In their research on the right-wing online community *Stormfront*, Bowman-Grieve (2009:1005) observed that ‘regular community members pride themselves on their commitment to the community and the activities they pursue, that is, communicating with others, disseminating their truth, creating a place where others can come to learn, and offering validation to others on their ideological beliefs’. Though this research was not on paedophiles, it may be applicable to broader online communities. The offenders’ *truth* in

this case would be their offence-supportive beliefs and rationalisations to justify their illegal behaviours. Offenders in the dataset also offered validation for each other’s ideological beliefs. In total, there were 245 instances of attitudes expressed by offenders in support of the in-group paedophile community/paedophilia.

As with challenging attitudes, categories of supportive attitudes were coded within the Attitudes sub-theme (see Appendix 47 for coding book). The results of this analysis can be seen in Table 7.14.

Table 7.14: Coding counts and data examples for categories of supportive attitudes towards the in-group.

Supportive Attitude Types	Data Examples	No. of Codes
Affection or Encouragement	7.116. Please don't stop ever bro	133
Pride and Self-Image	7.117. Btw it is not your penis at such it is your pedophile mans cock	44
Appreciation for CSAM	7.118. Needs to be framed	33
Legitimising Abuse	7.119. How it should be, all of them abused. Our right	33
Praising Support/Safe Space	7.120. Your support and PD need are greatly appreciated	30
Disavowing Alternative	7.121. If it ain't Nepi I won't get boned any more	25
Group/Chat/Platform Quality	7.122. There have been some good posting here mate lately	16
Victim-Blaming	7.123. It deserve it, bro. His fault	15
Admiration for Expert or Famous Offenders	7.124. [name of an offender] was a hero	12
Superiority	7.125. we are of a rare breed	9

Supportive attitudes which declared paedophiles were superior to others (whether non-paedophiles or other offenders) were the least common category (n=9). Interestingly, Huikuri and Insoll (2022:5) found this sentiment to be far more prevalent in their dark-web fora research, referencing the ‘constantly repeated ethos of pedophiles being superior to the mainstream, which, again, is used to justify CSA’. This attitude may have been less common in the present study due to the dearth of offenders even discussing non-paedophiles/the out-group in these chatlogs – they mentioned them so rarely than it was also rare for them to make direct comparisons. However, offenders expressed

admiration for and glorified expert or (purportedly) famous offenders (n=12): e.g. '[name of an offender] was a hero'. Even if they did not directly compare themselves with non-paedophiles, they were asserting superiority in more implicit ways like pedestalling certain offenders.

Offenders seemingly attempted to justify their abusive behaviours by shifting the responsibility to the victim (n=15) e.g. 'That's what it deserves..'. Woodhams et al. (2021:9) also found offenders referring to children 'as objects whose purpose was to serve the sexual needs of others, and, in some cases, as being 'deserving' of the abuse' – suggesting that this was because the offenders were 'likely characterized by entitlement, and a lack of empathy and remorse'. The common perspective throughout many of these victim-blaming messages was that victims were inhuman or at fault and so the offenders could treat them in any way they liked (regardless of morality, empathy, and legality). In contrast, O'Halloran and Quayle (2010) found that common justifications in the 'boy love' forum included denying the harm of CSA and implying CSA was beneficial to victims. Similar themes, of perceiving consent in victims and minimising the harm of abuse, were also found in the offence-supportive beliefs of child sex offenders analysed by Paquette and Cortoni (2020). This sentiment did appear in some instances where offenders who were victims of abuse themselves in childhood claimed they had no ill-effects as a consequence, but it was rare for offenders to use those justifications here.

Offenders also positively evaluated the quality of group-chats/platforms (n=16). Sometimes these positive comments appeared alongside the negative challenging attitudes on the same topic, discussed in Section 3.1, where offenders asserted what were good or bad places to access CSAM or find an active community: e.g. 'Try the [group name] group sometimes is better than [group name] group'. Exclusively positive feedback on group-chats was also given to encourage members, e.g. 'You have a great group keep it going'. Offenders also praised paedophilia by disavowing the alternative to it (n=25), generally through assertions that they could not get sexual gratification any other way (e.g. 'Nothing else get me boned'). O'Halloran and Quayle (2010:81)

claimed in their study that excuses were 'so rare because an excuse is a type of account in which the individual admits that behaviour is wrong but denies being fully responsible for it'. They found instead that, because the offenders in the 'boy love' forum asserted that sexually abusing children was not wrong, excuses were 'counterproductive to their objectives and so are not employed'. Explicit excuses were also uncommon in this dataset, but the offenders claiming that they had no alternative to doing CSA/viewing CSAM for sexual gratification were in a sense making excuses for their behaviour. They cited similar justifications as the addiction/reliance motivation discussed in Chapter 5 Section 4.

Offenders sought out likeminded individuals with which to share their struggles, interests, and rationalisations. The online paedophile community provided a safe space, in their view, away from the judgement of society where they could discuss their illicit desires and criminal behaviours. Offenders praised this support-group aspect of the community (n=30). O'Halloran and Quayle (2010:80) claimed, when looking at the 'boy lovers' support forum, that 'the sense of "us versus them" that is established by website members enhances the support offered by pro-paedophile contributors to each other'. This opposition with the out-group/non-paedophiles likely increases the isolation offenders may feel from wider-society and makes them more susceptible to radicalisation by the community – leading to them viewing the online offender community as their social scene, moral compass, and support-network. One offender in these chatlogs suggested that sharing their paedophilic interests and identity with likeminded others allowed them to cope with their secrecy and behaviours: 'Let me tell you in all honestly I know how difficult and hard it is to cope and manage with it , just hope I take some of the hardship away by talking and sharing who we are'.

Offenders sought to normalise and legitimise the sexual abuse of children in the community through their offence-supportive statements (n=33). Winder et al. (2015:178) claimed that if this messaging was 'allowed to go unchecked, this will inhibit the offenders understanding

and accepting their deviant preferences and risk, potentially exacerbating their likelihood of committing contact offences, if such opportunities arise'. The two main methods for doing this were asserting that paedophiles were entitled to use children for sexual purposes ('How it should be, all of them abused. Our right') and suggesting that because they enjoyed being sexually abused as a child then all children must ('I was started at 9 . So lucky and never regrets'). Despite a prior study into CSAM-offenders finding that 'the majority (83%) of the offender group acknowledged that viewing child pornography contributed to the victimization of children, and that the majority of individuals depicted (86%) were not willing participants' (Steel et al., 2023:1029), the consensus in the present dataset appeared to be different. Offenders in these chatlogs not only used victim-blaming practices and dehumanising language, but they also performed attempts to legitimise the abuse through rationalisations that depicted victims as consenting or just ignored victims' agency all together. They disseminated this sentiment within the group, thus furthering the pro-paedophilia ideology which underpinned these beliefs.

Offenders also expressed appreciation for CSAM to normalise or praise paedophilia and the community (n=33). They pushed for others in the community to be more active and praised those who did so (e.g. 'You are so good pedo bro'). Members expressed pride in their identities and a positive self-image (n=44), tying flattery in with their ideology and saying, for example, that 'It shouldn't even be wrong. These are sexy thoughts!'. Offenders openly expressed pride in their paedophilia ('We are proud peds, bro') and sought to make others feel the same ('never feel ashamed'). These assertions contrasted with the portrayal of paedophiles in wider society, potentially prompting their extravagant statements of positivity about their sexual interests ('I feel so much alive and full of energy been a pd').

Similar messaging occurred in the most common supportive attitude type: offenders expressing affection or encouragement for each other's identities or offending behaviours (n=133). Offenders likely felt compelled in the community to combat the aforementioned negative portrayal

from wider society and so actively encouraged each other through assertions of superiority, compliments, and praise. Offenders expressed affection and solidarity towards each other for their shared paedophilic identities (e.g. 'You are a great geezer' and 'You have good taste , hope we keep in touch'), as well as encouraging them to continue their criminal behaviours (see example 7.116). All of these messages contained positive portrayals of paedophilia, often presenting it as a valued aspect of the user's identity (particularly to the online community they joined). This sympathetic and reassuring environment was attractive to paedophiles who cited difficulties in keeping their paedophilia a secret or resented wider society: e.g. offenders who claimed 'With a no perv the problem is sex, u know. And keep the secret', discussed 'how difficult and hard it is to cope and manage with it', and sought a life 'free of confrontations'.

As with challenging attitudes, coding books which investigated the conveyance of these supportive attitudes and their dissemination within the community were applied to the data. Results of coding for facework in the supportive attitudes expressed can be found in Appendix 48. Amongst the most common self-oriented facework categories found was offenders presenting themselves as grateful (n=60). They did this through thanking speech acts ('Thanks bro appreciate it'), emphasising how much they valued other offenders/their help ('I treasure every second and note with you'), and praise ('You have good knowledge , so good to know you and have you as a friend'). They presented themselves as friendly in these interactions 180 times ('Luv ya bro'), adding to the portrayal of the community as a welcoming, supportive space. Offenders also boasted while expressing their support for the community (n=95), often when bragging about sexual abuse they had done: e.g. 'The power of us and our dicks' and 'This one had it'. Frequent boasting likely reinforced the offenders' positive self-image and facilitated the community-wide glorification of paedophilia/CSA.

Similarly, offenders who regularly constructed their virility as part of their identities foregrounded sexual interests/experiences as a part of performing community membership. There were 322 instances of offenders portraying themselves as virile while expressing attitudes that were

supportive of the in-group: e.g. 'Don't care what damage I do as long as I'm balls deep'. In terms of other-oriented facework strategies, offenders predominantly employed positive politeness features when expressing supportive attitudes (n=247) like compliments ('U got best taste ever, bro'). They also made statements of solidarity/friendship, as would be expected in messages that praised the community, such as 'You are not alone !!' and 'Good man! I'm the same'.

Offenders took supportive stances towards the community: positively evaluating aspects of it and asserting shared, collective views which united members (see Appendix 49 for coding results). In-group supportive stancetaking by offenders often positively evaluated CSA and those committing contact abuse crimes: 'I envy them', 'Your family are the best so sexy', and 'what a good mum...an a lucky lad'. In the first example, an offender positioned himself (the stance subject) as envious of a prolific paedophile ring ('them', the stance objects), while in the second example a family where the two parents sexually abused their children were evaluated by the superlative 'the best' and called 'so sexy'. The third example shows an offender evaluating another as 'a good mum' for sexually abusing her son, who he also called 'lucky' – taking the stance that the sexual abuse was a positive, aspirational thing that the victim was fortunate to have experienced. Offenders also took stances on CSAM content to express their support of CSA, for example evaluating 'curling toes during bate' (the stance object) as 'awesome' when depicted in CSAM. Elsewhere another offender asserted that a victim in a piece of CSAM ('he', the stance object) 'needs fuckin raped', suggesting that the victim deserved to be sexually abused and taking the stance that this was a necessity (a *need*).

Offenders also attributed stances to the out-group, other offenders, and victims when expressing their views on the in-group. In one example, an offender positioned themselves as having accepted their paedophilia: 'I just recently allowed myself to accept my so called perversion'. However, this asserts that others (the out-group non-paedophiles) negatively evaluated their identity and viewed it as a 'perversion', via the inclusion of 'so called' (which implies that

‘perversion’ was the others’ word and they disagreed). However, offenders describing the views of the out-group was uncommon, whereas them assigning stances to victims was more prevalent. Offenders sometimes used their construction of the victim’s perspective, through assigning stances to them, as arguments in favour of paedophilia. In one example, an offender attempted to legitimise CSA by suggesting that his son was a willing participant in the abuse: ‘Daddy had a long day and his boy is so good at helping him unwind’. He implied that the victim wanted to help him ‘unwind’, evaluating this perspective positively as ‘so good’.

As discussed earlier, offenders also frequently constructed shared stances through collective pronouns which asserted that certain things were communally held beliefs: e.g. ‘We a have no regrets and we are impotent without any’. Alignment between offenders was also often asserted through collective pronouns and other-stance attribution: e.g. ‘We are very much the same’. Conversely, stance alignment through other-stance attribution could be suggested without collective pronouns, e.g. ‘You like it as much as me’. Alignment also occurred through individual stancetaking, where the speaker expresses agreement following another taking a stance: e.g. ‘I know the feeling’, ‘I’ll fukking join you bro’, and ‘I luv that’.

Extract 7.126 demonstrates two offenders engaging in stance alignment while expressing affection towards each other, pride in their paedophilic identities, and praising the support of the online community.

7.126.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_003]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	And no shame or remorse with you , NEVER !!!
2	P_003	Never, we accept what we are and we share our more intimate feelings to
3		each other
5	P_001	I honestly have been so intimate and happy to share my deepest needs with
6		someone like with you
7	P_003	Same, trust in you and glad to talk about it to u who don't judge me . Full
8		time hiding it and relaxed when telling it to u

In line 1, P_001 used an elided imperative directive to instruct P_003 to never feel 'shame or remorse' for their identity. In response, P_003 agreed and asserted that 'we accept what we are and we share our more intimate feelings to each other'. They used collective pronouns to attribute this attitude to both offenders in the exchange, advocating for the acceptance of their paedophilia. In line 7, P_003 praised the fact that P_001 did not 'judge' them (assigning this perspective to them). These offenders both expressed appreciation for the support they found in one another (lines 5-8), showing gratitude for being able to share their 'deepest needs' with someone who was likeminded that they could 'trust'. In lines 7-8, P_003 contrasted this positive relationship with the experiences they had in wider society, claiming that they were 'Full time hiding it' usually but were 'relaxed' when interacting with other offenders. This positions the online paedophile community as a refuge where offenders were their authentic selves and ceased their usual identity performance to outsiders – making this study's look behind the curtain at these interactions all the more imperative.

Propaganda techniques were employed by offenders when constructing their pro-paedophilia ideology to persuade others and justify their beliefs. Table 7.15 shows the results for applying the propaganda coding book to supportive attitudes. The techniques of doubt, slogans, whataboutism, *reductio ad Hitlerum*, red herring, obfuscation/intentional vagueness/confusion, and straw man (shaded in grey) never appeared in the supportive attitudes coding, while black-and-white fallacy/dictatorship and casual oversimplification only appeared once each. However, overall there were 140 instances of propaganda tools being used to bolster the offenders' positive statements about the in-group community/paedophilia. In contrast to the results of the challenging attitudes analysis, the majority of the propaganda techniques were present (11 out of 18). Though it may be affected by there being slightly higher coding for supportive than challenging attitudes, it is also logical that community members advocating for the normalisation of paedophilia and attempting to induct others into their pro-offending ideology would employ more tools of persuasion and argumentation.

Table 7.15: Coding counts and data examples for propaganda techniques used in supportive in-group attitudes.

Propaganda Techniques	Data Examples	No. of Codes within In-Group Supportive Attitudes
Repetition	7.127. Good taste 7.128. We have good taste 7.129. You have extremely good taste	52
Flag-Waving	7.130. we are of a rare breed	22
Loaded Language	7.131. It hurts to the core leaving any groups now and loosing good stuff	13
Exaggeration or Minimisation	7.132. Years ago it was just every so often , now adays there is nothing else that matter	13
Appeal to Fear or Prejudice	7.133. free of confrontations	13
Appeal to Authority	7.134. I am older than you , i was started early , in the last 6 , 7 years I gone for lower and lower age wise	11
Thought-Terminating/Cliché	7.135. It feels so natural	6
Name Calling or Labelling	7.136. Don't the freaks come out at night? ?	5
Bandwagon	7.137. There's more people at it than people realise	3
Casual Oversimplification	7.138. <i>P_169</i> That's what makes little boy pee pee grow big and strong <i>P_142</i> Really? <i>P_169</i> Yes <i>P_152</i> You have experience? <i>P_169</i> Cum all over boy pee pee and make him rub it in <i>P_142</i> I wonder if I would have been bigger if they did that too me	1
Black-and-White Fallacy/Dictatorship	7.139. <i>P_001</i> The bitch can die <i>P_032</i> It needs to for our dicks	1
Doubt		0
Slogans		0
Whataboutism		0
Reductio ad Hitlerum		0
Red Herring		0
Obfuscation/Intentional Vagueness/Confusion		0
Straw Man		0

Bandwagon, where one attempts to persuade the listener to join in with an idea or action because others/the majority are doing so, was used on three occasions by offenders. In all three instances it was implied that paedophilia was more prevalent than people know: 'There's more people at it than people realise', 'Pedos everywhere', and 'Nepi is an international language'. This attempt to normalise paedophilia and to exaggerate the numbers of those who identify this way may be used to reassure offenders in the community that they were not a societal out-group and should therefore not feel shame or try to combat their behaviours. The suggestion was that because everyone (or many people, according to these statements) was doing it, it could not be that bad/harmful. Alternatively, it may be a *strength-in-numbers* argument.

The offenders used the name calling/labelling propaganda technique in a few instances (n=5), either to playfully refer to each other ('you are a beast') or once to disavow the alternative to paedophilia (calling sex with adults 'ridiculous'). Cliché was employed by offenders (n=6) to construct justifications for paedophilia which discouraged critical thought, in favour of appealing to common sense arguments. Example 7.135 in the table shows an offender claiming that paedophilia 'feels so natural': implying that it was part of the natural order of things and thus encouraging blind acceptance from the listener. Another user repurposed an idiom, "spare the rod, spoil the child" (which advocates for the benefits of corporal punishment) to instead make a comment on CSA: 'God don't you know spare the gob, or you spoil the child....! Or something like that.... Really like that!'. This message was sent in a group-chat in response to a discussion on orally sexually abusing children, where the offender used a bastardisation of the saying to suggest that not sexually abusing a child orally would have negative consequences for them later on (that it would 'spoil the child').

Offenders appealed to authority figures (n=11) and to each other's fears/prejudices (n=13) to convey their supportive attitudes. Generally, they cited personal authority (their own experiences) to validate their views on the benefits of paedophilia, which is discussed shortly as a legitimisation strategy. Additionally, they used the existing judgements and perceptions of other

offenders to reinforce their victim-blaming, pro-paedophilia rhetoric. Example 7.133 illustrates an offender claiming to want to be 'free' of the 'confrontations' that they usually experienced from wider society (likely a shared experience between members), which only the paedophile community they were lauding facilitates. Othering appeared 29 times within the attitudes offenders expressed in support of the in-group paedophile community, often to appeal to existing prejudices. This predominantly consisted of othering victims to legitimise abuse through the aforementioned objectification, dehumanisation, and reductive generalisations (e.g. 'A smooth hole is a smooth hole', 'a lil slut', and 'a nb'), as well as positioning paedophiles as superior to non-paedophiles/other paedophiles in order to portray themselves favourably (e.g. 'Not many like us about bro').

The propaganda techniques of exaggeration/minimisation and using loaded language were both found 13 times in the supportive attitudes coding. The former of these never appeared in challenging attitudes, but was used by offenders in their supportive attitudes to express hyperbolic praise towards the community or exaggerate how offenders felt about paedophilia: e.g. 'That is heaven', 'cannot live without it nowadays', and 'Nothing else matters'. Loaded language was used similarly by offenders in exaggerating their feelings or the positive aspects of the in-group through strongly emotional language to impact the audience. Offenders claimed complete impotence without paedophilia ('fucking impotent with other kind of stuff'), engaged in idolisation of other offenders ('Bro you are my hero'), and spoke in absolutes ('Ur the perfect Perv dad').

Flag-waving (where individuals play on a strong sense of community or loyalty to a group to justify/promote an action) was the second most used technique in supportive attitudes (n=22). There were almost patriotic (towards the community) sentiments that offenders espoused. Statements which expressed pride in their shared identities ('we are addicted and proud'), exalted in them ('HAIL PEDO KILLER BROTHER'), and harped on their superiority over others ('we are of a rare breed') fed into the pro-paedophilia ideology which emerged across the chatlogs. Lorenzo-Dus (2023:148) affirmed that 'in digital ideological grooming, groomer and target are regularly

constructed as part of the same in-group, one to which the target may already belong (but perhaps not yet be sufficiently committed) or may join'. The presence of flag-waving supports a community feeling amongst offenders and a possible radicalisation pathway, due to the similarities with other extremist groups online (discussed in Chapter 2 Section 4.4).

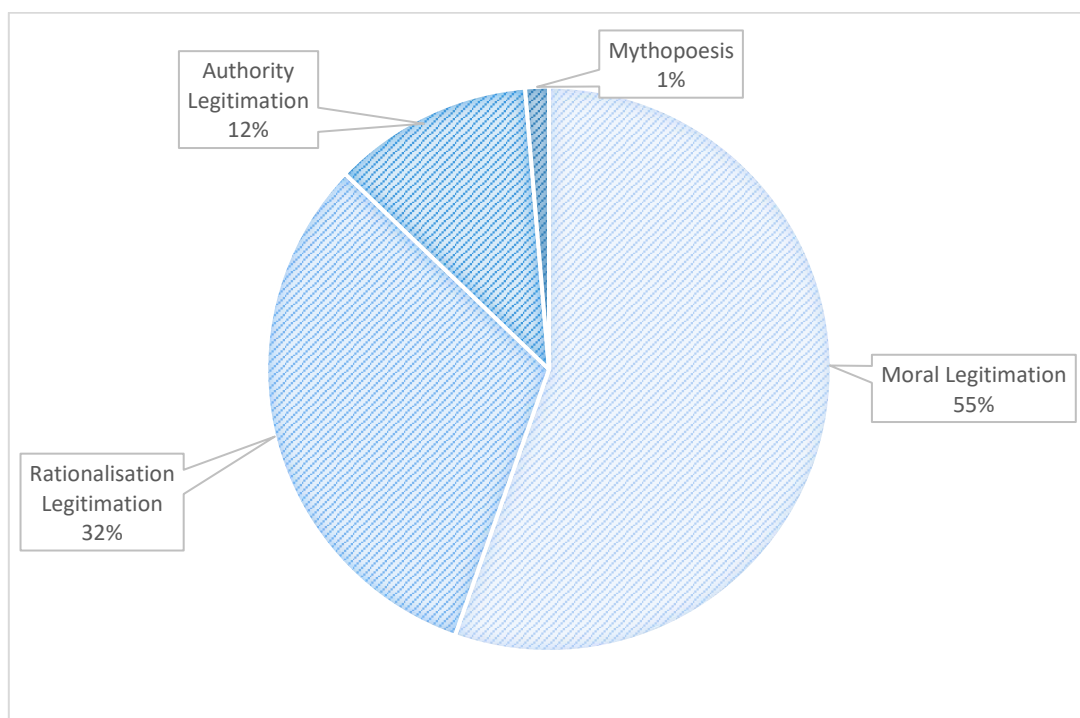
The most salient propaganda technique was repetition (n=52), which contrastingly never appeared in the offenders' expressions of challenging attitudes. Repetition was used overwhelmingly to reiterate positive evaluations of paedophilic sexual preferences and CSAM. As can be seen in examples 7.127-129, the compliment of having 'good taste' was commonly conveyed. There was variation in terms of the adjective used in this evaluation (e.g. 'impeccable taste'), and qualifiers were sometimes included (e.g. 'You have extremely good taste'), but overall the same sentiment was repeated.

Despite the presence of these eleven propaganda techniques in supportive attitudes, propaganda methods were not overly prevalent in the offenders' expressions of their beliefs. Many of the propaganda tools were uncommon in both supportive and challenging attitudes, with relatively low coding for most, and some propaganda techniques were never found at all in either attitude type. A coding book derived from traditional propaganda techniques usually applied to political or news discourse is not a perfect fit here for several reasons. Firstly, it was formulated based on research into political/new discourse and so was not intended for looking at other types of persuasion like in online paedophile communities. Due to this, some of the techniques would be highly unlikely to appear in the context of offenders discussing the in and out-groups, such as slogans (which are far more applicable to a political campaign than a heterogenous group of paedophiles discussing their identities). Additionally, the purpose of this online paedophile community did not appear to be debate about the morality of CSA, or an argument between opposing parties on these issues. It was more centred around offenders finding support, encouragement, chances to learn skills, exploring sexual fantasies, and access to illegal materials for

the purposes of sexual gratification. In this context – though there were some opportunities for sharing beliefs, persuasion, and ideological discussion – traditional propaganda tools generally would not come into play. However, the presence of some propaganda technique usage in these attitudes (especially supportive ones) does suggest that there was indeed an element of persuasion or indoctrination within the offenders’ community interactions.

Further evidence of efforts to convince others within the offenders’ supportive attitudes can also be found in their use of legitimation to reinforce their opinions. This was examined via the legitimation coding book. The distribution of coding across the four overarching legitimation types can be seen in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6: Legitimation usage in in-group supportive attitudes.



As shown in the chart, mythopoesis (n=2) was briefly used in the supportive attitudes despite being absent from the challenging ones. The distribution and salience of the other three legitimation types was also different from their use in challenging attitudes. Rationalisation was used more than authority legitimation (n=47 and n=17, respectively), which was a reversal from the order in challenging attitudes and an increase in the prevalence of both (from 11 to 17 instances of

authorisation and 5 to 47 instances of rationalisation). However, moral legitimation was again the most used type and made up over half of the legitimation coding (n=82).

Table 7.16 shows the full breakdown of coding results for the legitimation strategies which fell under these four main types.

Table 7.16: Coding counts and data examples for legitimation techniques used within attitudes that supported the in-group.

Legitimation Type	Data Examples	No. of Codes within In-Group Supportive Attitudes
Authority Legitimation –		17
Custom:		0
Conformity		0
Tradition		0
Authority:		14
Personal	7.140. I was started at 9 . So lucky and never regrets	13
Impersonal	7.141. its understandable why they'd give someone the boot	1
Commendation:		3
Expert		0
Role Model	7.142. You wanna read about [name of an offender]?	3
Moral Legitimation –		82
Evaluation	7.143. Bro you getting better by the day	77
Abstraction	7.144. Daddy had a long day and his boy is so good at helping him unwind	1
Comparison:		5
Positive	7.145. so good like dogs on Heath	5
Negative		0
Rationalisation Legitimation –		47
Instrumental:		37
Goal Orientation	7.146. Don't care what damage I do as long as I'm balls deep	7
Means Orientation	7.147. P_001 The bitch can die P_032 It needs to for our dicks	27
Effect Orientation	7.148. I feel so much alive and full of energy been a pd	3
Theoretical	7.149. It feels so natural	10
Mythopoesis –		2
Moral Tale		0

Cautionary Tale	7.150. God don't you know spare the gob, or you spoil the child....! Or something like that....	2
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Mythopoesis almost never appeared in the chatlogs, except for two instances of offenders using cautionary tales when expressing attitudes supporting the in-group. Cautionary tales are told to convey the consequences of not conforming to the norms of social practices or rules. However, in this dataset they were used to justify CSA by suggesting that the sexual abuse or violence was a consequence of the child-victim's actions (victim-blaming) or a necessity. One of the two examples involves an offender saying it was the 'fault' of a victim for being on the receiving end of violent abuse because 'It deserve it, bro'. The other (example 7.150) was the aforementioned example of an offender repurposing a mythopoetic idiom.

Authority legitimation was used more than mythopoesis but was still somewhat uncommon (n=17). Authorisation through citing customs (of conformity or tradition) never appeared in the attitudes coding, with the majority in supportive attitudes coming from im/personal authority (n=14) and role model commendations (n=3). Challenging attitudes included more impersonal than personal authority (9:1), whereas supportive used more personal authority than impersonal (13:1). This personal authority was generally constructed through offenders citing their personal experiences in a field, such as using their history of childhood abuse to assert that CSA was not harmful (as in example 7.140). In the challenging attitudes, no role model commendations were used (only one instance of an expert commendation), whereas here there were no expert commendations at all. A role model recommendation was used to suggest that others should follow the examples of role models/leaders (who may be members of the peer group) as 'the mere fact that these role models adopt a certain kind of behaviour, or believe certain things, is enough to legitimize the actions of their followers' (Van Leeuwen, 2007:95).

Example 7.142 of role model legitimization comes from a longer exchange that can be seen in extract 7.151 between two offenders. Some messages between lines 3 and 4 which consisted of the offenders locating and sending a URL are omitted for brevity.

7.151.

[3_PP001_P_001_P_003]

Line No.	User	Message
1	P_001	You wanna read about [name of an offender]?
2	P_003	[image]
3	P_003	Yah what happened? [...]
4	P_001	[URL]
5	P_001	You will recognised some
6	P_003	Yah bro we must be careful. Otherwise cannot resist getting hard just
7		watching him.
8	P_001	Me too . So sexy n hard core Pedo
9	P_003	And reading what they did. Wow dripping here
10	P_001	They were the best you know and you seen the room
11	P_003	Yah stroked lots with them
12	P_001	We did and it was the best
13	P_003	Remember [name of an offender] sessions with [name]?
14	P_001	Remind me
15	P_003	Lil black thing in live
16	P_001	Wish we recorded [name of an offender] was good wish he was still about
17	P_003	Yah same , sexy pdo, loved hear him talking ped
18	P_001	Such a proud pedophile jet the recollection it get me boned and stroking
19		hard here

In this interaction P_001 initiated discussion of another offender who the two users knew of as a purportedly famous paedophile that was arrested contemporaneously. In line 1, P_001 offered to send a news article link to P_003 who viewed it and claimed to become aroused due to the descriptions of the crimes ('Wow dripping here', line 9). The article concerned a paedophile ring who were apprehended and had similar sexual interests/victim preferences as these two offenders. In lines 8-19, P_001 and P_003 reminisced about viewing livestreamed abuse by these offenders, praising them to assign role model status to them: 'So sexy n hard core', 'They were the best you know', 'it was the best', '[name of an offender] was good wish he was still about', 'loved hear him talking ped', and 'Such a proud pedophile'. The support and admiration for the actions of these

revered offenders was used to legitimise their criminal behaviours (behaviours that P_001 and P_003 aspired to replicate).

The amount of rationalisation legitimisation increased substantially between challenging and supportive attitudes from only 5 instances to 47. Most of this coding came from instrumental rationalisation (n=37), with the remainder being theoretical (n=10). Theoretical rationalisations used here generally expressed pro-offending arguments that claimed to be 'founded on some kind of truth, on 'the way things are'' (Van Leeuwen, 2007:103). One of Van Leeuwen's (2007:103) suggestions of a theoretical legitimisation strategy was of someone claiming that an action was 'natural', and thus correct, which was used verbatim by an offender in justifying CSA: 'It feels so natural'. Elsewhere users claimed that paedophilia was 'How it should be', their 'right', and that a child should not have been 'allowed to reach 2' years of age (implying that it *should* have been abused and killed by an offender instead).

Employed more often by offenders, however, were instrumental rationalisations – predominantly means orientated rationalisations (n=27), then goal orientated (n=7), and effect oriented (n=4). Effect orientation focused on the effect being had on someone, which could be the victim (e.g. 'He looks moany and would love to give him something to moan about') or offender (e.g. 'I feel so much alive and full of energy been a pd'). Goal orientation appeared where offenders tried to rationalise their offending or paedophilia by focusing on the importance of the goal achieved by it: e.g. being 'able to enjoy pedophile life together'. In example 7.146, one user asserted 'Don't care what damage I do as long as I'm balls deep' – foregrounding their goal of sexual gratification to justify the harm done to the victim in their view. Means orientation was employed the most by offenders where they tried to legitimise their behaviours as just 'a means to an end' (Van Leeuwen, 2007:102), suggesting that the action was just the way of doing something to achieve something else. Example 7.147 illustrates how one offender made this argument, claiming that a victim should die because 'It needs to for our dicks' (to facilitate sexual gratification). This construction of the

rationalisation removed agency from the offender and instead placed the effects as being the necessary consequences of doing the action. Most coding in supportive attitudes for means oriented rationalisations used the need for sexual gratification as the justification (e.g. 'Nothing else works for me otherwise I am almost impotent').

Moral legitimisation was the most common legitimisation type used in supportive attitudes towards the in-group (n=82). Moral evaluation dominated this coding (n=77), with a few instances of comparison (n=5) and abstraction (n=1) also appearing. All uses of comparison were positive, unlike in challenging attitudes where it was an even split between positive and negative, which is likely due to the offenders only wanting to make favourable comparisons for the in-group when expressing attitudes in support of it. Evaluation (much like in challenging attitudes) was the most prevalent individual legitimisation strategy, again aligning with the evaluative component of stancetaking. Offenders used evaluative adjectives to compliment each other for their behaviours in the community (e.g. 'Good work in the room') as well as praising aspects of their identities (e.g. 'ur a fantastic perv!!'). This positive evaluative language worked in concert with the affectionate/encouraging attitudes, flag-waving propaganda techniques, and assertions of pride/superiority to create a supportive environment within the online community that attracted offenders fearing rejection from wider society and facilitated their progression along an offending pathway (of accepting their identities, engaging in cognitive distortions, and endorsing contact abuse).

Van Dijk (2006:119) asserted that 'we might assume that not all members identify with an ideological group in the same way, and equally strongly'. Offenders employed legitimisation strategies and propaganda tools to strengthen their argumentation and find rationalisations to underpin their beliefs to convince others (or even themselves) of their ideology. As Van Dijk (2006:229) pointed out, 'although ideologies by definition are socially shared, obviously not all members of groups 'know' these ideologies equally well [...], there are differences of 'expertise' in a

group'. Therefore, some members of the community may be more prone to espousing the ideology, those 'who teach, explain, inculcate and explicitly reproduce the group ideologies' (2006:119).

Chiang (2020a) asserted that newbies often took the action of 'demonstrating alignment' where they emphasised their affiliation with the paedophile community, as well as 'its interests and ideals'. Interestingly in the present study, out of those who enacted community roles, newbies were the most critical of the in-group during their role performances. There were 20 instances of users performing the newbie role whilst expressing attitudes that challenged the community, and 19 of users performing the expert role doing this. To a lesser degree disciplinarians expressed critical attitudes (n=8), as did advice seekers (n=6), advisors (n=3), and an administrator (n=1). Overall, during role performance, more challenging attitudes were expressed by offenders than supportive (n=57:43). Users enacting the expert role expressed the most supportive attitudes towards the in-group (n=18), followed by advice seekers (n=13), advisors (n=7), and newbies (n=5). The full coding breakdown of community roles with attitudes can be seen in Appendix 50. These figures suggest that voicing one's opinions (whether critical or supportive of the in-group) and being outspoken was a part of constructing the identity of an expert offender. It also counters the suggestion that newbies were overall praising towards the community but, as these results only looked at attitude expression during role performance (and not attitudes expressed by these offenders elsewhere), it is inappropriate to make strong claims about this behaviour.

4. Conclusions

This chapter examined how offenders used the resources available to them to establish their identities as paedophiles and community members through their attempts to normalise paedophilia and their alignment with a community ideology. It addressed the second, third, and (primarily) fourth research questions to investigate further how the community was participated in, how identities were constructed, and how an ideology was proliferated. Offenders established their sexual interests to meet likeminded individuals, gain access to their desired type of CSAM, and prove

their eligibility as members. They also engaged in sexual fantasy narrative construction to facilitate sexual gratification, plan future abuse, and cement relationships with each other (often through compliments and praise).

Victim sexualisation by offenders aimed to dehumanise and objectify them through the use of impersonal or derogatory child-victim synonyms and separating the sexual abuse of their physical bodies from their personhood. Offenders also engaged in cognitive distortions via other-stance attribution to claim victims were willing participants or to assign blame for the abuse to them. Cognitive distortions and offence-supportive rationalisations were pervasive in the offenders' expressions of attitudes towards the in-group community/paedophilia (who they opined on far more than the non-paedophile out-group). The content of these attitudes suggested that offenders were willing to criticise their own community or aspects of it, but they were far more likely to do so as a means to improve their experiences within the community (by increasing participation in groups, better risk assessments, preferred CSAM, or more trading) than to criticise the pro-paedophilia ideology.

The offenders' supportive attitudes established a welcoming tone in the community where members encouraged each other, affirmed their positive self-images, and rationalised their behaviours. Expressing pride in their identities and engaging in cognitive distortions which aimed to justify sexually abusing children allowed community members to disregard the harmful effects of their actions and interact with others who supported them. The offenders in this dataset did not always negate the harmful impact of CSA – they often demonstrated awareness of it and accepted this as a necessary consequence of their needs or got sexual gratification from the violence done to victims whom they had dehumanised. Persuasion techniques in the offenders' attitudes (such as propaganda tools and legitimisation) were used to reinforce their arguments in advocating for CSA and to successfully disseminate this pro-paedophilia ideology online amongst community members who likely varied in their personal beliefs on these issues.

Lonely, self-loathing paedophiles who were aware of the illegality and harm of CSA could come across the online paedophile community when seeking out CSAM and be drawn in by the uplifting, welcoming community. It not only contained users sharing tips, illegal material, abuse experiences, sexual fantasies, and attempts to normalise CSA – but also contained users espousing the sentiment that paedophilia was not as rare or harmful as wider society claimed, that others (namely victims or ones' circumstances) were to blame, and that one should feel pride in their identity in this place where they could freely be their authentic selves. This is a dangerous radicalising environment that may lead offenders down a pathway of escalating illegal behaviours and worsening offence-supportive beliefs.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

“ave atque vale”

— *Catullus, 101*

1. Introduction

This thesis sought to illuminate an understudied and often hidden aspect of OCSAE, that of the online paedophile community, through examining offender-to-offender interactions taking place privately on clear-web social media platforms. Approaching this task from a linguistic perspective was also a somewhat novel undertaking. As will be discussed in this chapter (Sections 3 and 4), the diversification of approaches to this field and expansion of data types studied can only benefit efforts to combat CSA. This conclusionary chapter begins in Section 2 with a summary of the results found and how these answer the research questions of the thesis. The remainder of the chapter explores the implications of these results and how they could be applied practically (Section 3); addresses the limitations of the study and proposes future research directions (Section 4); and concludes the thesis (Section 5).

2. Summary of Results

The thematic analysis in Chapter 4 revealed what the main topics of conversation were in the community and common offender behaviours. The main themes found were of Community Building; Sexual Identity Construction for victims and offenders; on and offline criminal Behaviours; and Risk Assessments. The prevalence of the first two themes (which appeared in 100% and 96% of chatlogs respectively) illustrated the importance to members of building and maintaining an online community environment as well as discussing sexual interests/experiences to demonstrate their paedophilia. The themes and sub-themes present also indicated a closer similarity to the CoP dynamic than an AS – but it became clear that both classifications were insufficient.

Chapter 5 delved into the discussions offenders had about their past and future criminal activities, as well as the crimes being committed in the chatlogs. Community members guided others on how to access CSAM online (through trading in chatlogs, the dark-web, or livestreamed abuse) and victims offline (through family/relatives, physical isolation, or positions of responsibility). Although more online crimes were discussed than offline, contact abuse was seen as the end-goal by many offenders who used the community to gather knowledge of how to undertake this crime without detection and conferred on the risks involved. This sexual imperative was also referenced the most as a motivation for acting on their paedophilia. Boasts about experience abusing children, as well as evidence of users planning future crimes and seeking advice from others, showed that the community poses the threat of facilitating offenders down this offending trajectory.

Chapter 6 established that offenders formed relationships with each other to gain access to the community. Members of the community performed identity roles (using what linguistic resources were available to them) which regulated the community (e.g. Administrators and Disciplinaryans), positioned them somewhere in the loose hierarchy (e.g. Newbies and Experts), or facilitated certain behaviours (e.g. Advisors and Advice Seekers). Community rules, etiquette, and norms (like reciprocity in trading CSAM) were present to maintain the viability of the communities, demonstrate good behaviours for members, and make it a beneficial space for users. Members also indexed their community identities by using slang, proving they were aware of community-specific terms, which often related to sexual topics and paedophilia.

Finally, Chapter 7 uncovered the ways in which offenders constructed their sexual identities as paedophiles, how they referred to child-victims, and what beliefs they expressed. Offenders constructed their sexual identities to index their group membership, to access their preferred CSAM, to establish connections with likeminded offenders, to get sexual gratification, and to rationalise their predilections. Offenders spoke vastly more about their sexual likes than dislikes. The chatlogs contained many extreme, violent, deviant sexual interests and acts which juxtaposed

the avoidant language on public pro-paedophilia advocacy websites and suggests that even some of the most egregious offenders operate on the clear-web (not just the dark-web). Furthermore, the most commonly expressed sexual interest (gratification from naming paedophilia) does not appear to have been commented on before in prior literature.

Sexual interests were discussed very early on in chatlogs, which suggests that aligning interests may be a prerequisite for offender-to-offender interactions lasting beyond initial contact. Offenders often flirted with each other, expressed sexual interests in fellow offenders, and engaged in SFNs about offender-only sex acts. The offenders engaged in storytelling through narrative devices to create vivid fantasy scenarios where they could play out their sexual desires. The purposes of these SFNs were mainly sexual gratification, planning abuse, or flirting/flattery. Stylistic devices were present in the SFNs, most commonly epithets (using *paedophile* before words) and metaphors. As victims had no voice in these chatlogs, victim sexual identity construction was done entirely by offenders and reflected what the offenders thought of victims, how they viewed them in a sexual context, and what they believed they thought. They showed awareness of victims not liking sexual contact, but generally mentioned this when fetishising the lack of consent/enjoyment. Offenders referred to victims by a wide range of synonyms, many of which emphasised their small size or young ages and dehumanised victims.

Offenders expressed their support and praise for the in-group community or paedophilia mainly through expressing affection/encouragement for one another, pride in their identities, appreciation for CSAM, legitimising abuse, and praising the support of the community. Propaganda and legitimation were also employed to make a convincing argument mostly via repetition, flag-waving, and moral evaluations. Offenders criticised the in-group community at times but usually criticisms centred around improving problems with the community/platforms to make it better for them (and some in-fighting around sexual preferences/offender types). Offenders rarely

criticised their pro-paedophilia ideology or made self-hating statements. The following subsections (2.1-2.4) will address the overall research questions of the thesis through the data findings.

2.1. Research Question 1

RQ1: What types of communities are these offender communities?

In determining the classification of the online paedophile community, existing lenses were applied to see how appropriate these were in approaching this understudied online community. Features which defined Communities of Practice and Affinity Spaces were examined throughout the analysis and have been discussed in the thesis when they appeared. As shown in Table 8.1, there were themes/features which supported a CoP classification, some which supported an AS classification, some which opposed an AS classification, and some areas where a CoP fell short. These inconclusive results suggested that an AS may not be the right fit here, which could indicate that the online paedophile community was a CoP.

Table 8.1: Findings supporting or opposing community type classifications.

Themes/features supporting a CoP classification:	Themes/features opposing a CoP classification:	Themes/features supporting an AS classification:	Themes/features opposing an AS classification:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shared attitudes ➤ Shared paedophile identities ➤ Shared sexual identities ➤ Community slang, linguistic and member styles ➤ Community roles ➤ Community rules ➤ Criminal activity and limits to access ➤ CSAM trading requirements ➤ Advice/skills sharing ➤ Support networks ➤ Relationship-building 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Access to the community ➤ Anyone can enact a community role ➤ Advice/skills sharing ➤ Relationship-building ➤ A common endeavour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A lack of organised content ➤ Some form of hierarchy and roles ➤ Established and enforced rules ➤ Group identities and communally held beliefs linked to identity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Co-authored SFNs ➤ Shared experiences ➤ Minimal sociability in openings ➤ The early query of “what u into” 			
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The way offenders engaged with the community, contributed towards it, and interacted with each other also pushes the needle further towards a CoP classification. In a CoP, members have a shared learning process, propagate information, engage in activities together, and know how others can support or contribute to their shared goal. Offenders in this dataset disseminated advice or skills about offending, security measures, access methods, technology, and other topics. Wenger (2011:1) defined CoPs as ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’. Offenders formed mutually beneficial relationships, engaged in CSAM trading to achieve their goals of accessing CSAM, and planned offline abuse or engaged in sexual fantasies with one another online.

However, shared learning and the dissemination of knowledge or skills are also features of AS. In AS, participation or engagement is required to sustain the space – which can be seen in the offenders complaining of inactive users in the dataset. On the other hand, Davies (2006:220) suggested that an AS ‘has content’ which is ‘organised’. This does not apply fully to the paedophile community, nor does Gee’s (2005:225) assertion that ‘the common endeavour’ rather than an identity characteristic ‘is primary’. Although it could be argued that normalising paedophilia or abusing children is the common endeavour of the community, it is more appropriate to say that the community members are unified by their shared identity performance as paedophiles rather than a shared action or goal – in fact, often their personal goals within the community can vary (e.g. access to contact abuse versus CSAM or both, acquiring skills versus bragging about experiences, and glorifying CSA versus professing to self-deprecating thoughts). Nevertheless, while members of these communities are unified by a shared identity performance, individual members do perform somewhat different versions of this shared identity: e.g. differences in status through their

construction of community roles like newbies or experts (see Omoniyi (2006) for an exploration of identity hierarchies and access to multiple identities in different contexts). This links back to Grant and MacLeod's (2018; 2020) resource-constraint approach to identity, as not all identities or roles are available to all offenders at any given time.

Accordingly, it becomes difficult to classify this community as an AS. The community leans more towards a CoP as there were no features it flat-out did not have or opposed, unlike some AS features, but it does not capture all that was going on and is too rigid on the organisation of the community and how membership is defined or attained in this changeable online context. As there is also a problem with placing the online paedophile community solely within the realms of a CoP, more research is needed to understand these kinds of emerging online communities which could build upon the concepts of AS and CoPs in a new context.

There is some overlap with the concept of Safe Spaces online, introduced in Chapter 2 Section 4.2.1, due to offenders seeking an environment separate from the non-paedophiles who would judge and deride them. Furthermore, the online paedophile community sought to be safe and separate from not just outsiders but also those they viewed as posing a risk to them – law enforcement. The similarities extend to the structures of these communities: there were moderators and rules but also an absence of a 'rigid' structure or specific 'prescriptions' for how the community was constructed (The Roestone Collective, 2014:1360). Incel online communities have also been discussed in terms of their forums acting as Safe Spaces where members 'can make their own rules and speak their minds without being mocked, questioned and criticized' (Pelzer et al., 2021:2). However, there is some discomfort in applying the Safe Space classification to such groups as incel and paedophile communities when the concept has predominantly been applied to feminist, queer, and civil rights groups. As with AS and CoPs, there are also elements where Safe Spaces diverge from the online paedophile community and do not capture the full extent of it.

Future research should explore new types of community classifications that address the fluid structures of online shared-interest networks where some sub-groups may be rigidly organised with enforced rules and administrators, but others are free-for-all democratic groups without an imposed hierarchy or regulatory body. These are communities where membership can be attained through different avenues like trust-building via CSAM trading, disclosing personal information, or recommendations from a friend – but also by just finding out group names or passwords that grant access. Once users gain access to the community there are various pathways to advancement which are not fixed or universal, and some may never seek advancement at all (remaining low-level or lurking members). Some can advance in status by taking on roles to gain prestige this way (e.g. administrators); some advance in terms of increasing their knowledge, skills, and expertise as an offender; while others advance up the social hierarchy by bragging about their experience in CSA, grooming, contact abuse, or viewing/making the most extreme (and thus valuable) CSAM.

Membership styles exist here, such as community-specific slang which is likely acquired by time spent amongst their peers, and membership identities are built through many means (e.g. claims to paedophilic criminal activity, asserting sexual interests, praising paedophilia). However, none of these are an immutable requirement for access/membership as this could be attained by trading CSAM alone in some cases. Al Zidjaly (2019:365) concluded that research indicates ‘the numerous factors characterising digital communication [...] give way to a surplus of new forms of social integration, the kind sociolinguists never had to deal with before, resulting in new challenges for language in society research that merit immediate and adequate identification, examination, and sociolinguistic theorization’. Within these emergent online environments, it is necessary to adapt the offline CoP origins to new concepts – research that this study advocates for in light of these results.

2.2. Research Question 2

RQ2: How are online paedophile communities formed, maintained, and participated in?

The aim of this question was to explore pathways to community membership, how congregations of offenders were sustained in a volatile online climate, and what behaviours were involved in performing community membership. Offenders formed relationships between each other to gain access to the online community. Sending CSAM was usually a prerequisite for attaining membership to groups and users shared group-names or links in private chats, as well as vouching for each other. Online, CSAM was mainly accessed through community platforms (group-chats, 1-2-1 DMs, trading), so accessing the community opened more avenues for obtaining CSAM. Offenders used politeness (mainly positive politeness) and, less commonly, impoliteness strategies to navigate these interactions.

Offenders maintained and engaged with the community through various actions: such as taking on roles, implementing rules for behaviour, trading CSAM, ensuring the security of communications, and discussing topics that members saw as important (like how to approach victims, rationalisations for offending, and sexual fantasies). An adherence to rules and etiquette generally enabled an offender to participate in the community as a member because these behaviours built trust and made the user a valued asset. Good behaviour was rewarded with access, whilst bad etiquette and abnormal behaviour was met with hostility and suspicion: users could be blocked, removed from groups, have conversations abruptly ended, or be criticised by others.

Explicit and implicit rules appeared in both group-chats and DMs, but predominantly explicitly in group-chats. Rules were enforced, with punishments often involving being removed or banned from a group, and enforcements were generally hailed positively as cleaning up and maintaining the community (despite individual offenders complaining about this enforcement happening to them and criticising the enforcers). Some of those enforcing rules were users taking on specific community roles, like administrators who had special powers to control membership (but were not always liked). Newbies were the least valued and most vulnerable due to their lack of knowledge about the community and security, which suggests that these novice members should be

targeted by child-protective efforts to deter them from the community before they can advance. Furthermore, because offenders idolised expert/famous offenders who fed into their pro-offending ideologies, combatting efforts should also aim to counter this hero-worship which may lead offenders onto an escalating trajectory as they try to replicate their criminal behaviours.

While participating in the community, more online crimes were discussed/committed than offline crimes (due to the online communication medium and volume of CSAM trading). Contact abuse was by far the most common offline crime discussed, followed by incest, CSAM production, and exhibitionism/public indecency. Online crimes mainly involved CSAM trading, participation in illegal offender group-chats/platforms, using the dark-web, and violations of the OPA 1959 or CA 2003. The main purpose for talking about crimes in the chatlogs was to plan or elicit criminal activity (followed by gaining advice or skills, bragging or constructing a paedophile identity, and for fantasy/sexual gratification). Trust-building was very important to maintain mutually beneficial and long-lasting relationships between offenders in the community due to this illegal activity.

Offenders had to remain active participants in groups to avoid being removed or banned – behaviours that undercover law enforcement should replicate to infiltrate these communities. Though there were many caveats (see Chapter 5, Section 3.2), the chronological study of P_001 revealed an escalation of a user's involvement in the community over time. This suggests that offenders may be drawn in and become more reliant on the community for CSAM, support, and building meaningful relationships – or they could be spending time in the community online at the expense of their real lives. Trading CSAM demonstrated value to the community, preventing removal for inactivity, and garnered respect (thus encouraging new users to become increasingly involved with trading to cement their membership and tying CSAM trading with status advancement).

Slang terms were employed by members of the community potentially to weed-out outsiders, signal membership, and enable them to talk in code to maintain security. That the

majority of slang terms were used to represent abuse/sex suggests that they may be disguising these topics from detection or framing them a certain way (such as minimising or worsening terms to facilitate cognitive distortions or gain sexual gratification). Participants in the community frequently discussed sexual topics to share graphic fantasies, recounted past abuse stories, conveyed their sexual interests, and engaged in victim blaming/dehumanisation practices. Offenders also expressed their beliefs about different aspects of the community/paedophilia, praising elements of the community and making statements which aligned themselves with communally held values to cement their membership status.

Having investigated the pathways to accessing these communities, member behaviours, and how offenders regulated or maintained them; some points of weakness were revealed. Offenders themselves in the chatlogs referenced platforms or groups they had previously used which they claimed were no longer safe to operate in, suggesting that some countermeasures by law enforcement or social media companies to eliminate these sites/groups were indeed effective. Aspects which threaten the viability of the community can be utilised to flag up spaces/chats for review by platforms and enable infiltration by UOs (who may gather evidence on members or work to dismantle the community from within). To tackle the expansion of the community, it is the users that need to be focused on as they transmit the locations of groups and CSAM to others. Furthermore, this emphasis on building supportive, mutually beneficial relationships with each other (alongside the sometimes formulaic opening sequences which could be replicated) could be exploited by UOs for further access to groups and information.

Although many rules in the community centred around CSAM trading etiquette, a large proportion concerned maintaining the security of groups and preserving anonymity. Considering there was variation in how controlled/structured each group was, with some being tightly dictated by administrators and other being a looser free-for-all, it is possible that less regulated groups would be more vulnerable to identification and infiltration. Similarly, an understanding of trust-building

practices could aid UOs impersonating offenders and infiltrating these communities. Requirements to disclose identifying information (especially early on) to form trusting relationships between some offenders is a significant vulnerability point. Additionally, users expressing sentiments of dissatisfaction with the community, complaining about groups, or criticising other members revealed that offenders were not wholly supportive of all aspects of the community. They self-regulated and strove to improve the community through chastising bad actors, denouncing bad behaviour, and encouraging better practices when they saw problems. However, the rareness of offenders having doubts about their paedophilia or questioning their shared ideology shows that this type of ideation was either unpopular, unwelcome, or simply just uncommon amongst members.

2.3. Research Question 3

RQ3: How do offenders construct their paedophile identities and proliferate their ideologies?

The individuals participating in the online paedophile communities in this dataset performed a variety of identities. As this research question poses, the offenders in this context were creating identities as paedophiles. Their identity performances allowed them to qualify for membership to the online community; to relate to one another; to engage in sexual conversations focused on their shared interest in CSA; and possibly to freely express themselves in a way they could not outside of the community. While their identities as paedophiles were predominantly constructed through their sexual identity construction of victims and offenders (via sexual interests, sexualisation, and SFNs) or their expression of pro-paedophilia rationalisations, community membership identities were performed through a plethora of behaviours. Membership was performed by trading CSAM; demonstrating knowledge of rules and etiquette (e.g. opening sequences or security measures); exchanging advice/skills with others; engaging in discussions about CSA or the sexualisation of victims; being supportive of other members; positively portraying paedophilia; and making use of community-specific slang. Furthermore, members could additionally perform community role identities by adopting certain styles, discussing specific topics, performing duties or actions, and

positioning themselves in relation to others. These varied resources which they drew upon (corresponding with and constrained by their sociolinguistic history, their physicality, the context of the interaction, and the audience/community involved in the interaction) illustrated how identity is constructed according to Grant and MacLeod's (2018) resource-constraint model.

The offenders' beliefs were explored in Chapter 7 where links were found between denoting a certain ideology and constructing one's membership identity. Members positively evaluated the community and its components through their stancetaking, frequently demonstrating stance alignment to express shared or collective views. Persuasion techniques and supportive attitudes created a welcoming, sympathetic environment in the community that attracted offenders who would be ostracised from wider society if discovered. These sentiments and encouragement facilitated cognitive distortions, got them addicted to being around likeminded individuals, and potentially put them on a radicalising pathway of espousing a pro-paedophilia ideology online. The offenders' brazen pride in their identities possibly came about as a countermeasure to cope with societies' opposing view of them. The uses of traditional propaganda techniques and legitimisation in these sentiments suggests that the pro-paedophilia ideology was being disseminated to others and used to convince them of this perspective.

2.4. Research Question 4

RQ4: How can linguistic discourse analysis contribute to the analysis of online offender communities?

Through reviewing existing research into online offender communities in Chapters 1 and 2, it was established that most prior studies approached this field from the disciplines of criminology and psychology – with linguistic methods making up a far smaller portion of these studies. However, across Chapters 1-3, it was apparent how appropriate linguistic analysis is to this type of data (largely due to the text-based datasets, interactional nature of online conversations, and the importance of examining identity construction). Applying linguistic methods to analysing the online paedophile community (as with discourse analysis in the present study) enables the investigation to

go beyond just what is happening in these online chats, but also into how it is being done and how the offenders' linguistic choices affect their behaviours and success in the community.

The CMDA approach employed here provided a plethora of tools to use while taking on an understudied dataset, enabling the casting of a wide net with which to capture any areas of interest (and interrogating these using a variety of methods). This was beneficial due to the absence of an established approach to this kind of data from a discourse perspective and ensured that different analysis methods could be tested out on different aspects of the data to determine their appropriateness and efficacy. For example, there were times in which analysis tools were applied and subsequently discarded due to yielding no tangible conclusions and being unsuitable for the analysis undertaken (e.g. formal versus informal register was at one point investigated within the offenders' community roles performances but yielded no noticeable trends or useful conclusions). A few analysis tools were evaluated within the chapters (such as propaganda tools and legitimation), sometimes concluding that, although not a perfect fit for this context, they were a step in the right direction in approaching analysing these communities. Other established tools, like im/politeness and thematic analysis, were greatly useful in understanding the content of these chatlogs and the language choices being made by offenders. In the next section, the added value of the linguistic analyses in this thesis theoretically to the existing body of literature, and practically to CSA-prevention efforts, will be outlined. Future pathways for linguistic research into online paedophile communities will also be proposed in Section 4.

3. Implications and Applications

The results of this thesis contribute towards expanding the research pool of knowledge on online paedophile communities and address several areas of concern where there has been a dearth in the field. Furthermore, it provides a new case study for the various methods employed and aligns or contrasts with prior research on some points. Regarding the social constructionist approach which understood identities to be linguistically constructed in these online communities by offenders

drawing on the resources available to them, this study contributes by supplying a further context for this analysis (CSA offender-to-offender community chat interactions) and a novel look at an under-examined online environment. As has been noted, viewing identities as complex is not a new concept in sociolinguistics, but ‘what is new is the need to keep the theory and methodology up with the heightened degree of complexity and diversity exemplified in identity construction in increasingly digitized and translocalized contexts’ (Al Zidjaly, 2019:364). In terms of methodological observations, the thematic analysis in stage 1 provided a beneficial overview of the topics discussed and behaviours taking place within the dataset. The usefulness of this thematic framework supports the comments discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.1 by Guest et al. (2014:10) that thematic analysis is ‘the most useful’ method for capturing ‘the complexities of meaning within a textual data set’. Additionally, it was felt that the similarities to the themes in Woodhams et al. (2021) alongside the regular coding checking with the project’s supervisor and a trained second analyst effectively countered the concerns levelled against thematic analysis of researcher coding bias/unreliability. The presence of these largely similar themes, though organised differently in the coding book, supports the prior work of Woodhams et al. (2021) into the content of online paedophile communities. The somewhat novel use of analysis tools like speech acts, politeness, propaganda, legitimation techniques, self-disclosures, etc. on a dataset of online offender-to-offender interactions demonstrates a different context for these tools to be applied and adds to the diverse applications of these methods.

There are several implications for the field of OCSAE, specifically for the research consensus on online offender communities, posed by the results of this study. The dataset alone diversifies the existing pool of data types in online paedophile community research because of the chatlogs taking place on the clear-web in private spaces – contrasting with most prior studies using dark-web fora and clear-web public fora/websites. Additionally, as outlined in Chapter 2 Sections 3.3.2 and 4.5, studies into CSA interactions (whether victim-offender in grooming or offender-to-offender) have often had to make use of decoy-victim or decoy-offender datasets due to the rarity

and barriers to accessing authentic data. Thus, the present dataset is important for comparison to these prior studies. Notably, despite the results reaffirming a lot of findings from existing dark-web studies, the behaviours of offenders here also contrast with public clear-web forum/website datasets – suggesting that the divide in behaviours is likely due to the public versus private nature of the interactions rather than a clear-web/dark-web distinction.

The results here expand on what was known about community roles in these spaces: establishing a list of roles present and their behaviours, as well as how offenders perform these identities. The varied structures in groups and inconsistencies around regulations or rule enforcement also contribute to this picture of the heterogeneity of paedophile communities. The prevalence of incest supports the established notion that offenders usually target children they already know like family members (Richards, 2011; NSPCC, 2019). The finding that some offenders sought access to children through positions of responsibility like teaching, adoption, and childcare highlights the importance of thorough vetting in these areas. Similarly, the victim access method of isolation supports a grooming tactic found in Lorenzo-Dus et al.'s (2020) OGDM. Linguistic analyses can illuminate previously understudied aspects of identity construction, interactional identity negotiations, and the narrativization of sexual fantasies or experiences to distort their framing. Previous studies have observed or speculated that there may be a pathway to escalating offender behaviours in these communities or an increase in cognitive distortions, but a linguistic analysis can determine how this intra-group grooming takes place (shown in Chapter 7).

The results of this thesis illuminated practical implications for law enforcement, social media platforms, rehabilitation efforts, and prevention organisations. The picture of typical offender behaviours produced by these results should be taken into consideration by undercover law enforcement officers attempting to infiltrate these communities and impersonate offenders. Understanding and adhering to community norms is essential for UOs to successfully penetrate these communities, especially considering their inability to participate in CSAM trading which

negatively impacts their prospects in relationship building, gaining access, and being viewed as trustworthy. Furthermore, as SFNs were viewed similarly to CSAM trading, UOs may need to participate in these to advance in the community. As violence in fantasy has been linked with violence in offline contact abuse, it may be pertinent to further investigate the content of offender SFNs in guiding or inspiring subsequent offending.

The analyses of attitudes, ideology, motivations, and persuasion could influence both law enforcement infiltration methods (by improving offender identity construction and assimilation), and offender rehabilitation work by law enforcement/charities/prevention organisations (who can determine which areas to target and consider as these offenders are being groomed into an echo chamber of supportive beliefs and welcomed into an encouraging community that contrasts with their wider perception). Rehabilitation programmes should target the offenders' sexual fixation, their 'need', and rejection of an alternative to paedophilia to tackle these apparent motivating factors. Addressing the cognitive distortions around portraying a history of childhood abuse positively is needed amongst offender populations through rehabilitation, as many seemed aware of this pipeline but denied the harm. Rehabilitation programmes should also focus on recognising the lack of agency in children and their inability to consent or understand the abuse to combat these distortions and address the offenders' dehumanisation of child-victims to rationalise abuse.

The offenders' use of slang terms should be considered by social media sites when flagging up potential criminal users interacting. Specifically, the child-victim synonyms slang terms should be decoded and lists of slang/synonyms for victims provided to social media platforms to facilitate detection. Synonym features may change over time or across other factors like offender interests and platform types, thus more research should be done into these terms across a variety of datasets and diachronically. Lists of community-specific slang terms and child-victim synonyms were passed over to law enforcement partners at the close of this study. In addition, lists of reported risks posed to offenders and their responsive security measures were also provided to law enforcement.

4. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations on the study arose during its course, and caveats on some results have been mentioned thus far due to a variety of factors (e.g. the CSAM-trading and community engagement studies in Chapter 5 Sections 3.2 and 3.3). Although there was diversity in the clear-web platforms, chat-types, and years the chatlogs took place, the dataset was somewhat skewed due to the bulk of it coming from *Kik* (not evenly distributed across platforms) and from the earlier end of the timeframe (most from 2013-2015). There were also far more 1-2-1 files than group-chats and group-chat files were not necessarily full start-to-finish lifespans of the groups, affecting the analysis of openings/closings, relationship-building, and access. The asymmetry of the dataset generally prevented comparative analysis between DMs/group-chats, between platforms, or diachronic changes. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restricting data access for analysis, the *GigaTribe* file had to be sampled and the smaller dataset size was unideal for a corpus analysis.

The necessary data redaction and lack of metadata provided precluded much analysis of demographic factors or a detailed username analysis. In hindsight, it would have been preferable to have noted down the presence or absence of more username features (such as the inclusion of age, victim preferences, location, or violent language, etc.) to provide a clear-web study for comparison with Schneevogt (2022). Unfortunately, access to the unredacted data was restricted after anonymisation was completed and the raw files were returned to the data owner, thus making any retroactive further analysis of usernames impossible. No information was available with the dataset about offenders within the files, arrest details, crimes charged, details of images/videos shared, the method for extracting the data, sources (beyond chat platform), or how they were caught – so none of these factors could be considered in the analysis. Consequently, all demographic information, personal details, and contact abuse crimes disclosed were entirely self-reported and carried the caveat of being unverifiable.

The conclusions in this thesis inspire further questions about offender behaviour, online communities, and the analysis tools applied here – necessitating future research. Some offenders were surprisingly blasé about security measures in their usernames, suggesting that a broader study to examine risk taking practices and identity construction in clear-web offender usernames is needed. Alongside identifying information in usernames, the sexualised or paedophilic language in usernames should be flagged up by the platforms/social media companies where the usernames were created (and the same goes for group-names in the same vein). This would not only help apprehend users, but also make it harder for paedophiles to find each other online as they would not be able to signal their identities in their usernames or group names as easily. This sentiment has been expressed prior in a Europol (2016:27) report urging law enforcement to ‘continue to strengthen cooperation with the private sector, specifically content and service providers, to encourage the integration of mechanisms which allow the early detection, blocking and removal of CSEM online’. Despite the interesting conclusion found in the present study that more prolific offenders used more of the username features and potentially took more risks in their usernames, there were many limitations to this small-scale study and so more research is encouraged.

Future linguistic forays into online offender communities could delve further into the grooming between offenders to explore the radicalising trajectory of offence-supportive beliefs and how it can be countered. Other-stance attribution to the absent victim is another interesting behaviour that should be studied in more detail in different types of offender communities (perhaps comparison between the public and private portrayal of victims by offenders). More OCSAE research should examine clear-web communities where private communication occurs (aka social media). The dark-web was also used and discussed by offenders in this dataset, but clear-web social media apps and platforms were frequently referenced or used. Research should be done into the content of SFNs and how they inspire/guide offline abuse or how fantasies are guided by those experiences. Additionally, to support the conclusions found in this thesis, the thematic coding book for online

offender-to-offender communication in paedophile communities should continue to be tested on more data sources to further establish which methods are appropriate in this field.

5. Concluding Remarks

This thesis examined online, private paedophile communities on the clear-web from a linguistic perspective using discourse analysis methods. The study aimed to increase understanding of how offenders participate in these online communities; to build a picture of their language choices whilst interacting with one another; to establish their attitudes and identity construction; and to determine what types of communities they were. The chatlogs revealed that there was a thriving online network offenders could gain access to – from group-chats centred around a particular victim/CSAM type, to 1-2-1 private chats where offenders developed trusting and supportive relationships, to other platforms for livestreaming abuse or engaging in sexual fantasies. These online communities could be organised and regulated, freely joined by those able to trade in their currency (CSAM), and kept safe from detection through implementing security measures. In the interactions between members, offenders discussed their past abuse experiences and planned future crimes; they asserted their sexual interests and engaged in cognitive distortions to dehumanise child-victims; they exchanged advice on offending, risks, technological skills, or access; and they provided a sympathetic ear to one another, encouraging offending and a positive self-image through the perpetuation of a pro-paedophilia ideology.

The content available in these communities (of information just as much as CSAM) poses a significant threat to CSA-prevention efforts as membership of these communities could absolutely contribute towards upskilling offenders and facilitating future crimes. Furthermore, the encouraging environment, rife with rationalisations for abuse and justifications for paedophilia, has the capacity to send members down a pathway of escalating offence-supportive beliefs and a normalisation of sexualising children that could directly result in real-world harm. The results of this thesis suggest that possessing membership of online paedophile communities is likely an aggravating

factor in offenders posing more of a threat of harm, and thus this understudied aspect of CSA offending must be further examined and tackled to combat this danger.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Specifications of Dataset

Batch:	Platform:	File Name:	No. of Users Involved:	Word Count:	Approximate Chat Duration:
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_002	2	352	35 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_003	2	11,213	92 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_005	2	93	13 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_006	2	89	1 day
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_007	2	137	19 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_012	2	260	7 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_013	2	108	8 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_019	2	163	9 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_023	2	40	15 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_032	2	372	28 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_052	2	480	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_055	2	375	6 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_060	2	54	29 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_063	2	74	53 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_066	2	1,026	59 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_074	2	6,690	40 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_078	2	671	8 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_085	2	112	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_089	2	82	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_098	2	262	14 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_103	2	147	25 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_106	2	141	53 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_111	2	4,475	47 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_112	2	2,991	< 1 hour
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_127	2	61	4 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_128	2	261	19 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_136	2	238	5 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_137	2	80	1 day
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_138	2	156	7 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_139	2	146	40 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_140	2	141	< 1 hour
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_152	2	150	1 hour
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_154	2	10,455	6 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_169	2	225	17 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_184	2	205	14 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_186	2	395	4 hours

1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_225	2	370	4 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_227	2	122	21 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_244	2	123	1 day
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_245	2	43	1 day
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_246	2	6,172	11 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_247	2	118	13 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_250	2	208	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_260	2	123	12 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_314	2	2,157	9 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_315	2	192	< 1 hour
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_336	2	381	6 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_368	2	429	6 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_369	2	32	3 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_371	2	1,909	3 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_372	2	933	5 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_386	2	179	< 1 hour
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_388	2	90	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_390	2	128	1 day
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_401	2	19	3 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_409	2	1,237	< 1 hour
1	Kik	3_PP001-P_001P_416	2	7	2 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_01	9	164	20 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_02	193	8,660	77 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_03	58	1,665	14 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_04	101	3,435	10 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_05	31	463	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_06	5	43	2 hours
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_07	74	1,435	2 days
1	Kik	3_PP001-PP_08	41	948	3 days
1	GigaTribe	3_PP002	1,111	15,945	990 days
2	WhatsApp	P_1574/P_1575	2	126	2 days
2	WhatsApp	P_1576/P_1577	2	681	172 days
2	Kik	P_1578/P_1579	2	284	1 day
2	Unknown	P_1583/P_1582	2	360	249 days
2	Skype	P_1583/P_1584	2	109	43 days
2	Skype	P_1583/P_1585	2	994	104 days
2	Skype	P_1583/P_1586	2	2,701	76 days
2	Unknown	P_1583/P_1587	2	458	111 days
2	Skype	P_1583/P_1595	2	130	98 days
2	Skype	P_1588/P_1589	2	830	30 days
2	Kik	P_1591/P_1590	2	277	1 hour
2	Kik	P_1591/P_1607	2	522	< 1 hour
2	Kik	P_1591/P_1608	2	681	9 hours

2	Kik	P_1592/P_1594	2	346	3 hours
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1603	2	47	< 1 hour
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1605	2	181	< 1 hour
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1606	2	48	< 1 hour
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1609	2	127	59 days
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1610	2	95	2 days
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1611	2	41	1 day
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1612	2	111	3 hours
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1613	2	45	< 1 hour
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1614	2	69	1 day
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1615	2	243	1 hour
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1616	2	130	1 day
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1617	2	292	6 days
2	Kik	P_1592/P_1618	2	79	3 hours
2	Kik	P_1597/P_1596	2	87	2 days
2	Kik	P_1597/P_1600	2	85	< 1 hour
2	Kik	P_1597/P_1601	2	123	< 1 hour
2	Kik	PP_09	73	2898	1 day

Appendix 2: Parallels Between Offender Communication Thematic Analysis Frameworks

Woodhams et al.'s (2021) themes:	This study's themes:
The suspect's demographics	This study's name for it was 'Exchanges of Personal Information' which was a sub-theme under the 'Community Building' theme.
The suspects self-reported motivations	The 'Motivations' sub-theme appears under the online and offline activity subsets of the 'Behaviours' theme.
Descriptions of security measures and precautions	This study's name for it was 'Risk Assessments'.
Their self-reported sexual interests and likes	This study's name of it was 'Sexual Identity Construction', which has the sub-theme of 'Sexual Interests'.
Their behaviour on the platform being used	This type of data was captured in various themes for this study. It was captured by the 'Behaviours' theme and in sub-themes from the 'Community Building' theme: 'Relationships', 'Roles and Norms', 'Sociability', and 'Access'.
The topics discussed on the platform	This information was captured via the other themes in the framework and so was not a distinct theme in this study (for example, the topics could be 'Risk Assessments' or 'Relationships' etc.).
[Offence-supportive statements]	This other finding that the author's did not explicitly label as a theme was captured in a sub-theme within the 'Community Building' theme called 'Attitudes'.

Appendix 3: Searle's (1969) Speech Acts Taxonomy

Speech Acts:
Assertive Affirmative
Assertive Negative
Directives
Interrogatives
Comissives: Threats
Comissives: Offers
Comissives: Promises
Expressives
Expressives: Thanking
Expressives: Apologising
Acknowledgements

Appendix 4: The Face Coding Book

Face	Definition
Self-Oriented Face –	Facework that focuses on the self, the speaker, or author.
Boasting	When the speaker is boastful.
Humble	Expressing humility.
Flexible	When the speaker presented themselves as being flexible and compromising with other's preferences/wants.
Friendly	Being friendly to others and welcoming/kind.
Self-Deprecating	When the speaker makes self-deprecating comments.
Grateful	Expressing thanks.
Helpful	When the speaker helps others and provides assistance.
Knowledgeable	When the speaker shares information or expertise and portrays themselves as knowledgeable on the subject.
Optimistic	When the speaker acts positively and appears to be optimistic about something.
Inexperienced	Showing a lack of experience or knowledge about something.
Irritated	When the speaker shows anger and irritation.
Cautious	When the speaker portrays themselves as cautious, perhaps by suggesting security measures or taking certain actions.
Virile	When the speaker presents themselves as sexually active, aroused, experienced sexually, or enthusiastic about sexual acts.
Authoritative	When the speaker portrays themselves as authoritative and assertive with knowledge about a subject.
Confident	When the speaker portrays themselves as confident, charismatic, or self-assured.
Pessimistic	When the speaker acts negatively and appears to be pessimistic about something.
Demanding	Being demanding and asking, perhaps, aggressively for something, perhaps repeatedly.
Unhelpful	Not offering help or aid to someone else when you are capable of doing so.
Jovial	Being happy, friendly, and positive in the interaction.
Inquisitive	Being questioning and seeking further information/explanations.
Other-Oriented Face –	Facework that focuses on the other, the hearer, or recipient.
Politeness:	
Positive Politeness	The speaker seeks to minimise the threat to the hearers' positive face. This could be by hedging, statements of solidarity or friendship, compliments etc.
Negative Politeness	The speaker is focusing on the hearer's negative face and trying to avoid imposition on their negative face needs.
Off-Record Indirect	Using implicature to remove the speaker from the potential to be imposing (e.g. 'wow, it's cold in here!').
Impoliteness:	
Bald-On-Record Impoliteness	Direct, clear, unambiguous and concise impoliteness where face is not minimised.

Positive Impoliteness	The use of strategies to damage the addressees positive face wants (e.g. ignore, snub, swear, mystify the other with jargon, be secretive etc).
Negative Impoliteness	The use of strategies to damage the addressees negative face wants (e.g. frighten, scorn, ridicule, interrupt etc).
Off-Record Impoliteness	Using implicature to convey impoliteness.
Withholding Politeness	The absence of politeness work where it would be expected (e.g. not thanking someone for a present).
Sarcasm and Mock-Politeness	The use of sarcasm or politeness in a mocking, sarcastic manner.

Appendix 5: The Stance Triangle Coding Book

The Stance Triangle Coding Book	
Stance:	
Subject 1	
	Positions or Evaluates
	Aligns
Object	
Subject 2	
	Positions or Evaluates
	Aligns
Other-Stance Attribution:	
Subject 1	
	Positions or Evaluates
	Aligns
Object	

Appendix 6: The Propaganda Techniques Coding Book

Definitions sourced from Da San Martino et al. (2019).

Propaganda Technique:	Definition:
Loaded Language	Using words or phrases with strong emotional implications to influence an audience.
Name Calling or Labelling	Labelling the object of the propaganda as either something the target audience fears, hates, does not desire, or loves/praises.
Repetition	Repeating the same message over and over.
Exaggeration or Minimisation	Either exaggerating something to be larger, worse, better, or making something seem less important, or smaller than it is.
Doubt	Questioning someone's credibility.
Appeal to Fear or Prejudice	Seeking to build support for an idea by instilling anxiety and/or panic in the audience towards an alternative, possibly based on preconceived judgments.
Flag-Waving	Playing on strong national feeling, or another group etc, to promote or justify an action or idea.
Casual Oversimplification	Assuming one cause when there are multiple causes behind an issue (also scapegoating).
Slogans	A brief striking phrase that may include labelling or stereotyping.
Appeal to Authority	Stating a claim is true simply because a valid authority or expert supports it, without any other evidence.
Black-and-White Fallacy/Dictatorship	Presenting two alternative options as the only possibilities, sometimes dictating the action to take to the listener.
Thought-Terminating/Cliché	Words or phrases that discourage critical thought, often done via cliché.
Whataboutism	To discredit an opponent's position by accusing them of hypocrisy without directly challenging their argument.
Reductio ad Hitlerum	Persuading an audience to disapprove an action or idea by suggesting that the idea is popular with groups hated by the target audience.
Red Herring	Introducing irrelevant material to what is being discussed to distract.

Bandwagon	Attempting to persuade the target audience to join in and take a course of action because others or a majority are.
Obfuscation/Intentional Vagueness/Confusion	Using deliberately unclear words.
Straw Man	When an opponent's position is substituted with a similar one that is then refuted in the original's place.

Appendix 7: The Legitimation Coding Book

Definitions sourced from Van Leeuwen (2008).

Legitimation Type	Definition
Authority Legitimation –	Authorization is legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested.
Custom:	
Conformity	The implicit message is, ‘Everybody else is doing it, and so should you’ or ‘Most people are doing it, and so should you’. No further argument.
Tradition	Invoking traditions, customs, habits etc.
Authority:	
Personal	Authority of the individual person because of their status or role in a particular institution, or from citing related personal experience.
Impersonal	The impersonal authority of laws, rules, regulations, or guidelines.
Commendation:	
Expert	In expert authority, legitimacy is provided by expertise. This expertise may be stated explicitly, for instance by mentioning credentials, but if the expert is well-known in the given context, it may be taken for granted.
Role Model	People follow the examples of role models and leaders. The mere fact that a role model adopts a certain behaviour legitimatises it to their followers.
Moral Legitimation –	Moral evaluation is legitimation by (often very oblique) reference to value systems.
Evaluation	Using evaluative adjectives.
Abstraction	Referring to practices in abstract ways that ‘moralize’ them by distilling from them a quality that links them to discourses of moral values. Instead of ‘the child goes to school for the first time’, we might say ‘the child takes up independence’.
Comparison:	Using analogy or comparison with a legitimacy function.
Positive	Comparison that casts the subject in a positive light, by saying it is like something else good or saying it contrasts with something bad.
Negative	A negative comparison makes the subject appear negative, by comparing it akin to something negative or contrasting something positive.
Rationalisation Legitimation –	Rationalization is legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity.

Instrumental:	Legitimation through the means, goal, or effect of the action.
Goal Orientation	Justification by the ultimate goal you achieve.
Means Orientation	A means to an end.
Effect Orientation	Legitimised by the effect being had on something/others/oneself.
Theoretical	Justification by giving a definition/ redefinition, idioms, or referring to the way things are/some kind of truth.
Mythopoesis –	Mythopoesis is legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions.
Moral Tale	In moral tales, protagonists are rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices, or restoring the legitimate order.
Cautionary Tale	Cautionary tales, on the other hand, convey what will happen if you do not conform to the norms of social practices.

Appendix 8: The Data Redaction Key

Data examples here were invented to demonstrate the redaction process.

Key:

dldele → P_003

4440006969 → [kik number] / [phone number]

:-(→ [sad face emoji]

Offender first name → [P_002's first name]

Image numbers or message → [image]

Weblink → [URL]

Film name → [name of film]

The states → [name of country]

Matt → [name of an offender]/ [first name]

South of France → [name of region and country]

Name that could be username or website → [name/site name]

Tommy → [nickname of an offender]

Spanish → [name of nationality]

Italian → [language]

pedofilo → ['paedophile' in other language]

JL → [other's initials]

Tagshgsgfgr → [username of an offender] / [P_111's username]

Liverpool → [name of city/town]

Non-English messages → [phrase in other language]

All the best, F xx → all the best, [P_002's initial] xx

Gatwick → [name of airport]

Down under → [nickname for country]

The capital (London) → [name of city]

Oregon / CA → [name of region]

Europe → [name of continent]

Cppager → [name of resort]

Nuck → [misspelt name]

The Ritz → [name of workplace]

Appendix 9: NVivo Software Specifications

Nvivo Release 1.6.1 (1137)

License obtained by Swansea University.

<https://help-nv.qsrinternational.com/20/win/Content/about-nvivo/about-nvivo.htm>

Appendix 10: The Thematic Analysis Coding Book

Parent and child nodes:		Definition:	E.g.
Sexual Identity Construction		<i>Discussions of sexual topics, abuse, or sexual preferences.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Offender	<i>When offenders discuss their sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, or evaluate sexual practices/interests.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Self	<i>When offenders discuss their sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, or evaluate sexual practices/interests for themselves.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Objectification and Sexualisation	<i>When the offender objectifies or sexualises themselves physically.</i>	[1] P_001 My dick is throbbing P_003 Briefs soaked of ped precum here, bro [2] P_1586 Treat me like a proper slut
	Sexual Interests	<i>When the offender discursively constructs their sexual preferences (likes, dislikes, past sexual experiences, and interests).</i>	[1] P_001 Luv extreme too [2] P_314 That's a 16 who lives in [name of city] who wants to meet up... I'm not sure tho he's not really my type P_001 Not sure is my type either P_314 If he wears school uniform and puts a Gimp Mask on I prob would lol
	Other	<i>When offenders discuss the sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, or evaluate sexual practices/interests for other offenders.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]

	Objectification and Sexualisation	<i>When offenders sexualise or objectify each other.</i>	[1] P_003 Love ur pedo dick [2] P_001 I think you are sex on legs matey
	Sexual Interests	<i>When the offender discursively constructs the sexual identity (likes, dislikes, past sexual experiences, and interests) of other offenders.</i>	[1] P_001 Grandad has got taste [2] P_154 Well, ur a fantastic perv!! P_154 Toddler lover
	Victim	<i>When offenders discuss their fantasy, potential, or real victim's sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, sexual enjoyment, or evaluate sexual practices/interests they perceive that their victims have.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Objectification and Sexualisation	<i>When the offender objectifies or sexualises imagined, potential, or real victims.</i>	[1] P_003 stroking on every lil slut thing I see, bro [2] P_069 The ass on the kid with the pacifier is amazing
	Sexual Interests	<i>When the offender discursively constructs their fantasy, potential, or real victim's sexual identity (likes, dislikes, past sexual experiences, and interests).</i>	[1] P_078 I like when they're both into it [2] P_112 Little girls love to feel daddy cock in there cunts and ass
	Non-Offender Adult	<i>When offenders discuss the sexual preferences, likes, dislikes, sexual orientation, sexual fantasies, or evaluate sexual practices/interests for others (not child victims). This may be other adults or family members for example.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Objectification and Sexualisation	<i>When the offender objectifies or sexualises</i>	[1]

		<i>other adults (who are not other offenders).</i>	P_0853 you like big tits matures with saggy 410ogether?
	Sexual Interests	<i>When the offender discursively constructs the sexual preferences (likes, dislikes, past sexual experiences, and interests) of other non-offender adults, family members etc.</i>	[1] P_0782 ever met other couples on real or cam net? P_0463 no P_0463 shes not into the kinky stuff
Risk Assessments		<i>Discussions by offenders of risks, security measures, evading detection by law enforcement, and advice on this topic.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Online	<i>Discussions of online security measures: encryption, identity protections online, storing CSAM securely, warnings of undercover officers in chats, identity confirmation/checks, etc.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Self	<i>Offline security measures, such as identity protection and behaviours to keep abuse hidden, etc... pertaining to personal risk to the speaker.</i>	[1] P_001 Bro I wanna save all this shut on a memory stick is it safe to email from my phone [2] P_0540 How did you find me?
	Other	<i>Discussions of encryption, identity protections online, storing CSAM securely, warnings of undercover officers in chats, etc... pertaining to the risk for others.</i>	[1] P_001 Careful not to spread to many pics [2] P_1099 Warn all against the user [username]
	Offline	<i>Offline security measures, such as identity protection and behaviours to keep abuse hidden, etc.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Self	<i>Offline security measures, such as identity protection and behaviours to keep abuse hidden, etc... pertaining</i>	[1] P_001 [image] P_066 Jesus! Lol I'm on the train! [2]

		<i>to personal risk to the speaker.</i>	P_001 Can't be left alone with the lil one enough to to have some fun grrrrr
	Other	<i>Offline security measures, such as identity protection and behaviours to keep abuse hidden, etc... pertaining to risk for others.</i>	[1] P_074 Can i ask one very special thing . Please be careful as you satisfy your need . I travel.alot so I never have things on me .pics etc and am careful not to load or do things . I want us to.openly be pedo 411together but safe 411together . My special friend
Behaviours		<i>Activity or actions undertaken or discussed on/offline, criminal or otherwise.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Online	<i>All online behaviours/activity.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Criminal	<i>Use of offender groups/ platforms/chats, accessing CSAM, online grooming, as well as communicating with other offenders while viewing illegal content (e.g. group video calls of livestreamed abuse).</i>	[1] P_001 Have you got any old pics or vid as I came off Nepi and lost the Lot P_246 [image] P_246 [image] P_246 [image] P_001 Thanks mate P_246 Pleasure. This last boy is my dream [2] P_134 If you ever find yourself in the dark web make your way to [website name] can find tons of stuff there
		Access	[1] P_001 How to send pic from a memory stick P_052 If you put the memory stick into your computer, you can then send to your email, look the email

			<p>up on your phone, download the pic from your email to your phone then send to kik.</p> <p>P_001 Thanks will do [2]</p> <p>P_001 "Because I am new to lol can you let me know it tell me more about the groups</p>
	Motivations	<i>Self-reported motivations for the online criminal behaviour.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_001 I only get boned among sikk Nepi porn</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>P_003 Can think nothing else whole day, bro. Every minute</p>
	Non-Criminal	<i>Non-criminal internet use such as online shopping, emails, or work.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_338 Heyy, anyone here play GTA V on Xbox 360 and wanna play?</p> <p>P_337 Yes I do</p>
	Offline	<i>All offline behaviours/activity (fantasy offline abuse non coded here).</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Criminal	<i>Criminal offline behaviours: contact abuse, offline grooming, transporting CSAM or sharing it offline, etc.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_244 Nice got my 15mo choking on my big cock</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>P_112 A little fun I had</p> <p>P_001 You lucky kunt</p> <p>P_112 Not bad for a 7 yr old eh</p>
	Access	<i>The method for doing the criminal behaviour offline: can be access or approach to victims or maintaining relationships with victims.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_001 I picked him today from school , could not help myself rubbing around him</p> <p>P_154 U fondled him??</p> <p>P_001 Just s little while I was saying to him I: " I need to see if</p>

			<p>this new rugby shorts I bough you from [name of country] are fitting you</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>P_001 So many coming over from Syria right now , so much choice and nobody will know</p> <p>P_154 Have u tried?</p> <p>P_001 Done at the beach while some were begging for spare change</p>
	Motivations	<i>Self-reported motivations for the offline criminal behaviour.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_003 How it should be, all of them abused. Our right</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>P_007 That's what it deserves.. What it was made for.</p>
	Non-Criminal	<i>Non-criminal offline activity such as going to work, going on holiday, or having dinner, etc.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_001 Later better get going and do some work</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>P_371 I'm stuck at the terminal waiting for my flight.</p>
Community Building		<i>Actions and talk that builds up relationships and community between offenders, creating connections and establishing networks amongst them, as well as constructing shared group identities.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	In-Group	<i>Community building of the in-group (the paedophile community).</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Sociability	<i>Small talk like greetings, sign-offs, and pleasantries.</i>	<p>[1]</p> <p>P_055 Hey u ok</p> <p>[2]</p> <p>P_074 Hey brother</p> <p>P_074 Thanks for chat yesterday</p>

	Relationships	<i>Discussions or building of relationships between offenders (includes sharing further contact information, praise/complimenting, and arranging further contact).</i>	[1] P_001 [P_111's first name] you see the issue with me it that I trust people not just for the sake of a wank P_111 And I like that you think that way P_111 I miss you and we haven't even met P_111 I feel a strong powerful connection [2] P_078 Thanks. So if I join zoom rooms how do I find you! P_001 Usually I always under the addi of [P_001's username]
	Exchanges of Personal Information	<i>When offenders state or discuss/request personal/ demographic information, such as age, gender, location, name, employment, appearance, contact information, or relationship status.</i>	[1] P_184 Asl? P_001 51 m [name of country] P_001 You? [2] P_1596 Hey I'm [first name]!
	Roles and Norms	<i>Explicit or implicit displays of community roles (e.g. newbie, advisor, admin), group/community rules, group/community behavioural norms etc, as well as discussing roles and norms and activity on groups.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Community Rules	<i>Implicit or explicit displays or discussions of rules or regulations for the community.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Rule Enforcement	<i>When the explicit or implicit rules are enforced and consequences are dolled out for the rule-breaker.</i>	[1] P_052 ALRIGHT FOLKS THIS IS THE ADMIN SPEAKING! I will be cleaning up this group THIS WEEKEND. You all better start posting or pm by Monday with a couple of pics and or videos to stay in the group.

			<p>YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!</p> <p>[2] P_1107 [username] will not give password...del</p>
	Explicit Rules	<i>Rules that are explicitly stated and described as rules or an equivalent.</i>	<p>[1] P_052 Post or get booted</p> <p>[2] P_1581 "New Member Rules.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send vid to owner or admin in 5 mins of receiving this post 2. Constantly keep sharing vids and pics and links 3. Don't send dick pics or personal info 4. The admins will kick anybody that is not active 5. If u are removed feel free to come back if u get content to trade. 6. Scammers WILL BE BANNED 7. Have fun
	Implicit Rules	<i>Rules that are not explicitly stated but are hinted at or can be discerned from context.</i>	<p>[1] P_001 [image] P_250 Had that one already P_250 Send a different one</p> <p>[2] P_152 Which group and what are they saying?</p> <p>P_001 The group is [group name] , I posted as one pics , most profiles blanks asking it for real , when I took it . How I manage and so on , ... Instead of just enjoy the post. Got a bit suspicious of some</p>

			had to take pics off the group
	Norms of Behaviour	<i>Discussions of what is normal behaviour in the community or commonplace habits.</i>	[1] P_002 Loads of groups on here share but they usually want you to send first [2] P_0463 ok i delete for no response, re-apply when you are ready to communicate.
	Community Roles	<i>Roles that are adopted by offenders in the community to present as a certain identity, gain authority, or undertake responsibilities. This may be explicitly stated or revealed through actions and includes discussions of roles.</i>	[1] P_052 [name] is the other admin. Can I help with something? [2] P_020 Anyone help a newbie x Wanna watch and learn
	Attitudes	<i>Attitudes towards the in-group.</i>	[Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Supportive	<i>Supportive attitudes towards in-group behaviours, identities, talk, and actions (includes offence-supportive attitudes).</i>	[1] P_246 It shouldn't even be wrong. These are sexy thoughts! [2] P_001 As you said we are of a rare breed
	Challenging	<i>Attitudes that challenge or criticise others in the in-group, behaviours, talk, practices, identities, or ideas. Includes othering in-group members.</i>	[1] P_078 The groups on here are all inactive [2] P_1580 Admins are all collectors. They dont send anything back. Dont waste ur time folks
	Access	<i>Anything relating to access to specifically the in-group online paedophile community or online groups, or to each other online.</i>	[1] P_001 Hi , got your nick from you while on a z room, hope you good [2] P_314 Theres about 6/7 active BL groups at the mo... You want info!? P_001 Too right mate

			P_314 Hold up P_314 #[group name]
	Out-Group		<i>Community building of the out-group (non-paedophiles, wider society).</i> [Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Relationships		<i>Discussions of relationships with those not in the paedophile in-group.</i> [1] P_154 I have a nephew but am not interested in him [2] P_066 On the train heading to my mama's
	Attitudes		<i>Attitudes towards the out-group.</i> [Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Supportive		<i>Supportive attitudes towards out-groups constructed by the offenders, their behaviours, beliefs and identities.</i> [No coding]
	Challenging		<i>Attitudes that challenge or criticise out-groups constructed by the offenders (their identities, behaviours, ideas, or actions).</i> [1] P_001 Bet the mother of father would give any away to cross the fucking border [2] P_003 Fuck all those lil bastard sluts who provoq our need.
	Roles and Norms		<i>Explicit or implicit displays of out-group community roles, out-group/community rules, out-group/community behavioural norms, etc... as well as discussing roles and norms and activity on out-groups.</i> [No coding]
Redacted Media			<i>Media content (e.g. images, videos, hyperlinks) that was redacted during the anonymisation stage.</i> [Aggregated from child-nodes]
	Sexual Media		<i>Redacted media that is clearly sexual (and/or CSAM) from the context of the media sharing.</i> [1] P_106 [image] P_106 I wanna date this boy P_106 So hot

			<p>[2] P_1592 Can you send a links with animal and girls P_1594 [URL]</p>
	Other Media	<p><i>Media that is determined as non-sexual from the context of its sharing.</i></p>	<p>[1] P_052 [image] P_052 If you see this guy, block him. He's a cop.</p>

Appendix 11: Affinity Spaces and Communities of Practice Feature Lists

- Community of Practice Features
 - Participants share similar ideas about who belongs in the community
 - Participants have a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world
 - Boundaries are maintained in contrast with out-groups
 - Participants have mutually defining identities
 - Certain styles are recognised as displaying membership
 - Participants know how others can contribute to the shared enterprise
 - Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
 - Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
 - The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions
 - The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
 - Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
 - Shared stories, inside jokes, and lore
 - The development of a linguistic style, including community slang/terminology
 - Absence of introductory preambles, with conversations/interactions/problems being discussed without much set-up
- Features of Both
 - Common endeavour
 - Shared process of learning
- Affinity Space Features
 - The space has content and the content is organised
 - The organisation and content of the space can change through interaction
 - The common endeavour (rather than race, class, gender, etc) is primary
 - Interactivity is required to sustain the affinity space
 - Newbies and masters and everyone else share common space (not segregated by age)
 - Many different forms and routes to participation and status
 - Leadership is porous and leaders are resources
 - Roles are reciprocal
 - Internal grammar is transformed by external grammar [the language of the AS is changed by the language of the participants]
 - Encouragement of intensive and extensive knowledge, individual and distributed knowledge, dispersed knowledge [knowledge from other places relevant to the space], and tacit knowledge [knowledge people have built up in practice but may not be able to explicate fully in words]

Appendix 12: Thematic Analysis Results by Main Theme

Parent and child nodes:		Percentage of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Sexual Identity Construction		96%	2754
Offender		95%	1963
	Self	94%	1245
	Objectification and Sexualisation	42%	158
	Sexual Interests	93%	1087
	Other	64%	718
	Objectification and Sexualisation	39%	230
	Sexual Interests	57%	488
Victim		66%	784
	Objectification and Sexualisation	65%	608
	Sexual Interests	28%	176
	Non-Offender Adult	6%	17
	Objectification and Sexualisation	5%	9
	Sexual Interests	3%	8

Parent and child nodes:		Percentage of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Risk Assessments		53%	354
Online		49%	311
	Self	48%	188
	Other	27%	123
Offline		14%	43
	Self	13%	33
	Other	8%	10

Parent and child nodes:		Percentage of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Behaviours		89%	860
Online		86%	549
	Criminal	86%	531
	Access	39%	184
	Motivations	27%	63
	Non-Criminal	6%	18
Offline		46%	311
	Criminal	34%	196
	Access	27%	91
	Motivations	16%	65

	Non-Criminal	27%	115
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Parent and child nodes:		Percentage of files codes appear in:	No. of codes:
Community Building		100%	3250
	In-Group	100%	3175
	Sociability	76%	475
	Relationships	56%	402
	Exchanges of Personal Information	68%	514
	Roles and Norms	57%	1215
	Community Rules	23%	211
	Rule Enforcement	14%	64
	Explicit Rules	20%	73
	Implicit Rules	9%	10
	Norms of Behaviour	36%	88
	Community Roles	41%	657
	Attitudes	62%	415
	Supportive	49%	245
	Challenging	38%	170
	Access	36%	154
	Out-Group	24%	75
	Relationships	19%	50
	Attitudes	11%	25
	Supportive	0%	0
	Challenging	11%	25
	Roles and Norms	0%	0

Parent and child nodes:		Percentage of files codes appear in:
Redacted Media		67%
	Sexual Media	67%
	Other Media	5%

Appendix 13: The Community Roles Coding Book

Community Roles and Nodes	Definition
The Administrator	The Admin is a named, designated administrator: monitoring and moderating the group/community content, inviting or removing member, etc. and potentially having powers vested in them by the platform/social media site that others do not have.
The Advice Seeker	A recipient of the Advisor role. The Advice Seeker does not necessarily have to be a Newbie, they may be a level of learner in the community above a Newbie, but they still seek information and teaching from others. This is when an offender is actively asking for help and information.
The Advisor	The Advisor dispenses advice to others on offending practices, security and risk assessment, locating victims or CSAM, codes of conduct, etc...
The Disciplinarian	The Disciplinarian enforces the rules of the community and challenges/chastises those who break them or threaten group norms.
The Expert	The Expert is a knowledgeable elder of the community who has/claims to have a lot of offending experience and talks/brags about their experience. They are respected and may hold superiority or seniority over others.
The Newbie	The Newbie is a newer member of the community, inexperienced, and unaccustomed to the norms or inside-knowledge of the group.
Discussing A Role	When someone comments on a community role. This could be a discussion of it, criticism, compliment, or even an offhand mention. The role may be referred to by name but if a role is inferred, this will also be included.
Enacting A Role	When someone performs a community role: constructing themselves as this role, labelling themselves with a title, or carrying out the designated tasks/behaviours of that role.

Appendix 14: The Victim/CSAM Access Coding Book

Coding for these methods captured both when the access method was occurring and when it was discussed by offenders.

Victim and CSAM Access Methods Code Book	Definitions of Themes
Offline	
Access to Victims:	The methods used by offenders to access child-victims offline.
Abroad, Travel, Refugees	Accessing victims by travelling to other countries for sex-tourism, targeting refugees, travelling for more lax child-sexual abuse laws.
Blackmail	Blackmailing victims into sexual acts (sometimes through the threat of circulating sexual images or harming others).
Childcare, Fostering, Adoption	Accessing victims by fostering/adopting children or providing childcare.
Family, Relatives	Accessing children who are family members or relatives for victimisation.
Friends, Neighbours	Accessing children of friends or neighbours for victimisation.
Isolation	Physically isolating victims from others offline for abuse.
Kidnapping, Abduction	Kidnapping or abducting children for victimisation.
Payment, Gifts, Coercion	Eliciting sexual acts from child-victims through coercion, or by payment/gifts.
Perceived Consent	This captures instances where offenders believe they have elicited consent from victims for sexual acts (despite underage children being unable to legally consent).
Positions of Responsibility, Employment	Accessing children for victimisation through positions of responsibility or employment like teachers or doctors etc.
Public Facilities, Shops, Schools	Accessing children in public places where they are likely to be, such as parks, shops, and schools for example.
The Difficulty of Access	This captures when offenders express annoyance at the difficulties of accessing children for victimisation, such as the risks of being caught or personal failed attempts.
Sharing CSAM Offline	This captures all methods for offenders accessing CSAM offline.
Online	
Access to CSAM:	This captures all methods for offenders accessing CSAM online.
Community Rules	When offenders access CSAM due to rules within the community, such as rules that encourage CSAM trading in groups.

CSAM Storage	When offenders discuss how to store CSAM.
Dark-Web	When offenders access CSAM through the dark-web.
Encrypted Apps	When offenders access CSAM through the use of encrypted messaging apps.
Group and 1-2-1 Chats	When offenders access CSAM through group-chats or 1-2-1 direct messages with each other.
Laptop, Computer	When offenders use their laptops/computers to access CSAM.
Livestreamed CSAM, Video Calling	Access to CSAM through video-calling platforms that livestream sharing of CSAM.
Non-Specific Online Access	Accessing CSAM online in away that fits no other category.
Phone, Mobile Device	Accessing CSAM using ones phone or mobile device.
The Difficulty of Access	This captures when offenders express annoyance at the difficulties of accessing CSAM, such as the risks of being detected, undesirable material, or personal failed attempts.
Trading, Exchanging	When offenders trade CSAM or gain it through an exchange with others for something.
Access to Victims:	This captures all methods for offenders accessing victims online.
Dating Apps	When offenders access underage victims through online dating apps.
Dating, Relationships	When offenders access victims online by forming relationships with them online, such as dating them or friendships.
Through Other Offenders with Access	When offenders gain access to child victims through other offenders they interact with online that have offline access to the victims (e.g. video-calling with offenders who have access to a physical child).

Appendix 15: Coding Matrix for Speech Acts Used in Offender On/Offline Access

Speech Acts	Online Criminal Access	Offline Criminal Access
Assertive Affirmative	548	345
Assertive Negative	151	60
Directives	181	62
Interrogatives	223	111
Comissives: Threats	2	0
Comissives: Offers	20	9
Comissives: Promises	0	0
Expressives	27	28
Expressives: Thanking	34	1
Expressives: Apologising	16	1
Acknowledgements	37	15

Appendix 16: The Criminal Activity Coding Book

Crime Subtypes	Definitions of Themes
Offline	
Battery, Assault	Physical assault or battery in a non-sexual crime or as well as a sexual crime.
Bestiality	Sexual acts with animals.
Contact Abuse:	Offline, physical child sexual abuse with a victim.
Ongoing	Where the abuse is reported to be ongoing at the time of the disclosure.
Past	Where the abuse took place in the past and is not described as ongoing.
Planned, Future	When offenders plan future abuse or disclose intentions to commit it. Instances of pure fantasy were not coded for here, but when abuse was planned out practically and went beyond just fantasy this was included.
CSAM Offline Storage, Dissemination	Storing or disseminating CSAM offline, in a physical form.
CSAM Production	Producing CSAM by committing contact abuse and recording it.
Exhibitionism, Public Indecency	Committing the crimes of exhibitionism or public indecency by doing sexual acts or masturbation in public places/around others or public nudity.
Illegal Drugs	Taking illegal drugs.
Incest	Sexual contact with a relative.
Kidnapping, Abduction	Taking a child victim away from their home/family to isolate them.
Livestreamed CSA	Livestreaming online while committing offline contact abuse.
Murder	Killing another person deliberately.
Non-Contact Sexualisation	Sexualising child-victims offline without physically touching them (e.g. discussing sexual attraction to a naked child in public).
Prison, Criminal Punishment	When an offender has been in prison or received punishment for a crime (includes sex-offenders register).
Rape (Adult-to-Adult)	Non-consensual sexual assault of another adult.
Romantic Relationships with Victims	Becoming romantically involved with or dating an underage child-victim.
Scouting for Victims	Searching for children offline for victimisation.
Soliciting, Exploitation	Exchanging money or other payment for sexual acts (including with adults or underage child-victims).
Travel for CSAM or CSA	Travelling for sex-tourism, contact abuse of children in other countries, or access to CSAM.
Online	
Bestiality Media	Images, videos, or other media depicting sexual acts with animals.
CSAM:	Online access to CSAM.
Dissemination	Disseminating, sharing, trading, or offering CSAM online.
Eliciting	Eliciting or asking for CSAM online.
Production	Producing/creating CSAM online.
Storage	Storing CSAM online and on electrical devices.

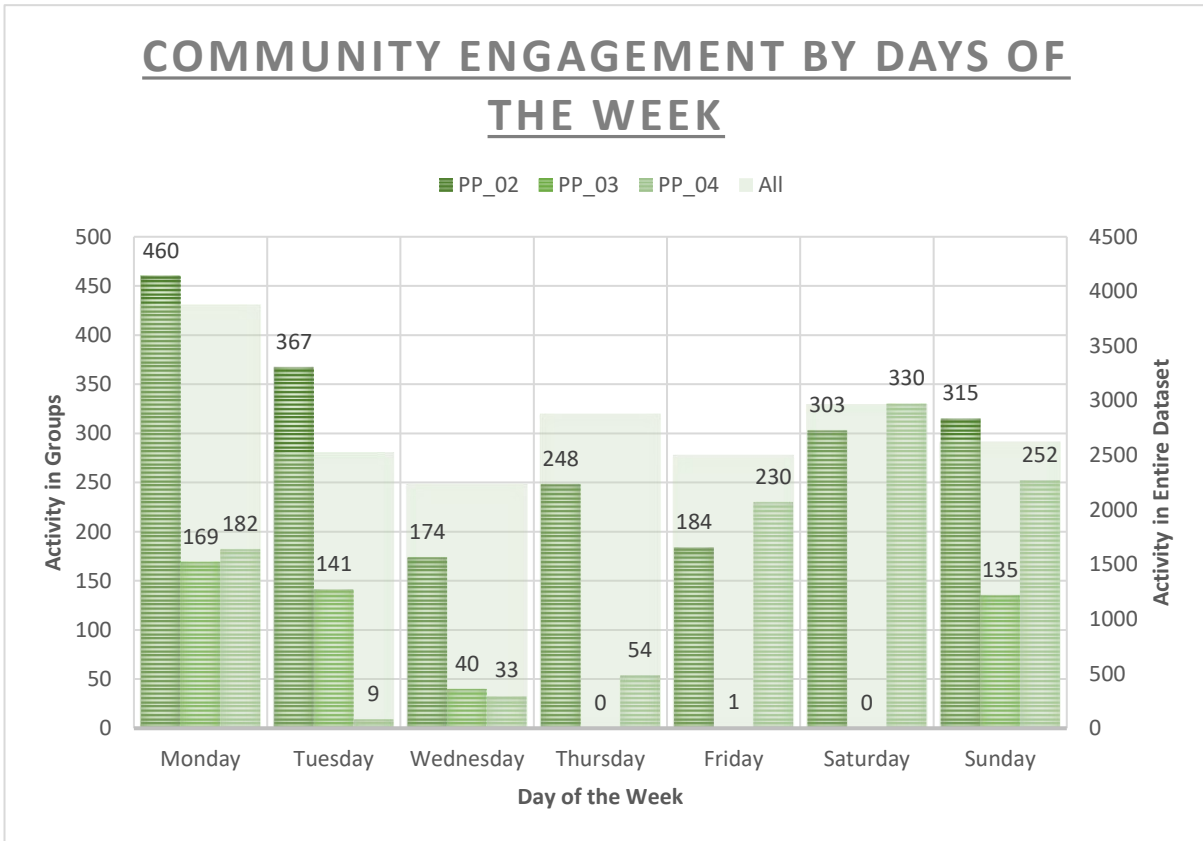
Viewing	Viewing CSAM online.
Dark-Web, Tor	Using the dark-web or Tor to access the dark-web for illegal sites.
Illegal Online Purchases	Purchasing prohibited items online.
Livestreamed Contact Abuse	Livestreaming contact abuse to other offenders on video-sharing platforms.
Offender Group Chats, Platforms	Being a member of a paedophile group (includes forums, DMs, zoom rooms, etc) online.
Online Grooming	Grooming children online for the purposes of victimisation.
Online-only CSA	Sexual abusing child-victims online (and not offline) through video-calling, messaging, or other methods.
OPA 1959, CA 2003	Violations of the Obscene Publications Act and Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003. This includes graphic descriptions of real or fantasy sexual abuse of children and sexualisation of children as well as discussing extreme violence.

Appendix 17: The Coding Book for Purposes of Discussing Criminal Activity

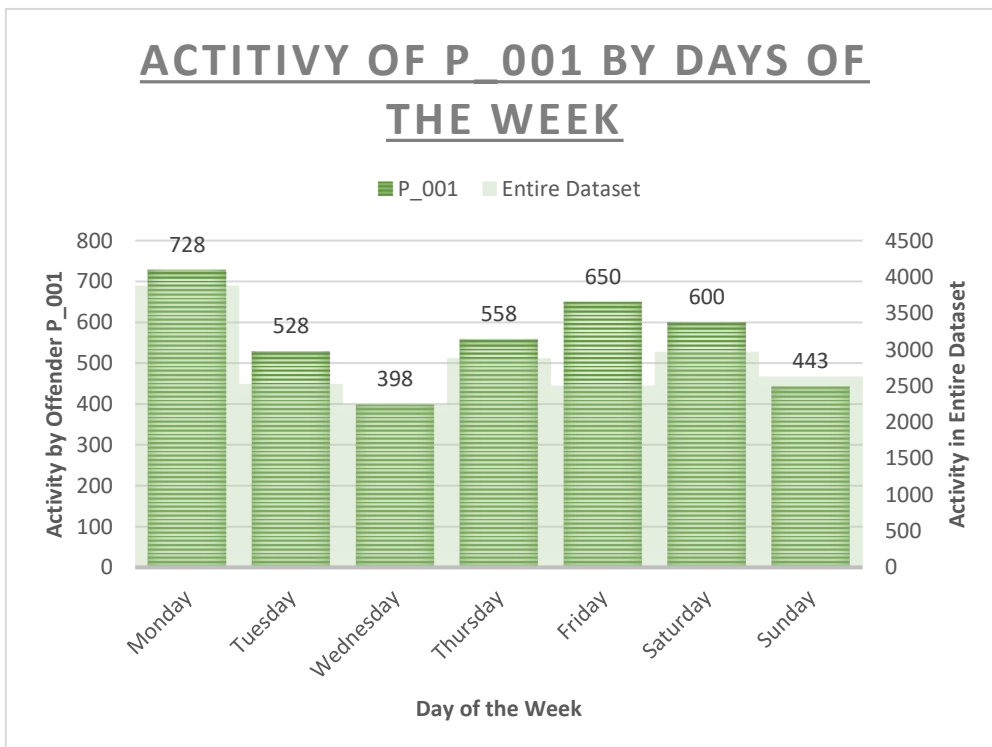
Purposes of Discussing CA	Definitions of Themes
Advice or Skills: Learning, Requesting	To gain skills from other offenders or elicit advice from them. This captured when offenders discussed crimes to learn skills or requested information/advice.
Teaching, Sharing	This is when offenders talked about crimes to teach others or share skills.
Attitudes on Group Chats, Platforms	This is when crimes were discussed in the process of giving opinions on groups or platforms used by the community.
Bragging, Experiences, Paedophile Identity	This captured when offenders mentioned crimes to brag about doing them, recount past experiences, or to cement community membership by constructing their paedophile identity.
Cognitive Distortions, Justifications, Rationale	To discuss the morality of the crimes, to justify and discuss cognitive distortions, or rationalise criminal behaviours.
Fantasy or Sexual Gratification	This was when crimes were discussed in the process of creating sexual fantasies or in order to gain sexual gratification from talking about them.
Planning or Eliciting Crimes	Planning out, enabling, facilitating, discussing crimes, or recruiting co-conspirators for abuse with the intent to do these things (not merely fantasy).
Security and Risk	When crimes are discussed during risk assessments, cautionary steps, and reassuring others that they are authentic/careful.

Appendix 18: The Activity of P_001 and P_0463 by Days of the Week

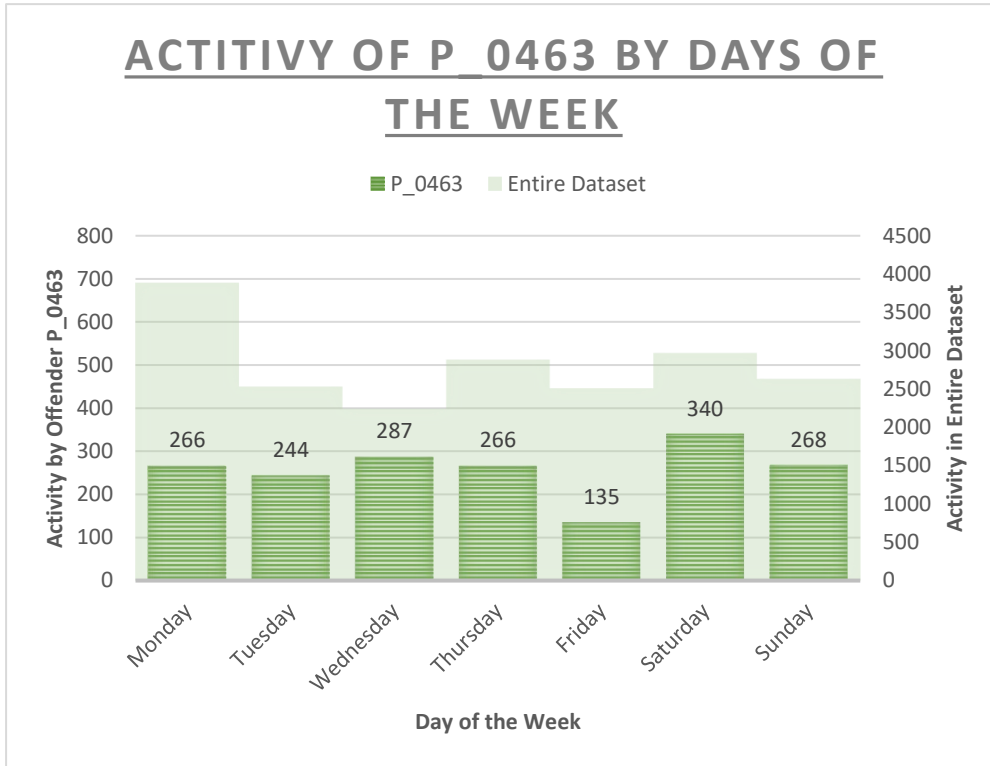
A.



B.



C.



Appendix 19: The Criminal Motivations Coding Book

Crime Motivations	Definitions
Sexual Gratification	Offenders citing sexual pleasure (through masturbation or abuse from viewing CSAM/committing crimes) as the motivation for doing the crime.
Addiction/Reliance/A 'Need'	Offenders referencing an addiction/reliance on CSAE/other crimes or describing it as a 'need'/compulsion.
No Alternative/Impotency	Suggesting there is no alternative to doing the crimes or that the offender would be sexually impotent without the CSA element.
Pro-Paedophilia/Abuse Ideology	The offenders citing a support for paedophilia/CSA as motivation for doing crimes.
History of Childhood Abuse	Offenders directly linking their history of childhood sexual abuse with their adult criminal behaviour.
Supporting Others/ Relationships	Offenders suggesting that they do criminal activities to support others in the community or build/maintain relationships.
Create Own CSAM	The motivation for committing abuse is to create their own CSAM.
Fame/Popularity/Boasting	Doing crimes to gain fame or popularity, or so that the offender can boast about this activity.
Relaxation/Wellbeing	Offenders citing their wellbeing as a reason for doing crimes or suggesting it is needed for relaxation.
Other Motivations	Other miscellaneous motivations.

Appendix 20: Coding Matrix for Stance in Criminal Motivations

	Motivations for Online Crime
Stance	
Subject 1	57
Positions or Evaluates	118
Aligns	18
Object	139
Subject 2	13
Positions or Evaluates	33
Aligns	39
Other-Stance Attribution	
Subject 1	29
Positions or Evaluates	28
Aligns	13
Object	30

Appendix 21: The Self-Disclosure Coding Book

Definitions for Self-Disclosure Types sourced from Kou and Gray (2018:14).

Self-Disclosure	Definitions of Themes
Request for Disclosure	When someone explicitly or implicitly requests personal information/ self-disclosure from another.
Self-Disclosure Topics	
Account Logins or Passwords	Personal information relating to ones username/email and passwords/login details for accessing an account.
Age	If a user's age is disclosed.
Appearance	Any disclosure relating to the individuals physical appearance, through descriptions of their looks, body, or images depicting them being shared.
Contact Information	When further contact information is provided so offenders can continue to interact on other platforms.
Employment	When a job-status or title, or details about their job, is disclosed.
Family, Home, or Relationships	When offenders discuss their family members, marital status, living situation, or relationships with family or friends.
Gender or Sex	When they disclose their gender or biological sex.
Location, Nationality or Ethnicity	When the offender discloses where they are/where they live, their ethnicity, native language, or current location.
Name	When offenders disclose any part of their name.
Other	Other types of personal information shared: e.g. criminal records, medical information, etc.
Sexual Orientation	When offenders discussed their sexual orientation. Only commonly recognised orientations coded for here (e.g. homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, heterosexual, etc.) not paedophilic 'sexualities'.
Self-Disclosure Types	
Credibility Adjusting	'A context where disclosure did not serve as a necessary logical link, but rather a means of increasing or decreasing the credibility of the discloser's opinion'.
Empathy	'A situation where people disclosed their own experiences, often negative ones such as frustrations and failures, to respond to others' disclosure of similar experiences'.
Evidence-Based Reasoning	'Scenarios where disclosure served as evidence for the discloser to make a point'.
Question Answering	'The most basic type of disclosure where the discloser answered a question by sharing personal information'.
Reciprocity	'A scenario where disclosure emerged in accordance with the flow of professional conversation between two interlocutors'.
Unprompted	When self-disclosure takes place without any question or request for it that does not fit any other sub-category. When personal information is included in the chat without any reason.

Appendix 22: Coding Matrix for Face in Exchanges of Personal Information

	Exchanges of Personal Information
Face: Self-Oriented	
Boasting	23
Humble	1
Flexible	4
Friendly	175
Self-Depreciating	10
Grateful	132
Helpful	23
Knowledgeable	5
Optimistic	4
Inexperienced	11
Irritated	9
Cautious	18
Virile	32
Authoritative	1
Confident	6
Pessimistic	6
Demanding	20
Unhelpful	1
Jovial	4
Inquisitive	151
Face: Other-Oriented	
Politeness –	667
Positive Politeness	226
Negative Politeness	444
Off-Record Indirect	1
Impoliteness –	59
Bald-On-Record Impoliteness	35
Positive Impoliteness	8
Negative Impoliteness	6
Off-Record Impoliteness	6
Withholding Politeness	1
Sarcasm and Mock-Politeness	4

Appendix 23: Coding Matrix for Speech Acts in Community Access and Relationships

Speech Acts	Community Access	In-Group Relationships	Out-Group Relationships
Assertive Affirmative	272	1251	103
Assertive Negative	50	236	31
Directives	116	320	29
Interrogatives	109	270	50
Comissives: Threats	2	0	0
Comissives: Offers	17	39	0
Comissives: Promises	0	0	0
Expressives	16	41	7
Expressives: Thanking	16	63	1
Expressives: Apologising	5	30	1
Acknowledgements	20	62	11

Appendix 24: Coding Matrix for Face in Community Access and Relationships

	Community Access	In-Group Relationships	Out-Group Relationships
Face: Self-Oriented			
Boasting	15	117	31
Humble	2	1	0
Flexible	2	29	0
Friendly	48	492	13
Self-Deprecating	3	47	6
Grateful	13	74	1
Helpful	42	93	2
Knowledgeable	41	67	5
Optimistic	7	36	2
Inexperienced	50	56	2
Irritated	17	22	2
Cautious	30	82	16
Virile	40	396	47
Authoritative	4	19	1
Confident	3	22	0
Pessimistic	16	56	1
Demanding	53	71	8
Unhelpful	7	6	0
Jovial	11	75	1
Inquisitive	36	90	34
Face: Other-Oriented			
Politeness –	130	449	17
Positive Politeness	73	357	15
Negative Politeness	39	52	1
Off-Record Indirect	10	46	1
Impoliteness –	61	123	7
Bald-On-Record Impoliteness	43	53	3
Positive Impoliteness	3	28	2
Negative Impoliteness	7	17	1
Off-Record Impoliteness	6	23	0
Withholding Politeness	1	0	1
Sarcasm and Mock-Politeness	2	2	0

Appendix 25: Coding Matrix for Speech Acts in Community Role Enaction

Speech Acts	Enacting Adviser Role	Enacting Advice Seeker Role	Enacting Newbie Role	Enacting Administrator Role	Enacting Disciplinarian Role	Enacting Expert Role
Assertive Affirmative	118	161	113	21	5	110
Assertive Negative	36	50	26	7	4	18
Directives	75	52	73	20	6	14
Interrogatives	29	78	43	10	1	28
Comissives: Threats	0	0	0	10	1	0
Comissives: Offers	8	5	7	2	0	3
Comissives: Promises	0	0	1	0	0	0
Expressives	4	12	9	2	0	7
Expressives: Thanking	1	17	9	0	0	2
Expressives: Apologising	5	2	3	1	0	0
Acknowledgements	4	11	12	1	0	7

Appendix 26: Coding Matrix for Face in Community Role Enaction

	Enacting Adviser Role	Enacting Advice Seeker Role	Enacting Newbie Role	Enacting Administrator Role	Enacting Disciplinary Role	Enacting Expert Role
Face: Self-Oriented						
Self-Depreciating	2	17	5	0	0	1
Unhelpful	1	0	3	0	0	0
Pessimistic	1	9	0	0	1	4
Irritated	2	1	2	8	8	4
Inexperienced	5	80	44	0	0	1
Demanding	4	17	45	9	2	8
Cautious	18	22	3	1	0	5
Inquisitive	3	11	3	1	0	2
Humble	0	3	1	1	0	1
Flexible	4	5	2	0	0	0
Confident	1	1	0	0	0	14
Authoritative	24	1	0	19	2	5
Optimistic	0	4	5	0	0	1
Jovial	2	2	7	0	0	0
Grateful	0	19	12	0	0	1
Boasting	10	6	2	2	0	66
Virile	7	18	21	2	0	44
Knowledgeable	68	7	3	1	1	24
Helpful	83	1	7	10	0	8
Friendly	12	25	14	6	0	4
Face: Other-Oriented						
Impoliteness –	37	16	14	30	11	25
Withholding Politeness	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sarcasm and Mock-Politeness	0	1	0	0	0	0
Positive Impoliteness	9	1	1	3	1	14
Off-Record Impoliteness	3	3	2	1	0	1
Negative Impoliteness	9	0	1	17	8	6
Bald-On-Record Impoliteness	16	11	10	9	2	5
Politeness –	38	81	86	13	1	20
Off-Record Indirect	3	20	8	1	0	0
Negative Politeness	12	26	34	1	0	4
Positive Politeness	24	35	49	11	1	16

Appendix 27: Coding Matrix for Face in Community Rules

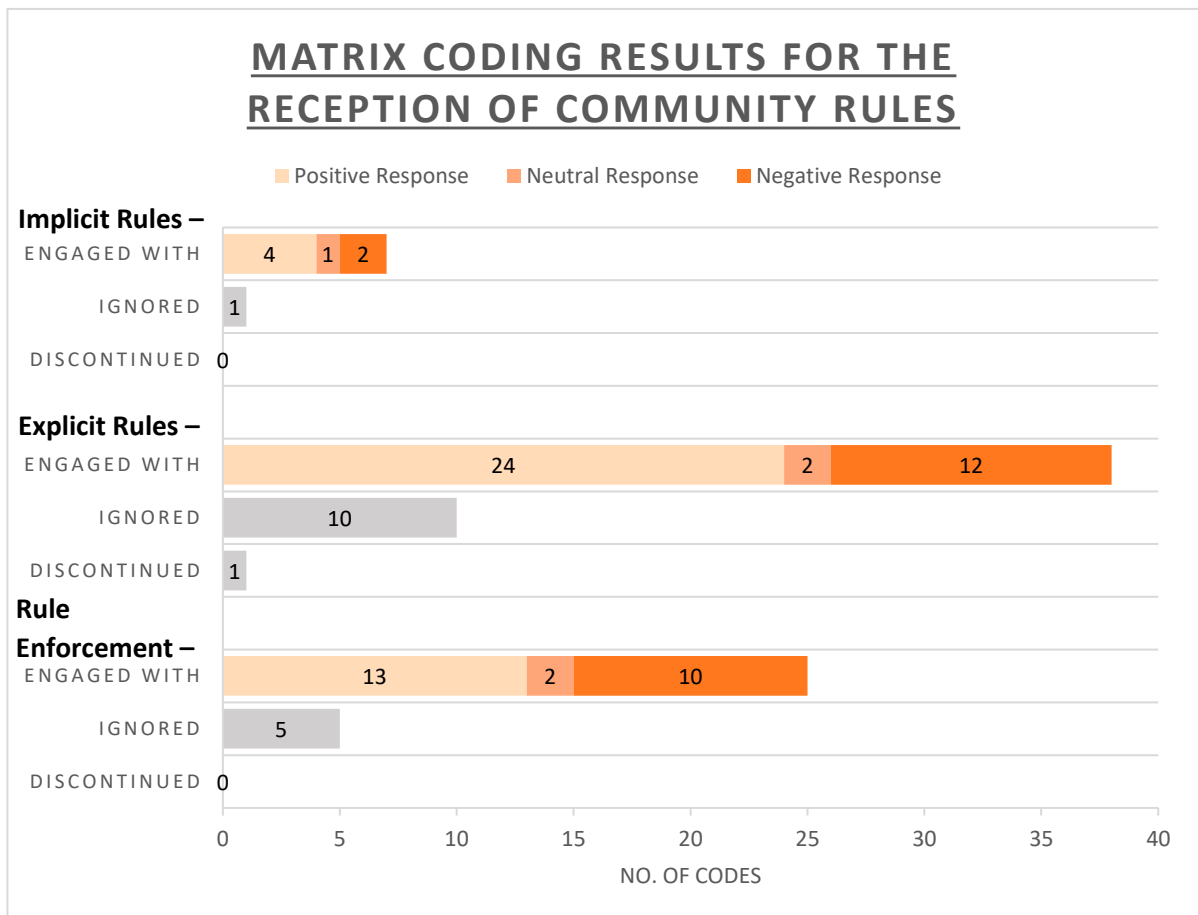
	Rule Enforcement	Explicit Rules	Implicit Rules
Face: Self-Oriented			
Boasting	5	6	6
Humble	1	1	0
Flexible	0	2	0
Friendly	4	6	8
Self-Deprecating	3	2	0
Grateful	0	2	0
Helpful	8	15	2
Knowledgeable	7	12	3
Optimistic	1	2	1
Inexperienced	1	12	0
Irritated	27	29	6
Cautious	1	10	1
Virile	2	2	2
Authoritative	17	20	4
Confident	0	0	0
Pessimistic	2	5	1
Demanding	10	17	5
Unhelpful	2	1	1
Jovial	1	1	4
Inquisitive	1	3	0
Face: Other-Oriented			
Politeness –	16	32	9
Positive Politeness	15	25	8
Negative Politeness	1	5	1
Off-Record Indirect	1	3	0
Impoliteness –	52	75	14
Bald-On-Record Impoliteness	22	27	5
Positive Impoliteness	3	9	4
Negative Impoliteness	25	36	4
Off-Record Impoliteness	4	2	1
Withholding Politeness	0	2	0
Sarcasm and Mock-Politeness	0	0	0

Appendix 28: The Reception Coding Book

A.

Reception	Definition
Discontinued	The topic/narrative is shut down or someone actively asks to stop talking about it.
Engaged With:	The topic/narrative is interacted with by others.
Negative Response	The topic/narrative receives a negative reaction.
Neutral Response	There is not a positive or negative response to the topic/narrative but it is engaged with somehow.
Positive Response	The topic/narrative is responded to positively.
Ignored	The topic/narrative is ignored, the subject may be changed, and no engagement happens with it.

B.



Appendix 29: The Openings/Closings Coding Book

Nodes	Definition
Openings –	Openings were greetings and initial message/s sent before the first topic shift in the interaction.
1-2-1 DMs	Openings in 1-2-1 direct messaging files.
Group-Chats	Openings in multi-party group-chat files.
Closings –	The ending of a conversation, whether an intentional sign-off or an unintentional abrupt ending.
1-2-1 DMs:	Closings in 1-2-1 direct messaging files.
Intentional	Intentional closings are the final messages before someone leaves or ends the chat related to signing off, leaving, farewells, reasons to leave, etc.
Unintentional	Where the conversation terminates with no prior warning or closing sequence.

Appendix 30: The Slang Types Coding Book

Slang types	Definition
Slang for Community Roles	Slang terms for the roles in the community (e.g. for newbies or experts).
Slang for Online Communication Tools, Technology	Slang for online social medias, websites, platforms, or general technology.
Slang for Sexual Acts, Arousal	Slang for sex acts, arousal, and things that are sexual acts to the offenders (not necessarily to others).
Slang for Sexual Interests, Sexuality	Slang for types of sexual interests or sexuality identifiers.
Slang for Sexualised Anatomy	Slang for physical body parts that are being sexualised.
Slang for Victims	Slang terms to refer to child-victims.
Slang Internet Abbreviations, Text Speak	Internet common slang terms that involve abbreviations, what is often referred to as 'text-speak'.
Other Slang	Miscellaneous other types of slang that do not fit into any of the above categories.

Appendix 31: Glossary of Slang Terms Appearing in Examples

Slang Term (by order of first appearance)	Translation	Location of First Usage in Thesis Examples	
		Chapter	Section
boned boner	Physically sexually aroused	4	2.1
cyber	Online contact (with other offenders)	4	2.2
vid vids	Video media file	4	2.2
admin adm	The administrator of a group/chat	4	2.2
pic pics	Photos	4	2.2
link/links	Hyperlinks to websites	4	2.2
dick pics	Sexual photos of a penis	4	2.2
kick kicked booted booted out the boot	Removing someone from a group (often by an administrator)	4	2.2
content	CSAM	4	2.2
banned	Removed from a group permanently	4	2.2
no perv	Non-paedophile	4	2.3
bro	Brother (informal term of endearment)	4	2.3
pedo pedos pdo	Paedophile	4	2.3
ped peds	paedophile	4	2.3
slut sluts whore	Sexually promiscuous	4	2.3
lil	Little	5	2
in buff	Nude	5	2
fuck fucked	Sexual intercourse	5	2
wank wanking	Masturbation	5	2
drink right from the tap	Easy access to children in a place they frequent (e.g. school)	5	2
gf	Girlfriend	5	2
z r z room room zooming	Zoom video calling group	5	2

Pm	Personal/direct Message	5	2
TOr T go on tour	The Onion Router	5	2
Nepi	Nepiophile (sexually attracted to babies and toddlers)	5	2
the net	Internet	5	2
b	Boy	5	2
posting	Sharing CSAM in groups	5	2
faggot	Slur for homosexual	5	2
cock	Penis	5	2
y/o	Years old	5	2
trading	Exchanging or sharing CSAM	5	2
geezer	Sometimes complimentary term for a man	5	2
the man on the street	General public	5	2
the ring	Paedophilic collaborative crime groups	5	2
pass	Password	5	2
pass 4 pass	Asking for a mutual exchange of passwords/access to CSAM folders	5	2
douche	Negative insult/profanity	5	2
sucked	Oral sexual act on male genitalia	5	3.1
mo	Month old	5	3.1
stroking it stroke	Masturbation	5	3.1
perv	Paedophile	5	3.1
nb	Newborn	5	3.1
blew my head	Mind-blowing (possibly sexually satisfying)	5	3.1
horned horny	Sexually aroused	5	3.1
load	Sperm	5	3.1
slut	Sexually promiscuous	5	3.1
poppers	Illegal inhalant drugs	5	3.1
fucked raw	Violent sexual intercourse	5	3.1
BL	Boy lover (paedophile with preference for male victims)	5	3.1
live shows	Livestreamed child sexual abuse	5	3.1
cammed cam	Video-called (often for sexual purposes)	5	3.1
cunts	Vagina	5	3.1
fukk	Sexual intercourse	5	3.1
shoot	Ejaculating/sexual climax	5	3.1
bby	Baby	5	3.1
0-7	Age range of victims	5	3.1

cleaning up cleaning house spring cleaning	Removing inactive users from CSAM-sharing groups	5	3.2
cp	Child pornography (CSAM)	5	3.2
chat is dead	Inactive	5	3.2
lurking	Being a member of a group/community but not posting/messaging	5	3.2
dripping	Sexually aroused with sperm	5	4
snuff it	Kill the victim	5	4
PD pd	Pedo/paedophilia	5	4
Fuck	Used as a profanity	5	4
bastard	Used as a profanity	5	4
cum	Sperm	5	4
craving crave	Feeling the need to watch CSAM	5	4
library	A personal collection of CSAM	5	4
likeminded	Other paedophiles or sexual intercourse/pornography involving two or more paedophiles together (without child-victims)	5	4
soft cock	Flaccid penis	5	4
drain my balls	Ejaculate/masturbate	5	4
broken break in	The first instance of sexual abuse on a victim (e.g. losing virginity), used similarly to 'breaking in horses'	5	4
ur corrupted	The person who introduced them to CSAM/paedophilia (possibly by abusing them as a child or showing them CSAM in adulthood)	5	4
fam	Family	5	4
lcuii	A website with a chat function popular with paedophiles	5	4
g	Girl	5	4
< 5	Age range of victims	5	4
corpse	A sexual interest in necrophilia	5	4
lil ones	Children	5	4
v v v v y	Very young victims	5	4
your need	Sexual attraction to children	5	5.1
the mob number	A mobile phone number	5	5.1
M	male/man	5	5.1
A/S/L asl	Age, sex, location?	5	5.1
hung?	Asking if someone has a large penis	5	5.1

u/c	Uncut (an uncircumcised penis)	5	5.1
addi addy nick nikk	Username information	6	2
Lmao	Laugh my ass off		2
jerking off jerk off	Masturbating	6	2
beast zoo	Bestiality media	6	2
Host	Setting up and running a livestream or group video-call for CSAM exchange or livestreamed abuse	6	2
Luv ya	Love you	6	2
Bf	Boyfriend	6	2
perv pole	Penis	6	2
blackballed	Blacklisted, excluded from CSAM trading	6	3.1
the crown	A symbol on <i>Kik</i> which indicates someone is an administrator		3.2
on live	livestreaming	6	3.3
scallies boys	Working-class youths (a slang term for a homosexual male preference in a certain aesthetic)	6	3.3
spunk	Ejaculate	6	3.3
Newbies	Newcomers to the community	6	3.4
mstick mem. stick	Memory stick/USB	6	3.5
lol	Laugh out loud	6	3.5
del	Delete	6	4.1
sk groups	Skype groups	6	4.1
vanilla	Standard, not hardcore or kink, sexual intercourse/sexual interests	6	4.1
collectors	Users who collect CSAM from other offenders but do not send any in return. Used as a derogatory term.	6	4.2
bud buddy	Friend	6	4.2
Sup	What is up	6	4.2
spike	Penis	6	4.2
bi	Bisexual	6	4.2
smoke	Illegal drugs	6	4.3
Sniff	Illegal drugs	6	4.3

Chems	Doing illegal drugs during sexual activities	6	4.3
chat clear	To speak openly about paedophilia without using coded language	6	4.3
Dnet Dweb	The dark-web	6	4.3
pm prvt	Private message	6	4.3
k9	Bestiality with dogs	6	4.3
pthc	Pre-teen hardcore CSAM	6	4.3
crush	Violent CSAM	6	4.3
fam pleasure	Incest CSAM	6	4.3
Gayperv	An interest in male child-victims	6	4.3
todd	Toddler	6	4.3
a bit sell by date	A victim being too old for their preferences	6	4.3
diaper ages	Victims who are babies/toddlers	6	4.3
bald ones bald	Babies	6	4.3
yng yung y	Young victims/children	6	4.3
pussy	Vagina	6	4.3
snog	Kiss	6	4.3
hole	Vagina or anus	6	4.3
pdophile meat	Penis	6	4.3
Pd rod	Penis	6	4.3
a baby fucker	Penis	6	4.3
Nepi workout	Masturbation	6	4.3
solo	Masturbation	6	4.3
spit roasted	Sexual act/position	6	4.3
impaling	Sexual penetration	6	4.3
wreck one	Violently sexually abuse a victim	6	4.3
thx	Thanks	6	4.3
tbh	To be honest	6	4.3
pos	Piece of shit	6	4.3
ttyl	Talk to you later	6	4.3
atm	At the moment	6	4.3
overgrown	An older victim than the offender prefers	7	2.1.1
kiddies	Children	7	2.1.1
pubes	Public hair	7	2.1.1
sub	Submissive (sexual preference)	7	2.1.1
hairy trench	Anus	7	2.1.1
single digits	Young children	7	2.1.1
fingered	Digital penetration	7	2.1.1

tiny Bois	Male children	7	2.1.1
gdad	Granddad	7	2.1.1
15mo	Fifteen-month-old child	7	2.1.1
on the cord	A baby still attached to the umbilical cord after birth	7	2.1.1
cock ring	A sex toy	7	2.1.1
Gimp mask	Fetish wear	7	2.1.1
precum	Pre-climax sperm	7	2.1.1
ty	Thank you	7	2.1.1
pink puffy lips	Labia	7	2.1.1
hard	Sexually aroused	7	2.1.2
Sexting	Sexually themed texting	7	2.1.2
Pound	Sexual intercourse	7	2.1.2
morning wood	Sexual arousal after waking up from sleep	7	2.1.2
cocksucker	Oral sexual act, profanity	7	2.1.3
turn you on	Become sexually aroused	7	2.1.3
Doggy style	Sex position	7	2.1.3
lubed	Using sexual lubricant	7	2.1.3
bruv	Bother, affectionate term	7	2.1.3
filth	Deviant sexual acts	7	2.1.3
happy hunting	Wishing someone good luck predated child-victims	7	2.1.3
seed	Sperm	7	2.1.3
sac	Scrotum	7	2.1.3
play	Child sexual abuse	7	2.1.3
give her lessons	Child sexual abuse	7	2.1.3
the business	Child sexual abuse	7	2.1.3
feast	Child sexual abuse	7	2.1.3
going ham	Trying hard/intensely	7	2.2.1
sucking him off	Oral sex	7	2.2.1
daddy	Father	7	2.2.1
piece of meat	A victim	7	2.2.2
cock tease	Sexually seductive but not engaging in sexual intercourse	7	2.2.2
eating out	Oral sex	7	2.2.2
breeding	Ejaculating inside a vagina or anus	7	2.2.2
chat is dead	Inactive	7	3.1
pedomom	Mothers who are paedophiles abusing their children	7	3.1
pedo family	Families who are paedophiles abusing their children	7	3.1
Grindr	Homosexual dating app for men	7	3.1
a copper	Law enforcement	7	3.1
lightweight	Paedophiles with less extreme/deviant sexual interests than others	7	3.1
This one had it	Sexual intercourse occurred	7	3.2

balls deep	Deep sexual penetration	7	3.2
pee pee	Penis	7	3.2
the gob	Mouth	7	3.2
a smooth hole	A vagina or anus without public hair (a child's genitalia)	7	3.2

Appendix 32: The Offender Sexual Interests Coding Book

Offender Sexual Interest Types	Definitions
Sexual Dislikes:	Types of sexual interests that the offenders claim to dislike.
Bestiality	Disliking sexual acts with animals.
Bodily Fluids/Filth	Disliking sexual acts involving dirt, lacking cleanliness/hygiene, or involving bodily fluids like urine, semen, vomit, etc.
Children's Bodies	Disliking children's physical bodies.
Non-Abuse	Expressing a dislike of non-abusive sex/pornography to praise/justify liking abuse.
Non-Violence	Expressing a dislike of non-violent sex/abuse.
Offender-to-Offender	Disliking sexual intercourse between offenders.
Rape/Forced/Violence/Abuse	Expressing dislike for abuse which they perceive as violent, abusive, forced, or explicitly rape – preferring CSA which they can frame as consensual.
Self-Degradation/Masochism	Disliking self-harm, pain, or degradation during sex.
Sex Acts with Narcotics	Disliking sexual acts under the influence of illegal drugs, such as a type of offenders called 'the chems'.
Victim Age Preferences	Having victim age preferences where the ages the offender does not like are detailed.
Victim Gender Preferences	Having victim gender preferences where the genders the offender does not like are detailed.
Sexual Likes:	Types of sexual interests that the offenders claim to enjoy/prefer.
Bestiality	A sexual interest in sexual acts with animals.
Bodily Fluids/Filth	Liking sexual acts involving dirt, lacking cleanliness/hygiene, or involving bodily fluids like urine, semen, vomit, etc.
Cannibalism	An interest in cannibalism (eating human flesh) during/after sexual acts.
Degrading Victims	Getting sexual gratification from dehumanising, degrading, or humiliating child-victims.
Dom-Sub/Control	A sexual kink where one party is dominant and the other is submissive, or getting sexual gratification from exerting control over the victim.
Ethnicity Preferences	Having preferences of which ethnicity sexual partners/victims are.
Exhibitionism/Public Indecency	Getting sexual gratification from sex acts in public places or exhibitionism like flashing or public nudity.
Fetishising Children's Bodies	Sexualising the physicality of children's bodies, e.g. small, hairless, underdeveloped, etc.
Fetishising Children's Innocence	A sexual attraction to the playfulness, naivety, or innocence of children.
Group or Shared Abuse	When offenders want to abuse victims with one or more other offenders together.
Incest	Sexual acts between biologically related family members.
Masturbation	Sexual stimulation on ones self.
Necrophilia/Snuff	Gaining sexual gratification from killing victims during/after the abuse. Also, sexual contact with corpses (often of victims).
Paedophilia (Named)	Gaining sexual gratification from calling themselves or others paedophiles.

Perceived Consent	When offenders describe an apparent willingness or sexual agency in victims for their own gratification of denying the abusive element.
Rape/Forced (Named)	Though all sexual contact with a minor victim is statutory rape, this category is for when rape or forced sexual interaction is mentioned explicitly as the goal or as a preference. This involves offenders explicitly saying they prefer 'rape' or 'forced' sex, or implicit statements such as saying they like it when the victim does not want it.
Self-Degradation/ Masochism	Gaining sexual gratification from pain, self-harm, degrading oneself, or humiliation.
Sexuality (Named)	Conventional sexualities recognised in wider society like homosexual/gay, bisexual, straight/heterosexual, etc.
Victim Age Preferences	Having victim age preferences where the ages the offender likes are detailed.
Victim Gender Preferences	Having victim gender preferences where the genders the offender likes are detailed.
Violence/Sadism	Gaining sexual gratification from acts of violence or sadistic cruelty towards others (child-victims).

Appendix 33: The Reception of the “what you into” Question in the Dataset

Reception to “what you into” Variations	No. of Codes
Engaged with:	
Positive response	19
Neutral response	8
Negative response	3
Ignored	5
Discontinued	0

Appendix 34: A Coding Matrix of Stance in Offender Sexual Identity Construction

	No. of Codes			
	Self		Other	
	Offender Sexual Interests	Offender Sexualisation	Offender Sexual Interests	Offender Sexualisation
Stance				
Subject 1	317	46	208	52
Positions or Evaluates	1312	251	660	285
Aligns	121	32	88	25
Object	1531	284	815	324
Subject 2	227	44	171	60
Positions or Evaluates	361	84	221	80
Aligns	343	74	191	61
Other-Stance Attribution				
Subject 1	303	71	255	86
Positions or Evaluates	327	68	292	86
Aligns	59	16	53	21
Object	318	76	266	86

Appendix 35: The Victim and Offender Sexualisation Coding Book

Sexualisation Types	Definitions
Offenders:	
Dehumanisation –	Dehumanization is the psychological process of depriving another of their humanity and individuality: demonising them, making them seem sub-human or not deserving humane or moral treatment.
Objectification	Speaking of a person as if they are an object (such as substituting them with naming an inanimate object).
Reductive Generalisations	Reducing another to a generalisation or reductive identifier.
Zoomorphism	Sexualisation via giving a person animalistic properties.
Offender-only Sex Acts	Sexual acts not involving child victims or non-offender adults.
Perceived Promiscuity	Calling someone a ‘slut’, a ‘whore’, or bringing up their willingness to do or history of doing sexual actions.
Sexual Flattery	Sexualised compliments.
Sexualised Anatomy	Sexualising genitalia or other body parts through physical descriptions or compliments (includes bodily fluids).
Sexualised Violence	Sexualising violent scenarios or forced sexual abuse.
Offender Sexualisation Misc.	A category of other sexualisation involving offenders which does not fit into the other categories.
Victim:	
Dehumanisation –	Dehumanization is the psychological process of depriving another of their humanity and individuality: demonising them, making them seem sub-human or not deserving humane or moral treatment.
Objectification	Speaking of a person as if they are an object (such as substituting them with naming an inanimate object).
Reductive Generalisations	Reducing another to a generalisation or reductive identifier.
Zoomorphism	Sexualisation via giving a child animalistic properties.
Perceived Promiscuity	Calling someone a slut or whore, or bringing up their willingness to do or history of doing sexual actions.
Sexual Flattery	Sexualised compliments.
Sexualised Anatomy	Sexualising genitalia or other body parts through physical descriptions or compliments (includes bodily fluids).
Sexualised Violence	Sexualising violent scenarios or forced sexual abuse.
Victim Sexualisation Misc.	A category of other sexualisation involving victims which does not fit into the other categories.

Appendix 36: The Content of Offender Sexual Fantasy Narratives

SFN Subtypes	No. of Codes
Fantasy Contact Abuse	158
Offender-to-Offender Only	83
Fantasy Online Abuse	9

Appendix 37: The Sexual Fantasy Narratives Coding Book (Functions, Stylistic Devices, and Subtypes)

Nodes	Definitions
SFN Functions:	The purposes of the sexual fantasy narratives. This was only coded when the functions were blatantly clear.
Bragging	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction to brag about sexual or abuse experience.
Cognitive Distortions/ Victim-Blaming	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction to blame victims for abuse or produce cognitive distortions about abuse/offending.
Community Membership Affirmation	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction to assert or reinforce community membership by indexing their paedophilic identities.
CSAM Preferences	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction to gain access to CSAM that they want to see, the type they want to see, or at all.
Flirting/Flattery	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction to flirt with other offenders or compliment them.
Planning Abuse	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction to plan out potential real-world contact abuse.
Sexual Gratification	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction for masturbation purposes, for sexual pleasure, and 'sexting'.
Venting	Engaging in sexual fantasy narrative construction as a form of confession, venting, or a release of speaking in a non-judgemental safe space for their sexual preferences (e.g. speaking in a way or about things they have to keep hidden in the rest of their life)
SFN Stylistic Devices:	Literary and narrative tools that may have been used in the sexual fantasy narrative construction.
Alliteration	Using the same letter or sound at the start of adjacent or close proximity words.
Allusion	Referencing something by mentioning something else that links indirectly or covertly to the original thing.
Anaphora	Repeating the same word or phrase in successive phrases.
Asyndeton	Using commas over conjunctions.
Epithet	An adjective or adjectival phrase linking a quality or attribute to a person or thing (often repeated).
Humour	Comedy.
Hyperbole	Exaggeration.
Idiom, Cliché	A saying or concept, often figurative and well known or established/overused.
Juxtaposition	Contrasting two very different things by placing them together.
Metaphor	Non-literal. Using a word or phrase in place of another, sometimes as a symbol.
Onomatopoeia	A word which sounds like the sound it makes.
Personification	Attributing a personality or human characteristics to objects or non-humans.
Polysyndeton	Using many conjunctions.
Repetition	Repeating a word or phrase.
Rhetorical Question	A question asked for dramatic effect or to make a point that does not require an answer.

Simile	Saying that something is 'like' or 'as' something else.
Understatement	Presenting something as less important, less concerning, or smaller than it actually is.
SFN Subtypes:	The categories/sub-types of narratives.
Fantasy Contact Abuse	Narratives which depict fantasy contact abuse of child-victims.
Fantasy Online Abuse	Narratives which depict fantasy online grooming or online abuse of child-victims.
Offender-to-Offender Only	Narratives which depict fantasy sexual contact between offenders (not victims).

Appendix 38: The Functions of Sexual Fantast Narratives

SFN Functions	No. of Codes
Sexual Gratification	139
Planning Abuse	75
Flirting, Flattery	56
Community Membership Affirmation	32
Venting	13
Bragging	13
CSAM Preferences	10
Cognitive Distortions, Victim- Blaming	1

Appendix 39: The Reception of Sexual Fantasy Narratives

Reception to SFNs	No. of Codes
Engaged with:	192
Positive response	189
Neutral response	2
Negative response	1
Ignored	17
Discontinued	1

Appendix 40: A Coding Matrix of Stance in Sexual Fantasy Narratives

	No. of Codes in SFNs
Stance:	
Subject 1	101
Positions or Evaluates	368
Aligns	52
Object	448
Subject 2	101
Positions or Evaluates	136
Aligns	119
Other-Stance Attribution:	
Subject 1	103
Positions or Evaluates	99
Aligns	23
Object	115

Appendix 41: A Coding Matrix of Speech Acts in Sexual Fantasy Narratives

Speech Acts	No. of Codes in SFNs
Assertive Affirmative	1143
Assertive Negative	77
Directives	357
Interrogatives	104
Comissives: Threats	0
Comissives: Offers	29
Comissives: Promises	1
Expressives	42
Expressives: Thanking	17
Expressives: Apologising	4
Acknowledgements	42

Appendix 42: The Victim Sexual Interests Coding Book

Victim Sexual Interest Types	Definitions
Evidence of Sexual Dislikes:	Instances in which offenders imply sexual preferences of victims through evidence which suggest dislikes.
Non-Consensual	Victim sexual dislikes shown through implying they did not consent to or enjoy the sexual encounter. This includes explicit mentions of 'rape' or 'abuse' as it inherently implies a lack of consent.
Violence/Pain	Where offenders describe child victims not enjoying pain/violence (such as crying or screaming during sexual abuse).
Evidence of Sexual Likes:	Instances in which offenders imply sexual preferences of victims through evidence which suggest they have sexual likes.
Perceived Consent	When offenders describe victim as wanting to have sexual contact, as if they consent, or assume consent (despite this being statutorily impossible).
Physical Arousal	When offenders describe signs of physical arousal in victims to suggest that they are enjoying sexual abuse.
Sexual Agency/Promiscuity	When offenders attribute sexual agency to victims, imply that they are promiscuous or sexually active, or call them 'sluts' etc.
Sexual Partner Preference	When offenders claim that victims have preferences for sexual partners (such as appearance, physical, or gender preferences).

Appendix 43: A Coding Matrix of Stance in Victim Sexual Identity Construction

	Victim Sexual Interests	Victim Sexualisation
Stance		
Subject 1	59	145
Positions or Evaluates	243	653
Aligns	18	57
Object	324	808
Subject 2	35	109
Positions or Evaluates	102	199
Aligns	72	180
Other-Stance Attribution		
Subject 1	91	131
Positions or Evaluates	90	129
Aligns	5	16
Object	90	135

Appendix 44: All Child-Victim Synonyms Used by Offenders in the Dataset

Child-Victim Synonyms	No. of Appearances
it	27
one	24
young	12
nb	10
them	6
toddlers	6
a toddler	5
teen	5
a boy	4
a little boy	4
teens	4
the boy	4
V v y	4
8	3
16	3
18	3
any	3
B n G	3
Boy	3
Lil boy	3
Lil boys	3
lil slut	3
Toddler	3
11	2
13	2
< 5	2
a bby	2
a kid	2
b & g	2
babies	2
bald cunts	2
bbby	2
ginger cp	2
infant	2
its	2
kiddie	2
lil ones	2
Newborn	2
one of them	2
some	2
y	2

yng	2
yung	2
-18	1
0	1
2	1
4	1
5	1
< 5	1
it	1
v v v y , babies n nb	1
[name of ethnicity]-cp	1
< 3	1
< 5 and white	1
< 5 or 6	1
0/12	1
0+ < 5	1
0+ <5	1
0-4	1
0-4 b	1
0-7	1
0-7 yrs	1
10/11	1
11- 15	1
12 yr old	1
12-15 yo boys	1
13-16	1
14 year old black girl	1
15//16//17	1
16 year old	1
16 year old to	1
16+	1
-18?	1
2 y/o	1
3 m	1
3 mo bby	1
3 months toddler	1
3 year old ones	1
4-6	1
5/6/10/12	1
6 year old girl	1
a 10	1
a 16 y/o	1
A 2	1
a 3 months	1

a 3 months baby	1
a 3mo	1
a 4 year o	1
a 5 y/o	1
a 5 yo	1
a 7 yr old	1
a b one a g	1
a bald cunt	1
a bald cunt of about 2	1
a bald lil cunt	1
a bald on	1
a bald one	1
a bald one	1
a beautiful lil piece of meat	1
a beauty	1
A bit sell by date	1
a boy and girl 16+	1
a child	1
a corpse	1
a dead baby	1
a few.	1
a girl 16	1
A human baby flashlight	1
a kiddie	1
a lil baddie	1
a lil piece of meat	1
a little cock sucking slut	1
a little fucktoy	1
a little girl that was 18m	1
a live one	1
a load of school girls	1
a nb	1
a pregnant Nepi whore	1
a random 5 year old	1
a ratarded bitch to use	1
a tasty meal bro	1
a tight slut hole	1
a v v v y	1
a young kid	1
any bald or lil hole	1
anything fuckable	1
b	1
b n g	1
B but I like g if bald	1

b or g	1
baby and toddler	1
baby boy	1
Bad little boy	1
bald	1
bald one	1
bald ones	1
bbies	1
bbys	1
boy 0-14	1
bsldies	1
cp of ginger girls	1
cute little fuck sluts	1
daughter and son	1
dead lil meat	1
diaper ages	1
few	1
fresh meat	1
fucking hot slut sucker	1
Grls	1
him	1
his little boys	1
his toddler	1
hot baby boy	1
il one < 5 , both g & b ,	1
in one	1
infant to toddler	1
it's	1
Just 9 yr old little boy	1
kids	1
lad	1
lil baby	1
lil bastard slut	1
lil bastard sluts	1
lil cold meat	1
lil corpse	1
lil girls	1
Lil nakie thing	1
lil shit	1
lil shit meat	1
lil slut thing	1
little boy	1
little boys	1
little Fucker	1

little girl	1
Little girls	1
little lads	1
little one	1
little ones	1
little sexy preteens	1
little slut	1
little toddlers	1
little whore	1
lovely little preteens	1
Luv bald	1
luv balds	1
M or f	1
middle school/freshman	1
Mmmm little baby boyz	1
much smaller	1
my 15mo	1
my neph	1
nb baby	1
new born	1
newborns	1
older and younger brothers	1
older brothers with Lil bros	1
One each	1
one just	1
one of those	1
one to	1
one Todd	1
online slave boys	1
our small friends	1
Poor boy's	1
preteen	1
preteen girl	1
sexy teens	1
single digits	1
single digits a must < 5 best	1
small tiny girls	1
smooth holes	1
some 5 yo	1
some hot fuckable things	1
some little cuties	1
something	1
something bald	1
that	1

that boy	1
that lil cocksucker	1
that little boys	1
that little fucked	1
that piece of meat shit	1
that waste of flesh	1
that whore piece of meat	1
the 11 y/o	1
the 5	1
the bald y cunt	1
the bby	1
the bby told	1
The bitch	1
the child	1
the fukka	1
the fucking whore	1
the lil bastard	1
the lil bastardise	1
the lil corpse	1
the lil one	1
the lil piece of meat	1
the lil shit	1
the little boy	1
the little corpse	1
the little fukka	1
the little shit	1
the little whore	1
the one bitch	1
the other kid	1
the premature	1
the stock	1
the tod	1
the toddler	1
the young lad	1
they	1
those lil sluts	1
those lil things we both like	1
tiny Bois	1
toddler boys	1
under 3	1
ur 13y/o	1
ur beautiful nephew	1
V v y , b & g	1
v v y and bald cunts	1

v young and bald cunts	1
very small please [smiley face emoji] toddler	1
Vry lil grld	1
VVY	1
What a beauty n the beast !!!	1
y and < 5	1
y hole	1
yng	1
yngyng	1
Young boys	1
young girl or boy	1
Young girls	1

Appendix 45: The Number of Child-Victim Synonyms Used in Each Chatlog

File Name	No. of Child Victim Synonyms Used
3_PP001_P_001_P_003	92
3_PP001_P_001_P_154	43
3_PP001_P_001_P_112	37
3_PP001-PP_02	27
3_PP001_P_001_P_111	20
3_PP002	19
3_PP001_P_001_P_246	16
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1587	13
3_PP001-PP_03	9
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1586	9
3_PP001_P_001_P_032	8
3_PP001_P_001_P_371	7
3_PP001-PP_04	7
3_PP001-PP_07	7
3_PP001_P_001_P_074	6
3_PP001_P_001_P_103	5
3_PP001_P_001_P_368	5
3_PP001-PP_08	5
3_PP003-PP_09	5
3_PP001_P_001_P_128	4
3_PP001_P_001_P_244	4
3_PP001_P_001_P_007	4
3_PP001_P_001_P_372	4
3_PP003-P_1576_P_1577	4
3_PP001_P_001_P_184	3
3_PP001_P_001_P_314	3
3_PP001_P_001_P_409	3
3_PP003-P_1591_P_1607	3
3_PP001_P_001_P_055	2
3_PP001_P_001_P_136	2
3_PP001_P_001_P_140	2
3_PP001_P_001_P_186	2
3_PP001_P_001_P_012	2
3_PP001-PP_05	2
3_PP001_P_001_P_013	2
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1585	2
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1595	2
3_PP003-P_1591_P_1590	2
3_PP001_P_001_P_078	1

3_PP001_P_001_P_138	1
3_PP001_P_001_P_225	1
3_PP001_P_001_P_227	1
3_PP001_P_001_P_315	1
3_PP003-P_1588_P_1589	1
3_PP003-P_1592_P_1614	1
3_PP003-P_1592_P_1616	1
3_PP003-P_1597_P_1596	1
3_PP003-P_1597_P_1601	1
48 chatlogs contained no uses	0

Appendix 46: Features in Child-Victim Synonyms, Grouped by Chatlog

Chatlog File Name	Does it contain these features (including any variations or similar terms)?													
	"it"	"one"	"young"	"newborn / infant/ toddler/ baby" etc.	"them/ those"	"bald"	"teens"	"boy/ girl"	numbered ages	"little/ small"	"slut/ whore"	comment on attractiveness	insult/ profanity	dehumanisation /objectification/ things
3_PP001_P_001_P_003	14	13	1	24	11	3	1	6	27	11	3	16	32	
3_PP001_P_001_P_007	2						1		2				2	
3_PP001_P_001_P_012				1									1	
3_PP001_P_001_P_013				2										
3_PP001_P_001_P_032	2		2	1					1			3	2	
3_PP001_P_001_P_055							1	1					1	
3_PP001_P_001_P_074	1						5		5				1	
3_PP001_P_001_P_078							1	1						
3_PP001_P_001_P_103		1	1			3	2	1					1	
3_PP001_P_001_P_111	7	5	1	2		3		1	1		1	4	11	
3_PP001_P_001_P_112	1	9	2	5	1	6	2	3	6	7	2	4	5	3
3_PP001_P_001_P_128		1	1	2										
3_PP001_P_001_P_136				2					1					
3_PP001_P_001_P_138			1				1							
3_PP001_P_001_P_140						1		1						1
3_PP001_P_001_P_154	2	1	1	7	1		11	9	7		1		4	
3_PP001_P_001_P_184			1				2	1						
3_PP001_P_001_P_186								2						
3_PP001_P_001_P_225		1												
3_PP001_P_001_P_227									1	1			1	
3_PP001_P_001_P_244			1				1	2						
3_PP001_P_001_P_246		1	3	7		3	3	1				1		
3_PP001_P_001_P_314			1				1							1
3_PP001_P_001_P_315				1				1						
3_PP001_P_001_P_368	1											1	2	
3_PP001_P_001_P_371			1	1	1		5		3					
3_PP001_P_001_P_372			1	1	1	1	1					1		
3_PP001_P_001_P_409		1		1				1						
3_PP001-PP_02	1	2	1	7	2		9	7	8		1	2	1	
3_PP001-PP_03		1		1	1		5	2	4					
3_PP001-PP_04		2		2			1	2	1					1
3_PP001-PP_05				1			1		2					
3_PP001-PP_07			3	3	1			1	1				1	
3_PP001-PP_08				2			1		3	2			2	
3_PP002			9				8	1	4	1				
3_PP003-P_1576_P_1577				1			1		2	1	3	1		
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1585								1	1	1				
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1586				1				2	9					
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1587			4				1	3	8	1				
3_PP003-P_1583_P_1595				2				1		1				
3_PP003-P_1588_P_1589									1					
3_PP003-P_1591_P_1590								2	2					
3_PP003-P_1591_P_1607			2				1	1	2					
3_PP003-P_1592_P_1616							1							
3_PP003-P_1597_P_1596									1					
3_PP003-P_1597_P_1601														
3_PP003-PP_09			1					1						

Appendix 47: The Attitudes Coding Book

Attitude Types	Definitions
Challenging:	Attitudes that challenge or criticise the in-group paedophile community or paedophilia.
Criticism of Ideology	Criticisms of the paedophile mindset and values.
Group/Chat/Platform Quality	Critical comments on the quality of specific group chats, social medias, or chat-sites.
Not Trading CSAM	Challenging messages which criticise others for not sharing or reciprocating CSAM.
Objection to CSAM Content/Sexual Interests	Critiques or dislike of a type of CSAM being shared or sexual interests shared by others.
Relationships	Criticisms of the relationships build between offenders (this could be general statements about forming connections or specific comments about a relationship between two offenders).
Removal from Groups	Critical comments in response to one being removed from a group-chat.
Security and Access	Criticisms of security measures (whether complaining that they are lax or complaining about them causing difficulties in access).
Self-Deprecating/Inferiority	Comments that are self-deprecating, self-critical, or refer to themselves/paedophiles as inferior to non-paedophiles.
Supportive:	Attitudes that support or encourage the in-group paedophile community or paedophilia.
Admiration for Expert or Famous Offenders	Admiring comments, praise, or support for expert of famous offenders.
Affection or Encouragement	Being affectionate or encouraging to other offenders for their identities or criminal behaviour.
Appreciation for CSAM	Expressing gratefulness or appreciation for CSAM that has been sent or for the sender.
Disavowing Alternative	Being supportive of paedophilia by disavowing the alternative to it.
Group/Chat/Platform Quality	Supportive, complimentary comments on the quality of specific group chats, social medias, or chat-sites.
Legitimising Abuse	Attempting to legitimise CSA by providing rationalisations and justifications for it.
Praising Support/Safe Space	Expressing gratefulness or appreciation for the supportive aspects of the online paedophile community and praising it as a safe space.
Pride and Self-Image	Expressing pride in their paedophile identity and having a positive self-image.
Superiority	Claiming that offenders/paedophiles are superior to non-paedophiles.
Victim-Blaming	Rationalising abuse through blaming the victims as deserving of abuse or asking for it.

Appendix 48: A Coding Matrix of Face in Attitudes

	In-Group Supportive Attitudes	In-Group Challenging Attitudes	Out-Group Challenging Attitudes
Face: Self-Oriented			
Boasting	95	15	13
Humble	3	1	0
Flexible	2	3	0
Friendly	180	45	9
Self-Depreciating	14	9	4
Grateful	60	8	1
Helpful	25	17	4
Knowledgeable	39	31	11
Optimistic	13	10	2
Inexperienced	14	19	4
Irritated	0	59	0
Cautious	15	30	15
Virile	322	58	21
Authoritative	21	9	6
Confident	4	4	1
Pessimistic	16	41	4
Demanding	26	26	1
Unhelpful	0	2	0
Jovial	25	5	4
Inquisitive	55	35	9
Face: Other-Oriented			
Politeness –	255	107	11
Positive Politeness	247	93	11
Negative Politeness	3	9	0
Off-Record Indirect	5	5	0
Impoliteness –	30	166	8
Bald-On-Record Impoliteness	15	69	3
Positive Impoliteness	12	41	3
Negative Impoliteness	0	27	2
Off-Record Impoliteness	3	26	0
Withholding Politeness	0	0	0
Sarcasm and Mock-Politeness	0	8	0

Appendix 49: A Coding Matrix of Stance in Attitudes

	No. of Codes within In-Group Challenging Attitudes	No. of Codes within In-Group Supportive Attitudes
Stance:		
Subject 1	97	132
Positions or Evaluates	224	311
Aligns	16	53
Object	336	382
Subject 2	76	90
Positions or Evaluates	101	88
Aligns	37	78
Other-Stance Attribution:		
Subject 1	70	121
Positions or Evaluates	70	116
Aligns	3	35
Object	80	127

Appendix 50: A Coding Matrix of Community Roles with Attitudes

Community Roles Coding Book	No. of Codes within In-Group Challenging Attitudes	No. of Codes within Out-Group Challenging Attitudes	No. of Codes within In-Group Supportive Attitudes
Enacting The Adviser Role	3	5	7
Discussing The Adviser Role	0	0	0
Enacting The Advice Seeker Role	6	0	13
Discussing The Advice Seeker Role	0	0	0
Enacting The Newbie Role	20	0	5
Discussing The Newbie Role	0	0	0
Enacting The Administrator Role	1	1	0
Discussing The Administrator Role	15	0	0
Enacting The Disciplinarian Role	8	0	0
Discussing The Disciplinarian Role	0	0	0
Enacting The Expert Role	19	5	18
Discussing The Expert Role	1	2	5

Glossary

Forensic Linguistics

The application of language analysis tools in criminal contexts like linguistic evidence, language in the courtroom, and authorship analysis.

Discourse Analysis

A linguistic approach, encompassing various qualitative and quantitative methods, which examines language in context. Discourse analysis involves analysing the structure and conveyance of language with a consideration of the social and cultural context it exists within.

Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis which examines language from computer-mediated contexts on the internet (e.g. email, social media, and forums).

Corpus Linguistics

A linguistic approach using language analysis tools to analyse a large body of data through statistical measures on a computer. The large collection of data is called a corpus (pl. corpora).

Node (Parent/Child Nodes in NVivo)

Categories in coding books made in the NVivo software are called *nodes*. Parent-nodes are the overarching categories created, while child-nodes are sub-categories within the parent nodes.

Code (in NVivo)

Coding is done in NVivo by selecting units of analysis (e.g. words or phrases) and assigning them to the nodes/categories within a chosen coding book. This means the word/phrase is coded to that node (e.g. coding 'Stop!' to the node for directives in a Speech Act coding book).