Moral panics and cybercrime: How Canadian media cover Internet child luring

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Abstract

The Internet's rise and popularity have imbued sex crimes against children with a different sense of urgency and immediacy. Canadian media were drawn to this public fixation and concern with the risks involved in the new medium and how child luring, as a sex crime against children, represents a "clear and present danger" to society. This study examines Canadian media's construction of Internet child luring during the first decade of the twenty first century. We analyze the manner in which two Canadian-based newspapers construct Internet child luring and present empirical evidence to support assertions that this problem is as pervasive as suggested. The newspapers studied are *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*, widely circulated and considered to be among the most influential newspapers in Canada. Through a content analysis, this article explores the larger how moral panics develop around "sexual predators" and child luring.

Key words: Moral panics, Canadian media, crime news, cybercrimes, sex crimes

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Introduction

Child sexual abuse has moved to the forefront of public consciousness to become one of the most important issues on the social and political agendas in Canada. With the popularization of Internet technologies in the last two decades, public attention has been directed to issues surrounding *online* sexual exploitation of minors in Canadian newspapers. As revelations of child molestation within the Catholic Church in Canada, the United States, and elsewhere exploded, the public's outcry kept with a perception that children's and young adults' safety continues to be jeopardized at the hands of sexual perpetrators. "There are few human behaviors that society views as more obscene, despicable, and worthy of public outrage than sex crimes against children," concluded Holmes and Holmes (2002, p. 94). Indeed, the last couple decades have also seen tremendous public attention focus on issues surrounding child sexual abuse as newspaper stories started exposing the true nature and scope of this crime. NBC's "To Catch a Predator," among other numerous television shows, heightened public awareness and fears (Adler, 2010). The wild popularity of "To Catch a Predator" played a "dramatic role in shaping the category of "predator" in popular imagination, in public policy and in law" (Adler, 2010). The instrumental role the media plays in shaping public's awareness, attitudes, and subsequent policy responses to sex crimes against children is rarely in dispute because the media are fundamental in the construction of social reality and public opinion (Tuchman, 1978). Moral panics are usually one of the most obvious ways in which the media purportedly influences public opinion.

The Internet's rise and popularity have imbued sex crimes against children and Internet-related crimes in general, with a different sense of urgency and immediacy. Canadian media were drawn to this public fixation and concern with the risks involved in the new medium and how child luring, as a sex crime against children, represents a "clear and present danger" to society. This study examines Canadian media's construction of Internet child luring during the first decade of the twenty first century. We analyze the manner in which two Canadian-based newspapers construct Internet child luring and present empirical evidence to support assertions that this problem is as pervasive as suggested. The newspapers studied, *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*, are widely circulated and considered to be among two of the most influential newspapers in Canada. Several questions were examined in this study: How did these two newspapers portray Internet child luring? How did their coverage construct fear of child luring? How did it play into the public's exaggerated fear of the Internet? How did media coverage prescribe preventative strategies to diminish the issues surrounding Internet child luring? The article answers these questions through a content analysis of related media coverage to explore the larger how moral panics develop around "sexual predators."

Sex Crimes, the Internet and Media Coverage

News coverage in local newspaper on crime related issues remain predominant in Western society (Cohen, 2002; Surette, 1992). With this coverage, media plays an integral part in swaying the public opinion. Several research studies have focused on the elements that are

considered newsworthy and attention grabbing (Boulahanis, & Heltsley, 2004; Katz, 1987; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). Within this coverage, atypical features of crime related stories generally make front-page headlines (Boulahanis & Heltsley, 2004). Boulahanis and Heltsley (2004) found in their study that these atypical features include demographic variables such as race, gender, and age. Child sexual abuse, both online and offline, remains a current and pressing topic within Canada. Although child sexual abuse has been reported for decades, an increasing number of stories have been covered on Internet child luring have due to the high technological society we live in today (Potter & Potter, 2001). With this type of coverage, a moral panic in society has the possibility to occur by the exposure of atypical stories, thus creating an intense fear in society (Boulahanis & Heltsley, 2004).

With the rapid advancement of computer technology, children and youth have become an increasingly vulnerable target for online sexual abuse. Instant messaging (such as MSN Instant Messenger, AOL, and Yahoo Chat) has become an important form of communication used by minors. In addition to text messages, most instant messaging programs are capable of sending voice messages and images. However, online sexual exploitation of youth and children has become more prevalent with this advancement (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2001). Before any meaningful developments can occur in preventative actions, researchers need to understand from various angles as to how children become vulnerable to victimization. Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell and Ybarra (2008) have found that "…the Internet is becoming an increasingly dangerous place for children and teenagers who online profiles often attract aggressive sexual predators" (p.111).

As children become increasingly fluent within their Internet use, offending behavior becomes increasingly prevalent. Children and adolescents, in particular, are the significant group embracing new forms of communication technology (Atkinson & Newton, 2010). In 2005, 61% of youth reported that they had high-speed (broadband) access to the Internet at home (Young Canadians in a Wired World 2002). Wolak, Mitchell and Finkelhor (2009) propose that online relationships are the new phenomenon in today's adolescent culture as home Internet use has become mainstream practice within our technically advanced society. Communication by offenders through chat rooms, e-mail and instant messaging forums are used to develop intimate relationships with victims (Wolak et al., 2008). As the virtual connection through cyberspace offers anonymous identities, the "…N-JOV study found that 5% of offenders pretended to be teens when they met potential victims online" (Wolak et al., 2008, Pg.112). Benson (2003) suggests that this tactic of age misrepresentation is part of the manipulation process in grooming of the child. While these issues present very serious implications when analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of cyberspace, attempts to legislate to protect children from sexual predators have been underway. In Canada, Bill C-15A in 2001 sought to address these areas.

Internet Child Luring: C.C.C Section 172.1

As the Internet evolves and online sexual exploitation of children continues, countries are developing and continuously modifying legislation within their national borders to assist in

controlling Internet child luring. However, as each country creates its own legislation, some disparity in legislation occurs when dealing with international cases. In Canada, Section 172.1 of the Criminal Code of Canada sets out the Internet luring offence. On March 14th 2001, Bill C-15, an act to amend the Criminal Code, was introduced to the Federal House of Commons due to the growing concern over Internet-related sexual abuse of minors. The offence came into force on June 4th, 2002 (Goetz & Lafreniere 2001).

Section 172.1 makes it "an offence to communicate via a "computer system" with a person under a certain age, or a person whom the accused believes to be under a certain age, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of certain sexual offences in relation to children or child abduction" (Goetz & Lafreniere 2001, 4). When the offence was originally enacted, Section 172.1 stated that:

> (1) Every person commits an offence who, by means of a computer system within the meaning of subsection 342.1(2), communicates with
> (a) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of eighteen years, for the purposes of facilitating the commission of an offence under subsection 153(1) [sexual exploitation], subsection 155 [incest] or 163.1 [corrupting morals], subsection 212 [procuring sexual intercourse] (1) or (4) or section 271 [sexual assault], 272 or 273 with respect to that person;
> (b) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of sixteen years, for the purposes of facilitating the commission of an offence under section 280 [abduction of a person under the age of 14] with respect to that person; or
> (c) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age fourteen years, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence under section 151 [sexual interference] or 152 [invitation to sexual touching], subsection 160(3) [bestiality] or 173(2) [indecent acts] or section 281 with respect to that person.
> (2) Every person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is guilty of
> (a) an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of no more than Five years; or
> (b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.
> (Greenspan & Rosenberg, 2004, CC-309)

As of February 28th 2008, the legal age of consent was increased from 14- to16-years-of age due to the passing of Bill C-2 (Tackling Violent Crimes Act). The new age of consent came into force on May 1, 2008. This new modification makes it illegal for adults more than five years old to have sexual relations with 14- and 15-year-olds, unless they are married to the youth.

The Canadian luring offence consists of three important elements that are required to commit this offence. The first element is that the accused must have used a computer system to

communicate with the minor. Thus far, this element has never been denied or discussed in any legal debate. The second element states that the accused intentionally communicated with a person who is or who he or she believes to be under the age of consent (as determined by the various secondary sexual offences). The third element states that the accused must have "facilitated" a secondary sexual offence through conversation with a minor. In the case of *R. v. Legare*, the Supreme Court of Canada evaluated the Canadian luring law and held that "facilitating" is broader than an attempt: it is "helping to bring about and making easier or more probable – for example, by 'luring' or 'grooming' young persons to commit or to participate in the prohibited conduct; by reducing their inhibitions; or by prurient discourse that exploits a young person's curiosity, immaturity or precocious sexuality" (*R. v. Legare* at para. 28). Before this clarification, some courts held that the intentions of the accused to "facilitate" a secondary sexual offence had to be explicitly known (such as via evidence that he or she tried to arrange an offline meeting with the minor).

Research Question

Against this legislative background, media's attention to Internet-related sex crimes offers one way of understanding whether and how related moral panics would develop. The advent technology conjures up added risks in social perception of crime. As an "instrumental medium," the Internet was perceived to augment the possibilities of committing sex crimes against children that range from online grooming and stalking to facilitating the exchange of child porn (Dombrowski et al.*,* 2004). Mass media coverage of Internet related sex-crimes against children and its relationship to pertinent legislation is a main objective of this study. This article focuses on print news stories that involve the harming of children by computer-facilitated luring.

Since there is little scholarship discussing online child sexual abuse and print media coverage, this research seeks to examine whether there is a concerned emphasis placed on stories that discuss Internet child luring during the legislative year of 2002 and the consecutive three years after. Analysis of print media coverage of Internet child luring during this four year period provides insights into the levels of media attention paid to the issue of Internet luring and computer-facilitated sex crimes against children in Canada. The main research question this article seeks to answer is:

> RQ1: How do print media cover Internet-related sex crimes against children, particularly child luring?

To answer this question, the article focuses on *The Globe and Mail*'s and *The Toronto Star*'s coverage of the issue "child luring." The analysis examines a) the "tone" and language of news coverage, b) the "geographic" spread of the covered crimes, and c) the "prevention" strategies prescribed in related media coverage.

Method

The researchers conducted a content analysis of two Canadian newspapers, *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe & Mail*. These newspapers were selected because of their divergent scope and audience reach. *The Toronto Star* is a regional newspaper for the city of Toronto and surrounding areas, while *The Globe & Mail* offers a national perspective in its reporting on Canadian issues. Newspaper articles were preferred for this analysis as they are generally more accessible and indexed than other news sources. This is due to the large portion of newspaper content dedicated to the reporting of crime related issues (Surette, 1992; Cohen, 2002). The data consists of newspaper articles published during the four year period following the 2002 legislation, i.e. between 2002 and 2005. These articles discuss computer-facilitated Internet luring of children, which is a criminal offence as stated in the Criminal Code of Canada (C.C.C) section 172.1.

This study used both qualitative and quantitative analyses and approaches to highlight some of the significant themes and pattern that thread throughout the collected newspaper articles. A content analysis concerns itself with "…'meaning' only in the sense of what is explicit in the words used…and what is implied by their use from the range of alternatives that could have been employed" (Miller & Brewer, 2003, p. 43). To operationalize these patterns and themes that develop throughout the articles, a closed-ended coding scheme will be developed as a way to assess the printed articles. In this closed ended coding scheme, several variables were constructed for analysis like age of victim and offender, gender, geographic information, charges laid, article 'tone', and whether the selected articles provided some sort of primary preventative strategy.

Retrieving and gathering data for analysis relied on two academic databases. The Toronto Star news coverage was retrieved from the *Canadian Newsstand* database by ProQuest Multimedia as it provides full access to *The Toronto Star* articles of print post -1985. Articles from *The Globe & Mail* articles were retrieved using *LexisNexis Academics* by Lexis Nexis, which provides full access to articles. The search focused on all articles published between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2005. The same key search words were used to conduct citation and document text searches of *Canadian Newsstand* database for *The Toronto Star*'s articles, and *LexisNexis Academics* database for *The Globe & Mail*'s articles. These terms include "luring", "lured", "child", "abuse", and "sex." Additional terms were used to further define the search within these articles. The analysis focused on a) "article tone," b) "geographic location," and c) the "prevention strategies."

a) Article Tone

An article's "tone" refers to the manner in which the article's author portrayed Internet child luring as a level of public threat or if the criminal act itself would be taken seriously within the Canadian criminal justice system. Article tone was determined by words, statements, and overall rhetoric suggesting the extent to which Internet child luring has or is harmful to the members of the community. Articles were assigned to one of three categorical frames

("serious," "neutral" and "not serious"). As an example, articles that advocated for anti-luring legislation or urged parents to remain cautious in monitoring their children's Internet use' were deemed as constructing Internet child luring as posing a serious threat to public safety. Also, articles that identified the seriousness of the crime by listing maximum sentence terms or any regulatory procedures under the criminal justice system were listed as "serious" articles. Articles considered as "not serious" were those which presented Internet child luring as infrequent. Articles lacking an identifiable tone were deemed "neutral."

b) Geographic location

The geographic location of the article story was reported to identify if the news story occurred in Toronto or in another location. The two categories created are 'Toronto area' which include any geographic location within the greater Toronto area (GTA). Any story that was discussed which did not occur within the GTA were reported as being 'outside Toronto'. This was done to examine the pattern of reporting between the two newspapers.

c) Prevention strategies

Several key trends were identified as primary prevention strategies to assist in diminishing child Internet luring in Canada. Each Internet child luring article was examine to seek out any preventative strategies that were provided by the author, for readers, that could assist in the protection of children and youth when online. Two types of categories were provided for the purpose of a quantitative analysis. These categories (yes, and no) were used depending on the observation. Some examples of preventative strategies would be advising parents to re-locate Internet accessible computer into a common area of the house, like a family room, or for parents to participate in further training that could enhance their own knowledge about computer safety. This would provide an opportunity to monitor Internet use of minors as well as provide education to their children about their computer use.

Analysis

The study's 48 month period yielded 43 articles for analysis, the bulk of which 53.5% (N=23) derived from *The Toronto Star*. Only 46.5% (N=20) of the sample consisted of *The Globe & Mail* articles. Although individually each paper averaged less than one Internet luring publication each 28-31 days (dependent upon the month), collectively the two papers discussed about Internet luring on almost a monthly basis between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2005 (see Table 1). To simply distribute the number of articles over the study's duration is, however, misleading. The quantitative description fails to depict reporting irregularities.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Article Location

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Avg. article per month
Toronto Star	23	53.5%	.48
Globe & Mail	20	46.5%	.42
TOTAL	43	100%	.90

While Section 172.1 criminal offence came into effect in July 2002, article collection started January 1st, 2002 to capture any news reporting previous to this offence on Internet luring. The article distribution of both newspapers varied between 2002 and 2005. The highest year for reporting news articles was in 2004.   This spike in reporting could be due to the increase use of social networking sites and growth in computer purchases for household use although no articles specifically point to one factor within this year. With a sample size of 43, the frequency indicated that 39.5% (N=17) news articles luring were printed during the year 2004. Only 18.6% (N=8) news articles on luring were printed the previous year (2003).

A cross-tabulation was run between the article year and the article locations to further examine the distribution between the two newspapers and within the years of publication. Individually, *The Toronto Star* printed 34.8% (N=8) of the total 23 articles discussing child luring in 2004 (see Table 2). The least amount of articles printed by the Toronto Star was in 2002, that being 13% (N=3) out of the total 23 articles printed over the four year span. *The Globe & Mail* printed 45% (N=9) of the total 20 articles discussing child luring in 2004, which was the highest amount for this paper. The least amount of articles was printed by *The Globe & Mail* was in 2003, that being 10% (N=2) out of the total 20 articles printed. Although the cases are minimal in this statistical analysis, it was performed to illustrate the distribution of both newspapers.

Table 2: Zero-Order Cross-Tabulation

Article year	Toronto Star	Globe & Mail
2002	13.0% (3)	30.0% (6)
2003	26.1% (6)	10.0% (2)
2004	34.8% (8)	45.0% (9)
2005	26.1% (6)	15.0% (3)
TOTAL	100% (23)	100% (20)

1) Article Tone

Of the study's 43 articles, 40 portrayed Internet child luring as a "serious" issue to public safety (see Table 3). Only 2 articles were identified as having a "neutral" tone and 1 article portrayed Internet luring as "not a serious" issue to public safety. Following a somewhat gradual increase in serious tone rates, beginning in the fall of 2002, "serious" tone articles were highest in 2004 with a total of 15 articles out of the 17 articles for that year collectively.

Table 3: Tone/Portrayal of Internet Luring

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Not Serious	1	2.3%
Neutral	2	4.7%
Serious	40	93.0%
TOTAL	43	100%

Twenty-one of *The Toronto Star*'s 23 articles were defined as "serious" in tone. By provoking a 'serious' tone in articles, anxiety amongst its readers can develop. An example of a "serious" tone article was reporter Debra Black's article, "Internet predator could be anyone"[1], which emphasizes the randomness of predators to initiate online conversations with children. These types of articles could contribute to the anxious fear many parents feel about allowing their child to explore the Internet on their own with no supervision. In another article entitled, 'Targeting those who target children', staff reporter Betsy Powell states that "there's no comprehensive Canadian research on the prevalence of the [Internet child luring] problem".[2] By stating that Internet child luring remains an unknown issue, parents could easily speculate that the issue is much more prevalent than is officially reported.

The Globe & Mail also published several "serious" tone articles that captured the attention of the public. In Christine Boyd's article, 'Girl abduction exposes extent of Internet luring,' she discusses how the Internet "…is often accessed from home [which] can engender a false sense of security".[3] Such articles discuss the intrusiveness of the Internet while perpetuating an exaggerated fear of this technology, and construing it as a threat to the safety and sanctity of the home. Parents are becoming increasingly nervous about leaving children and youth unattended by a computer. Although, this fear is not completely unwarranted as Internet luring does occur, both newspapers sometimes presented un-sourced and highly questionable statistics.

2) Geographic location of incidents

The geographic location was reported to examine the distribution of news reports as well as the most common geographic location each newspaper reported. A cross-tabulation was run to determine the distribution amongst both papers and if the majority of reporting consist of stories that occurred within the Toronto area or outside Toronto. The results indicate that 77.8% (N=14) of articles from the regional newspaper, *The Toronto Star*, reported on news stories that occurred within the Toronto area. Only 22.2% (N=4) of the articles in *The Toronto Star* reported on stories that were located outside the Toronto area (see Table 4).

The Globe & Mail, a national paper, reported 52.6% (N=10) of their articles on news stories that occurred outside the Toronto area. Only 47.4% (N=9) of the articles reported on Internet child luring consisted of stories that occurred within the Toronto area. There were a total of six missing cases as the geographic location could not be identified within the article. The geographical findings were consistent with the type and scope of each paper, being regional or national in its coverage.

[1] Black, D. (2003, March 10). Predator could be anyone. *The Toronto Star*, p. E1.
[2] Powell, B. (2003, October 11). Target those who target children. *The Toronto Star*, p. A29.
[3] Boyd, C. (2003, July 17). Girl's abduction exposes extent of Internet luring. *The Globe & Mail*, p. A1.

Table 4: Cross-tabulation

Article Location	Toronto Area	Outside Toronto	TOTAL
Toronto star	77.8% (14)	22.2% (4)	100% (18)
Globe & Mail	47.4% (9)	52.6% (10)	100% (19)

Missing cases: 6

3) **Preventive strategies**

The articles were examined to locate any preventative measures against Internet luring for the public. Collectively, 67.4% (N=29) of the articles did not suggest any preventative strategies for protecting children and youth from online luring. Only 32.6% (N=14) of the papers provided preventative strategies to assist in diminishing the opportunity for predators to luring children online. Therefore, the majority of articles did not suggest any type of preventative safety measure.

A cross-tabulation was conducted to analyze the distribution of preventative strategies between the newspapers. *The Toronto Star* did not provide preventative methods for 60.9% (N=14) of its articles. Only 39.1% (N=9) Toronto Star articles listed some sort of preventative measure. Therefore, the majority of Toronto Star articles did not suggest a preventative safety measure. *The Globe & Mail* did not provide preventative methods for 75.0% (N=15) of the articles. Only 25.0% (N=5) *The Globe & Mail* articles listed some method of prevention. Thus, the majority of *The Globe & Mail* articles did not suggest a preventative strategy.

When prevention was discussed, *The Toronto Star* was largely in support for increasing parental monitoring of children when online. In 'Street-proof kids about dangers online,' reporter Debra Black recommends that "…parents should design a family contract about Internet use", as you "…wouldn't allow a child to talk randomly on the phone to a stranger, so why would you allow them to do the same on the Internet?"[4] Similarly, Nick Pron's article, 'Jail time for online predator,' contends that "…the best thing parents can do is move the computer from the child's bedroom into a family room where they can observe who their children are talking to".[5] These types of preventative methods can all be implemented within one's household.

Police departments have also taken initiative in protecting children and catching offenders. In Jennifer Quinn's article, "Toronto man accused of luring on net," a sergeant states that "our detectives routinely go on the Internet and monitor it [chat rooms], and if need be, they pose as young kids, teenaged kids on the Internet."[6] By police posing as children and youth in chat rooms, unsuspecting predators strike up conversation, assuming the police are adolescence, and begin the process of luring by gaining the trust of these children. As some of these predators test that creditability within these conversations, "...officers read teen magazines to help keep up to the speed on 'what's in'".[7] Powell also notes that it is "…important to know the proper slang,

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[4]Black, D. (2003, March 10). Street proof kids about dangers online. *The Toronto Star*. p. E6.
[5] Pron, N. (2005, July 19). Jail time for online predator. *The Toronto Star.* p. B3.
[6] Quinn, J. (2002, November 16). Toronto man accused of luring on net. *The Toronto Star,* p. B2.
[7] Powell. B. (2003, October 11). Targeting those who target children. *The Toronto Star*. p. A29.

such as omg (ohmygod), asl (age, sex, location) and 'kewl'...[officers] also try to avoid detection by making sure [they] make errors when typing".[8]

Along with strategies mentioned above, *The Globe & Mail* also focused on legislative changes to secure prosecution. In 'Ontario announces plans to fight on-line child porn,' the paper's reporter Richard Mackie writes that "…the Ontario government will intensify the police fight against the growing problem of the distribution of child pornography on the Internet and the use of the Internet to lure young people into sexual encounters with adults".[9] A similar law-and-order suggestion was echoed in Graeme Smith's article, "Teacher charged with girl's sex assault," stating that, "Peel police warned parents to keep an eye on their children's Internet habits"[10] and provided some safety guidelines for parents.

Discussion

Overall, this study yielded some interesting results. The article distribution between each year demonstrated publication growing media attention on Internet child luring stories. The initial year (2002), in which the Canadian government enacted a policy that would criminalize any Internet luring of a child or youth by adults, was the first year of article collection to monitor the publication. Three consecutive years were collected as well. The articles seemed to peak in 2002 and 2004. In 2003, there was a decline in article publication and media attention. As the luring legislation was enacted in July 2002, criminal justice agencies in 2003 might have been hesitant to apply this law since it was fairly new. As the Internet luring offence was constructed to coincide with the rapid growth of Internet technology, questions regarding the application and to what extent this foundational legislation could be applied might arise. In one article, "Internet luring sentence sparks outrage," Toronto police Chief Fantino "…expressed disappointment with the sentence"[11] of a child luring offender. He felt the sentence was not sufficient enough for the crime that had been committed. Without understanding the scope of this legislation, implementation of the law could have been complicated.

The findings in the article tone section were not surprising as one would think such articles that discuss Internet luring of children would exhibit some degree of seriousness in their content. As crimes against minors are subject to tough punishment by the justice system in Canada and scrutiny by the general public, articles that did not reveal such seriousness in regards to these crimes would seem atypical. Although the majority of these articles did convey a "serious" tone, only a small number of these articles provided preventive solutions that could assist in protecting adolescence from Internet luring. Based on these findings, *The Toronto Star* was more inclined to offer solutions than *The Globe & Mail*. This was interesting as 40 articles were listed as being of "serious" tone. Articles with such a "serious" context seem to provide solutions and inform parents about how to protect children from Internet luring. The seriousness is more pronounced particularly as parents are often viewed as less computer savvy than their children. For instance,

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[8] Powell. B. (2003, October 11).
[9] Mackie, R. (2004, October 14). Ontario announces plans to fight on-line child porn. *The Globe & Mail*, p. A10.
[10] Smith, G. (2002, April 26). Teacher charged with girl's sex assault. *The Globe & Mail,* p. A23.
[11] Levy, H. (2003, Nov 25). Internet luring sentence sparks outrage. *The Toronto Star*, p. B5

in one article titled, "Man faces charge of luring," Tracy Huffman reports that a police officer extends "… an appeal to parents to be vigilant and educate themselves and their children when it comes to the perils of online activity".[12] Overall, only 14 of the articles provided preventative strategies.

Finally, although only 43 articles were produced over the four year span that our data covered, one could infer that these articles do incite "some" panic around Internet use by adolescents and the vulnerability of children themselves. The news articles on luring crime stories employed anxiety-provoking rhetoric that potentially hinders parental confidence in their ability to protect their children. Therefore, some of the study's findings could potentially reflect ideological assumptions that misrepresent the true reality of Internet child luring. The present research refrains from qualifying it as a "moral panic" in the way Cohen (2002) and others described moral panics, however. For Cohen, moral panics need to satisfy the following criteria:

       1) Something or someone is defined as a threat to values or interests (labeling)

       2) This threat is depicted in an easily recognizable form by the media (amplification)

       3) There is a rapid build-up of public concern

       4) There is a response from authorities or opinion-makers

       5) The panic recedes or results in social change.

The newspaper coverage analyzed in this paper does indeed define child luring, and Internet enabled sex crimes against children as a threat to the social order. The articles have amplified the issue through the examples provided above. Yet, the amplification seems to occur after a response from the authorities in the form of Bill C-15A in 2002 had already taken place. Based on this analysis, the "panic" has not receded.

Still, the main aspects of the moral panic seen in the coverage concern the construction of Internet associated danger and the perpetrators. While individual responsibility is often prescribed in these articles, especially advising parents to educate themselves to catch up with their Internet savvy kids, there is an implicit emphasis that these "sexual predators" are always lurking behind computer screens. In a sense, child luring becomes a technological challenge facing modern parents. There is no refuge or save haven for young adults and children who go online. Policing is a traditional response, concomitant with the piece of legislation, but unable to root out the menacing problem. The latter finding diverges from the worn out paths traditionally associated with moral panics.

Conclusion

Drawing on the content analysis conducted in this research, this article highlights the possible influences Canadian print media might have on the perceptions of parents and legal guardians regarding the dangers associated with Internet use by minors. The main objectives the study focused upon were: (1) to analyze various ways in which two Canadian newspapers framed Internet child luring and Internet technology; and (2) to explore the possible repercussions of these narratives on parental guidance with their children. The policy response to Internet child

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[12] Huffman, T. (2005, April 16). Man faces charge of luring. *The Toronto Star*, p. B3

luring in Canada has been encapsulated in the Canadian Criminal Code in 2002 specifically designed for the protection of children and youth against inappropriate sexual behavior by adults. The rise of social policies and legislative measures has been foundational for regulating stricter criminal consequences for offenders engaging in sexual crimes against children. Although these crimes have occurred and been documented for several decades, no policy or legislative measure has successfully prevented child sexual abuse from occurring within family households and among trusted individuals.

The legislation became a catalyst for more media coverage and attention. This study employed a content analysis of two newspapers, *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe & Mail*, to observe and trends and patterns of the content in coverage related to child luring. Internet child luring was addressed on an apparent monthly basis and often associated with child pornography. Internet child luring was constructed as primarily as a "serious" threat to public safety, in articles displaying an identifiable tone. Police, members of parliament, crown prosecutors were all referenced to support this "serious" tone. It was concluded that a panic, although minor, did develop from the content of these articles. When Internet use was discussed in the articles, three particular themes developed in regards to user risk. The two Canadian newspapers created a rhetoric that focused on trolling perpetrators who lure unsuspecting victims in chat rooms, the anonymity of cyberspace, and that children have been easily duped into sexual behaviors by manipulating perpetrators. However, from the lack of publication over these particular years, the trajectory was not of a moral panic on a grand scale. Future studies should consider the post-2005 years to examine the threads that develop in media coverage because this study only evaluated the initial years that the luring legislation was enacted.

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