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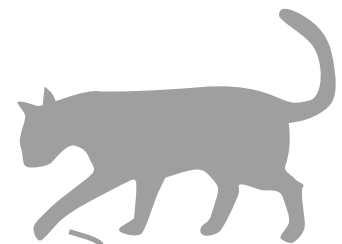
Mare Ainsaar

Lars Lööf

(Eds)

# Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse

## Literature Report



RISKTAKING ONLINE BEHAVIOUR  
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# ROBERT

Online behaviour  
related to child  
sexual abuse



Literature Report

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# Introduction

Lars Lööf

Young people today grow up in a technology-mediated world with almost unlimited access to games, music and film, not to mention the enormous array of contacts with other youth all over the world facilitated by the Internet. This opens tremendous possibilities that were unimaginable only half a generation ago. While such availability would uniformly be seen as positive, there are increasingly concerns about the problems access to technology might bring for young people. While the overwhelming majority of children and young people navigate safely through the Information and Communication Technologies, some children fall victim to abuse and to violence. While there is concern across different countries about online solicitation and grooming, there have been very few analyses to date that have explored how these contacts occur and what maintains these online relationships in the face of highly sexualised content.

The ROBERT project intends to make online interaction safe for children and young people. This will be achieved by learning from experiences of online abuse processes and the factors that make young people vulnerable as well as those that offer protection. As part of the ROBERT project a systematic review of studies, with a specific focus on sexually abusive online experiences and offline sexual abuse that have started with an online contact or where the contacts between the perpetrator and the young person have relied heavily on information and communication technologies has been made. This report will cover also some issues of specific interest as we discuss young people who are at risk of sexual abuse in connection with information and communication technologies and seek answers questions as follows:

- I What patterns can be observed from the review on a European level that relate to areas of concern across different countries?
- II How do different data collection methods impact on the type and the quality of the data obtained? (For example, telephone interviews, paper based surveys responded to in class-room settings, online questionnaires etc).
- III When compared with other research on difficult and sensitive issues involving young persons, what is indicated in relation to disclosure and how does this compare with official statistics?
- IV Which behavioural patterns and risks seem to differentiate between specific groups of young people? (e.g. in relation to gender or sexual orientation).
- V Are there any reports that explore the perception of the young person with regard to the expression of their sexuality online and their interpretation of abusive practices?
- VI What studies have examined specific behavioural patterns that can be seen as leading from online contact to abusive experiences?
- VII How can we understand resilience in relation to young people's online behaviour?
- VIII Do the reports indicate new emerging research needs as yet uncovered?
- IX What are the individual risk factors, or risks related to the environment, leading to sexually abusive experiences?
- X How have the complex ethical issues in involving children been negotiated across studies?

# 1 Methodological issues

Relevant publications were added to a publications database, set up as a part of the project. The emphasis of the work was on collecting information on publications related to online sexual abuse issues from 20 EU countries and Russia, but also publications from other parts of the world have been included if information was available to the project partners. The current report is the first analysis of literature collected by the ROBERT project in the database. The report consists of four major topics:

1. Methodological issues including regional and methodological coverage of online child sexual violence literature
2. Research evidence in to behavioural patterns which lead to becoming a victim of sexual abuse including risk factors of becoming a victim of sexual abuse
3. Behavioural patterns which lead to becoming a sexual abuser and sexually abusive behaviours including risk factors which lead to becoming a sexual abuser and sexually abusive behaviours
4. Specific behavioural patterns and risks of becoming a victim of abuse in relation to particular groups

The database on Internet related child sexual abuse literature is available for public use on the Child Centre webpage [www.childcentre.info/ROBERT](http://www.childcentre.info/ROBERT).

## 1.1 Glossary

Ethel Quayle, Lars Lööf, Kadri Soo, Mare Ainsaar

The EU Safer Internet Project ROBERT has developed a common set of definitions and terminologies relevant to this study and other current pieces of work. In doing so it has drawn on existing research and policy writing in this area.

**Age of consent** is the age at which the child is considered old enough to make an informed decision to consent to sexual contacts. All countries have defined an age at which children are considered mature enough to consent to sexual contact. For some countries in the world same sex relationships have a different age of consent than do sex between a boy and a girl. Up to this age, most European countries' legislation offer specific protection meaning that any sexual contact with a child below the age of sexual consent is legally seen as abusive or as being an act of rape even if the child claims s/he consented to the act. This is often termed statutory rape. If a child below the age of sexual consent has consensual sex with someone of similar age, many countries have provisions in place handling such acts outside of the legal systems. Some European countries also have different age of consent for sexual contacts with a person significantly older or between persons more or less of the same age.

**Child abuse** defined by WHO "constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

### **Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. However Gillespie (2010) has argued that such a definition, which uses an arbitrary cut off, is not without difficulties in the context of abusive images and that, "The difficulty of defining "a child" has a direct impact on the ability of the law to create laws relating to child pornography. It is submitted that there are two principal ways of defining a child for the purposes of child pornography: biologically or by age-specification".

**Child sexual abuse** includes a spectrum of sexual crimes and offenses in which children up to the age of 17 are victims. (See age of consent). The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007) offers definition for child sexual abuse under Article 18:

- 1) engaging in sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities;

- 2) engaging in sexual activities with a child where
- abuse is made of coercion, force or threats; or
  - abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or
  - abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence. (p 8-9).

**Online (cyber) child sexual abuse is the engagement of a child in sexual activities** via Internet facilities

- 1) with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities;
- 2) engaging in sexual activities with a child where
- a. abuse is made of coercion, force or threats; or
  - b. abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; or
  - c. abuse is made of a particularly vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence.

All of these activities can be differentiated from adolescent sexual behaviours which are developmentally appropriate and which do not imply coercive activity. There are clear overlaps between online child sexual abuse and the commission of contact and other non-contact offences and all are seen as part of a spectrum of sexually violent behaviour towards children and young people.

Online (cyber) child sexual abuse includes the production, distribution, downloading and viewing of child abuse material (both still and video images); the online solicitation of children and young people to produce self-generated child abuse material, to engage them in sexual chat or other online sexual activity, or to arrange an offline meeting for the purposes of sexual activity, also known as grooming or luring; and the facilitation of any of the above.

**Contact sexual abuse** can be defined as:

**a) Penetration**

Sexual acts include contact involving penetration, however slight, between the mouth, penis, vulva, or anus of the child and another individual. Sexual acts also include penetration, however slight, of the anal or genital opening by a hand, finger, or other object. Sexual acts can be performed by the perpetrator on the child or by the child on the perpetrator. A perpetrator can also force or coerce a child to commit a sexual act on another individual (child or adult) (Leeb et al 2008).

**b) Non-penetrative touching**

This may include intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the following:

- Genitalia (penis or vulva)
- Anus
- Groin
- Breast
- Inner thigh
- Buttocks

Abusive sexual contact can be performed by the perpetrator on the child or by the child on the perpetrator. Abusive sexual contact can also occur between the child and another individual (adult or child) through force or coercion by a perpetrator. Abusive sexual contact does not include touching required for the normal care or attention to the child's daily needs. A perpetrator can also force or coerce a child to commit a sexual act on another individual (child or adult) (Leeb et al 2008).

**Non-contact Sexual Abuse** can include the following:

- Intentional exposure of the child to another's genitals or private parts or pornographic material for purposes of sexual arousal or to shock or harass (exhibitionism)
- Photographing or filming of child in a sexual display for purposes of sexual arousal (which may result in the production of child abuse materials). A child below the age of 18 is not seen as being in a position to agree to such acts. In most countries however, such acts committed between young persons of similar age are not seen as abusive.
- Sexual requests or overtures to the child for or other attempts to engage the child in sexual activities that would constitute sexual abuse were they to be carried out, which may also be described as grooming or solicitation.
- Comments and language of a sexual nature intended to demean, embarrass and/or draw unwanted attention to the child's sexual parts or sexual activity or moral character (whether true or untrue). This should be differentiated from, for example, the teaching of sex education in schools where the content may cause embarrassment but where the focus is not the individual child or young person.
- Persuading, inducing, enticing, encouraging, allowing, or permitting a child to engage in or assist any other person to engage in, prostitution, or sexual trafficking. A child or young person below the age of 18 is not seen as being in a position to give informed consent to such acts and are thus protected also from persuasive, enticing or encouraging behaviours.

**(Online) harassment** involves threats or other offensive behaviour, sent online to the youth or posted online about the youth for others to see (Finkelhor 2000). Online harassment occurs when someone uses the Internet to express aggression towards another person. This can take the form of inflammatory e-mails or instant messages, or damaging pictures or text posted on a profile.

Sexual harassment encompasses a wide variety of behaviours and can range in severity from degrading remarks to unwanted sexual advances and sexual assault (Dill et al 2008). Most expressions of sexual harassment that prevail on the Internet appear in the form of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention (Barak 2005). Gender harassment in cyberspace includes gender-humiliating comments, sexual remarks, dirty jokes, insulting erotic or pornographic picture, and the like. These messages can be targeted directly to a particular person or potential receivers generally. Unwanted sexual attention assumes personal communication between a harasser and victim sending messages that refer to or ask about a victim's intimate subjects (i.e., sex organs, sex life), or invite to talk about or engage in sex-related activities. In contrast to gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention is specifically intended to solicit a victim to sexual cooperation in virtual or non-virtual environment (Barak 2005). Unwanted sexual attention is a connection point between sexual harassment and sexual solicitation. Obviously, various authors use either sexual harassment or sexual solicitation investigating similar construct.

**Sexual solicitations and approaches** are requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or give personal sexual information that are unwanted or, whether wanted or not, made by an adult (Finkelhor et al 2000). This definition of solicitations refers therefore to the potential negative consequences to the target person. Unwanted sexual solicitation is the act of encouraging someone to talk about sex, to do something sexual, or to share personal sexual information even when that person does not want to. There are clear overlaps between solicitation and sexual **harassment and bullying**. They all have been linked to psychosocial challenges for youth targeted by them (Ybarra et al 2007). Most of sexual solicitations are limited to online interaction and is relatively mild. Therefore many young people might not find it disturbing. Mitchell et al (2007) differentiate also between limited sexual solicitation and Finkelhor et al (2000) aggressive sexual solicitations.

Sexual solicitations should be differentiated from counselling, sex education and other communication about sexual issues, when the aim of communication is not to involve person to the sexual activities. It should also be differentiated from chatting about sexual issues, sharing sexual information or even sharing images of sexual content, self produced or other, between consenting peers. These are challenging issues since communicating about sex may occur in online conversations between young people and unknown people, without it in any way violating the child.

**Child abuse images** has increasingly been used instead of the term child pornography to more adequately reflect the content of what is produced, and to challenge any implicit consensual activity (Taylor & Quayle 2003). The term 'abusive images' is now widely used by those who advocate for children's rights in relation to sexual abuse through photography (Jones & Skogrand 2005), but this change is not straightforward. The term child pornography is consistently used in the majority of laws and policy documents internationally (Akdeniz 2008), and attempts to change terminology are thought by some to be both confusing and to not adequately capture the complex nature of the material (Lanning 2008).

**Child pornography** has been variously defined in supranational and international policy documents. The European Union's Framework Decision on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography entered into force in 2004 and required member states to take steps to ensure compliance by 20 January 2006. Here child pornography is defined as pornographic material that visually depicts or represents:

- (i) a real child involved or engaged in sexually explicit conduct, including lascivious exhibition of the genitals or the pubic area of a child; or
- (ii) a real person appearing to be a child involved or engaged in the conduct mentioned in (i); or
- (iii) realistic images of a non-existent child involved or engaged in the conduct mentioned in (i).

The definition in the European Union's Framework Decision talks about a 'real' child, 'real' person and 'realistic' images, which may prove unlikely to cover virtual images or cartoons. The Council of Europe's Cybercrime Convention (2001) came into force in July 2004, and Article 9 defines child pornography as pornographic material that visually depicts: a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct; a person appearing to be a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct; or realistic images representing a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct. This relates to all people under the age of 18, but it is possible for a lower age limit of

16 to be set. The United Nation's Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography came into force in January 2002 and defines child pornography as 'any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes'. In all three a child is defined as someone under the age of 18 years and includes both photographs of actual children as well as representations of children, which would appear to include computer-generated images. However, the issue of age is subject to several reservations and complicated by the age of sexual consent established under national law. Akdeniz (2008) draws our attention to the fact that the UN definition is broad and, as it refers to 'any representation', would also include textual material, cartoons and drawings. The most recent relevant instrument establishing a definition of child pornography is the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. While this definition is restricted to visual materials it does not require that a real child be used in their production (as is the case in the US). However, member states may opt not to criminalise the production and possession of virtual child pornography. Importantly the Convention has chosen not to criminalise the consensual production and possession of materials created by children who have reached the age of sexual consent (Quayle 2009).

**Cyberbullying** is defined as an individual or a group wilfully using information and communication involving electronic technologies to facilitate deliberate and repeated harassment or threat to another individual or group by sending or posting cruel text and/or graphics using technological means (Mason 2008). Cyberbullying is any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others beyond the school grounds and follow targets into their homes (Patchin & Hinduja 2006). In cyberbullying experiences, the identity of the bully may or may not be known. Cyberbullying can occur through electronically-mediated communication at school; however, cyberbullying behaviours commonly occur outside of school as well (Tokunaga 2010).

**Internet sex offenders** do not have a set of agreed diagnostic criteria outlined by DSM or any other categorical model. Generally Internet sex offenders are considered those who behaviour can be classified under sexual abuse activities. This includes: downloading illegal images from the Internet (which largely, but not exclusively relate to pornographic pictures of children); trading or exchanging such images with others; producing images through photographing children or modifying existing images and engaging in the solicitation or seduction of children (Quayle 2008). Elliott and Beech (2009) generated a broad typology of Internet offenders comprising four groups: (1) periodically prurient offenders, consisting of those accessing impulsively, or out of a general curiosity, who carry out this behaviour sporadically, potentially as part of a broader interest in pornography (including 'extreme' pornography) that may not be related to a specific sexual interest in children; (2) fantasy-only offenders, consisting of those who access/trade images to fuel a sexual interest in children and who have no known history of contact sexual offending (3) direct victimization offenders, consisting of those who utilize online technologies as part of a larger pattern of contact and non-contact sexual offending, including child pornography and the grooming of children online in order to facilitate the later offline commission of contact sexual offenses and (4) commercial exploitation offenders, consisting of the criminally-minded who produce or trade images to make money.

**Online and offline** are conventionally seen as relating to computer mediated communication and face-to-face communication. One is seen to occur in the virtual world of cyberspace and the other in the 'real world', although many have seen this distinction as an over simplification (e.g. Slater 2002). For example, Slater (2002) argues that the telephone can be regarded as an online experience in some circumstances, and that the blurring of the distinctions between the uses of various technologies (such as PDA and mobile phone, television and Internet, and telephone and Voice Over Internet Protocol) has made it "impossible to use the term *on-line* meaningfully in the sense that was employed by the first generation of Internet research".

**Online sex** is when two or more people are stimulating each other sexually by exchanging digital texts, messages pictures or video clips (Döring 2009). The term in itself does not indicate if the contact is voluntary, abusive or the result of unduly pressure or persuasion. Forms of online sex have been known to be used by adults with an interest in engaging a child in sexual exchange, the exchange of texts with a highly sexualised content or exchange if thoughts about sex and sexuality. In these cases the online sex has been an obvious part of the grooming process. (Wagner 2008). Online sex is also by many described as a safe way of exploring your sexuality or a way of having sex with a partner far away geographically. Studies conclude more women than men prefer online sex since they appreciate the opportunity to explore their sexuality in a safe setting.

**Paedophilia** is defined as a sexual interest in prepubescent children, but also as a diagnosis in medicine. The medically determined paedophilia can have a link with sexual offense against children: Child pornography offenders and sex offenders with child victims are more likely to be paedophiles (Seto 2009). At the same time, some paedophiles have not had any known sexual contact with children, and perhaps half of sex offenders against children would not meet diagnostic criteria for paedophilia. The American Psychiatric Association Development Group for DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) is 'recommending this disorder be renamed from Pedophilia to Pedohebephilic Disorder'. This would include sexual activity by someone 18 or older with children and adolescents at least 5 years younger (Kramer 2010).

**Pornography** – see Child abuse images, child pornography.

**Self-generated content** is part of the wider phenomenon of user generated content. User-generated-content (USG) is content created and published by the end-users online and consists of videos, podcasts and posts on discussion groups, blogs, wiki's and social media sites. Self-generated content in the context of abusive experiences mediated by the information and communication technologies mainly refer to images or videos. These are also seen as part of the grooming process where the offender convinces the child to send him images of her/himself naked or in some cases masturbating. The images are often used to persuade the child of the harmlessness of sexual contacts between a child and an adult, lowering the child's inhibition to engage in off-line sex or to be paid by the adult to meet. Wagner (2008) has suggested that the adolescent involved sees him or herself as an accomplice to the abuse after having sent the perpetrator images and after having been paid for sexual services. Self-generated content is differentiated from casts of different forms, web casts or voice interactions in the way that it is published wilfully by the person that is in the image.

**Sexting** has been defined as the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images by minor teens (Lenhart 2009). "Sexting" refers to the use of mobile phones with built-in cameras to produce and distribute images of oneself in a sexu-

ally provocative or revealing position Photographs produced by the use of "sexting" can be distributed to unintended third parties, often leading to embarrassment and harassment. Moreover, senders are also in danger of being charged with possession and distribution of child pornography, regardless of the fact that they are minors and the pictures are often of themselves (Zhang 2010). It has been suggested that the problematic nature to this activity depends on its persistence and extent. Isolated incidents are unlikely to be seen as a form of sexual violence but this is different from persistent activity with extensive dissemination of images. Ostrager (2010) has suggested that "The legal system needs to distinguish between sexting as a serious offense posing a danger to others, and when it is simply a romantic entanglement: the act must fit the punishment" (p 272).

**Sexual exploitation** is one form of sexual abuse. It is differentiated from sexual abuse by the fact that the act of sexual abuse is somehow unequal and exploitive from the start of communication. For example the child's position as younger and less experienced is exploited for the gain of the offender through the coercion and the persuasion of the child (Quayle et al 2008). Asquith and Turner (2008) suggest that sexual exploitation encompasses various forms of sexual abuse including prostitution, child pornography and child marriage, and is used variously to mean any one or all of these.

**Commercial sexual exploitation** can be differentiated from other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation on grounds of the motive of profit. Commercial sexual exploitation may drive to the abuse and exploitation of children or may be a consequence of it. It includes the prostitution of children, trafficking for sexual purposes, the production, sale distribution and use of child pornography, and child sex tourism (Kane 2006).

**Sexual grooming** can be defined as a process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions (Craven et al. 2007). In the UK the Home Office defines grooming as '*a course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes*'. This definition formed the basis of the grooming clause in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Davidson and Martellozzo 2005). The main difference between sexual grooming and sexual solicitation is that the groomer first attempts to befriend a child and gain his/her confidence and trust before sexually abusive behaviour (Rogers et al 2010). However, the solicitation occurs without any special friendship-forming phase – a child is exposed more quickly to unwanted requests for sexual activity and sexualised talk.

**Violence.** The definition of violence is that of article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "all forms of physical or mental injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse".

**Violence against children** is an intentional behaviour by people against children that is likely to cause physical or psychological harm including physical and mental abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, societal forms of violence, such as exploitative child labour, and children's involvement in armed conflict (Skinnider). Violence against children is the broader concept than child abuse, especially due to its societal dimension. Many forms of violence that are harmful to children (i.e., involvement in violent conflicts in state) lie outside common definitions of child abuse. Moreover, violence can be seen rather as deliberate exertion of physical force and power (see Krug et al 2002); however, abuse refers to the treatment of somebody



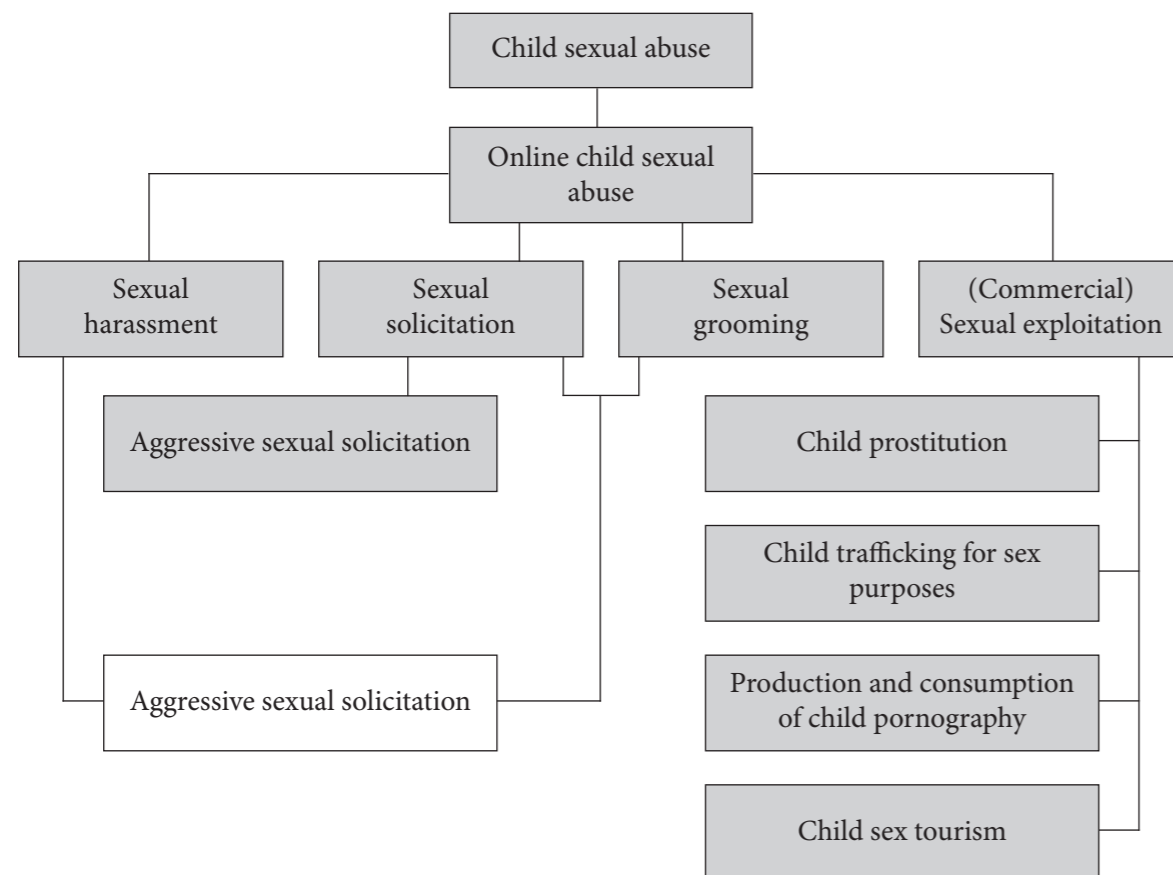
in inadvertent or harmful way. Violent toward a child can be acquaintance or strange adult and underage persons.

**Virtual child pornography** includes non-photographic pornographic images of children (NPPIC); that is, fantasy visual representations of child pornography in the form of, for example, computer generated images, cartoons or drawings (Ost 2010).

In the United Kingdom this is a new offence under ss 62-68 of the C & JA. The image must either focus 'solely or principally on a child's genital or anal region,' or portray any of the following acts:

- (a) the performance by a person of an act of intercourse or oral sex with or in the presence of a child;
- (b) an act of masturbation by, of, involving or in the presence of a child;
- (c) an act which involves penetration of the vagina or anus of a child with a part of a person's body or with anything else;
- (d) an act of penetration, in the presence of a child, of the vagina or anus of a person with a part of a person's body or with anything else;
- (e) the performance by a child of an act of intercourse or oral sex with an animal (whether dead or alive or imaginary);
- (f) the performance by a person of an act of intercourse or oral sex with an animal (whether dead or alive or imaginary) in the presence of a child.

**Web cam sex** is a form of online sex where the participants engage in sexual behaviour simultaneously in front of a camera connected to the computer. They can see their partner(s) on the screen at the same time as they can show themselves to their partner(s).



## 1.2 Data collection procedures for the publications database

Kadri Soo, Mare Ainsaar

The aim of the database was to systematically gather published materials containing information about online sexual abuse/violence and grooming committed against children under 18. The database contains different types of published materials covering three main topics:

1. Online communication with a minor leading to online sexual abuse/violence (including sexual grooming and solicitation, exposure to violent and/or pornographic material, receiving indecent proposals, online sexual harassment)
2. Online (risky) behaviours of minors leading to online or offline sexual abusive/violent encounters (including meetings with strangers);
3. Offline voluntary or involuntary/abusive sexual encounters, leading to some form of online abuse/violence (including online bullying/harassment, manufacture, dissemination and trading of child erotica/pornography such as the posting of indecent images).

Although these topics were the main focus of the database, other related issues such as: risky online behaviour by minors; characteristics of victims, offenders, and abusive situations; practice of prevention and intervention of specialists; parental support are also included in the database.

The database assembles articles, reports (survey reports, reports of governmental/non-governmental organisation), books or chapters in book, PhD and Master thesis etc. It contains scientific researches conducted both with qualitative, quantitative or combined methods. Literature reviews and law and policy analyses have also been included.

	Children's Internet use		
Online risk	Low (<65%)	Medium (65-85%)	High (>85%)
Low	Cyprus Italy	France Germany	
Medium		Austria Spain	Denmark Sweden
High		Bulgaria Czech Republic	Estonia Netherlands Norway Poland UK

Table 1. Classification of some countries, subject of main information in the database, by children's Internet use and online risk Source: (Livingstone and Haddon 2009).

### Collection of published materials

Although the database includes materials from a large range of countries, the main efforts were directed to the collection of all relevant materials in all languages from 20 EU countries and Russia. Preliminary results in relation to use of the Internet from the EU Kids Online report were used as a source of information in order to determine which 20 countries should be subjected to a greater level of scrutiny. The aim was to include countries with different Internet usage prevalence and online risk levels (see Table 1). 15 countries were selected from the classification provided by the EU Kids Online 1 project (Table 1) and Russia, Finland, Lithuania, Hungary, France were also included as interesting country cases. However, the database was not restricted to these countries only. Papers and studies from other countries were added as well, although it should be noted that information about publications in the national languages of those other countries might be less representative.

In the case of countries participating in ROBERT project (Estonia, Russia, Denmark, Germany, Italy Sweden and the UK), the national project teams were responsible for collecting publications from their country. From European countries outside of the project partnership, specialist contributors were recruited<sup>1</sup>. Their task was to gather publications dealing with the above-mentioned topics and send it to the database coordinator according to the template. All country teams received instructions to search for and pass on information regarding literature published about their own country or published in his/her country. The researchers were instructed to collect publications issued either in local languages or in English. The Estonian team also collected research from other countries.

The main requirements for researchers was that they should be familiar with various research methods and that his/her research interests or work tasks would be related to the subject of child abuse, Internet use or online risks. Most of the contributors were professors, associate professors, researchers, and PhD students from universities or research institutes who have written works on, or studied, the sexual abuse of children including online abuse. Some contributors worked as experts for NGOs whose sphere of activity includes online safety. All entries passed basic quality controls.

The database includes information about the

- Type of publication
- Language of the publication
- Year of publication with complete reference in its original language and in English.
- Aim of the publication
- Research topics
- Period of data collection
- Type of regional coverage (Cross-national, National, Sub-national)
- Country/ies where the empirical data originates
- Country where the publication was issued
- Type of methodology
- Sample size
- Age of persons in the study
- Description of results

The database included information about 218 publications at the beginning of 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Our special gratitude to all contributors who helped to complete the database: Rita Zukauskienė (Lithuania), Andrea Dürager (Austria), Miguel Angel Casado (Spain), Marios Vryonides (Cyprus), David Smahel (Czech Republic), Claudia Lampert (Germany), Cédric Fluckiger (France), Lukasz Wojtasik (Poland), Katri Lampainen (Finland), Elisabeth Staksrud (Norway), Bence Ságvári (Hungary), Susanne Baumgartner (The Netherlands), Carla Machado (Portugal), Georgi Apostolov (Bulgaria).

## 1.3 Regional, thematic and methodological coverage of online activities related child sexual violence literature

Mare Ainsaar, Kadri Soo

Studies regarding child online sexual violence themes were quite rare until 2000 (Figure 1). Since 2002 we see continuous growth of literature on this topic and 2007 marks a remarkable jump in the quantity of this kind of research. During recent years the average number of published studies has stabilised and has stayed at between 30-40 publications per year.

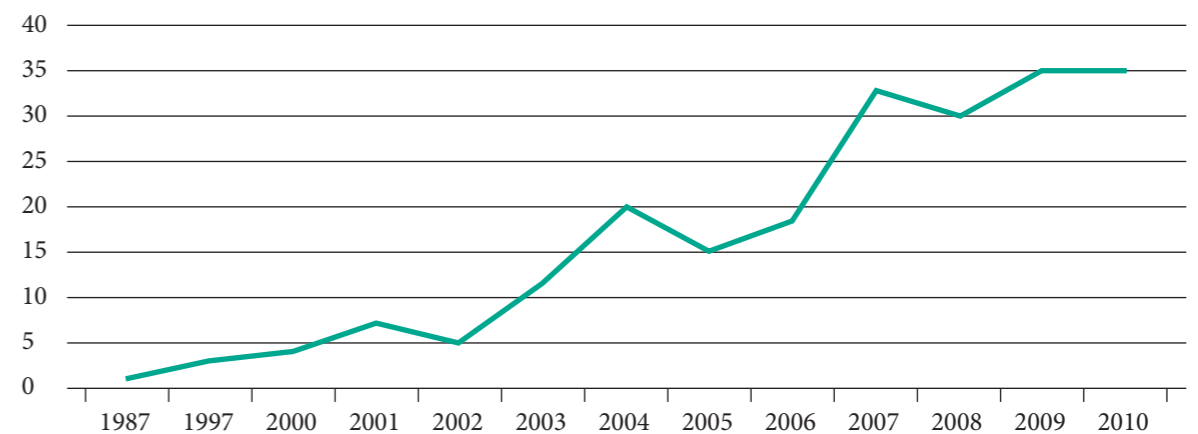


Figure 1. Number of publications on online sexual abuse related topics.

### 1.3.1 Methods

Different methods allow different phenomena to be grasped. Qualitative research is very often used either at the preliminary preparatory phase of a research or in later stages to understand more deeply and interpret more fully the processes, cases etc. Quantitative methods are the best in order to measure the occurrence and interaction strength between different acts. The number of publications based on other methods remains however limited.

The very first published study on the topic of online sexual abuse was qualitative by nature (Table 1). In 2000 the first quantitative research piece in USA (Finkelhor et al 2000), was published. The first European quantitative surveys were published by O'Connell (2001) who studied pornographic material on the Internet and Valkenburg and Soeters (2001) who explored children's experiences on the Internet in The Netherlands. Since 2004 the number of quantitative research projects is growing intensively while the number of qualitative works published has only doubled and stays more stable. In 2009-2010 36 qualitative methods based surveys with very large samples, but also with much more limited selections were published.

Since 2003 we can also see published studies which combine both methods. Review type analytical works about online sexual abuse related themes are traditional and the number of this kind of work has also increased over the years. This is not surprising, because the total number of evidence based works has increased, which need to be understood in a more generalised way.

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Else, review
1987	0	1	0	0
1997	0	2	0	1
2000	1	2	0	1
2001	3	2	0	2
2002	2	2	0	1
2003	0	5	4	2
2004	6	6	5	3
2005	3	5	2	5
2006	6	2	3	7
2007	15	6	10	2
2008	9	8	9	4
2009	21	4	8	2
2010	15	4	8	8
Total	81	50	49	38

Table 1. Methods used in publications by years.

The assumption that the number of publications might increase because of international projects and their published reports does not seem to be borne out by the figures. The share of cross-national publications fluctuates from year to year and was highest in 2000 and 2003 when publications with international content formed more than 50% of all publications about online sexual abuse papers. During recent years cross-national publications constitute 15-17% of the total number published works. In 2010 the share of publications with cross-national content increased to close to 45% once again thanks to the EU Kids Online Project results.

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Both	Other	Total
Cross-national	8	19	9	20	56
National	55	22	31	14	122
Subnational	7	17	10	3	37

Table 2. Level and methods of research.

The quantitative approach seems to be the most popular for national level analysis with qualitative methods being used more for cross-national and sub-national studies (Table 2). Quantitative methods with a mixed approach dominate also in the research relating to online sexual abuse, grooming, and solicitation literature (Table 3). In the research of online activities related to offline activities qualitative methods are used more often.

The majority of quantitative surveys (69%) use a representative sample design. Approximately two third of samples are representative by age, gender and/or region. Studies with a representative educational level are also quite common. On the other hand very few studies are representative according to ethnicity and socio-economic status. Unfortunately, the information about the criteria of representativeness has been not always revealed clearly in all studies.

Topic	Qualitative		Quantitative		Mixed method	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Online sexual abuse/violence	23	26	43	49	21	24
Online grooming or solicitations	25	28	36	40	28	31
Online activities related to offline sexual abuse/violence	27	39	21	30	22	31
Offline activities related to online abuse/violence	15	35	12	28	16	37

Table 3. The topics of publications by type of method (percentage from topics)

The most common approach to study online sexual violence issues is to use qualitative face to face semi-structured or unstructured interview and a self-completion questionnaire for the quantitative aspect (Table 4).

Research based on self-completed surveys were conducted most frequently with the purpose of investigating the experiences of online sexual victimisation (including sexual solicitations, grooming or unwanted exposure to sexual material). For example, about two thirds of surveys conducted with these methods aimed to ascertain the prevalence of online related sexual abuse and the characteristics of victims among children and young people. Self-completed questionnaires (online survey or paper-and-pencil survey) are often used also in victim surveys – this method guarantees the anonymity while answering delicate questions and thereby improves the reliability of the information gathered.

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed method	Total
Paper self-completion	0	17	17	34
Face-to-face structured interviews	0	7	5	12
Face to face semi- or unstructured interviews	24	0	17	41
Online/email survey	1	21	3	25
Focus group interviews	6	0	9	15
Analysis of official records	7	4	12	23
Case study/ies	12	0	11	23
Text analysis or analysis of log files	8	2	0	10
Telephone interviews	2	16	5	23

Table 4. Employed sub-method in studies (number)

Semi- or unstructured interviews concentrate mainly on examining the participants' opinions, knowledge, attitudes, or perceptions concerning Internet risks and online related sexual abuse. Only a few papers aim to describe children's personal experiences of online related sexual abuse and perpetrators' behavioural patterns. Some interviews were conducted with the help of computers (so called CAPI - Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing) or by telephone.

Group interviews usually covered themes such as: online activities; chatting on the internet and competence when using chat services; seeing pornographic material and its effect; children's perception of online risks and safety and sexting.

Studies of experts aimed to examine the experts' experience of treating online sexual abuse victims.

Case studies and analysis of official records (including court cases and police records) have more often been used in order to investigate the process of online sexual abuse, legislative and institutional measures provided for prevention and supporting the victims.

Only ten studies used analysis of log files. Text or log files analysis was employed in studying self presentation and solicitation tactics of online sex offenders. The material which was analysed generally included perpetrators' correspondence, postings in forums or social networking sites.

### 1.3.2 Countries

We might expect that countries where Internet access has been prevalent for a longer time and where the current level of use is higher (Figure 2) are also those where the needs of society have initiated research into online sexual violence. According to Internet use data we would expect that the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland and Norway are the leading countries for Internet sexual violence research. However, the reality is more complex.

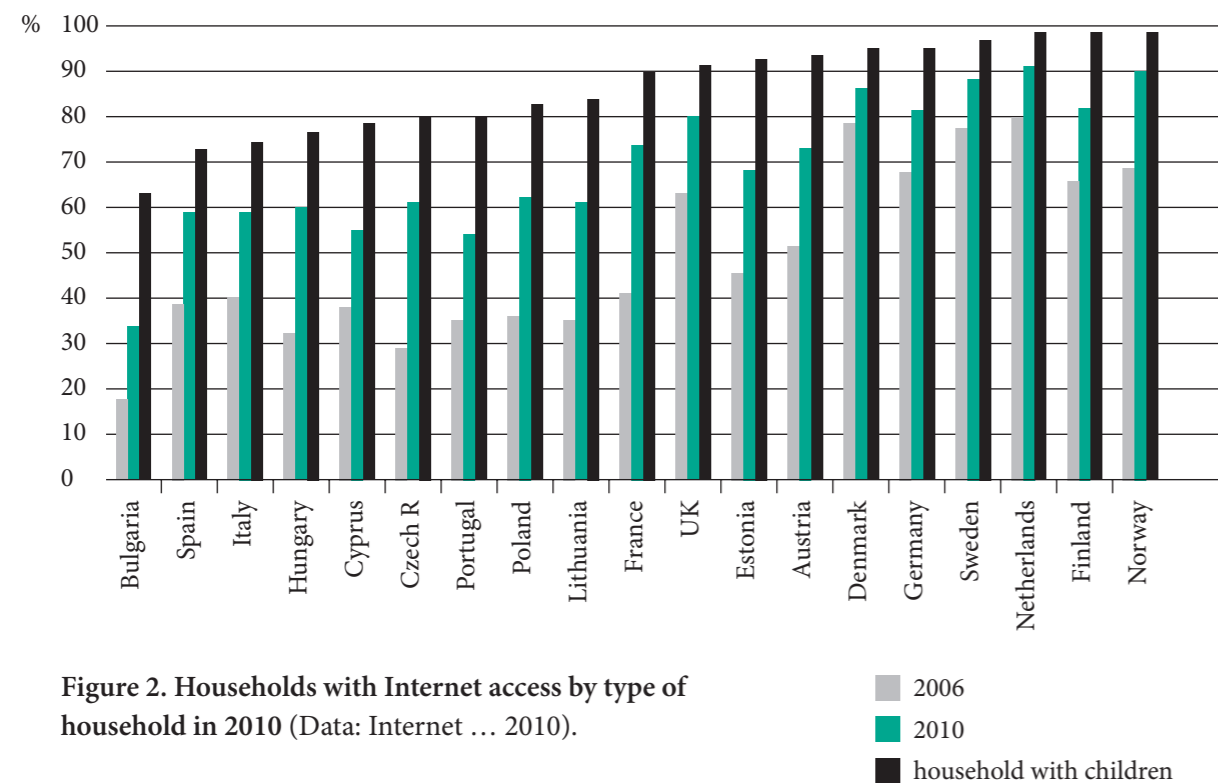


Figure 2. Households with Internet access by type of household in 2010 (Data: Internet ... 2010).

Figure 3 presents the number of publications about online sexual abuse topics according to the country where the information or empirical data originate. The UK seems to be the most carefully studied country in Europe. It does not correspond with current Internet use levels (Figure 2) and is probably partially explained by the high productivity of local research staff. The next country according to the number of publications is the USA (30 publications in the database), but because the USA was less carefully studied for this research, this number might have been underestimated. However, the prevalence of information in relation to the UK and the USA is not surprising, because the issue of sexual violence might be more significant among English speaking countries because of global nature of online violence and role of English language as the primary language of communication on the Internet. Other European countries such as Norway, the Czech Republic, Germany, France and Italy have more information about children's online related sexual violence than other countries. The amount of research in Norway, France and Germany seems to be in accordance to the high level of Internet access which children in these countries have. Research in Finland on the other hand is surprisingly limited taking into account the high prevalence of Internet use. Table 5 reveals that one secret of the high number of publications in relation to the UK is the comparatively early start of research activities into online sexual violence topics, when compared with other countries. However other factors such as language and dedicated research personnel are preconditions to this result as well. During recent years information from other big countries like Italy, Germany, Russia is also more available. Surprising is the comparatively outstanding representation of Czech Republic in literature. Czechs were among the first to undertake projects researching this at a level similar to the UK, despite of comparatively limited access to the Internet.

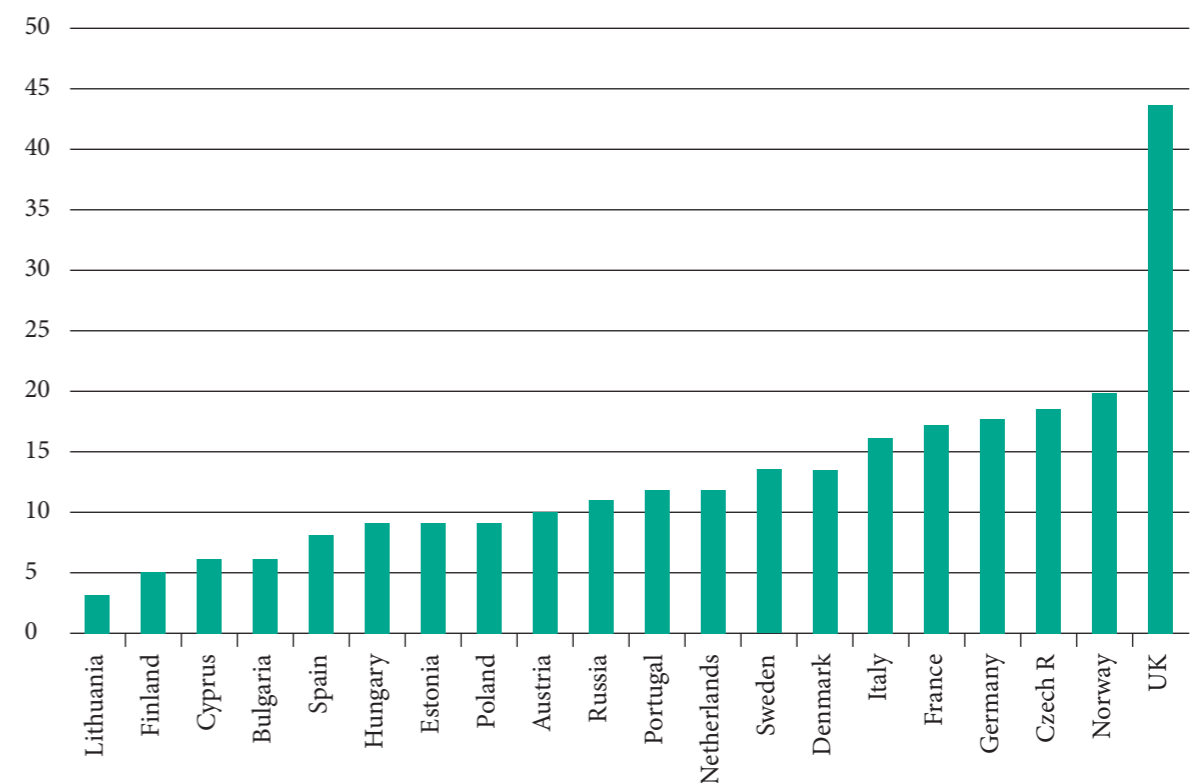


Figure 3. Information about country situation, number of online related sexual violence publications.

In well studied countries the share of non-English language publications tends to be significant also (Figure 4). The publications in local language are prevalent in Russia, Italy, France, Germany and Norway. In contrast information from Cyprus and Bulgaria are 100% in English, although the total number of publications is not particularly high in those countries.

	<2007	2007	2008	2009	2010-11	Total
Lithuania	0	1	1	0	1	3
Finland	0	1	3	0	1	5
Cyprus	0	2	1	2	1	6
Bulgaria	0	2	1	2	1	6
Spain	1	2	2	2	1	8
Hungary	1	1	3	1	3	9
Estonia	2	2	1	3	1	9
Poland	2	2	1	3	1	9
Austria	1	2	2	2	3	10
Russia	0	0	1	4	6	11
Sweden	1	6	2	3	1	13
Portugal	0	4	2	5	1	12
Netherlands	3	3	1	2	3	12
Denmark	1	4	2	3	3	13
Italy	3	1	4	2	6	16
France	7	3	2	2	3	17
Germany	3	5	3	3	4	18
Czech R	5	2	2	7	3	19
Norway	9	4	1	3	3	20
UK	21	6	6	5	6	44

Table 5. Information about country and year of publication.

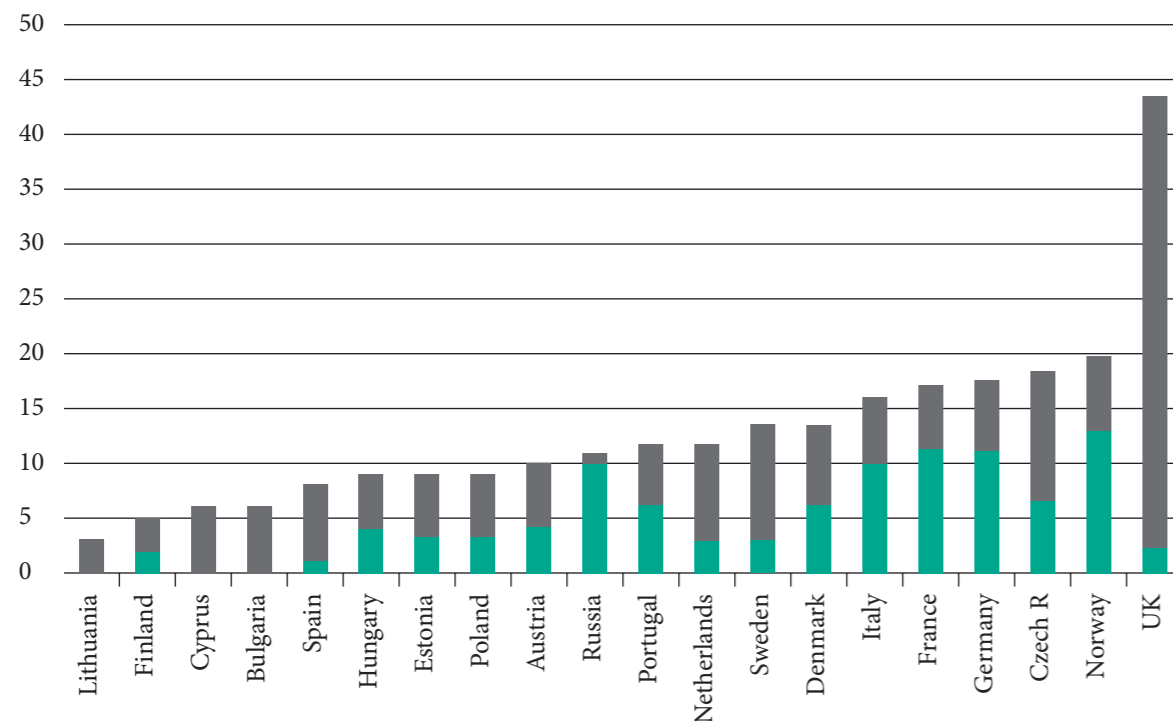


Figure 4. Information about country situation and language of publications.   
■ non-English   
■ English

	Austria	Bulgaria	Czech R	Cyprus	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Hungary	Italy	Lithuania	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Russia	Spain	Sweden	UK	
Experiences of victims of online sexual abuse/grooming					+		+		+	+	+		+	+			+	+	+	+	
Treatment of victims					+				+					+							+
Profile and behaviour of online sex offenders					+					+				+			+		+	+	+
Analysis of legislation, policies, and practices					+			+	+		+			+			+		+	+	+
Conversation with stranger online	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Meeting an online contact offline	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Receiving (unwanted) sexual comments and/or requests	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Sending/posting sexual messages or images	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Encountering pornography online	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Emotional disturbance/interpretation while encounter pornography, receiving sexual comments and/or requests	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Coping strategies in case of encountering pornography, receiving sexual comments, requests	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Persuading or pressure a child to do something sexual in front of webcam					+		+		+	+			+							+	+
Offering money (gifts) for doing something sexual online or offline					+		+		+		+			+						+	+
Parental knowledge of risks related to online sexual abuse	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Parental supervision and offering assistance	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Online bullying	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Interent usage and activities of children	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Risk behaviour (e.g., downloading, sharing files, recording with camera other persons, uploading videos etc.)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Giving out personal information	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Flirting and having cybersex in the context of sexual abuse			+					+					+								+
Risky online communities (bloggers)			+																		
Boylovers (incl. online self presentation, sexual needs, contacting boys, sharing pictures etc.)	+								+					+							

Table 6. Themes of research in the content of sexual abuse research in some European countries.

Table 6 demonstrates, that while there is research about online contacts, meeting online contacts offline, receiving sexual comments and requests, emotional disturbance/interpretation while encountering pornography, receiving sexual comments and/or requests and coping strategies in case of encountering pornography or receiving sexual comments/requests, parental knowledge of risks related to online sexual abuse, parental supervision and offering assistance and Internet usage and risks in almost all countries, some themes are rare and understudied. A topic like treatment of victims, the profile and behaviour of online sex offenders, flirting and having cybersex in the context of sexual abuse and risky online communities are rather rare.

Group	Quantitative	Qualitative	Both	Total	%*
Children and/or young people and their victim experiences	54	25	32	111	82
Offenders	5	6	1	12	9
Experts	0	5	5	10	7
Adults	4	5	1	10	7
Parents	4	1	2	7	5
Teachers	1	0	0	1	1

Table 7. Sample for studies and method of research.

\* from total number of publications

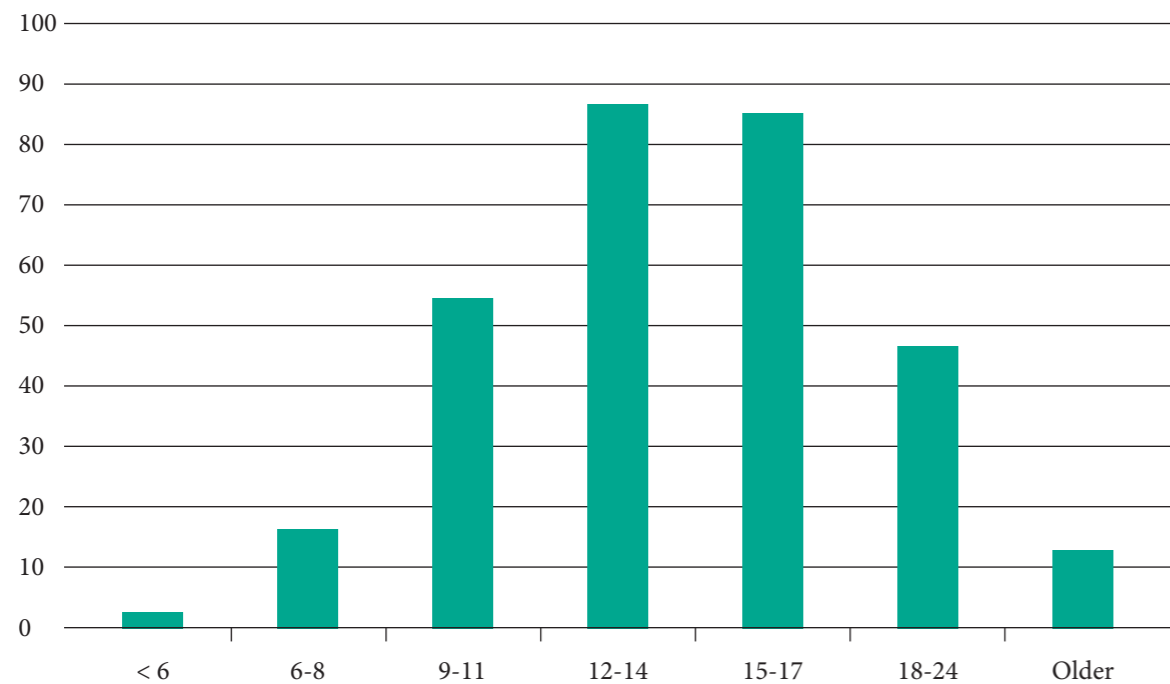


Figure 5. Age of children in the studies (“older” represents the groups of grown-ups related to child research, like offenders, parents, teachers, experts etc)

### 1.3.3 Who is studied?

Children and young people constitute the most dominant group of respondents in child online sexual violence research (Table 7). Other groups (offenders, experts, adults, parents, and teachers) have been inquired of much more seldom. There are 12 studies where offenders have been studied. These include both qualitative and quantitative research. The experts surveyed are mainly law enforcement officers, counsellors, therapists, and practitioners. It is remarkable that experts are predominantly studied with qualitative methods (i.e. through a personal or group interview). Parents are one of the most studied groups amongst grown-ups, but there are only 7 publications regarding the results.

Studies which include more than one group in research, for example children and their parents, young people and adults, children and teachers are also fairly common. The age of the children is very important in all processes. Figure 5 demonstrates that the age of the children in the online sexual violence research corresponds to the age of children in online behaviour research generally (Livingstone et al 2009). There is very little research among young children up to age 9 and quite a substantial amount among 12-17 year old adolescents. Declining numbers for 18 and older people are partially the result of the definition of child research, which should mainly cover the experience of under 18 year old people, but it could also reflect the decline in interest from researchers when children are no longer in their most vulnerable age.

Children and young people have predominantly participated in the surveys as participants of focus group interviews and only in single cases as experts or in the role of victims.

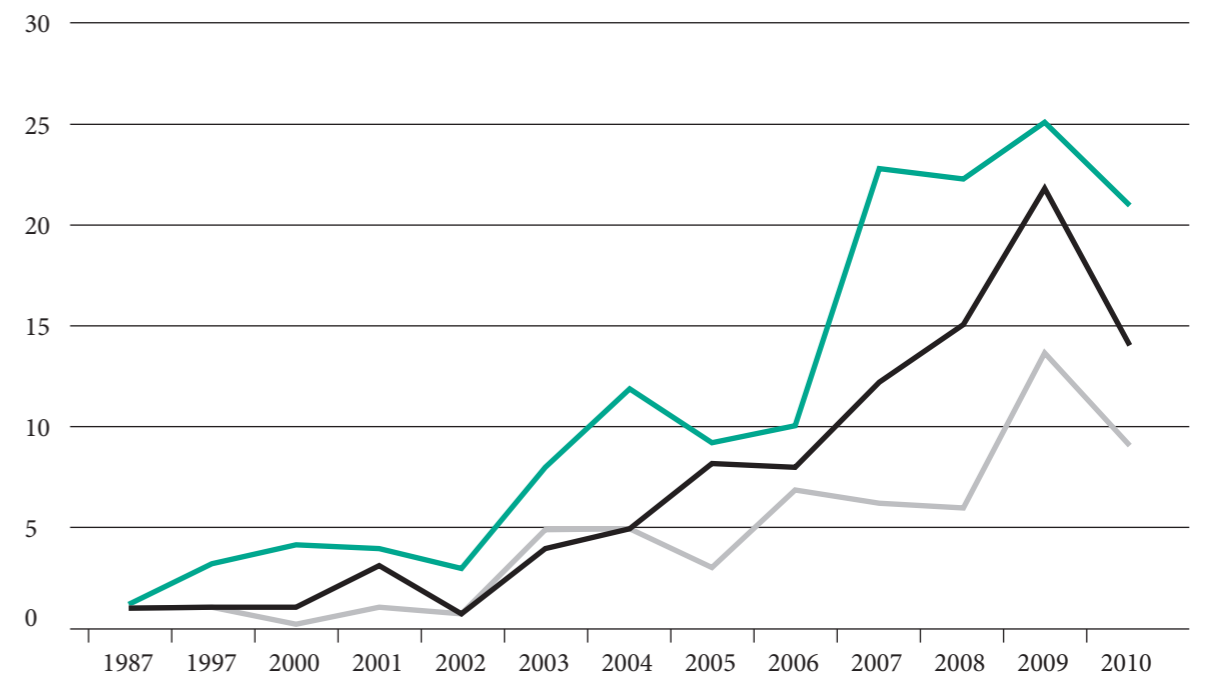


Figure 6. Number of publications by themes.

— Online contact offline violence  
 — Offline activities related to online violence  
 — Online violence, grooming

### 1.3.4 On- and offline activities and different themes of research

All the publication were classified into one of three groups in order to differentiate better between the nature of on- and offline activities:

- 1) those covering only and mainly online activities and violence related issues (online violence, grooming)
- 2) those relating to situations when online contact is related to offline sexual violence and online contact takes place either before or after offline violence
- 3) those relating to situations when offline activities are related to online sexual violence, of-line contact takes place either before or after online violence

Several topics can be covered in the same report.

Figure 6 demonstrates that literature covering only online activities is prevalent. However the number of works which fall into all three categories is rising. The very first publication which simultaneously covered online contact and violence and offline violence themes is from 1987. Carter et al (1987) examined exposure to and use of pornography, family, developmental and criminal histories of 38 rapists and 26 child molesters incarcerated at the Massachusetts Treatment Centre. While both groups reported similar levels of exposure to pornography at the home and during development, child molesters indicated significantly more exposure than rapists in adulthood and were significantly more likely both to use such materials prior to and whilst committing their offences. The number of publications regarding online activities related to offline violence is growing at the same pace as the number of publications which relate to online behaviour only.

Offline activities which are related to online violence have remained the least studied area. The first research recorded about offline activities which are related to online violence is from Sweden 1997. Svedin and Back (1997) investigated 10 children who were victims of the production of child pornography and six perpetrators sentenced for child pornography. They found that none of the children had told anyone about the sexual abuse. The children revealed the incidents only when the police identified them via images. The children did not want to remember or sometimes even suppressed their experiences completely.

Not surprisingly the Internet is the most frequently covered topic among all the publications (186 publications). Computers are mentioned in the conclusion of 33 publication and mobile phones in 18 publications.

Online violence research started from emphasis to child offenders and abusers. From themes with negative connotation “abuse” is mentioned in 111 publications, “violence” in 26, “grooming” in 41, “solicitation” in 27 cases and “harassment” in 20 publications. However all together only 30 publications are dedicated to offenders or in some way cover the issue of offenders. Additionally, 12 publications make conclusions in relation to abusers.

Victims are one of the main research targets and are mentioned directly in 68 publications. Victim research has become more widespread during recent four years (Figure 7). “Risks” are mentioned in 103 cases. Grooming research, like process research, began in 2003. There are two pieces of research before 2003 which mention solicitation, both by Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2000, 2001). Grooming itself is crucial part of process of violence and abuse and is often masked by friendship. Friends are generally very important in the life of young people. Therefore it is not surprising that 52 publications cover issues relating to friends.

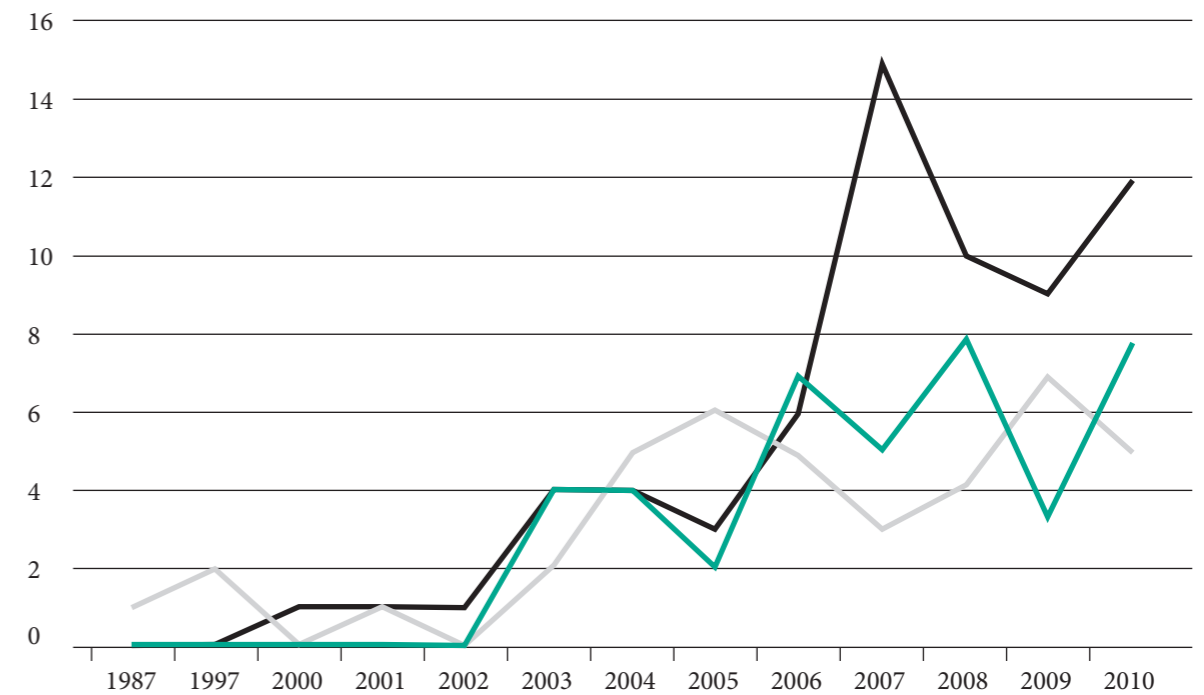


Figure 7. Coverage of victim, offender + abuser and grooming themes in publication.

— victim  
— offender, abuser  
— grooming

Girls are studied (79 cases) more than boys (59 cases). Disabled children are covered only in one paper (1). 70 papers discuss the role of parents to some extent, 19 cover teachers, 37 deal with the role of strangers in communications online. 48 papers are school related research and 5 mention other institutions.

Sharing information online is a crucial issue in the process from initial contact online to the occurrence of sexual violence online. “Information” is mentioned in 79 publications, images in 54, pictures or photos in 45.

81 papers make conclusions about pornography, 11 relate to prostitution and 23 are about paedophiles. Conclusions which include preventive or awareness raising measures are made in 21 publications.

Other issues under research are often as follows:

- Internet safety/exposure to inappropriate material
- Risky sexual online behaviour
- Children’s awareness of risks
- Risky sexual online behaviour that may lead to incidences of sexual solicitation
- Exposure to sexual material
- The effects of viewing pornographic material online
- Responses to, and detection of images of child on the Internet
- Children creating content online connected to sexually abusive or violent experiences
- Internet harassment

- Attitudes to online activities which are related to offline sexual abuse
- Risks of mobile phones, abuse via mobile phones
- Digital deception
- Competence among children using chat services
- Paedophile subculture
- Internet child pornography offenders
- Use of the Internet to facilitate child trafficking and trade in child pornography
- Representation of sexual abuse in media
- Teenagers' experiences of prostitution
- Cybersex, sexual communication, motivations for cybersex, meeting strangers for sex
- Becoming a victim of or an offender in relation to online sexual abuse/violence
- Interpretation of abusive practices
- Internet addiction
- Lying
- Meeting strangers
- Development of online contacts
- Giving out personal information
- Self-harming
- Identities
- Level of knowledge, preventive measures and help-services related to online abuse on the Internet
- Parental rules and monitoring of adolescents' online behaviour.
- Protecting children online
- Legal responses to/definitions of child pornography
- Protecting children online
- Parents' perception of online risks

### 1.3.5 Solely online activities: online sexual abuse/violence, online grooming or solicitations

The database of published studies distinguished between

- Online sexual abuse/violence (106 publications)
- Online grooming or solicitations (111 publications)
- Online activities related to offline sexual abuse/violence (95 publications)
- Offline activities related to online abuse/violence (58 publications)

The amount of publications which only cover children's activities online is growing. In most of the countries covered online related process investigations form the majority of all studies in the area of online sexual violence (Table 8). About half of the literature relating to online activities is quantitative in terms of methodological approach.

	Only online activities	Online activ. offline violence	Offline activ. online violence
Bulgaria	4	3	3
Spain	6	5	5
Italy	5	7	4
Hungary	8	5	4
Cyprus	4	3	2
Czech Rep.	7	7	5
Portugal	8	7	3
Poland	8	3	3
Lithuania	2	1	1
France	5	10	6
United Kingdom	27	21	20
Estonia	5	3	4
Austria	7	4	3
Denmark	11	7	3
Germany	10	4	6
Sweden	9	6	5
Netherlands	7	4	3
Finland	3	1	1
Norway	16	7	7

Table 8. Themes of research by countries

While most of the research focuses on the general use of the Internet and risks whilst on the Internet such as vulnerability to grooming, sexual harassment or child pornography, there are surveys which provide a deeper analysis in relation to:

- Physiological reactions and disorders related to online sexual material and abuse (Allen et al 2007, Howitt and Sheldon 2007, Mitchell, Ybarra, & Finkelhor 2007, Ybarra et al 2004, Mitchell et al 2001, Gáti et al 2002)
- Offenders and offender behaviour (CEOP 2009, Mitchell et al 2005, Alexy et al 2005, Holt et al 2010, Marcum 2007)
- How families and young people themselves are addressing issues (Finkelhor et al 2010, Wojtasik 2009, Dunkels 2007)
- Sex for payment (Svedin and Priebe 2007)
- Time trends (Helweg-Larsen et al 2009, Mitchell, Wolak and Finkelhor 2007)

It is hardly possible to distinguish between quantitative or qualitative research, because many of the studies use a combination of both. In addition, all the themes covered by quantitative methods are presented by qualitative research.

Reports which focus on the achievements of organisations in protecting children are a particular type of study which are predominantly written quantitatively. Publications on protection strategies (Baines 2008, Barrow and Heywood-Everett 2006, Davidson and Martellozzo 2008, Faremo 2007, Neves 2008, Skybak 2004) are more often written in qualitative style.



### 1.3.6 Online activities leading to offline abuse

The vast majority of publications on children's online activities which lead to offline sexual abuse analyse children's experiences of meeting the stranger. In these the main authors consider that meeting with a stranger, especially with an adult stranger, carries with it the risk of, or potential for, sexual abuse.

In particular, the following topics have been covered:

- The prevalence of children and young people who have met face to face an unknown person, with whom they had previously communicated with online (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002, Monteiro & Gomes 2009, De Graaf et al 2005);
- Going to the appointment alone or accompanied by somebody (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002);
- Telling somebody about a plan to meet or talking about it later (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002);
- The ways in which a child first contacted someone they have met offline (Livingstone et al 2010);
- The age, gender and other characteristics of children and persons met offline (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002, Livingstone et al 2010, Gallagher 2007);
- Positive and negative experiences while meeting offline and consequences for children (i.e., intimate relationships, falling in love, having sex, rape) (IPSOS 2010, De Graaf et al 2005, Freeman-Longo 2000);
- Offender's behaviour (i.e., befriending, solicitation, deception, hiding or misrepresentation of their motives) (Wolak et al 2004);
- Perception of meeting a stranger as a danger from children's perspectives (Safer internet... 2007);
- Parents' awareness of their child's experiences of meeting stranger offline (Livingstone et al 2010).

Only a few publications deal with Internet-arranged commercial sexual exploitation of children. It appears that the Internet (chat rooms) are used to procure children for the purposes of sexual trafficking, sex tourism, advertising victims in prostitution cases or selling them to other offenders (Alexy et al 2005, Mitchell et al 2005, Mitchell et al 2010, Somerset 2001). Moreover, the experiences of adolescents who have offered sexual services for pay to persons contacted via the Internet have been analysed (Svedin & Priebe 2007, Strömpl 2004). Trafficking has, in the main, been researched by analysing court cases and official records. Accordingly there is limited information about the online communication process between the offender and victim and the offender's motivation and strategies are not analysed scientifically.

**Offline activities which are related to online sexual abuse** have been covered by only a few publications and on quite a general level. Usually children have been photographed while being sexually abused by an adult (i.e., touching of the children's genitals, having sexual intercourse) and then the adult circulates or posts these photographs on the Internet (In Innocence... 2007, Mitchell et al 2010). The offender may be a stranger, an acquaintance or even family member.

## Conclusions

Research into online violence issues started with analysis into the influence of Internet pornography on offline violence. Having analysed all the literature concerning Internet related sexual violence, we can conclude that for the moment literature which covers online activities only is prevalent. However the number of publications covering offline violence related to online contacts and online violence related offline contacts is rising and 2007 marked a remarkable jump in this rise in terms of the total number of publications which are related to online sexual violence.

Although the Internet is international by nature, and cross-national comparative surveys might be the most promising method for future research, studies based on international material or data have never exceeded 50% of total publications so far.

The most common approach taken in studying online sexual violence issues is to use qualitative face to face semi- or unstructured interviews and quantitative self-completion questionnaires. The majority of quantitative surveys (69%) use a representative sample design. Two thirds of samples are representative by age, gender and/or region. Publications which are to an extent representative by education are also quite common. There are very few studies which are representative according to ethnicity and socio-economic status.

The UK seems to be the most carefully studied country in Europe. This does not correspond with the current level of Internet use in the UK and is probably explained by the high productivity of researchers. From other European countries Norway, The Czech Republic, Germany, France and Italy have more information about children's online related sexual violence than other countries. A great deal of information from Russia, Italy, France, Germany and Norway is unavailable for an international audience because of the large proportion of papers which are not published in English.

Children and young people in different roles constitute the most dominant group of respondents in child online sexual violence research. Offenders, experts, adults, parents, and teachers have been inquired of much more seldom. The age of the relevant children is very important in all processes and procedures. For example, the ages of children studied in online sexual violence research corresponds to the age of children in online behaviour research generally. However, there is very little research among young children up to age 9. Girls are more studied more than boys. Disabled children are covered only in one paper (1). 70 papers say something about role of parents, 19 cover teachers, 37 considering the role of strangers in communications and 48 papers refer to school related research with another 5 mentioning institutions.

Victims are the main target group of research into online violence. They are mentioned directly in 68 publications. Victim research has become particularly common since 2006. "Risks", actual or perceived, are mentioned in 103 cases. Grooming research, like process research, starts from 2003. In relation to themes with clear negative connotations "abuse" is mentioned in 111 publications, "violence" in 26, "grooming" in 41, "solicitation" in 27 and "harassment" in 20 publications. 42 publications cover the topic of offenders or abusers.

There might be a gap in results depending on different research methods, for example longitudinal studies show greater interaction with online friends than cross-sectional studies (Rice et al 2007). However, because of the limited number of research projects into online

violence, it is difficult to estimate the effect of any bias in the research or the extent to which the results may have been influenced by research methods. Even within this limited number of online related sexual abuse literature, methodological variability does not make it possible to conduct any reliable comparisons. Empirical data differs from study to study because children with different ages are studied different times. There are hardly instances where the wording of a question is repeated systematically in independent surveys. For example questions about an experience of having had a sexual conversation online vary according to different criteria included within the question such as referring to: (a) an “unpleasant conversation”, (b) but omitting any clarification about the interviewee’s feelings about the nature of the talk, (c) whether such a conversation has “ever occurred”, (d) conversations during the last year, (e) conversations during the last 2 years, (f) conversations with a person the respondent knew, (g) conversations with an adult only, (e) conversations with a person of any age. Obviously, the difference in the wording of the questions produces different results depending on other methodological preferences. Experiments providing further knowledge about methodological issues of research can be, however, useful areas of research in future.

Analysis of present literature and working with database material also allows us to make conclusions about future research needs and gaps in current research. For further development of knowledge about the process and risks of online sexual abuse we need

- Clearer operational definitions in this area.
- Time lines with comparative research.
- More analysis based on international comparative data. Also, recent cross- national international databases need more extensive analysis.
- More research with a focus on sexual offences committed between peers and how these kinds of situations develop into children’s first (unwanted) sexual experiences.
- The differences between online and offline world. Double standards in online world
- To have a better understanding of harm related and non-harm related issues.
- To compare offline and online sexual violence and instigate surveys and research which covers both issues simultaneously.
- Although there seems to be information from several surveys about parents’ perceptions of problems, none of the surveys provide information about the effectiveness or the effects on parent- child communication.

## 1.4 Ethical issues of sexual abuse studies

Mare Ainsaar

The ethics of research is a vital part of scientific investigations. The aim of this section is to give a brief overview about the particularities and common practice in cases of scientific investigations into sexual abuse concerning research ethics.

The issue of sexual abuse itself, especially from the point of view of the victim and the child victim is a very sensitive issue because of the different psychological risks. Therefore ethical codes of research that suggest not causing harm, avoiding and minimising distress or harm are especially relevant. Other examples of principles of research which are usually set are as follows:

- Requirement of freely given informed consent of those who are studied. Researchers should use their skills to provide information that can be understood by the child, and their judgement to decide on the child’s capacity to understand what is being proposed;
- Research participants should be made aware of their right to refuse to participate;
- Researchers should have regard for issues of child protection and make provision for the potential disclosure of abuse;
- Research should be beneficial to those studied;
- Online surveys might be especially useful tool for investigation of sensitive issues. However, because standards and practices of Internet research are still in development, researchers are advised to be especially careful with matters of informed consent, negotiating access agreements, assessing the boundaries between the public and the private, and ensuring the security of data transmissions.

As a part of the ROBERT project the ethical practices of publications in the database were analysed. Although we might assume that general principles of research ethics were followed by all authors, very few publications describe explicitly what they did. We can find more of this kind of description set out in issues of International Journals which have been published in recent years. Therefore we present here a collection of different approaches reported in papers, rather than a quantitative overview of practices.

Although there are different requirement in different countries and research fields for this kind of research, some papers refer to requirement that ethical approval is obtained for all research projects, either from the University or from the country’s Research Ethics Committee. It depends on the particular country or research field whether or not this kind of licence to research is compulsory or voluntary.

Informed consent from the people involved seems to be the most common procedure. In some cases it is institutional consent which is required. For example approval for the research was obtained from the representative of the Association of Chief Police Officers responsible for child protection or from schools. In case of minors, consent from the child’s parents is often requested and required in addition to the child’s consent. Another procedure which was common was that the participants were informed during the interview that they could stop answering questions at any time if they wished.

Some research teams stressed, that in order to guarantee confidentiality they asked participants to fill in the questionnaire in privacy and emphasised that the answers would be

analysed only by the principal investigators. Sometimes interviews were designed in such a manner that children could talk freely and not need to worry about privacy.

Therapists are those who victims of sexual offence often meet. However, it is still quite rare for therapists to publish research papers related to online sexual abuse. Leonard (2010) used therapeutic intervention alongside research procedure. This approach aimed to: collect information for research, process therapeutic intervention, and help develop safe coping strategies to deal with the range of possible effects. This multitasking process carried out by the same individuals seems to be very effective, although professionally challenging.

Other surveys used specialists and hired qualified counsellors to work directly over the phone with youths who were identified as potentially in danger of further abuse (Mitchell et al 2007).

“The goal was to have the counsellor work with the youth respondent so that disclosure of the situation to a caretaker or some other authority would take place. The counsellor re-contacted the youth on a periodic basis to inquire about the resolution of the situation. Contacts were maintained until the counsellor determined the danger had ended or appropriate parental, child protection, law enforcement, or other authorities were involved. This process was successfully used in this and several other national telephone surveys of youth.”

Some other surveys made efforts to prevent distress and further harm. They guaranteed oral and written information about where those who had taken part in the research could get counselling if they suffered distress as a result of having taken part in the research or as a result of their internet use (Baltic Sea Regional study of Adolescent sexuality) or provided leaflets with useful tips for safe internet use (EU Kids Online project).

Additional ethical issues may arise whilst undertaking a participation experiment in Web forums or when using fake identity. For example O’Connell (2003) used researcher entering chat rooms or channels intended for child or teen users and posing as an 8, 10 or 12 year old child, typically female.

“The researcher utilised the usernames: ‘angel’, or ‘honey’ and frequented both web based and IRC based chat rooms and channels respectively. Details of the fictitious child’s life were that she had moved to a new location, her parents were constantly fighting, and that she had not yet made friends with peers in her new school. Essentially, the hallmarks of a socially isolated child were the messages that were to be divulged to any other user with whom the researcher, posing as a child, engaged.”

O’Connell (2003) does not describe the ethical rules implemented during the research, but refers to APA ethical guidelines and gives contact details of who to contact for additional information.

In conclusion we see, that although many research projects work according to ethical principles, not all reports include information about the exact procedures applied. Those who provide an overview of the efforts made to meet ethical guidelines do so with reference to the best practices of process procedures. However, the scientific research evidence about the possible effects of investigations is still limited, although they can provide a basis for giving advice to researchers and Ethic Boards. One of the few pieces of research which provide evidence regarding how respondents felt about taking part in sexual abuse research (Priebe et al 2010) found, that attitudes about sexuality and inexperience with sexuality themes might indeed give rise to feelings of discomfort and unease, whereas discussing individual experiences of sexual abuse involving penetration did not significantly increase such feelings of discomfort.

Research in the sexual abuse of adolescents has exposed several other threats which might violate the basic principles of trustworthy research alongside those ethical issues which are specifically related to the particular vulnerability of participants. These shortcomings are typical for other social research areas, but are especially remarkable in adolescent sexual abuse research and include systematic sampling bias, unreported response rates and the lack of critical evaluation of the results.

## Research evidence in to behavioural patterns which lead to becoming a victim of sexual abuse

Carl Göran Svedin

Access to the Internet has steadily increased worldwide but it is especially the case in high-tech countries and children in Sweden for example have access to their own computer and Internet early in life. In the last study by the Swedish Media Council (2010) 61% of children 12-15 years of age had a computer with Internet access in their own room. In the large scale survey EU Kids Online, where more than 25,000 children aged 9-16 were questioned, it was found that 93% go online at least weekly and 60% go online every day or almost every day (Livingstone et al 2011). The children and young people used the Internet interactively for many reasons. Most children used the Internet for gathering information, buying things but most of them went online to make contact with others, especially peers. The vast majority of children are aware of that there are safe and risky behaviours connected with the use of Internet.

In their review of adolescent victimisation via the Internet, Wolak et al (2007) concluded that most adolescents today have a fairly sophisticated understanding of the social complexities of the Internet and many engage in a complex and highly interactive use, which carries higher risks. This is consistent with what one might expect on the basis of normal development. Adolescents are at a stage of life at which they have an intense interest in expanding their social networks, forming close relationships, and acquiring knowledge about sex. In addition, rebellion and risky sexual behaviour are the hallmarks of adolescence for some youths. These normal development factors make adolescents vulnerable to seduction and put them at a risk because they are more likely to respond to online sexual advances from adults.

Many children and adolescents meet people in real life who they initially met on the Internet (Svedin & Priebe 2009). Knowledge about how often and what the dynamics are that could help explain why and how online sexual contacts and online sexual abuse develops into a meeting offline and offline sexual abuse is sparse. This chapter will try to highlight some of these issues.

### 2.1. Online abuse

The intensity of children’s use of the Internet is inherently associated with, and has consequences for, their psychosocial adjustment. This association tends to take an U-shape curve. Bélanger et al (2011) found, in a study of 7,211 students aged 16-20 years in post-mandatory schools in Switzerland, that symptoms of depression were associated with both non-Internet users (no use in the previous month) and heavy Internet users (>2 hours/day). They also found that heavy users had more somatic health problems, which were found to be linked

to insufficient sleep among female adolescents and excessive weight among males. This gives us the information that high consumers of Internet are a risk group per se and therefore a potential risk group for online abuse.

We know from experience and from research that abuse over the Internet is a two-way communication with a sliding scale that goes from innocence and curiosity to a more active behaviour from the victim's side while the perpetrator's behaviour also can vary from curiosity to grooming and more advanced sexual exploitation. As a consequence the following presentation will try to separate between exposure and grooming on one side and self-deliberate exposure (such as taking contact, self-exposure by webcam or posting sexual images) on the other, whilst bearing in mind that this distinction is somewhat artificial.

### 2.1.1 Pornographic material

Being **exposed to pornographic material** on the Internet is a very good example of the issue i.e. that the coin has two sides. Some children, can be offended by exposure to unwanted sexual explicit pictures or video clips on the Internet (especially younger children) whilst others actively search for and look at pornography. We know from studies that it is a myth that children are bombarded by pornography when surfing the web. For example only 14% of children in the EU Kids online study (Livingstone et al 2011) had seen images online that were "obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or having sex" in the preceding 12 months. Most hits with pornographic content happen because of a positive action by the child, that is, the child searches for pornographic sites by themselves. This does not exclude that some children may feel cheated, disgusted or uncomfortable by what they see online. Adult sexuality can be both frightening and exciting.

Our understanding that "online predators" use the Internet to gain access to young victims through trickery and violent behaviour has changed as a consequence of new studies in the field which have revealed a more complex picture. Wolak and colleagues (2007) showed for example that in the majority of the cases, victims were aware that they were conversing online with adults. The offenders seldom pretended to be other teens. In the so called National Juvenile Online Victimization study only 5% of the online molesters deceived victims this way (Wolak et al 2007).

Several studies have tried to describe children's experiences of being exposed to sexual explicit material or sexual conversations through the Internet.

A Swedish study of more than 4,000 high school seniors (17-19 years old) showed that 97.8% of the boys and 74.5% of the girls had seen pornography and 39.1% of the boys and 1.7% of the girls watched pornography once a week or more (Svedin & Priebe 2011). The Internet was the dominant medium through which the respondents came into contact with pornography. These figures correspond very well with other Nordic and international studies in the field (Sørensen & Kjörholt 2007, Sabina et al 2008). There is usually a distinct difference between boys' and girls' attitudes towards pornography in that boys have more positive attitudes towards pornography than girls. Boys think that pornography "turns you on" and consider it exciting while girls are more likely to think that pornography "turns you off" and is disgusting (Priebe et al 2007, Sabina et al 2008). On the other hand Wolak, Mitchell and

Finkelhor (2007) report that out of the 42% of youth Internet users who had been exposed to online pornography in the past year, 66% reported unwanted exposure, i.e. they had accidentally found themselves on a web page with pornographic material. In the EU Kids Online survey 14% of 9-16 year olds had in the past year seen images online that were "obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex (Livingstone et al 2011). Of those who had seen sexual pornographic images online, one in three was bothered by the experience. Older children had seen pornographic images more often and younger were more bothered by the experience.

Children are also asked for sexual pictures online. In a study as a part of the Second Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-2) Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2007) found that 4% of Internet-using youth (10-17 years old) reported an online request to send a sexual picture of themselves during the previous year. Only one out of 65 children actually complied. Being female, being of Black ethnicity, having a close online relationship, engaging in sexual behaviour online, and experiencing physical or sexual abuse offline were risk factors for receiving a request for a sexual picture.

### 2.1.2 Sexual solicitation

Sexual solicitation on the Internet has been another area of concern. In the first study within the framework of an EU project for a more secure use of the Internet (SAFT 2003) 1,000 children aged 9-16 years were surveyed. 32% responded that they had been asked to talk about sex when they did not want to. In the last survey by the Swedish Media Council (2010) 21% of 12-16 year old children answered that someone had talked about sex with them over the Internet and a little bit more than one third of these conversations were with a total stranger (8% of the total sample). Girls reported having Internet contact with a stranger three times more frequently than boys (13% compared to 4%).

In the EU Kids Online survey, 15% of 11-16 year olds had received peer to peer "sexual messages or images". The definition of sexual messages was "talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex" (Livingstone et al 2011).

In a Swedish study from 2005 (Brå 2007a) nearly 7,500 students from grade 9 (14-15 year olds) from 107 schools were asked if they had been contacted by unknown adults who had made suggestions of a sexual nature. Thirty percent of 14-year-old children (48% girls and 18% boys) reported that they had had contacts with sexual content through the Internet during the last year. Twenty-five percent responded that they had been given sexual suggestions or being asked for sexual services through the Internet the last year (girls 38% and boys 12%). Nine percent reported that they had been given sexual suggestion through their mobile phone (girls 11% and boys 6%).

These figures suggest that the Internet may play a central role as an interface tool for contacts of sexual nature between adults and children. Children contacted by adults with sexual suggestions were in this study characterised by lower satisfaction with school and family relations, more often subjected to bullying, thefts and violence. They also spent more time with older friends, had been drunk more often and had a higher rate of truancy.

The second web-based questionnaire was sent to 4,750 youth members (15-17 years of age) of a web-panel (Brå 2007b). After over 1,000 answers were gathered the panel was closed and 1,019 answers were analysed. Almost 70% of the girls reported that they had had an unwanted sexual contact over the Internet and almost 59% stated that this was the case during the last year. Corresponding figures for the boys were 20% and 15% respectively. The person who approached the children over the Internet was in 92% of the cases older than 18 years of age (49% > 25 years of age), 92% male and 95% were unknown to the child. The contact was considered unpleasant by 67% of the respondents.

In a study of 7,033 students in their final year of secondary school (18-year olds) in Norway, Suseg et al (2008) found that 48% of the girls and 24% of the boys had experienced some form of sexual harassment or solicitation on the Internet. More than 40% of the girls had at one time or another been encouraged to send sexual photos of themselves. Almost one of four had received invitations to have sex, and almost as many had felt violated by crude sexual language in a cyber-communication.

Suseg et al (2008) also identified differences between groups of young people who were at a higher risk of being sexually solicited on the Internet. Children with a negative parental relationship, children whose parents consumed alcohol heavily and children from families with a difficult financial situation were more likely than others to experience sexual solicitation on the Internet. The risk also rose with the following factors: having few friends, having a self-identified homosexual or bisexual orientation, drinking alcohol or taking drugs, becoming sexually active earlier, having experienced sexual abuse or being disabled.

Mitchell et al (2001) found in their first Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-1) in 2000 that 19% of youth who used the Internet regularly were the targets of unwanted sexual solicitation in the previous year. Girls, older teens, troubled youth, frequent Internet users, chat room participants and those who communicated online with strangers were at significantly greater risk. Twenty-five percent of the solicited youth reported high-levels of distress after solicitation incidents. Risk of distress was significantly more common among the younger respondents, those who received aggressive solicitations (the solicitor attempted to make or made offline contact) and those who were solicited on a computer away from their home.

Five years later in 2005 the second Youth Internet Safety Survey was performed making it possible to look at trends over this 5-year period (Mitchell et al, 2007). The study showed that the overall incidence and 5-year trends of reporting unwanted sexual solicitations, harassment, and unwanted exposure to pornography varied by age, gender, race, and household income. In particular, the decline in the percentage of youth reporting sexual solicitations was apparent for both boys and girls and across all age groups, but not among minority youth and those living in less affluent households. The increase in harassment within particular sub-groups of youth was largely explained by the increase in amount of Internet use over the past five years. There was an increase of unwanted exposure to pornography (boys from 27% to 37% and girls from 23% to 31%) between the two studies.

Mitchell et al (2011) also added some limited questions about online sexual victimisation experiences to their National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence. According to this study, online victimisation was one of the least common victimisations that youth experienced. Nine percent of youth reported an online lifetime victimisation and 6% in the past year. Five percent reported an unwanted lifetime sexual solicitation and 3% reported this during the last year. Almost all of the youth reporting an online victimisation also reported

at least one incident of offline victimisation during the last year. The offline victimisations most strongly associated with and linked to online victimisation were sexual victimisations (such as sexual harassment, being flashed at or rape) and psychological and emotional abuse. Online victims also reported elevated rates of trauma symptomatology, delinquency, and experiences of adversity. Youth who reported online sexual solicitation were 2 times more likely to report depressive symptomatology and a high level of substance use (Mitchell et al 2007).

It has been reported that a lot of children interact online with people who are unknown to them in real life with little risk of being exposed to unwanted sexual solicitations (Wolak et al 2008). Those young people who have been found to be most at risk included those with a diverse range of problems, including rule-breaking behaviour, depression, and social problems that may manifest in different ways in interaction with strangers. Mitchell et al (2008) also studied whether blogs give rise to sexual solicitation or harassment. Sixteen percent of the children in the study reported using blogs in the previous year. Bloggers were not more likely to interact offline with strangers they met online. Those who interacted with people they met online, regardless of whether or not they blogged, were at a higher risk of online sexual solicitations.

### 2.1.3 Self-deliberate exposure

A question which is asked often is how common is it for children to expose themselves sexually online? Studies (e.g Svedin & Priebe 2009, Daneback & Månsson 2009) reveal that a large majority of youth are restrictive when it comes to exposing themselves sexually online. In a Swedish study consisting of 3,500 youth in secondary school (17-19 years old), approximately 10% had experience of posting images of themselves undressed online. A larger proportion, 11.9%, of the male students and 16.4% of the female students answered that they had posed nude in front of a webcam or mobile phone. A smaller proportion (6.1% of the males and 4.9% of the females) stated that they had masturbated in front of a webcam or mobile phone. The participants who had exposed themselves sexually showed worse psychosocial health, lower self esteem, lower sense of coherence and an experience of less parental care and more parental control than the rest of the participants (Svedin & Priebe 2009).

Three percent of the children in EU Kids Online stated that they had sent or posted sexual messages or images (Livingstone et al, 2011). They were a couple of years younger than those questioned in the study done by Svedin and Priebe (2009) which together with the use of a different methodological approach (interviews in the home) can explain the comparably lower figures.

In the nationwide representative survey from Sweden (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2009) 9.4% of the girls and 6.3% of the boys aged 16-19 years old reported that they had posted sexy pictures/videos of themselves online, 2.5% of the girls and 2.4% of the boys had sexy pictures/videos posted online against their will. It was more common for young people (16-25 years of age) who had posted sexy pictures/videos to have also given sex for compensation (42.3%), bought sex (12.4%), being homosexual, bisexual or transsexual (HBT) (18.8%), being threatened with physical violence (18.6%) and being physically hurt (21.5%).

Some studies spread some light on what makes teens voluntarily display or distribute sexual images of themselves on the Internet. Two studies (Jonson et al 2009, Nigård 2009) describe the need to be seen. The children in the Online project (Jonson et al 2009) were all in great need of attention and recognition, that someone would “see” them. Many of the children often lived in family situations where there was insufficient attachment and/or neglect. The child often felt alone, worried and abandoned due to life experiences in the family e.g. divorce, diseases or death of a family member. Their need for affirmation could immediately be provided for online. Through all compliments, the child felt chosen and unique, something that was lacking at home or among friends. Nigård (2009) describes this need to be seen as a kind of “self medication” that is linked to individuation and narcissism. She also mentions two other themes that were common in the interviews with the youth; sexually exposing themselves as reaction to cultural lay-off and the pornographic script and ambivalence. Nigård describes how children can be ambivalent when it comes to the sexual exposing which also is a finding of the Online project.

## 2.2. Online activities and offline abuse

In this section the connection between online activities and offline abuse will be described in relation to images of sexual abuse (child pornography) and selling sex (child prostitution) but will mainly focus on contacts that started online and developed to an abusive experience.

Behind every sexually abusive image of a child is an abusive sexual act performed offline. The amount of **child pornography** on the Internet is an extraordinary problem especially for the children depicted in the sexual abusive images. There is no reliable estimation of how many images or video clips there are out there in the cyber space but a conservative estimation is hundreds of thousands. Around the world 2,025 children have been identified in what Interpol has defined as child pornographic images (Interpol-International Child Sexual Exploitation Image db, 2011). This is just a fraction of all child pornographic images that exist. The children depicted in the images are both girls and boys, with different ethnicity and different skin colour, and of all ages. This gives us an indication that the problem is global in nature and not limited to particular groups of children.

The history behind individual sexual images online can be very different. Children might appear in sexual images online but how this had happened from who initiated the contact to production and distribution of the images will have had different meanings and perceived consequences for the children and the perpetrators. Some can be self-produced and self-distributed as part of a game and something young people could see as fun or enjoyable. Initially it can be seen as non-problematic. But the material can later be used in a way which was not originally planned. Other images, probably the vast majority, of child pornography images are images that were taken during sexual abuse and the perpetrator produced and distributed the images.

Aside from two Swedish studies there is little known about the children present in images of sexual abuse (Svedin & Back, 1996, 2003). The first 30 children identified in sexually abusive images seized by the police in Sweden were studied. Most of the children came from, at least from the outside, fairly ordinary home conditions. There had, however, been periods of stress within the family and parental neglect, as a consequence of divorce, a death in the family, or as result of overwork or burden of work. There was sometimes been a parental need for respite assistance and help with the children, sometimes coupled with parental gullibility. In three cases there was a significant lack of supervision and care. In these cases an unknown perpetrator initiated contact with children in the wider society. Most of the children had a relation with the perpetrator, for example they were a family member, relative, friend of the family etc. Out of the 30 children only in 3 cases (9%) the perpetrator was someone who from the beginning was more-or-less unknown to the child or the child’s family. In these cases he made contact with children in public places or at a jumble sale. For a majority of the children, one can see “cuckoo in the nest behaviour” by the perpetrator in connection to the family where the family yielded to offers of support, babysitting, or adult friendship. Through becoming a trusted person, for example as a work colleague, nursery staff or relative, who was appreciated and liked by adults as well as children, the consequence was that there was no one who was suspicious. Of their own accord the children made contact with the perpetrator, who engaged them, gave them attention and things to do, all of which they appreciated. In the majority of cases one can see that the perpetrator acted like a cuckoo by intentionally marginalising the parents. For a time, the perpetrator became an important person or even the most important adult person to the child.

When it comes to children in sexual abusive images there are differences to the children who produce their own material. The first and most obvious difference is the age difference. The children in the child abusive images were younger than the children posting their own material and the second was that all images depicted very serious child sexual abuse. Being young in the abusive images was for some of the children, a relief. One girl stated “I was so young that only my mother can recognise me from those images”. To be beyond recognition supported this girl’s ability to move forward in life. Yet for the older children the possibility of having the images disseminated for others to see created anxiety and panic.

In 2003-2004 the first study of sexual exploitation in the form of **selling sex** was performed in Sweden (Svedin & Priebe, 2007). In that study of 4,339 high school seniors (aged 17-19), 1.4% (1.8% of the boys and 1.0% of the girls) had sold sex for money or other form of payment. The most common way to get in contact with the ‘buyer’ was, among both girls (30%) and boys (35%), through friends. Internet as the way of establishing a contact with the ‘buyer’ was the option for 16.7% in 2003. Six years later, in 2009, this way to make contact had increased to 56.9% although the number of young people who had sold sex was relatively unchanged (Svedin & Priebe, 2009).

As many as 35% of the boys and 26% of the girls stated in the Norwegian study (Suseg et al., 2008) that they had **met someone face-to-face (offline)** who they initially made contact with on the Internet. Less than five percent of these meetings with cyber-contacts had involved any form of sexual harassment or abuse. The most common occurrence – reported by 4.6% of girls and 1.8% of the boys who had met cyber-contacts offline – was that their cyber-friend tried to talk them into having sex. A smaller percentage, 1.5% of the girls and 0.7% of the boys, reported that they had been pressured or threatened into having sex in the context of a meeting with a cyber-contact.

In a study of 104 abused and 69 non-abused female adolescents aged 14 to 17 years, Noll et al (2009) studied aspects of Internet usage, maternal and paternal caregiver presence, substance use, high-risk sexual attitudes, and involvement with high-risk peers. To measure self-presentation, participants each created avatars, which were quantified according to the degree of provocative physical features. Their results showed that forty percent reported experiencing online sexual advances, and 26 percent reported meeting someone offline who they first met online. Abused girls were significantly more likely to have experienced online sexual advances and to have met someone offline. Having been abused and choosing a provocative avatar were significantly and independently associated with online sexual advances, which were, in turn, associated with offline encounters.

There are a couple of studies that use police reports and legal procedures as a starting point for their research of victims of online sexual abuse.

Nilsson (2004) analysed police reports and judgements concerning 151 children victims of sexual abuse with elements of sexual exploitation. Of these 12 children, all girls, had made contact with the perpetrator through the Internet. Four of the girls (11-14 years of age) had been sexually abused by two different men who had approached them via chat sites on the Internet. Five girls (16-17 years of age) had responded to an inquiry on the Internet to take part in erotic and pornographic films for money. In two cases the girls agreed during a chat-room conversation to have sexual intercourse with the perpetrators without being paid.

Shannon (2008) used a free text search of relevant words and terms that were in police reports concerning sex offences against individuals under the age of 18 (children). The search covered offences reported to 14 of Sweden's 21 police authorities during a 33 months period 2004-2006. In all 315 cases were identified as having some form of Internet connection. Four groups of Internet related crimes could be seen: (1) In 179 cases the perpetrator and victim had only been in contact online, (2) cases where perpetrator and victim had been in contact both online and offline (e.g. by phone), but where the material provides no clear indication of a sexual offence having taken place at an offline meeting (n=45), (3) cases where an adult perpetrator who already knew the child offline has used the Internet to develop the existing relationship for sexual purposes (n=22) and finally (4) 69 cases where the perpetrator and victim came into contact with one another online, and where the perpetrator has subsequently committed a sexual offence against the victim at an offline meeting. In the forensic interviews (carried out by the police in Sweden) it was obvious that there was a significant discrepancy between the victims' feeling of safety when they were online and the fact that the situation felt strange and unpleasant immediately when they met in real life.

Leander et al (2008) investigated how adolescent girls, who had been sexually (*on-* and *off-*line) deceived and abused by an Internet hebephile, reported these acts. Through the documentation of 68 girls' conversations (i.e. chat logs) and involvement with the perpetrator, they were able to gauge what the victims reported during the police interview against this detailed documentation. In contrast with findings from previous research, the majority of victims reported about the *off-*line activities (real-life meetings) with the perpetrator. However, the victims omitted and/or denied more of the *on-*line activities, specifically the more severe sexual *on-*line acts (sending nude photos and participating in sexual web shows). There is probably a gap between what the victims reported and what they presumably remembered about the *on-*line activities.

Wolak et al (2004) studied, by interviewing law enforcement investigators, 129 sexual offences against juvenile victims that originated from online encounters. Victims in the study were 13 to 15-year-old teenage girls (75%) who met adult offenders (75% older than 25) in Internet chat rooms. Most offenders did not deceive victims about the fact that they were adults who were interested in sexual relationships. Most victims met and had sex with the adults on more than one occasion. Half of the victims were described as being in love with or feeling a close bond with the offenders. Almost all cases with male victims involved male offenders. Offenders used violence in 5% of the episodes.

In another study of arrests for Internet-related sex crimes against minors during 2006 in the United States an estimate of 569 arrests for Internet-facilitated commercial sexual exploitation of children were studied (Mitchell et al 2010). Offenders fell into two main categories: first those who used the Internet to purchase or sell access to identified children for sexual purposes including child pornography production (36% of cases), and second those who used the Internet to purchase or sell child pornography images they possessed but did not produce (64% of the cases).

Finally, from a therapeutic perspective, children who meet their abuser online and suffer offline abuse seem to have additional problems to deal with in therapy. It seems that in IT-related sexual abuse, feelings of guilt and shame may be accentuated by the fact that they were actively participating in the contact with the abuser (Jonsson et al 2009, Jansen 2010).

## Summary

It is difficult to compare the results of studies across countries and cultures when different questions are asked of different age groups. Despite this, some of the observations from the available literature seem rather consistent.

1. The probability that a child receives unwanted sexual contacts through the Internet vary between 6% (Mitchell et al. 2011) and 59% (girls, Brå 2007b).
2. Girls are more exposed to risk to receive an offer for sexual activities than boys. The sex ratio seems to be 2-4 girls for every boy which is almost the same ratio that is reported in relation to the children who are sexually abused.
3. There are many different kinds of exposures to sexuality that a child can experience through the Internet, from rude sexual language, to being encouraged to act sexually in front of a webcam or send sexual explicit photos or suggestions to meet off-line.
4. Exposure to pornography on the Internet can be described as a normative experience even if some children, especially girls, can find it both embarrassing and disgusting.
5. Children with a risk background tend to be both at risk for sexual solicitation on the Internet and exhibit sexually aggressive behaviour on the Internet.

## Risk factors of becoming a victim of Internet related sexual abuse

Kadri Soo, Zinaida Bodanovskaya

This chapter describes the potential risk factors that may facilitate a young person to become a victim of Internet related sexual abuse. Because of the lack of obvious differences between Europe and America in this area the results of risk research are analysed together. The chapter is divided into individual and environmental risk factors.

### 3.1 Individual risk factors

#### Demographic factors

**Gender** – Several studies show that girls are more at risk of sexual harassment, solicitation and grooming than boys (Baumgartner et al 2010, Ellonen et al 2008, Mainardi and Zraggen 2010, Mitchell et al 2007a, Wolak et al 2008). The gender distribution is almost equal amongst those who have been used for the purposes of producing child pornography. See also the chapter about gender differences.

**Age** – The probability of being exposed to unwanted pornographic material, sexual solicitation and grooming increases with age. Because of more frequent Internet usage, sexual curiosity and risk-taking behaviour, teenagers are more likely to become targets of Internet related sexual abuse than preadolescent children (Baumgartner et al 2010, Ellonen et al 2008, Livingstone et al 2011). Wolak et al (2004) asserts that 76% of victims of Internet-initiated sex crimes are between 13 and 15 years old.

**Education and knowledge of risks** – De Graaf and Vanwesenbeeck (2006) have found that girls with lower education are more at risk of receiving unwanted sexual requests online than those with higher education. Youngsters who are more aware of online risks are less likely to receive and respond to online sexual requests and meet online acquaintances offline.

**Sexual orientation** – Teenagers who identify themselves as homosexual or with unclear sexual orientation are more at risk of experiencing Internet-initiated sex crimes (Wolak et al 2004). This group can be more vulnerable because they elevated interest in questions of sexuality. While searching for information online about homosexuality and sexuality, they may more easily trust adults who appear to offer help and support.

#### Personal behavioural factors

**Frequent Internet usage** – Young people who are frequent Internet users are more likely to be the targets of Internet related sexual abuse (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Mitchell et al 2001, Stahl and Fritz 2002, Wolak et al 2008, Ybarra et al 2004). Frequent chatting online and instant messaging increases the risk of unwanted sexual and aggressive solicitation (Baumgartner 2010, Mitchell et al 2007b). The chat rooms allow immediate conversation that Internet offenders actively use. In addition, young people who spend lot of time online are more likely to express their sexuality on the Internet (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006).

**Online risk-taking behaviour** – Online risk behaviour is considered an important risk factor of Internet related sexual abuse. Youngsters who communicate online with strangers and meet them in the real world have been sexually harassed and solicited more than those who do not make contact with strangers (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002, Mitchell et al 2001, Mitchell et al 2008, Stahl and Fritz 2002). Children and young people who give out personal information (e.g., name, telephone number, pictures or their address) online to an unknown person are at greater risk of receiving aggressive sexual solicitations (Mitchell et al 2007b). Risky online sexual behaviour such as flirting, talking about intimate or sexual topics and seeking sexual content is significantly associated with exposure to unwanted sexual experiences on the Internet (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Katzer 2007).

Teenagers are interested in and curious about sexual issues and they find it simpler to use chat rooms and instant messaging to flirt or have sexual conversations. Young people perceive online communication as being more protective and easier than face-to-face conversation, because of the physical distance and the separation imposed by the screen (Fluckiger 2007). But such behaviour attracts the attention of potential offenders. However, sharing sex experiences and information online can sometimes be less risky than the offline alternative (Fluckiger 2007).

**Substance usage** – The evidence of an USA survey displays that girls who are high or average substance users (tobacco, alcohol or drugs) are more likely to receive unwanted online sexual solicitation than those girls who are mild or non-users (Ybarra et al 2004). For boys, the relationship with substance usage is insignificant.

#### Personal experiences of adversity and emotional situation

**History of abuse** – Youths (especially girls) with a history of offline sexual or physical abuse are at greater risk of online sexual solicitation (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Mitchell et al 2007b, Wolak et al 2008). For instance, children who have physically or sexually abused offline during their life are 8.6 times more likely to experience aggressive sexual solicitation online in the past year (Mitchell et al 2007b). Youth who have been harassed or sexually solicited online or victimised offline have been exposed to unwanted online pornography more than those who have no history of abuse (Wolak et al 2007). This might be linked to the same factors that raise the risk of online and offline sexual abuse.



Abusive experiences also have an effect on a child's emotional and cognitive development and decrease their ability to cope adequately. Psychological distress caused by abuse makes a child more vulnerable to further different types of victimisation (i.e., conventional crime, maltreatment, peer victimisation, sexual victimisation; Cuevas et al 2010). Thus many perpetrators can take advantage of the children's emotional vulnerability and their need of attention and support.

**Depressive feelings and thoughts** – Youths who report major depression-like symptoms (such as, sadness, emptiness or difficulties concentrating) have also experienced online sexual solicitation more often (Ybarra et al 2004). A Dutch study (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006) indicated that girls with symptoms of depression reported having received unwanted sexual questions, requests to do something sexual in front of webcam or other unpleasant online sexual experiences more frequently compared to those who did not experience such symptoms. The girls with depressive feelings were also more likely to have responded to online sexual questions and requests as well. In both surveys the causality relationships were not examined, therefore it may be possible that the symptoms of depression were the result of the online sexual abuse rather than the other way around. However, it is obvious that emotionally disturbed children are more vulnerable than emotionally healthy and self-confident children.

### 3.2 Environmental risk factors

**Family structure** – According to several surveys (Gallagher 2007, Mitchell et al 2010, Mitchell et al 2007b) the majority of victims of Internet-related sex crimes live in single-parent or reconstituted families. Living in single-parent or step-parent family may be linked to weaker ties between the child and caregiver and less monitoring of the child's (online) activities which could make the child more vulnerable to online threats.

**Homelessness or running away from home** – Homeless children and those with history of running away from home are particularly vulnerable to Internet-facilitated commercial sexual exploitation (ECPAT International 2008, Mitchell et al 2010).

**Household socio-economic status** – The results of the surveys show certain connections between the risk of Internet related sexual abuse and the socio-economic status of the household. Young people from households with higher socio-economic status have been more exposed to unwanted sexual material in online than those from lower income families (Livingstone et al 2011, Mitchell et al 2003). This can probably be explained by the fact that young people from households with a higher income are more likely to have their own computer and Internet access. Mitchell et al (2007b) did not find significant relationship between online sexual solicitation and household annual income; however, children with a more educated parent (or some other household member) were less likely to be victims of sexual solicitation.

**Quality of relationship with parents** – According to Mitchell et al (2007b), conflicts with parents in USA can increase the chances of online sexual solicitation. Around a quarter of children aged 10 – 17 who have been sexually solicited online reported a high level of conflict with their parents, the share of children who had conflicts with their parents but were not the targets of solicitation was 11%. Children who reported a lack of close relationships with parents were more likely to make friends online or chat online with adults (ICAA 2004, Sørensen 2007). The lack of confidence and the belief that parents do not understand them can be seen as reasons why young people do not tell their parents about people they meet online.

**Parental monitoring** – There is evidence that the greater degree of parental monitoring the fewer negative online experiences had by their children. For example, Dutch girls whose parents were well aware of their online activities were less likely to be asked to do something sexual in front of a webcam and they responded less to sexual questions and requests online, compared to those whose parents did not monitor their children's activities as much (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006). Higher parental monitoring is also related to a lower level of unwanted exposure to sexual material on the Internet (Mitchell et al 2003). Furthermore, parental monitoring decreases not only the risk of Internet related sexual abuse but also the level of risky sexual online behaviour for boys and girls (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006).

### Summary

The factors that lead to online sexual abuse are complex and intertwined. The analysis indicates that teenage girls with sexual abuse history and depressive feelings, who have poor relationships with their parents and where there is weak parental monitoring are more at risk of Internet related sexual abuse. The most important and also most examined risk factor is young people risk-taking behaviour online. It is apparent that the more young people are open to online sexual activities (especially flirting and having sexual conversations with strangers), the more probable it is that they may become victims of sexual harassment, solicitation or grooming.

It seems that the risk factors of online sexual abuse have been explored in Europe much less than in USA. Only a few individual European surveys pay attention to the characteristics of the children such as their experiences of adversity, emotional disturbance, symptoms of depression and offline problem behaviour. Very little information at all is held in relation to the connections between Internet related sexual abuse and the quality of family relationships. The effect of each child's attitudes and values as well as the influence of peers on a young person becoming a victim of online sexual abuse seems to be excluded from the studies.

The current analysis revealed no differences in the factors that facilitate sexual abuse only in the online environment (e.g. online sexual harassment) and abuse which is related to offline settings (such as grooming). The absence of visible differences may be a result of the very small number of studies which explore the risk factors of both types of abuse. There is a distinct need for research which examines the risks of becoming a victim of abuse according to different patterns of risk.

## Behavioural patterns of becoming an offender of sexual abuse and offending behaviour

Ethel Quayle

### 4.1. Grooming, child abuse images and the Internet

Fears about online predators are evidenced not only in the popular press but also in academic publications with, for example, assertions that, “Recent advances in computer technology have been aiding sexual predators, stalkers, child pornographers, child traffickers, and others with the intent of exploiting children. Internet bulletin boards, chat rooms, private websites, and peer-to-peer networks are being used daily by paedophiles to meet unsuspecting children” (Kierkegaard 2008, p 41). However, Schrock and Boyd (2008) in the Internet Safety Technical Task Force (<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/research/isttf>) do point out that there is a danger that fears about safety can become exaggerated, and ignore or distort the findings of research in this area. The University of New Hampshire published two survey studies (YISS-1 and YISS-2), which involved telephone interviews with national samples of youth Internet users aged 10 to 17 conducted in 2000 and 2005 (Finkelhor et al 2000, Wolak et al 2006). This research has dominated our understanding of the incidence and types of online solicitation and makes it clear that the stereotype of the Internet child molester who uses trickery and violence to assault children is largely inaccurate (Wolak et al 2008). This US research would suggest that most Internet-initiated sex crimes involve adult men who use the Internet to meet and seduce underage adolescents into sexual encounters and that in the majority of cases victims are aware that they are conversing online with adults. A comparison of survey data obtained from law enforcement agencies in 2000 and 2006 showed an increase in online predators, but an examination of the data indicated that this was largely accounted for by an increase in the number of young adults arrested (from 23% to 40%) (Wolak et al 2009). Children and adolescents are active participants in creating their own cyber cultures.

According to Davidson and Martellozzo (2008), Internet sex offender behaviour includes the construction of sites to be used for the exchange of information, experiences, and indecent images of children; the organization of criminal activities that seek to use children for prostitution purposes and that produce indecent images of children at a professional level and the organization of criminal activities that promote sexual tourism. Several recent studies found evidence of online forums which justified and normalised sexual feelings and engagement with children (Holt et al 2010, O’Halloran & Quayle 2010).

Online luring, grooming and solicitation are country-specific terms which refer to a process through which someone with a sexual interest in a child prepares the child for future sexual contact. In the UK the Home Office defines grooming as ‘*a course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes*’ (Home Office 2002). Davidson et al (2011) have proposed a definition of an online groomer as someone who has initiated online contact with a child with the intention of establishing a sexual relationship involving cyber-sex or sex with physical contact. Davidson et al (2010) have suggested that child grooming is a process that commences with sex offenders choosing a target area that is likely to attract children, and developing a bond as a precursor to abuse. The internet offers

speed and increases the range of contacts. Other on-going research funded by the European Commission focusing upon men convicted of online grooming or solicitation has found some evidence of child pornographic images being used alongside and as part of the grooming process. This study includes depth interviews with offenders, police officers and young people in four EU countries. The preliminary findings suggest that approximately 40% of offenders had easy access to CP images, used newsgroups and social networking sites to share images with others, categorised images and attempted to connect these in terms of physical characteristics with the children they were grooming (Webster & Davidson et al 2011). Other recent research conducted by a Covert Online Police Officer (Taylor in Davidson, 2010) working with the Metropolitan Police High Technology Crime Unit presents findings from three operations involving 3 covert officers (Cii’s). The officers created profiles of 12, 13 14 year old girls. All used e-mails, Social Networking Sites and Instant Messaging to meet and interact with online offenders displaying a sexual interest in children. During these operations 150 offenders interacted with the researcher and other Cii’s, 39 offenders groomed a Cii and travelled to meet the child. The remaining 111 either caused or incited a child under 13 to engage in sexual activity or, engaged in sexual activity in the presence of a child or caused a child to watch a sexual act. The offences were committed using digital cameras, mobile phones and web cams. On arrest all the offenders computers were seized and analysed. Of the 150 subjects, 147 were found to have child abuse images or movies on their computers, or on their person when arrested.

Concern has been expressed that certain Internet platforms provide opportunities for those sexually interested in children for grooming behaviour. Social networking sites are popular with adolescents and adults alike, although media portrayals of their dangerousness have been hard to examine empirically. In recent years there have been increasing concerns about the kinds of behaviour relating to social networking sites that may be associated with children placing themselves at risk. A recent study by Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones and Wolak (2010) explored the variety of ways social networking sites (SNSs) are used to facilitate the sexual exploitation of youth, as well as identify victim, offender, and case differences between arrests, with and without a SNS nexus. A nationally representative sample of over 2,500 local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in the United States were sent mail surveys followed by telephone interviews for a subset. Their results suggested SNSs played a role in an estimated 2,322 cases of Internet sex crimes against minors, ending in arrests in the year 2006 SNSs were used to initiate sexual relationships, to provide a means of communication between victim and offender, to access information about the victim, to disseminate information or pictures about the victim, and to get in touch with victim’s friends. However authors point out that,

“... by far the largest number of SNS-related arrests (1,696) involved police acting in an undercover capacity. The majority of such cases were initiated in chat rooms (82%); the SNS component being a web site constructed by law enforcement under the guise of a teenager as a place for the suspect to go to see pictures of the “victim” and to further corroborate the undercover agent’s identity. This suggests that SNSs can be useful in terms of their ability to enhance law enforcement’s capacity to detect and catch criminals. Moreover, a law enforcement presence on SNSs may serve as a deterrent to potential criminals” (Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak 2010, p 186).

Bryce (2009) has argued that groomers will often offer incentives such as money, gifts, concert tickets, modelling contracts, day trips, phones and games as part of the grooming process or to encourage young people to produce and send images of themselves. On-going research by Davidson et al (2011) has used qualitative analyses of interviews with men in the

United Kingdom convicted of grooming offences to develop a typology of these offenders. This work is still in process but should further our understanding of the different ways in which offenders achieve their goal of technology-enabled communication with children in order to engage in the eventual commission of a contact offence or cybersexual activity.

A recent exploratory study was conducted by Briggs et al (2010) of 51 people convicted of an Internet sex offence in which they attempted to entice an adolescent into a sexual relationship using an Internet chat room. The authors conclude that Internet chat room offenders constitute a separate group from other sex offenders and were characterised by less severe criminogenic factors. They hypothesised that chat room sex offenders typically avoided relationships and spent a significant amount of time in chat rooms as a primary social and sexual outlet. They also appeared to engage in other sexually compulsive behaviours. Briggs et al's data suggested two subgroups: a contact drive group who were motivated to engage in offline sexual behaviour, and a fantasy driven group motivated to engage in cybersex, but without an express wish to meet young people offline. However, the empirical research in relation to grooming or online solicitation is still sparse, and has largely focussed on the behaviour of the young person as opposed to the offending adult. It is also worth noting that in the University of New Hampshire research both the 2000 and 2005 surveys indicated that nearly half of the sexual solicitations were initiated by other young people, somewhat challenging some of our assumptions about the nature of online grooming (Wolak et al 2008).

Moving away from the individual, Taylor and Quayle (2006) attempted to address the criminal context for offending, drawing on the perspective of rational choice theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). This emphasises the importance of the situational context facing the offender in the period immediately before and at the time of offending, in terms of factors that might influence decision processes. These factors are often expressed as cue qualities of environmental events, and the effect of those cues on the decision calculus. In general, the factors that impinge on the individual whilst interacting with the Internet are predominantly perceptual in character, in that in current circumstances, the dominant Internet experience comprises visual depictions on the computer screen. However, images are different to other 'products' accessed through the Internet, in that almost uniquely, accessing an image can yield (given the right printing software) not just an electronic image, but also a physical image, which can be accessed rapidly and at his or her convenience.

Taylor and Quayle (2006) describe how we might understand these kinds of Internet crimes in terms of the rational choice theory concepts of search, precriminal situations and opportunity (Cusson 1993). In this sense the concept of 'search' refers to the individual looking for a suitable precriminal situation that will, contingent on some action, result in the commission of an offence. Searching may be thought to mediate between the intention to commit a crime and engaging with criminal opportunity through the identification of precriminal situations. Whilst the Internet is a complex system lacking a clear formal indexed structure, it nevertheless has many opportunities to conduct effective searches. The various search engines enable this, as do the search capacity of p2p networks<sup>2</sup>, for example. Given the significance of the perceived absence of a 'capable guardian' (Cohen & Felson 1979) which the Internet's 'end-2-end' architecture (Saltzer et al 1984) makes likely, it is possible, as far as the user is concerned to engage in apparently unconstrained and essentially unmonitored search activity to identify precriminal situations. In this context the 'end-2-end' argument

would suggest that the network provides a basic 'packet delivery service', with the network unaware of the services layered above it (see <http://web.mit.edu/Saltzer/www/publications/endtoend/endtoend.pdf> for a more detailed description).

Searching is facilitated by the role of hubs as critical elements in navigating the Internet. Search engines (like Google) are obvious critical hubs, which serve to filter and direct users to lesser nodes focusing on content relevant to particular search terms. Whilst search engines may set boundaries to searching, experienced users easily circumvent these. The search hierarchy implied by successive refinement of searching quite naturally leads to the emergence of precriminal situations and opportunities. The precriminal situation is therefore the situation where the potential to commit an offence is present, depending on the activity and response of the potential offender. One criminogenic quality of the Internet, at least with respect to abuse images of children (and other images as well), lies in the extraordinary ease with which a potential offender in a precriminal situation can move to become a real offender, through pointing and clicking on a link.

We can understand this by drawing on the concept of affordance: a process relating the properties of objects and environments to different behaviours, and drawing attention to the fact that some environments specify likely behaviours more than others (Joinson 2003). Norman (1988), extending this notion, suggests that the environment has 'natural signals' that allow for natural interpretations of cues with conscious needs. In Norman's terms, using hyperlinks has high perceived affordance qualities, resulting from the high degree of ecological validity enhanced by the ease of the behaviour of pointing and clicking. It can be argued that clicking on a hyperlink has 'natural signals' that allow for the interpretation of cues and their uses. Additionally, the consequences of clicking on the link is immediate access to a desired image, which, given the context, can be assumed to be highly reinforcing.

The context to this behaviour need not necessarily be exclusively sexual. People involved in the acquisition of large numbers of abuse images make reference to collecting, rather than sexual qualities, as sustaining their behaviour (Taylor & Quayle 2003). The sequences of choices and actions made by the offender during the criminal event are referred to as criminal tactics. Tactics are shaped by the precriminal situation, and reflect its situational context, and in particular in the situation of concern here, the affordance qualities of environmental cues.

In so far as access to abuse images of children is concerned, the behaviour of searching for precriminal situations does seem to be best conceptualised as occurring within the context of a 'motivated offender'. Access to abuse images of children on the Internet is not easy, and implies effort and direction on the part of the user to identify potential locations. The nature of the motivation underlying this behaviour, however, is as noted less clear, and in particular, sexual motivation may not be the sole factor involved (Taylor & Quayle 2003, Reijnen et al 2009). However, given that this behaviour does probably occur in the context of sexual arousal, it might be reasonable to assume that the individual is highly motivated. This is of some significance because we know that decision making in states of high arousal and motivation can be influenced in three broad ways: it narrows attention to factors related to that state; it reduces attention to short term factors, and it narrows the focus inwards to paying attention to personal factors to gain primacy over other decisional factors.

<sup>2</sup> p2p stands for "Peer to Peer." In a P2P network, the "peers" are computer systems which are connected to each other via the Internet. Files can be shared directly between systems on the network without the need of a central server. In other words, each computer on a P2P network becomes a file server as well as a client.

It might be thought that all of these could influence decision-making in search situations involving the Internet and abuse images (and other forms of sexually arousing images) and might result in an increase in risk taking and a perseveration of search activity. This seems to be most clearly the case when sexual arousal is involved. Boufford (2002) presents evidence that emotional states can influence rational decision making in sexual aggression (see Carmichael & Piquero 2004).

Why might situational factors be important? Wortley (in press) has argued that the situational approach emphasises the role of opportunity in driving consumption and that under the right environmental conditions the potential to view children as sexual objects is more widespread than sexual deviance models suggest. Situational prevention requires strategies that reduce the opportunities for accessing child abuse images by making the activity less rewarding, more difficult, and riskier. It is likely that this approach has relevance not only for crimes involving images of children but also for grooming activities. Searching activities are a key feature of social network sites such as Facebook (Wise et al 2010) and are potentially important ways of accessing relevant information about potential young people as targets. As previously discussed, such social network sites are clearly used to exploit the sexual grooming of young people (Mitchell et al 2010). This situational perspective is worthy of further empirical research.

## 4.2. Typologies of offenders

Conceptualisations of online abuse do not only describe offenses that take place solely online, but include those where technology has mediated part of the offense chain. There have been several attempts to generate a more differentiated view of technology mediated crimes that are sexual in their orientation and which might cause harm to children. These have been largely conceptualised as typologies of offending behaviour, as they describe not only the activities themselves but suggest underlying motivations for offending. Several of these typologies built on earlier work that predated the Internet, such as that by Hartman, Burgess and Lanning (1984). Alexy et al (2005) described a typology based on the distinction between those who use the Internet as a way of furthering contact offences against children and those who use the Internet to access abusive images. These authors generated three types of offender: traders, travellers and trader-travellers. Traders were described as people who both collect and trade abusive images of children on the Internet and therefore provide a market for the further abuse of children. Travellers use the Internet to gain access to children whom they coerce into meeting them for sexual purposes. The third category, trader-travellers, are those who do both. Krone (2004) generated a more comprehensive typology along a continuum of increasing seriousness of the offence. This included a range of offences from those that did not directly involve a child to offences involving direct contact with children, and from online engagement to physical abuse. Krone's (2004) typology generated nine types of offender classes. In a similar way, Lanning (2008) talked about 'computer offenders' who use this medium to sexually exploit and sexually abuse children. He suggested that they fall into three broad categories: situational, preferential and miscellaneous. Situational offenders include: adolescents or impulsive or curious adults with a newly found access to a wide range of pornography or sexual opportunities; morally indiscriminate people motivated by power or anger and who have a history of varied violent offences; and profiteer offenders who aim to profit from the lucrative child pornography market by involving children in sexual activity.

Criticism have been made of these typologies (Beech et al 2008) as while Lanning and Krone both talk about those who sexually abuse and those who exploit that abuse, they make no specific distinction between the groups. It is also apparent that offenders collect a wide range of images, and while the primary function is largely in the service of sexual arousal, there are other functions such as social activity, collecting behaviour and meeting a set of (largely) emotionally avoidant needs (Sheldon & Howitt 2008, Middleton et al 2006, Quayle & Taylor 2002, Surjadi et al 2010). While these may not have been the initiating factors in the offending process, they may be factors that maintain the behaviour.

There are many fewer accounts of internet facilitated commercial sexual exploitation of children (IF-CSEC). Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor and Wolak (2010) in a US study of arrest cases in 2006 found only 569 of 1051 cases were IF-CSEC. There were two main categories of offenders: those who used the Internet to purchase or sell access to identified children for sexual purposes (including child pornography production) and those who used the Internet to purchase or sell child pornography images they possessed but did not produce. Those offenders attempting to make a commercial profit were more likely to have: prior arrests for sexual and non-sexual crimes; a history of violence; produced child pornography; joined forces with other offenders, and included female offenders.

## 4.3 Comparison of online and offline abusers

In trying to make sense of offending on the Internet, comparisons have been made between those who have downloaded and traded images with offenders who have committed a contact offence against a child in the offline world. At present, for many practitioners, there tends to be an assumption that in fact they are one and the same, and as Internet sex offenders are such a heterogeneous population (aside from gender and racial group which we will go on to consider) this is often going to be the case. Clearly sex offenders who have both committed a contact offence with a child or children and who then use child abuse images on the Internet are likely to have a lot in common with those who have sexually offended against a child in the offline environment. However, as yet there is surprisingly little data to support this, although recent meta-analyses of studies would tend to support that there are similarities as well as differences (Babchishin et al 2010).

Seto, Cantor and Blanchard (2006) investigated whether being charged with a child pornography offence was a valid diagnostic indicator of paedophilia, as represented by an index of phallometrically assessed sexual arousal to children. Their results indicated that child pornography offenders had almost three times higher odds of being identified as a paedophile phallometrically as offenders against children. Seto et al (2006) suggested that child pornography offending is a stronger diagnostic indicator of paedophilia than is sexual offending against child victims. The results of this study pose a considerable challenge to us all.

Webb et al (2007) compared 90 Internet offenders with 120 child molesters from probation caseloads across the Greater London (UK) area. Both groups had experienced substantial levels of childhood difficulties, although child molesters were more likely to have been physically abused. A significantly higher number of Internet offenders had been in contact with the mental health services as adults, and had had significantly fewer live-in relationships. On the Hare Psychopathy Checklist, child molesters scored higher than Internet offenders, although the latter were reported as having significantly more problems with 'sexual self-

regulation' than child molesters. In this study, 65 per cent of Internet offenders had had one life event or more in the 12 months prior to their arrest (related to financial and social issues, and personal health and sexual difficulties). Both groups presented with a more schizoid, avoidant and dependent profile, which the authors felt was suggestive of individuals who either retreat from interpersonal and social situations, sometimes fearing rejection and cutting themselves off emotionally, or individuals who place excessive reliance on their relationships with others in order to be able to cope. Similarly in a Dutch sample of Internet offenders it was found that they were more likely to be young, single, living alone and leading relatively isolated social lives (Reijnen et al 2009). A further Swiss study (Niveau 2010) found that their sample of Internet offenders showed varying degrees of personality disorders and two-thirds exhibited problematic Internet use.

Sheldon and Howitt (2007) attempted an examination of how far Internet offenders match conceptions of contact offenders. This UK study compared 16 Internet sex offenders, 25 contact offenders and 10 mixed offenders (those who had committed online as well as contact offences) on a range of questionnaires exploring childhood and adult attachment, dispositional coping strategies, sexual fantasies and cognitive distortions. Comparing the populations, contact offenders were characterised by adverse childhoods (including sexual abuse); lengthy criminal records, and the use of emotionally oriented coping strategies. Internet sex offenders were more likely to be professionally employed; have more years in education; few criminal convictions; report some childhood difficulties and heterosexual sexualised play; high levels of paedophile fantasies and cognitive distortions but few criminal convictions of any kind. In this group paedophilic fantasies were related to sex play experiences and close themes between early childhood sexual experience and later adult abusive behaviour were evident.

A further comparative study was published by Bates and Metcalf (2007) using data generated by the Thames Valley Programme in the UK. The two groups were compared using a battery of psychometric tests employed by the programme (Beech et al 1998). Seventy-eight men were assessed, half of whom had a conviction related to a contact offence and half who had committed an Internet sex offence. Their results suggested that overall rates of 'psychometric deviancy' were similar between the two groups (22.2 per cent of Internet sex offenders and 23.1 per cent of contact offender). Internet sex offenders showed higher self-esteem than contact offenders, but worse emotional loneliness. In a recent UK study a data set consisting of 505 adult male Internet offenders and 526 adult male contact sexual offenders was compared (Elliott et al 2009). Each was allocated to one of two groups (Internet versus contact offender) based on their current index offence which was analysed by across a number of measures including: offence related beliefs and attitudes; social adequacy and interpersonal functioning; ability to effectively manage emotions and behaviours; and socially desirable responding. They found that contact offenders had a greater number of victim empathy distortions and cognitive distortions and a greater bias towards favourable self-description while Internet offenders had a greater ability to identify with fictional characters. A subsequent statistical model indicted that an increase in scores on scales of fantasy, underassertiveness, and motor impulsivity were found to be predictive of an Internet offence type.

What is important to note that many samples of Internet sex offenders do not seem to deviate from the general population in their psychological profiles. Henry, Mandeville-Norden, Hayes and Egan (2010) analysed the psychometric scores of 422 UK Internet sex offenders and found that they reduced to three groups: normal, inadequate and deviant. Paradoxically the largest group were 'normal' and appeared more emotionally stable, less pro-offending in their attitudes, but scoring higher for social desirability. The inadequate cluster were characterised by socio-affective difficulties, deficits in levels of self-esteem and emotional loneliness whereas the deviant group demonstrated poor victim empathy.

It is apparent from existing research that there is evidence to support both similarities and differences between online and offline offenders. Seto, Hanson, and Babchishin (in press) found that approximately half of online offenders admitted to committing a contact sexual offence and 12.2% had an official history of contact sexual offenses. As previously discussed, Seto et al (2006) found a large proportion of online offenders displayed high levels of sexual arousal to images which they considered to be a good indicator of paedophilia. However, as we have seen it is the case that there appear to be differences between these offending groups. For example, Internet offenders have been found to be better educated, more intelligent, and younger than offline offenders (Neutze et al 2009). We can add to this differences in psychological characteristics in that online offenders have fewer cognitive distortions and greater empathy than offline offenders (Bates & Metcalf 2007, Elliott et al 2009, Neutze et al 2009).

In an important recent study (Babchishin et al 2010) a meta-analysis was reported which addressed the degree that online offenders were different from offline offenders, and also from the general population. In doing so these authors noted that,

"To date, the literature is mostly descriptive in nature (e.g., age, marital status) and tends to only report information concerning a single sample of online offenders. Nevertheless, aggregating these findings will provide information on some of the key characteristics of online offenders. Although the available research is still rather limited, some broad conclusions are possible" (p 3).

This study confirmed that in terms of demographic features, online offenders tend to be Caucasian males who are younger than the general population. Although they were not different than the general population in terms of education, they were twice as likely to be unemployed. Both online and offline offenders reported significantly more physical and sexual abuse than males in the general population. In comparison with offline offenders, online offenders had greater victim empathy, greater sexual deviancy, and lower impression management. In addition, offline offenders tended to be older than online offenders as well as have greater emotional identification with children and more cognitive distortions. There were no significant differences between offline and online offenders in terms of loneliness or self-esteem.

Babchishin et al (2010) felt that a possible explanation for the predominance of Caucasian online sex offenders is the distribution of Internet use in the general population. There is little evidence to support this explanation, however, as the racial distribution of Internet users closely resembles the distribution in the general population. It is worth noting that as yet there have been no published studies of other online offending populations in, for example, Asia, where Internet use is high. This is a challenging area as in many countries, for example Thailand and Malaysia, laws exist that criminalise pornography but do not specifically delineate child pornography.

Babchishin et al (2010) note that there are challenges in such meta-analyses because of the small number of studies and the different measures used in relation to some constructs such as cognitive distortions. However they do speculate that it is possible that, online offenders avoid emotional closeness in sexual relationships, in fact reducing sexual relationships to pictures in order to avoid people.

#### 4.4 Self-generated content

One consideration in relation to child abuse images is self-generated, or user-generated, content (Quayle & Sinclair, in press). A US nationally representative survey by the Pew Research Center (Lenhart 2009) indicates that 4% of teenagers aged 12-17 who own a mobile phone report that they have sent sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images of themselves to someone else via text messaging and 15% have received such images. This increases to 8% and 30% respectively in those who are 17 years old, with teenagers who pay their own bills more likely to send sexual images. This activity is frequently referred to as 'sexting': the practice of sending or posting sexually suggestive text messages and images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via cellular telephones or over the Internet (Levick & Moon 2010). Typically, the young person takes a picture of himself or herself with a mobile phone camera (or other digital camera), or has someone else take the picture. This is then stored as a digital image and transmitted via mobile phone as a text-message, photo-send function, or electronic mail. Additionally, the subject may use a mobile phone to post the image to a social networking website like Facebook or MySpace (McBeth 2010).

Leary (2007; 2010) has referred to this material as "self-produced child pornography". Self-produced child pornography is images that possess the following criteria: they meet the legal definition of child pornography and were originally produced by a minor with no coercion, grooming, or adult participation whatsoever. The definition does not focus exclusively on the young person who makes the image but also those, "juveniles in the distribution chain who may coerce production, or later possess, distribute, or utilize such images" (Leary 2010, p 492). Leary (2010) highlights that the term sexting has been used variously to describe: one minor sending one picture to a perceived significant other; a minor taking and/or distributing pictures of him or herself and others engaged in sexually explicit conduct; a minor extensively forwarding or disseminating a nude picture of another youth without her knowledge; a minor posting such pictures on a web site; an older teen asking (or coercing) another youth for such pictures; a person impersonating a classmate to dupe and or blackmail other minors into sending pictures; adults sending pictures or videos to minors or possessing sexually explicit pictures of juveniles, adults sending sexually suggestive text or images to other adults. These are all different activities, only some of which would be deemed illegal in many jurisdictions.

However, Heverly (2008) has pointed out that there is little, if any, explicit recognition among young people that digital media may not only be used by them, but in fact may use them. This is expressed very powerfully in the following. "... when young people become the subject (or object, if you will) of digital media, they are used by it; when a digital media artefact – a digital media file of any type, for example video, audio, still image, text – that features them is created, part of them becomes entangled with the digital media and forms the substance of it" (p 199). Heverly (2008) distinguishes between those young people who actively

create media files in which they are embedded and those for whom the activity is passive. This brings us back to Leary's (2010) point that such media files may not only be used by the person or people within the images but also by other young people or adults within the distribution chain. Ostrager (2010) suggests that within this group of producers and distributors of self-generated content there is a need to distinguish between a person who is a "mass sexter" and someone who is a "repeat sexter". He suggests a three tier approach. Tier one includes young people who sext a picture to one person or possess one picture but who do not disseminate it. Tier two are described as mass sexters who send a graphic picture to up to ten people, or a repeat sexter who sends to up to five people in one month. Tier three are juveniles that send mass texts to eleven or more people or a repeat sexter who disseminates to six or more people at different times within one month. While it would seem that the numbers chosen to justify whether someone falls into either of the tiers is somewhat arbitrary, there does appear to be a legitimate concern to distinguish between sexting as a serious offence which poses a danger to others and when it is simply the product of a legitimate sexual relationship.

#### 4.5 Risk factors of becoming an offender of sexual abuse and offending behaviour

To date there are a limited number of studies to inform our understanding of risk with Internet sex offenders, and this is compounded by the different kinds of populations used (e.g. prison versus community), the time frame for the data collection (more recent accounts would suggest a greater availability of illegal images of children, through, for example peer-to-peer networks, Lapaty et al, in press), the ways in which the data are gathered (telephone interviews, self-report questionnaires, reconviction rates) and the lack of longitudinal data (Quayle 2009). Conroy (2006), in the context of risk management of sex offenders, draws our attention to the fact that a high risk of sexually reoffending is associated with a range of factors. Harris (2006) using the meta-analysis by Hanson and Morton-Bourgon (2005) summarised these as: the presence of sexual deviancy as measured by both phallometric assessment and deviant sexual preferences, measured by standardised tools, with sexual interest in children as a strong predictive factor in child molesters, although this is not the case with rape interest for rapists, and the presence of an antisocial lifestyle and orientation, such as rule violation, poor employment history and reckless, impulsive behaviour.

While there have been a number of studies from Europe that have theorised about the relationship between viewing images and the risk of committing a contact offence (e.g. Elliott & Beech 2009, Endrass et al 2009, Neutze et al 2010), the empirical data has been somewhat fragmented, plagued by differences in definitions, the point at which the assessment was made, and the use of, or absence of, bio-signal measures (e.g. Buschman et al 2010). It is also apparent that a proportion of Internet sex offenders are likely to have sex offending histories that include the commission of contact offences against children. Seto et al (in press) conducted a meta-analysis of 21 samples of online offenders (largely convicted of child pornography offences) regarding their contact sexual offending histories. Almost one in eight online offenders had an officially documented history of contact sexual offending. In a subset of six samples where self-report data were available, approximately half of the online offenders reported having committed a contact sexual offence.

The most substantial work so far has, as with the above study, come from Canada with a review of offender studies by Eke and Seto (in press). They examined risk domains previously identified for adult male contact sexual offenders and listed as: young offender age, sexual deviance, antisocial orientation, problems with secure adult attachment, and negative social influences (Hanson & Babchishin 2009). Eke & Seto (in press) concluded that, “Risk factors identified in this emerging research include established criminological variables such as offender age at first arrest and criminal history. There is also evidence to suggest that factors such as substance use and indicators of sexual interest in children (e.g., self-reported interest, phallometric test results) are relevant. Evidence that modified versions of existing measures have predictive accuracy supports the idea that the same factors that help predict recidivism among contact sexual offenders will also work with child pornography offenders. Offender age and prior history are also predictors of failure on conditional release among child pornography offenders and should be considered when making recommendations regarding bail. Our analysis of conditional release failures suggests that many child pornography offenders (half of those who failed) may put themselves in risky situations with children (e.g., by being around children unsupervised or by contacting children online) or continue to access (child) pornography; this is an important consideration for post-arrest or post-conviction supervision”.

## Conclusion

There is little documented evidence as to whether the types of abusive behaviours towards children seen in the online environment are different than, or similar to, those evidenced solely as contact offences without photography. This is clearly an area that warrants further research. There are also challenges in how we make sense of young people involved in the production of images, either of themselves or other peers, and whether this should be seen as age-appropriate sexual exploration or an indication of more problematic behaviour.

## Specific behavioural patterns and risks for special groups of becoming a victim?

### 5.1 Experiences of Internet related sexual abuse and its risks among boys and girls

Kadri Soo

In this chapter children’s experiences of Internet related sexual abuse and online sexual risks are analysed with regards to the statistical differences between the sexes. The chapter gives an overview of reports in European countries and the USA together because there are no remarkable differences between them.

#### 5.1.1 Sexual activities on the Internet

Many reports show that boys use the Internet more frequently for sexual purposes than girls (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002). Adolescent boys talk more about sex with someone online and have more cybersex compared with girls (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006). It also appears that boys are more likely than girls to do something sexual in front of the webcam without being asked to do so (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006). Boys also encounter sexual content online more often (Antal & László 2008, The effect .... 2004, Peter & Valkenburg in press, Primary data ... 2010, Wolak et al 2006, Wolak et al 2007).

However, there are surveys (Baumgartner et al 2010) that do not find gender differences in relation to online sexual activities. They found no significant differences between the sexes in activities such as searching for someone on the Internet to talk about sex or to have sexual intercourse with. Baumgartner et al (2010) and Ellonen et al (2008) report, that about one to four percent of boys and girls had posted a photo or video of themselves naked on the Internet or sent it to someone known only online in the previous year or six months. But although there was no gender difference in terms of the number doing so, girls regretted it more than boys later.

The difference between boys and girls in relation to sexual activity online increases with age. The results of the last EU Kids Online survey reveal (Livingstone et al 2011) that the difference in viewing pornography between the sexes grows with age. There are no gender differences among 9 – 12 year olds – approximately every thirteenth boy and girl has seen sexual images in online during past 12 months. Gender differences are revealed at age 13 – 16, when 24% of boys and 17% of girls reported having seen sexual content. The result might be influenced by the more active use of the Internet by boys in terms of purposeful searches. Namely, boys visit pornographic websites more often, doing so intentionally and consider it more exciting than girls do. It appears from a UK survey that only 3% of girls and 17% of boys aged 9 – 19 have wittingly sought out pornographic material on the Internet (Livingstone & Bober 2004).

Girls and younger adolescents perceive the sexual content that they encounter online in more sensitive way. Unexpected and involuntary exposure to pornographic material may be recognised as a violent experience. Girls and younger respondents also describe themselves as feeling more uncomfortable than boys do when encountering pornography on the Internet (Antal & László 2008, Livingstone & Bober 2004).

#### **Awareness of online risks**

Girls are more aware of the risks related to sexual abuse in online and offline environments (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, INTECO 2008). Girls (87%) also agree more than boys (67%) that there may be people online who are only looking for sex, and children and young people may at risk of meeting paedophiles while communicating online (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006).

#### **Sexual harassment and solicitation**

Online sexual harassment and solicitation are similar and partly overlapping issues (see Glossary). They have been measured with quite similar questions (e.g., “has anyone sent you sexual messages online?”, “has anyone made a sexual proposal?”, or “has anyone involved you in conversations about sex?”) in the different surveys. Therefore, in the current chapter they are analysed together.

Approximately half of adolescents have been subjected to sexual harassment or solicitation on the Internet at some point in their lives. 45% of Italian teenagers (aged 12 – 19) have received online messages with sexual content (IPSOS 2010). 44% of Spanish youngsters (aged 10 – 17) who use Internet regularly have received proposals to take part in sexual activity, 11% have received such invitations more than once (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002).

Because of methodological differences the results of various surveys differ significantly. For instance the share of youngsters who have received sexual messages, were asked to behave sexually, or have been harassed in other ways ranges from 15% to around 60% (Baumgartner et al 2010, De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Finkelhor et al 2000, Livingstone et al 2011, Mitchell et al 2007, Wojtasik 2004). All surveys demonstrate that the probability of being subjected to sexual harassment and solicitation increases with age.

Much analysis of gender differences displays the prevalence of girls amongst the targets of sexual harassment and solicitation (see Antal & László 2008, Baumgartner et al 2010, Ellonen et al 2008, Mainardi & Zraggen 2010, Staude-Müller et al 2009, Strano 2006, Wolak et al 2006). However, some researchers (ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002, Livingstone et al 2011) have found no differences in terms of gender in the share of youngsters who received sexual proposals or messages online.

There are some examples from gender differences. One study found that about one out of twelve girls and 5% of boys aged 15 had received sexual messages on the Internet in the previous 12 months (Ellonen et al 2008). 5.6% of male and 19.1% female adolescents (aged 12 – 17) had been asked to talk about sex or do something sexual when they did not want to whilst on the Internet in the previous six months (Baumgartner et al 2010). More than a fifth of girls and about every twentieth boy reported having received proposals to have sex or requests to send ‘sexy’ photographs or videos (Ellonen et al 2008). Only a few boys and 5% of girls declared that an unknown person had asked them to have sex online and offered money or gifts for it.

The surveys show also that not all boys and girls who have received sexual comments or proposals describe themselves as feeling uncomfortable or disturbed. Girls usually perceive sexual proposals and texts more negatively than boys. For instance Wojtasik (2004) found, that one third of girls and 17% of boys who were engaged in sexual conversations online felt anxious or horrified. Girls who received sexual messages are twice as likely to be bothered by them as boys (Livingstone et al 2011). Moreover, 83% of girls and 28% of boys who have been asked to do something sexual in front of the webcam disliked it (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006).

#### **Grooming**

The previous review about sexual victimisation at beginning of the online conversation presents only the results of quantitative surveys. Based on these results it might be inaccurate to refer to all occasions where abuse was committed as “grooming”<sup>3</sup>. There is almost no detailed information from quantitative surveys regarding the nature of the interaction process before an offline meeting and the motive of the perpetrator. Taking into account that the majority of the perpetrators were about the same age as the victims then these incidences might refer rather to failed dates due to poor communication between parties and different expectations concerning each other’s behaviour. Investigating grooming with a quantitative inquiry is complicated because of its scarcity and the fact it is such a delicate topic. Furthermore, it is difficult to capture the nature of grooming.

Incidents of grooming have been analysed using court cases and official/police records as well. In the majority of grooming cases which have reached the courts the victim was a teenage girl (Carr 2004, Gallagher et al 2006, Wolak et al 2004). Often cases started on the Internet in chat rooms or on social networking sites where the victim and the offender were acquainted and then led to sexual abuse in real world.

#### **5.1.2 Online encounters leading to offline sexual abuse**

The number of children and young people who have experienced sexually abusive incidents when they meet in real-life someone they first encountered online is relatively small. The share of youngsters who have been subjected to attempts to use them for sexual purposes in some way during online meeting seems to be around 7% (Helweg-Larsen et al 2009, Sajkowska 2009) and about 1% of these went on to become victims of offline sexual abuse (Ellonen et al 2008, Helweg-Larsen et al 2009).

According to the surveys no gender differences for online contacts leading to offline sexual abuse are revealed. For example a Danish survey (Helweg-Larsen et al 2009) found that the offline meeting with a “virtual friend” led to sexual abuse for 8% of boys and 5% of girls aged 15 - 16. 7.2% of boys and 4.6% of girls answered that they had been pressed to agree to engage in some sort of sexual act, but 1.2% of girls and 0.5% of boys were actually forced to do so. Few youngsters (1%) have received money or gifts for participation in sexual activities offline. In most cases the perpetrator is a peer who is slightly older than the victim.

<sup>3</sup> Sexual grooming is a process by which a person prepares a child by befriending the child online and gaining his/her trust and compliance for the abuse of this child (see also Glossary).



### Invitation to meet and meeting a stranger online and offline

Communicating with a stranger online is more widespread among teenagers than among prepubescent children. According to the pan-European survey, the share of boys and girls who have contacted a stranger is almost the same (30 and 29, respectively; Livingstone et al 2011). Some surveys reveal that girls have a higher level of activity in terms of online communication with strangers. For example, the results of a Portuguese online study with 10 – 22 year old school students indicate that girls are more likely to communicate with strangers through e-mail (83.6%) than boys (65.8%) (Monteiro & Gomes 2009). The evidence of an Italian survey shows that 42% children aged 8 – 16 have been invited to meet an online contact offline, and girls constitute two thirds of those children (Mainardi & Zraggen 2010).

The share of children and young people who have gone to an offline meeting with a person they became acquainted with online range from 14% to around 40% in different surveys (see ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002, Helweg-Larsen et al 2009, Livingstone et al 2011, Mainardi & Zraggen 2010, Monteiro & Comes 2009, Wojtasik 2004). The most recent cross-national survey, Livingstone et al (2011), demonstrated a huge variation between countries in the percentages of children who have arranged to meet and met a stranger offline. The lowest level was in Turkey and Italy (2-3%) and the highest in Lithuania and Estonia (24-26%).

It is quite obvious from the data that younger children meet strangers offline less often than older ones, however the results of different surveys concerning gender distribution are inconsistent. Helweg-Larsen et al (2009) and De Graaf and Vanwesenbeeck (2006) found that there are more boys than girls who meet face-to-face someone who they first became acquainted with online. The EU Kids Online survey did not find differences between the sexes. Approximately every tenth boy and girl had such experiences, but boys were more likely to meet different strangers than girls (Livingstone et al 2011). Mainardi & Zraggen (2010) on the other hand found that girls, compared to boys, are more active when it comes to meeting online acquaintances offline.

Most children described their offline meetings as pleasurable. Very few children did not enjoy the meeting, were bothered by the meeting or experienced abuse (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Ellonen et al 2008, Helweg-Larsen et al 2009, Livingstone & Bober 2004, Livingstone et al 2011). The difference in consequences of offline dating perceived by boys and girls are described later in this chapter.

### Summary

Although the results of surveys vary country by country and depend on research methods and the formulation of questions, the review above demonstrates clear differences between boys and girls in their experiences of Internet related sexual abuse and its risks. Specifically, boys are more open to risky sexual online behaviour such as having cybersex, taking part in sexual conversation online and visiting pornographic websites and sex oriented chat rooms. Girls behave in a less risky fashion and they are also more aware of online threats than boys. Furthermore, girls are more often the subjects of online sexual harassment/solicitation and grooming than boys. Girls are also more likely than boys to perceive various sexual activities and online content as unpleasant, annoying, or terrifying. The results are in line with the findings of the first EU Kids Online report (Livingstone & Haddon 2009), which showed that boys are more likely to encounter conduct risks (i.e., seeking pornography) but girls are more affected by content and contact risks (i.e., being upset by pornographic material, receiving unwanted sexual comments).

## 5.2 Children with disabilities

Kuno Sorensen, Zinaida Bodanovskaya

According to research in several countries, children with disabilities are more often exposed to sexual abuse (Kvam 2001, Sullivan & Knutson 2000, SISO & SUS 2007). Until now research has not focused on sexual abuse in relation to new technologies or how different groups of children with disabilities use new technologies in ways which make them more protected or, more vulnerable.

A hearing disability makes it difficult for the child to engage in social activities with children without the same disability. Children with hearing disabilities are most often dependent on sign language and lip-reading, which complicates communication and makes it difficult for them to feel integrated in spite of the fact their mental capability is unaffected. When young people with hearing disabilities chat online with text based chat they are not inhibited by their disability, but are on an equal footing with other young people.

Children and young people with hearing disabilities most often attend special schools and special leisure-time activities. These more isolated and protected environments may imply more limited experience towards “the normal world outside” and might make this group more vulnerable to those with dubious intentions when exploring the Internet.

Children and young people with learning difficulties may also constitute a more vulnerable group. Due to their particular circumstances it may be easier for the perpetrator to groom these children and pretend that he is a person with good and caring intentions. It should be also noted that mental disorders of various types can cause less critical and more incautious behaviour when on the World Wide Web in other situations that may put them at risk: for instance, a correlation between depressive states and risky types of behaviour has been decisively proven in more than one study.

According to the Swedish national board for youth affairs (See .... 2009) a group of young people with experience of providing sex in return for some form of payment is usually largely comprised of children who are experiencing problems in various areas of their lives. Many of the youths have a negative self-image, mental health problems, sexualised behaviour patterns and problems setting limits for themselves. The group is also characterised by a relatively high level of exposure to threats and violence in the family and by relatively high levels of alcohol and drug consumption.

Children with a tendency to develop mental illness seem to be more at risk when it comes to creating uncritical online relationships (Sørensen & Schrøder 2006). Virtually all types of online and offline victimisation were independently related to depressive symptoms, delinquent behaviour and substance use (Mitchell et al 2007). Even after adjusting the figures for the total number of different offline victimisations, youths who had been subjected to sexual solicitation online were still almost 2 times more likely to report depressive symptoms and high substance use than those who had not.

### 5.3 Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons (LGBT)

Zinaida Bodanovskaya, Anna-Maria Khranchenkova

A report by the Swedish national board for youth affairs (2009) shows that the Internet appears to be particularly important to young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT). This is because the Internet makes it possible to seek out and make contact with people who have had similar experiences and find out about organisations which exist to offer support. Online access to information is possible without any major risk of experiencing any unpleasant consequences. The Internet provides young people who are, or exploring aspects of being, LGBT space to fulfil six different aspects of their sexuality - identity, friendship, coming out, intimate relationships, sexual intercourse and community (Lynne & Lyn 2007). Many children start talking about sexual issues when they are 10-12 years old, they “play” with gender, location, sex and sexual orientation pretending to be someone or something they are not (Bergerud 2004). Mobile phones and the Internet provide further covert ways of making contacts and enabling activity to remain hidden.

However, problematic offline meetings (which involve being persuaded or forced into having sex against one’s will) which have been arranged as a result of from contacts made online appear to be more common among young LGBT people by comparison with other young people. Young LGBT people, and particularly males, tend to have more personal experience of providing sex in return for some form of payment, to be at higher risk of exposure to Internet-related sexual assault or abuse, and to be at higher risk of exposure to bullying or threats via the Internet or mobile phones than young heterosexual people. Boys and young men selling sex are thought to be far less visible than girls and young women, probably resulting from the additional stigma (Chase 2005).

In the UK in 2003 Bolding et al (2007) analysed self-completed questionnaires answered by males who had sex with males (MSM). Data was analysed for 810 MSMs who were under 30 years old at the time of the survey and who first had sex with another man between 1993–2002. During this period there was a significant increase in the percentage of MSM who met their first male sexual partner through the Internet (2.6–61.0%). There was a corresponding decrease in the percentage of those who met their first sexual partner at a gay venue (34.2–16.9%), school (23.7–1.3%), a public sex environment, through small ads or telephone chat lines (10.5–1.3%). From the research among young gay and bisexual men in the Netherlands (the sample size was 141 respondents), 82% (N = 116) reported experience of anal sex and who also were very active online; only two respondents had never visited gay sites on the Internet. From the respondents who did visit gay sites, 52% visited gay sites daily, 22% between 2 and 5 times a week, and 26% once a week or less (Franssens et al 2010). Men who used the Internet to find sexual partners appear to have a greater number of sexual partners (Horvath et al 2008). From research of Bauermeister et al (2010) it was found that young MSM men (18 -29 years of age) reported using the Internet to meet sexual partners at least once per week, having had multiple sexual partners in the past 2 months. The most commonly perceived risks included threats to physical safety and difficulties trusting a stranger. Risk reduction strategies included leaving information about partner and whereabouts with a friend, meeting in a public place, and screening a potential partner through conversations online.

### 5.4 Other vulnerable groups

Zinaida Bodanovskaya, Anna-Maria Khranchenkova

In this section we have collected evidence about the risks of online related sexual abuse for three additional groups: homeless adolescents, immigrant youth and those who are particularly impulsive.

A number of authors (Chase & Statham 2004, Gallagher 2007) give weight to underlying poverty and homelessness as factors which increase the risk of prostitution. In the Russian Federation there were cases where homeless children had been involved in the production of pornography (ECPAT International 2008). Gallagher (2007) found that the majority of victims of Internet-initiated incitement to take part in pornography were female, lived in single-parent or reconstituted families and came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Some reports provide some evidence (Svedin & Priebe 2007), that youths with an immigration background can be exposed to sexual abuse more. Part of this phenomenon can be linked to economic difficulties. For example a report of research concerning Estonia (AS Turu-Uuringud 2006) shows that children from bigger towns and national minorities have met strangers offline more frequently than children who live in smaller towns and villages, or who are native Estonians.

It was found that young people with higher levels of impulsiveness or compromised judgment characteristics seem to be more vulnerable to unwanted exposure to sexual solicitation (Wolak et al 2007). Findings are similar to previous results showing associations between online harassment or sexual solicitation and offline interpersonal victimisation and psychosocial challenge. Some common underlying features, such as impulsiveness or compromised judgment, may explain these associations, but these associations were not strong.

## 6.1 Denmark

Kuno Sørensen

The latest published findings about sexual abuse issues related to new communication technologies in Denmark come from the representative survey made by Helweg-Larsen et al (2009) *Unge trivsel 2008* (The well-being of young people 2008). The survey was undertaken via computer assisted self-interviewing with 3,976 young people in the 9th grade in Denmark, which made up 6 % of the 9th grade in Denmark overall. This chapter is mainly based on the report by Leicht and Sørensen (2011), who refer to unpublished findings regarding young people and new communication technologies from the Helweg-Larsen et al survey and to some findings from the recent 2010 study from EU Kids Online (Livingstone et al 2010).

According to the 2008 Danish study, 75% of Danish young people use the Internet every day, which is consistent with findings from the EU Kids Online study which was recently conducted among young Europeans (Livingstone et al. 2010). Many Danish children use the internet and 80% of Danish young people state that they are often alone when they spend time online. These figures are underlined in the European study, which reveals that out of the 23 countries surveyed, Denmark is the country where most children go online in their own room. 75% of Danish children indicated that they mainly go online in their own room, which is well above the European average of 48% (Livingstone et al 2010). Nearly 50% of the young people reported that they send over 100 text messages a week and only 2% responded that they did not send text messages at all. The boys generally spend more time online, whereas girls send more text messages.

72% of Danish young people stated that they had a profile on a Danish Social Networking Site, while 42% had a profile on an international social networking site (“SNS”) such as Facebook (Leicht & Sørensen 2011). Since 2008 Facebook’s popularity, however, has increased markedly at the expense of domestic sites, and one must therefore expect that the numbers would look different if the 2008 study were to be repeated today. According to a study from 2009 conducted by Statistics Denmark, 95% of Danish 16-19 year olds who had a SNS profile had one on Facebook (Statistics Denmark 2009).

The greater use of international social networking sites amongst Danish children and adolescents has consequences from the point of view of child protection. The international element is especially problematic when it comes to children and young people because there is not the same provision for either support or guidance, as there is on the Danish pages. Save the Children Denmark offers free training for all moderators on Danish children’s sites in order to ensure they are equipped to help children who experience problems on the site. The lack of moderation and opportunities for local contact may mean that it is easier for some users to abuse the social networking sites to spread rumours, bully, threaten, or sexually offend others undisturbed.

One might get the impression that the language used on the Internet and on various chat sites is very rough and has an overtly sexualized tone. Over 90% of the young people interviewed state, however, that during the previous year they have never felt offended by coarse sexual language when they were chatting with a stranger on the Internet. 3 out of 4 of those young people who report having felt offended by bad language are girls (Leicht & Sørensen 2011).

In the EU Kids Online survey children were asked whether they themselves have felt bothered by anything online. 93% of Danish 9-16 year olds answered that they think there are things online that bothers children of their age, while 26% report themselves to have been bothered by something online during the last year. Both figures are the highest scores among the 23 countries and might be taken to indicate that Danish children are aware of what children should and should not be exposed to (Livingstone et al. 2010).

A very small proportion of youths reported that sexual images of themselves had been uploaded to the Internet against their will; just less than 1 % of boys and 2 % of girls. Although very few had experienced having pictures published which they did not wish to be published, it is interesting that among those who had experienced it, 4 out of 5 were girls. In comparison more boys than girls had published such pictures of themselves, namely 2% of boys versus 1% of girls (Leicht & Sørensen 2011).

22% of adolescents responded that they had seen someone else do sexual act on a webcam. The difference between the sexes is also evident here, as boys make up almost 2/3 of those who report having experienced it many times. However, there are no significant gender differences to trace among the small proportion (8%) of young people who said that they had exposed themselves in a sexual way in front of a webcam either once or several times (Leicht & Sørensen 2011). Therefore a relatively large number of young people have in one way or another had experience webcams are being used in a sexual manner. Here it is important to stress that these figures cannot be used to comment on instances of sexual abuse or assault. Having watched someone else do “naughty things” on a webcam can cover everything from unwanted indecency to a girl showing off her new underwear to her partner to two young people agreeing to take off their jerseys for one another.

In autumn 2010 a trend became apparent that young girls were taking nude pictures of themselves and sending them to friends as proof of trust and friendship. Although the girls send pictures voluntarily, this behaviour can still be problematic because if the friendship stops or they even become enemies, the images may be passed on as revenge, and they have no further control over who gains access to the picture. What started as a naive expression of confidence may thus develop into a very unpleasant and stressful situation, where the girl is exhibited in a context that she had never imagined.

29% of girls and 9% of boys say that they have been asked by a stranger to send sexual pictures or movies of themselves via the Internet during the previous year. 16% of girls and 5% of boys indicated that during the previous year they have been asked for sex via the Internet from someone they did not know. Far more girls than boys using the Internet have been offered gifts or money for sex from someone they do not know, 8% of girls compared to 2% of boys (Leicht & Sørensen 2011).

43% indicated that they had met with virtual acquaintances in the physical world. Out of this group 7% of the boys compared to 5% of the girls stated that someone had tried to persuade them to do something sexual, and approximately 1% has felt pressured or forced into having sexual intercourse. 7 out of 10 of those who have been pressured or coerced into sexual intercourse by a friend they met online are girls. Last but not least more boys than girls have received money or gifts for doing something sexual in connection with meeting an acquaintance from the Internet offline. Out of the young people who had met a virtual friend in real life, 6% reported that they had experienced some form of assault as a result.

Among the very few young people who have had violent or unpleasant sexual experiences in offline encounters with a friend who they met online, 17% of the boys indicated that they became friends with the offender through an online gaming site, compared with only 3% of the girls (Leicht & Sørensen 2011).

In most of media reported cases of Internet-related assault the offender is an adult, reflecting widespread understanding that the greatest danger to children and young people on the Internet, are adults with bad intentions. The picture looks somewhat different when you ask young people who have had violent or unpleasant sexual experiences when meeting a friend from the virtual world. Out of this small group more than 4 out of 5 of the boys and almost half of the girls state that the person who committed unwanted act against them, was a person of the same age. 1 / 3 of boys and 2 / 3 of the girls reported that the offender was a little older than themselves, while less than 1 in 10 said that the offender was an adult. More girls than boys say that the assaults were committed by an adult, but the numbers are too small to generalise from (Leicht & Sørensen 2011).

Among the 6% who report having had an offensive or unpleasant sexual experience in connection with meeting a virtual friend 1/10 said that the violations were filmed or photographed and 1/12 answered that they did not know whether the assaults were filmed. Of those indicating that the assault was filmed 3 out of 10 knew that it has been uploaded to the Internet or sent to other people, while 4 out of 10 did not (Leicht & Sørensen 2011).

The research from Denmark indicates a need for more research and a greater focus on sexual offences between peers and how this kind of offence has an influence on how young people use the Internet and have their first (sometimes unwanted) sexual experiences.

## 6.2 Estonia

Kadri Soo, Mare Ainsaar

The use of information and communication technologies by children and young people has been studied in Estonia since 2000. Although more than 20 surveys have been conducted to ascertain the practises of computer and Internet use among children and young people, most of studies do not include any information about violence or sexual violence issues. Only nine studies are related in some way to online sexual abuse or its risks themes. The majority of them use quantitative methods or combine quantitative and qualitative methods with one study based on a qualitative approach. The only qualitative survey is based on focus group interviews conducted during the European Commission international project “Safer Internet for children”. During recent years Estonia has been part of several international projects and six publications out of nine are based on international projects. Among the survey methods self-completion questionnaires or structured face-to-face interviews dominate. No case studies, text or log files analysis have been conducted in Estonia.

Exposure to illegal or harmful material and giving out personal information are the most frequently studied online risks. Four surveys include data about parental awareness and activities related to their children’s online activities, regulation of Internet usage and talking to children about online risks (Children ... 2006, Safer ... 2006, The Gallup ... 2008, Livingstone et al 2010).

One of the first national studies “Children and Internet” was conducted in 2006. The study analysed Internet use and awareness of risks among 6 to 14 year old children. However, the sample size of a survey was so limited (145 children), that it is difficult to investigate rare phenomena. The survey included questions to the children about whether a stranger has talked to them in sexual manner, met them offline, asked to communicate via webcam or done something they did not like. The more thorough questions about negative or sexually abusive experiences while communicating online and offline consequences were not covered by this survey. For instance, there was no information about whether the children really talked to strangers via webcam or were forced to send photos or videos where they were naked.

The aim of the study Safer Internet for children ... (2007) was to improve knowledge about children’s Internet and mobile phone usage, online behaviour and perceptions of risks and safety while online. 32 children aged 9 – 10 and 12 – 14 from Estonia participated in focus group interviews. They talked about contact with and meeting strangers as a potential online risk. Some children had experiences of contacts with strangers but very few of them reported about sexual proposals by strangers and nobody interpret such occasions negatively. Qualitative interview method is useful to examine children’s interpretation of online risks and their experiences; however, it does not enable us to measure the prevalence of problem.

In 2008 Estonia participated in pan-European survey “Flash Eurobarometer 248: Towards a Safer Use of the Internet for Children in the EU – a parents’ perspective”. 500 randomly selected parents of a 6-17 year old children from Estonia were interviewed. The survey reflects parental perception of children’s use of the Internet, online risks, and practises to prevent them. The survey includes questions about parental concern about children’s exposure to sexually explicit images and the possibility of becoming a victim of online grooming.

The most recent large scale quantitative survey was carried out within EU Kids Online II project in 2010 (Livingstone et al 2010) on 9-16 year old children who use Internet. The survey was conducted as face-to-face structured interviews combined with a self-completion section for sensitive questions. In addition, one parent of each child was inquired. The Estonian sample contained 1,005 children. The survey covered children and parents' perspectives on Internet usage, risks and dangers. The risks included the themes like children's experiences of seeing sexual images, bullying, sending or receiving sexual messages, and contact and meeting stranger offline. Because the survey was completed recently, more thorough analysis of sexually related issues has not yet been carried out.

#### **Particularity of Estonian children's Internet use**

The more children use Internet, the more likely they are to come across different risks and feel disturbed by something on the internet (Livingstone et al 2010). The surveys indicate (Livingstone et al 2010) that Estonian children are among the most active Internet users in Europe. 93% of children aged 6-17 use the Internet and 83% use the Internet every day (The Gallup ... 2008). It is also remarkable that the average age of Estonian children when they start to use the Internet is one of the lowest in Europe – eight. Moreover, half of Estonian children have a tendency to use the Internet excessively; they have experienced at least one form of excessive Internet use fairly or very often (Livingstone et al 2010). This figure is the highest in Europe as well. Because Estonian children are the top Internet users, it is not surprising, that they have a higher risk and have more experience of dangerous and harmful situations (.e.g., of seeing sexual images or meeting someone offline who they first met on the Internet). 30% of Estonian children have seen sexual images on some websites, which is the highest figure in Europe (Livingstone et al 2010). Most often they have seen images or videos where someone is naked, but also material where someone is having sex. About half of children who have seen such images felt disturbed, girls more so than boys.

Receiving messages online including sexual content whether in words or pictures is especially prevalent in East-Europe (Livingstone et al 2010). Compared with other countries Estonia is in third place for this type of activity. 21% of Estonian children have seen or received sexual messages either on the Internet or via mobile phones. 4% of children have sent or posted sexual messages themselves. Older children (15-16 year olds) have had more of such experiences than younger children. The gender distribution when it comes to receiving sexual messages is quite similar. About a quarter of children who had seen or received sexual messages were bothered by them.

#### **Control of risks**

Quantitative surveys (Children... 2006, Kalmus et al 2009) reveal that Estonian parents are quite liberal and indifferent toward their offspring's online activities. Their awareness and supervision is poorer than EU average. The Eurobarometer survey indicates that 48% of parents are worried that their child might see sexually or violently explicit images on the Internet (The Gallup ...2008). The worry that children might see images via mobile phone is even lower – 25%.

Only about a half of children reported that parents had informed them how to communicate on the Internet. 61% of Estonian parents have forbidden children to communicate online with persons they do not know, whereas the EU average percentage is 83%. Estonian parents generally underestimate the likelihood that their child has experienced some kind of online harm or been at risk (Kalmus et al 2010).

#### **Children's experiences of Internet related sexual abuse**

According to crime statistics, the offences related to the manufacture and dissemination of child pornography and sexual solicitation of children through the Internet is increasing (Tammiste & Tamm 2009), although the number of incidents which come within the reach of the police is small. In 2008 13 incidents were registered where a child was sexually solicited. The cases under investigations included instances when, through social networking websites, children were asked to undress in front of the web camera or perform sexual acts in front it. In other cases they were sent pornographic material. Five minors were filmed with a webcam and after that the videos were uploaded to the Internet. It is impossible to evaluate the reliability of official statistics because of the lack of trustworthy population based minor surveys regarding this type of behaviour.

#### **Contacting and meeting strangers**

Contact with strangers on the Internet and meeting them offline is considered the behaviour with the highest risk of becoming a victim of sexual abuse. Compared with children from other EU countries, Estonian minors report the most frequent contacts with strangers. 54% of children aged 9 – 16 have conversed with stranger while online (Livingstone et al 2010) and the behaviour is age related – older children have more such contacts (Children ... 2006). In the main they have talked to unknown peers, but 5% have had contact with an adult stranger. Contact with adult strangers increases as children grow older.

Most often strangers ask about the child's name and free time activities (Children... 2006), but children also report requests from strangers to send a photograph (43%) or video (22%). Some children have wanted to meet offline (34%) and/or communicate in front of a webcam (22%). 8% of children who had contact with a stranger noticed that the stranger asked them to do something that they did not want to do. 5% reported that a stranger has talked to them in sexual manner. 68% of those with experience of comments of a sexual nature and 47% of those asked to do something unwillingly were disturbed (Children... 2006).

About 26% of children aged 9-16 have also met a stranger offline (Livingstone et al 2010). It is noteworthy that Estonian children meet Internet strangers offline twice as often as children in average in Europe. The parents' awareness of their children's activities is low – only 11% of parents know that their child has met an Internet stranger offline (Livingstone et al 2010). Survey (Children ... 2006) with a small number of respondents (n = 145) revealed that children from bigger towns and minorities have met strangers offline more frequently than children living in smaller towns and villages, and Estonians.

### Sexual services for money

A representative study on adolescents' sexual abuse experiences and attitudes toward sexuality was conducted in 2003. 1,943 students aged 15-20 filled the questionnaire. Although relatively very few cases of selling sex were reported (Strömpl 2004), the results referred to the potential link between offering sexual services for money and making contact with "clients" through the Internet. However, the survey did not specify what the online communication looked like or who had initiated the idea of payment for sexual services.

### Conclusions

Estonia belongs among countries with high level of children's Internet use and perceived online risks. Estonian children start using the Internet at a younger age than in many other countries, they use Internet more often and are more open to risks than peers from other European countries. According to the EU Kids online Survey they, along with children from Denmark, are the most likely to be distressed by something they have come into contact with on the Internet. There is however no convincing evidence that Estonian children have been victimised to a greater degree than other European children.

However, despite of the increase in general Internet research, the issue of online related sexual abuse has been covered only in single studies. The studies conducted in recent years are, in the main, cross-national comparisons. Additionally research into risks to children online and actual online related sexual abuse has so far been investigated on a general level. Although official crime statistics refer to individual cases where children have been asked to undress or have sex in front of web camera and then filmed, there are no surveys regarding the behavioural patterns which facilitate the process whereby children become victims, nor is there research regarding the psychology of abusers online. Moreover, none of the studies have examined online behaviour leading to offline sexual abuse and online sexual abuse activities from the perpetrator's perspective. It is impossible to evaluate consistency of different surveys results in Estonia, because of the small number of studies currently.

Although there seems to be information from several surveys about parents' perception of the problems which may exist, none of the surveys provide information about the effect on parent-child communication or what would be the most effective channels to provide information to children and parents in order to prevent sexual abuse. Considering children's high internet usage and exposure to risk there is a genuine need for special research and analysis regarding Internet related sexual abuse in Estonia

## 6.3 Germany

Julia von Weiler

Since 1998 media use by children and adolescents has been under continuous investigation by researchers (Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest - MPFS). Every year the MPFS publishes a JIM study concerning the media behaviour of 12-19 year old adolescents. JIM 2010 was consisted of phone interviews with 1,208 youths. Every other year the MPFS publishes a KIM study concerning media use of media by 6-13 year old children. KIM 2010 was consisted of personal interviews with 1,214 children along with parallel interviews with one caretaker, usually the child's mother. These representative surveys concentrate mainly on the change of behaviour in media usage in general. In recent years JIM and KIM also began to focus on the issue of digital media as well as the Internet more closely. Even though risks related to children's use of the Internet are frequently covered in the media, there are only very few studies concentrating on problematic behaviour concerning the digital media and the Internet in Germany.

### Surveys

Surveys by MPFS show that since use started to be monitored, children and adolescent's usage of digital media and the Internet has increased continuously. In 2010 89% of German children until 12 and 98% of adolescents have Internet access in their homes. 71% of the adolescents and 10% of the children have Internet access in their own room. 43% of children and 90% of adolescents use the Internet regularly. (MPFS: JIM 2010; KIM 2010). According to "EU Kids Online II" (Livingstone et al 2010) in comparison with other European countries, German children and adolescents access the Internet via cell phones or smart-phones above average (56%).

According to KIM 2010 3 % of children who are active online (n 687 of N 1214) state that they have online friends they only know online. 2/3 of active girls state that they also know their online friends offline. Only 54% of online active boys are certain that they also know their online friends offline. 17% of girls and 14% of boys who are active in chat rooms (n 344) had multiple disagreeable encounters with chat partners. 8% of online active children (n 687) state that they have encountered unpleasant things online: 3% saw things that frightened them, 16% had entered websites which they themselves judge to be improper for children. More than half of these sites contained sexual material, 20% violence or beatings and 9% saw frightening horror movies.

According to JIM 2010 the threat of paedophiles and online sexual abuse is recognised by 5% of adolescents (girls 7%, boys 4%) whereas 15% of Internet users complain about having experienced cyber mobbing.

JIM 2010 states that 6% of adolescents have contact with people they only meet online. Nearly every fourth online contact turns into a face-to-face contact over time. 20% of these face-to-face contacts turn out to be rather uncomfortable. EU-Kids-Online II found that 38 % of German children and adolescents had online contact with people they did not know otherwise. 11 % of these children met with such online contacts also offline. There is no statement to be found as to whether parents knew about these contacts or not.

JIM 2010 states furthermore that 7% of adolescents know about the spread of pornographic images via cell phones. 24% said they know someone who had received such images and 6% stated that they had received such images themselves. These questions however are not answered concerning their online activities.

EU Kids Online II concludes that children and adolescents in Germany are – as well as those in Italy, Spain, Ireland and the UK – less exposed to sexual images online than those children in Northern (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands) and Eastern European countries (Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania), with around one third having seen sexual images either online or offline.

#### **Research concerning problematic online and digital (sexual) encounters**

A representative inquiry of pupils aged 12 to 19 by Catharina Katzer (2005) found that in 2000 38.2% of adolescents online were being confronted unwillingly with sexual material. Katzer states further that only 8% of these adolescents asked an adult for help even though most of them felt highly uncomfortable. Whereas girls were mainly reporting being ‘chatted up’ in sexualised ways – boys were more often being sent pornographic material.

Katzer also found that 15% of adolescent Internet users complained about having experienced cyber mobbing. In conclusion she found that online bullies and victims of online bullying show the same characteristics as those being bullied offline. On the other hand online mobbing seems to be in part more stressful to victims than offline mobbing. Petra Grimm and Stefanie Rhein (2007) found that primary school children already make use of mobile phones to scare others by sending them violent or pornographic material. Mobile phones are also used as a tool for bullying – simply by filming others in embarrassing situations and spreading these films around peers via mobile phones.

The Bravo-Dr.-Sommer-Study (Bauer Media 2009), conducted paper and pencil interviews with 1,228 children and adolescents aged 11 to 17 in particular households, finds that two thirds of the youngsters aged 8 to 11 questioned indicated that they had seen pornographic pictures or films at least once. Petra Grimm et al (2010) conducted qualitative research based on interviews and found that from the point of view of the youngsters Internet pornography could be considered an absolutely normal component of everyday media consumption, especially for boys.

#### **Articles concerning posting pictures of children**

Anja Humberg (2006) and Günter Köhler (2007) describe experiences of the voluntary self-control of the Internet and jugendschutz.net (responsible for the protection of minors on the Internet) regarding the paragraph § 4 Abs. 1 Nr. 9 JMStV Germany’s Interstate Treaty for the Protection of Human Dignity and the Protection of Minors in the Media, which focuses on the “unnatural, sexually accentuated” presentation of minors on the Internet. Until this section of the German law came into effect, it was not possible to act against sexually accentuated online presentations of minors which fell just outside the legal definition of child pornography, but which are suspected of serving as an easy point of first contact for adults with a sexual interest in minors.

#### **Studies concerning the distribution of images of child sexual abuse**

So far only very few studies have been conducted which deal with problematic sexualised behaviour online. Most concentrate either on the distribution of images of abuse or on the extent children are confronted with pornography whilst online. Gisela Wuttke (2003) conducted expert interviews regarding the distribution of abusive images of children. Wuttke gives an overview of the knowledge of counselling centres concerning child sexual abuse with the main focus on child abusive images and gives recommendations for practical ways to protect children.

Innocence in Danger, Germany (2007) conducted expert interviews regarding the care and treatment children who are victims of pornographic exploitation. The research identified 245 cases (197 girls, 48 boys) and 280 suspected cases. Counsellors and therapists stated that these cases are of a higher complexity than offline abuse, more demanding for professionals and raise many questions as to how to deal with them on a professional level. Professional challenges included how to deal with the issue of permanence once abusive images have been distributed online, and what would be effective coping strategies for children which might foster resilience. The study concludes that even though exploitation of children for pornographic purposes is much talked about, there is still a great lack of knowledge of how to identify, approach and help children who have been victims of it.

#### **Ongoing or planned studies in that area**

At the Charité Institute of Sexual Science and Sexual Medicine in Berlin a study is ongoing which deals with those using abusive images of children. So far no results have been published. There also will be a representative study concerning child sexual abuse starting this year in Germany. It will run for the next three to five years dealing with all forms of sexual abuse (including online experiences).

#### **Conclusions**

Even though problematic use of digital media and the Internet is much talked about in a general sense and the risk of online grooming are being identified by practitioners there is hardly any substantiated data to be found in this area. The findings of KIM, JIM, the Bravo Dr. Sommer study and the EU Kids Online survey do not seem to correspond, which raises the question as to what extent the questions asked in each survey influence the findings and conclusions made.

## 6.4 Italy

Elisa Vellani

The studies conducted in Italy over the last decade show that increasing number of children and teenagers in Italy use technology, including a state-of-the-art technology (such as smartphones, tablet pc, consoles, etc.). New technologies and associated devices are perceived not only as useful tools for practical tasks, but also as a communication interface between oneself and the world. The Internet and its manifold forms (blogs, chat-lines, social networks, forums, and so on) represent a way to express oneself, to communicate and to experience even one's sexual identity. Far from being inert consumers, adolescents are often the ones who actively explore forbidden areas when surfing the net, for example visiting adults-only websites, or when interacting via mobile phones in order to get information and satisfy sexual curiosity. The web is considered useful for exploring sexuality and relationships and teenagers do this with fewer inhibitions than they would have in real life (Sexuality ... 2008). Parallel to the exponential growth of the ways to interact provided by new technologies, there are an increasing number of minors who become victims of grooming and sex abuse by adults through the same technologies.

Most of the analysed studies explore the habits of children and teenagers and their behaviour while surfing the net, in terms of time, space, modes and purpose of connection (Internet ... 2010, Mainardi and Zraggen 2010), their risk awareness and any tactics of self-defense they might adopt, in order to single out an effective strategy to prevent abuse (Child ... 2004). Risky behaviour analysis focuses particularly on the assessment of the minor's willingness to divulge his or her own personal data and/or meet offline someone who they have met on the Internet. On the contrary, less attention has been paid to the psycho-social profile of the potential victim, for instance through under-age victims' interviews and assessment, in order to identify elements of vulnerability and/or protection (Strano et. al 2006).

Empirical data from Italy confirm findings from literature that girls predominate among the victims, and the increase of the risk of grooming is connected to the age of the young surfers (Strano 2006, Curti et al 2010). Studies indicate that young victims are quite often aware of the potential risks online and they are conscious of these when communicating with unknown adults. However they rarely reveal the fact they are communicating in this way or the nature of the communication to parents or teachers, even when the experience is an unpleasant or a disturbing one. Youngsters mostly choose either to share these experiences with peers or not to share them at all (Internet ... 2010). Even when children realise that a grooming attempt is being made by an adult, they often do not ask for help, for two specific reasons: on the one hand, they are only half aware of being in danger; on the other, as typical of adolescents, they feel strongly attracted to the situation (Sexuality ... 2004). In Mainardi and Zraggen (2010) survey's the 15% of respondents indicated that during online chat, an unknown person starts talking insistently about sex or intimate personal experiences.

Between children's reactions to strangers who approached these topics in chat rooms while the majority claim has been bothered and closed the conversation or no longer answered to messages a significant percentage claim they: had fun (24%) and between these (18%) had talk about this to their friends, (16%) did not know what to do, (16%) provoked the conversation by themselves. Only a small proportion reported the facts to family members (9%).

Most of the studies underline how this lack of awareness to risk, together with a natural attractiveness of the situation, can be particularly dangerous, because since children or teenagers do not react with alarm reaction, they actually postpone asking for help and remain in the grooming process. (Strano et al 2003, Mainardi & Zraggen 2010).

Another relevant issue which emerges from these studies is the speed with which new technologies spread among the younger generations; such rapidity by far exceeds adults' ability to keep themselves up-to-date and acquire the necessary skills to support and guide their children regarding how to use these technologies safely (Mainardi & Zraggen 2010).

In "Profili da Sballo" (Doxa, Save the Children it., 2008) the 66,7 % of youngsters surveyed claims to hold a personal web profile. In this profile: (74%) of youngsters publish his/her true first name; (48%) publish his/her true surname; (61%) post personal pictures; (57%) share e-mail address; (18%) post references to the school he/she attends. Consolidating or establishing new friendships is the main reason for enrolling in a social network : (78%) of youngster surveyed claims to enrol to keep in touch with existing friends; (20%) to make new ones. About new friendships online: (47%) claims having made new friends, thanks to the Internet. (28.8%) claims to have met offline someone previously met online: (37%) has gone alone at the date, while (63%) accompanied by friends. (24.8%) has been in contact with people much older than themselves. Nearly half (44%) has entered a friendly relationship with them. About negative experiences youngest claim they have had in the network: (15%) has stumbled into pornography; (10%) received abusive and threatening messages; (9%) were asked to share personal provocative pictures; (7%) were asked to engage online sex; (6%) received embarrassing pictures.

Another important factor to be considered arises from the gap between what teenagers and children claim to do online themselves and what, in their view, their peers are doing. In the "Ragazzi Connessi" (2008) survey the 52% of teenagers interviewed claim that their peers pretend to be someone else, 46.7% state they peers post unauthorised photos, 51.5% that they say untrue things, 41.8% that they chat with adults without being aware of it (a percentage that drops to 34.4% in the case of chatting with adults while aware that they are talking with persons not their own age), 34.7% that are searching for pornographic materials, and 41.28% who receive invitations from strangers. When asked about themselves or their groups of friends about the situations listed above, in 25% of cases, youngsters found themselves in situations similar to those indicated, while 67.6% replied in the negative and 7.4% abstained. ( This gap can be interpreted in different ways. The first is that the first typology of questioning allow a more a greater chance of disclosure about behaviours recognized as inappropriate and not always safe like posting unauthorised photos, divulging personal data or accepting invitations to meet someone in person who they met online. Another possible interpretation would be to blame the imaginary concerns of the media (in relation to paedophilia, pornography and cyber-bullying), the profiles youngsters create and make known online, thereby explaining the disparity between these portrayals and the one emerging from study.

Essentially however, the authors concluded, that perhaps the results are not contradictory: just because mobile phones and the Internet have become normal, possible unsafe practices typical of adolescents belonging from the need for independence, to test their own identity, or to challenge the rules are also manifested through them.



With regard to a synthesis of the effective preventive strategies suggested by the different studies the regulatory interventions, of educational programmes to help youngsters gain a set of skills in order to make them face the classical challenges of puberty and adolescence in a safer way, and adult-oriented awareness campaigns on the actual web risks for their children have all been proffered (Curti et al.2010). If, on the one hand, children's risk awareness seems to have a very strong impact on the web behaviours they adopt, it is above all factors such as the presence of rules, frequency of use, computer location and surfing monitoring and the level of direct involvement by the parents which affects the extent to which children's behaviour is more, or less, prudent and safe (Mainardi & Zraggen 2010).

In conclusion these studies provide an accurate and useful research-based description of children's habits and behaviours when on line, which also promotes a better understanding of what to do to improve the safety and protection of youngsters from online sexual solicitation and unwanted exposure to pornography. More research is needed to aid the comprehension of online predator behaviour and about possible mechanisms by which sexual predators solicit youngsters. More research is also needed on the consequences of online victimisation for youngsters and regarding interventions to repair trauma caused by such victimisation.

#### **Critical evaluation of methods of studies**

On a methodological basis, it is possible to classify the selected studies according to the following macro-categories:

a) Studies based on structured interviews or questionnaires with teenagers contacted directly at home by telephone or via the Internet (telephone interviews and on-line surveys) such as ( Profili da Sballo 2008 and Sexuality and the Internet 2008).

These studies have collected a significant amount of data and provide epidemiological evidence regarding youngsters' potentially risky behaviour on the Internet, their Internet utilisation habits and awareness about what constitutes risky behaviour and illegal activities. An example of the latter type of study, and which is of particular interest, was an exploration of how the web may be employed to the express young peoples' sexuality. The interviews involved telephone or online conversations with young people on sensitive subjects and, because of the lack of structured interpersonal interaction between interviewers and interviewees, did not allow for a deeper investigation of the intra-psychic dynamics and motivations involved in web use. The typology of data obtained with this collection method was therefore mainly quantitative.

As for the degree of disclosure, several factors tended to contribute what could be perceived as less than complete candour. The indirect nature of the interaction allowed for less of a sense of awkwardness when it came to self disclosure but, at the same time, being contacted directly at home by telephone or via the Internet failed to guarantee a full perception of anonymity. Moreover, the interviewer could not exclude the possibility that the interview might be taking place in the presence of parents, which could certainly lead to some restraint in reporting events as interviewees do not want their parents to know about their views on, and reasons for, surfing the Internet.

A further consideration concerns the sampling and the representativeness of the sample. The sample was selected on the basis of the initial availability of parents, who, having been con-

tacted randomly from telephone and/or a larger sample list, gave their consent to participate in this specific study. A number of parents and guardians refused to participate or refused to allow researcher to talk to their children, and some young people refused to participate or were never even reached, for example, because of the digital divide. Which parents refused to allow their children to be interviewed? Do they represent a group sharing common traits or characteristics? Do they tend to be more absent or dismissive or are they parents who have anxiety issues relating to sexuality and believe they need to protect their children from gaining information or expressing their opinions on such complex topics? How does this type of selection affect the sampling of respondents?

b) Studies based on questionnaires completed by children at school as Ragazzi ... 2008, Mainardi and Zraggen 2010, Child ... (2010), Child ... (2004), Internet ... (2010).

This is the most widely used type of research survey for this subject in Italy. The sample is certainly more diverse and representative of the population with compared for example, to the interviews via the Internet described above. Parents tend to agree more readily because they perceive schools to be educational agencies capable of protecting children from potentially harmful content. Finally, the interviewee's perception of anonymity, when responding in writing without giving a name along with all their fellow students, is definitely higher. If, on the one hand, these points represent clear advantages in comparison to the first methodology (a), on the other, administering the interview/questionnaire collectively in the classroom may not be conducive to individual reflection and may even represent an aspect that could be disturbing or distracting enough to prevent full participatory involvement by a child taking part in the study.

As is the case in the previous group, this collecting method allows for a largely quantitative analysis of online behaviour. In this group two studies combine approaches in data collection by using questionnaires at school and then deepening the study through a qualitative focus through student focus groups (Mainardi & Zraggen 2010) and on teachers and parents (Child ... 2004), adding validity to the data collection by allowing for a deeper analysis of intra-psychic dynamics. The decision to use focus groups to achieve a greater depth of analysis is a particularly interesting one. In fact, the technique of using focus groups as a research tool is still largely under-valued and under-utilised in Italy for scientific/social research, despite the inherent particular advantages they offer by creating an atmosphere conducive to the exchange of opinions and which helps shared views and attitudes towards a specific phenomenon emerge. A final reflection on this point regards the need for some kind of involvement by parents and teachers in the study that could allow for a deeper investigation of their views on the problems posed by their children's educational and formative environments, leading to a more articulated reflection on the adult world as a reference point as well.

When dealing with disclosure of abuse attempts or risky habits, the majority of the studies include a warm-up phase and use a combination of different typologies of questions in order to facilitate the process:

- Questions that explore the perception of peers' behaviour: *In your opinion ... How often...?*
- Questions about the interviewee or his/her circle of friends' experiences: *has this ever happened to you or your friends?*

These typologies of questioning allow a more a greater chance of disclosure but make it impossible to know if what was declared happened to the interviewee or to someone he /she knows or if it is something he/she just presumes has happened.

- Questions that refer directly to personal experience: *Have you ever? Has it ever happened to you?*

When it comes to comparing studies' results, these particular types of questions should be compared strictly with similar types of questions only.

c) Studies based on data and survey analysis concerning reports of the illegal possession of child pornography material or of sex crimes perpetrated on the Internet, such as Strano et al 2003.

d) Investigations made by undercover agents from Postal and Communication Police simulating criminal identities, and interviews with under-age victims, namely Strano (2006) and Strano et al (2003).

These are currently the only structured research studies to have been conducted in Italy that explore the phenomenon of online victimisation from the perspective of the abuser, and certainly offer important insights in terms of prevention strategies and the protection of children and young people.

*CIRP: Child Internet Risk Perception Project* (2006) represents the second and final phase of research conducted by ICAA (2004) which oversaw a wide-ranging analysis of potentially risky behaviour through questionnaires given out at schools (5,000 questionnaires) and representative portrayals of the problems posed by environmental and educational contexts using focus groups and structured interviews with teachers and parents. In the second phase, the focus became more narrow and the research looked into the details of qualitative aspects concerning the behaviour and motivations of both the victims and the abusers through interviews with victims (400) and web simulations (1,000 connections with identity simulators). The ICAA's research team tried to delineate a specific link between risky behaviour and actually coming to harm. The study attempted to separate and set out: socio-biographical features of children which were more attractive to the abusers (gender and age); specific behaviours (time of connection, type of chat, etc.) that might encourage on-line harassment; and the psychology of children and young people (personality structures) that was most likely to be found attractive by abusers.

The survey was based on 400 interviews with youngsters who were victims of harassment and on 1,000 connections with identity simulation. The experimental protocol provided different behavioural profiles for the simulated youngster:

1. A-model (complete distrust)
2. B-model (naïve)
3. C-model (perplexity)
4. D-model (curiosity)
5. E-model (high availability).

On 1,000 connections with simulated identity 141 were recognised as actions of harassment (14.1%):

- (11.8%) were sexual verbal harassments in which the adult try to lead the conversation on to sexual issues
- (2.5%) were explicit attempts to meet the child offline

The time slots with the highest risk of being contacted by an abuser were:

- late afternoon 17-19 ( 33 cases )
- evening 19-21 (41 cases)
- night 21-23 (36 cases)

Girls aged 11 to 13 were found to be the most at risk of being victims of harassment by an adult. Interviews with the victims produced the same results. According to the study, girls who were particularly uninhibited, curious and at the same time respectful of the adult's role as a "guide" seemed to be most likely to be subject to verbal harassment and soliciting attempts.

The reconstruction of these complex components results in a final research project that is articulate, complete and of unquestionable interest. The management of such a complex study and, in particular, of the recruitment of minors who are victims, is not explicit in the research methodology. In the mean time, it would therefore be interesting to work more deeply on the management of such delicate practicalities with the aim of identifying and sharing views on best practice in this area.

e) Literature review on the subject such as Curti et al. (2010). This study provides an updated overview of epidemiological evidence relating to what is known about online sexual victimisation of children and teenagers. It also provides an overview of suggestions for preventative action that the literature on the subject considers useful in reducing the risk of becoming a victim to abuse online.

## 6.5 Russia

Zinaida Bodanovskaya

The collapse of the USSR and deterioration of social economic conditions across the country, among them anomie, lack of resources, unemployment, and - later on – the post Soviet “open market” that popped up and immediately got out of hand, difficulties in work of all existing governmental authorities and their fundamental inappropriateness to the challenges of the changing life – all provided fertile ground for the subsequent social crisis whose rates skyrocketed in the following years, i.e.: drug use and abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, and organised crime. In this situation the most vulnerable people in the population are children and other socially unprotected groups. When talking about the problem of commercial sex-exploitation of children (CSEC) in Russia we have to remember the specific attitude towards sex and sexuality that was prevalent in the Soviet Union. Sexuality was the sphere where strict rules and norms were imposed, any deviations were seen as perversions, any manifestations of sexuality *per se* were regarded as the sign of indecency, more than that - any talk or discussion of sex and sexuality were relentlessly censured. Everybody in Russia remembers a notorious statement by a woman participating in one of the late Soviet era talk-shows: she began with the phrase “We do not have sex in the USSR”. These social and economic circumstances opened the gates wide for a quickly emerging sex market, on the one hand, and created very serious barriers to the enforcement of the law which attempted to stop these criminal developments, including those that involved children.

The combat against commercial sex-exploitation of children in the whole of the post-Soviet territory was financed mainly by international donors till 2008.

The first mass media reports on the problem of CSEC in Russia only started to appear in 2006 and offered a rather harsh criticism of the law enforcement’s activities in respect of the protection of children’s rights. Thus, in the context of a child pornography market turnover in the range of €3,5 bn (Cherednichenko 2006), the rate of recorded crimes linked to the production and circulation of pornographic images of minors was extremely low: only 31 such crimes related to the Internet were investigated (and only 27 went to court). As was stated in a letter by the General Prosecutor’s Office of Russia: “... the audit of the Bureau of Special Operational Arrangements of the Internal Affairs Ministry of the Russian Federation carried out by the K-Directorate of the Ministry showed that reports of the Bureau on its work in the area of revealing and investigating the cases of the production and distribution of porn images/materials of non-adults in the Internet do not contain any data on revealed/investigated crimes, on the one hand, but offer declarations that daily monitoring of websites that are used for porn materials’ distribution including those of non-adults has been carried out, on the other,... only two criminal cases were initiated under Article 241.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (organisation of prostitution), both cases linked to each other”.

As shown in an interview (Cherednichenko 2006) in 2004, NGO Stelit’s specialists conducted a survey of 1,515 juveniles and youths of different social status (from pre-detention facility inmates to university students) aged between 14 and 21 years old in the North-Western Federal District of the Russian Federation. The study showed that 10% of the respondent males

and 6.7% of the females in St.Petersburg had taken part in pornographic photo sessions at least once in their life. In other cities of the Federal District, the share of girls who reported participation in pornography varied from 1.7% (Kaliningrad) to 6.5% (Murmansk). Among boys, the share of those who took part in nude photo sessions for some level of remuneration varied from 7.1% (Kaliningrad) to 2.7% (Murmansk).

The work of physically locating websites offering illegal content, undertaken by the UK Internet Watch Foundation also brought distressing news for Russia. In 2004 more than a third of such websites (40%) were hosted in the USA, Russia came second accounting for 31% of such Internet resources. The share of Russia-based porn websites increased to this level from 23% in 2003. In 2005 and 2006 the situation changed again: the share of Russia-based websites went down to 28% while the number of USA servers hosting such resources returned to previous levels (55%). Still, Russia retained its place among the three “leaders of the industry”.

In 2008 the tide seemed to be reversed, and the urgency of the problem was at last recognised by the government. In 2008 two nationally financed hot-lines were set up to fight illegal and indecent content, first and foremost child pornography on the Internet. On March the 16<sup>th</sup> 2009 Russian President Dimitry Medvedev declared: “Our attitude towards children is the parameter by which one can judge the maturity of the society, its progress. We need a reliable system of child protection in all senses of this word” (Argumenty I Fakty 2009).

Other officials followed with appropriate statements. On September the 15<sup>th</sup> 2009, Alexey Golovan, Ombudsman for Children’s Rights under the President of the Russian Federation, appeared at the All-Russia Best Practice Conference “The Russian System of Protection of Youth: Key Problems, Experience, Perspectives” organised by the National Foundation for the Protection of Children Against Abuse and Violence with support from the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation. In his report he, for the first time, described the fight against child pornography and prostitution as one of the four highest priority strategic areas for the protection of children in Russia.

At an international seminar “Protection of Children From Sexual Exploitation by Way of Using Information Technologies in the Baltic Regions and CIS Countries” (Kiev, Ukraine, 2010), Mr. E.N. Yakubovsky said that one of the problems facing the protection of rights and legitimate interests of minors is the portrayal of pornographic images and violence in the mass media. He also stated that children and young people constitute nearly half of all victims of sex crimes involving violence or abuse while the rate of children who have been victims of other types of sex crime has grown 20-fold over the last several years. At the same time the system of measures preventing crime against juveniles was evaluated as inefficient and ineffective. To develop guidelines for the improvement of governmental policies on the protection of children’s rights and the legitimate interests of young people in the Russian Federation, a special working group was set up including prosecutors, deputies of the Federal Assembly and members of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation members.

A better awareness of the problem amongst Russian society at all levels was the basis for the start of a wider public discussion of the risks children can face in the Internet: the majority of the publications analysed below have been brought out in the period since 2009.

### **Some of the characteristics of Internet behaviour**

First of all we have to mention that Russia has been actively developing an Internet market and continues to do so, means that the risks to children online and the potential for negative outcomes has also grown quickly. That means, that we must quickly develop an adequate system for preventing such risks, in the first place. According to a poll done by the Public Opinion Foundation amongst the adult Russian population (mid 2002 – early 2007), the number of Internet users in the country has gone up from 8% to 25% (The Public Opinion Foundation, 2007). In March 2007, Vice Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov forecast that by the end of 2015 “there will be no locality in the Russian Federation without technical capacity for land phone lines installation, cell phone communications and access to the Internet” (SMI 2007).

At the end of April 2009 the RUMetrika company did an online-poll of 1,000 respondents. A mixed sample was used including parents with children aged under 14 years old who use the Internet and children aged 14 and above who use the Internet without any control from adults (Baidin 2009). Only one fourth of the young Internet users accessed it under the control of or with the help of their parents, the turning point is at 9 – 10 years old when children begin to cease accessing the Internet in the company of adults, and by the age of 14 only 7% of them do this. At the same time only 12% of parents use special computer tools to impose limitations on their children’s access to the World Wide Web. More than 60% of parents of senior school children in Moscow give their children a free hand when using the Internet and never limit the time their kids spend browsing the web (Soldatova et al 2009).

While only one third of adult Russians currently use the Internet, for young people this figure is as much as 90%. Only 1/5 of Russians (2008) do not have a home PC, for Moscow the figure is only 5% (Soldatova et al 2010). Those youngsters, who do not have Internet access from their homes, do it from school and the share of such “school-based” Internet users is higher in the countryside.

The vast majority of the respondents view the Internet as a source of information and a means of communication, their attitude to the Internet is largely positive. Among Internet users aged 14 – 17 y/o, 93% use the vkontakte.ru and 43% – odnoklassniki.ru social networks. A large portion of the time Russian schoolchildren spend browsing the World Wide Web is spent searching for music or videos. Many respondents reported frequently listening to audio (73%) and watching video (68%) via the Internet, 60% take part in various Internet campaigns and polls, 77% play Internet games and 56% browse the websites which have been forbidden by their parents.

A poll of Russian schoolchildren from 17 Russian regions (4,338 pupils from forms 8 - 11) made it possible to single out 7 types of underage Internet users: “the curious”, “the rebels”, “the gamers”, “the clubbies”, “the consumers”, “the geeks” and “the businesslike” (Soldatova et al 2010). This classification was based upon certain features of the teenagers’ motivation which also applies to younger children’s Internet behaviour. The “curious” most often underestimate Internet threats and risks: every sixth of them believes that Internet is a safe place; the “rebels” often report visiting websites prohibited by their parents, downloading porn materials, having conflicts with other web-users and leaving their personal data on websites; the “clubbies” (because of their high Internet activity) are the most likely to face various risks like extortion, aggression, sexual harassment, undesirable acquaintances, more often share their personal information, and more than half of them prefer to meet their Internet friends in real life. This study also showed that the more often youngsters use the Internet, the less sensitive they are to the associated risks.

### **Perceived risks and threats**

Nearly a third of Moscow residents (28%) do not see the World Wide Web as a source of threat; the average figure for the country as a whole is 12% (Soldatova et al 2010). More than 75% of the respondents reported coming across aggression, sexual harassment and calls to inflict harm to oneself and to others in the Internet; more than 60% of the respondents have suffered moral coercion and two thirds of them have been humiliated and/or insulted. Only 48% of the respondents can claim that their children who are under 14 years old never browse websites with harmful content (Baidin 2009). Two out of five respondents (39%) confessed that their children view pornographic websites, while every fifth parent (19%) reported that his/her kids watch violent scenes on the Internet.

Nearly half of the respondents answered that they occasionally meet the people they make friends with in the Internet: only 45% of them have never met the people they have met and got to know on the web. The perceived Internet risks most often referred to by the respondents were (in descending order): computer viruses, pornography, indecent ads and insults, humiliation, or rudeness.

### **Real risks and threats**

According to the data provided by the Druzhestvennyy Runet Foundation (Friendly Runet is one of two web-based organisations (“hotlines”) fighting illegal and indecent content) for the year 2009, more than 10,000 webpages were reported to the hotline, 40% of them contained links to websites suspected of offering child pornography. More than 3,000 websites which featured child pornography were closed; at the same time 83% of child porn images reviewed by the hotline personnel contained various scenes of children having sex with adults or other children (Friendly Runet Foundation 2010, Bepalov 2010). According to the Safer Internet Centre of Russia, every third report received by the hotline was linked to cases of sexual exploitation of children (Parfentiev 2009).

The most widespread threat for children in the Internet is the abundance of openly sexual materials. Children’s curiosity concerning sex and sexuality is a quite normal thing, but Internet materials often give a wrong or distorted idea of what intimate relations between sexes are like. On the World Wide Web one can find much more information about perversions than educationally useful materials, so before a child has been taught the basics of normal publicly accepted sexuality models it is particularly dangerous for him/her to view these websites. This incorrect perception of sexuality models and patterns is linked to another threat which children are at risk of. A child may become victim of paedophiles and porn producers without even realising that his/her new “friends” are asking for something indecent: the child has already seen such things on the Internet where “everybody does this”. That is why it is crucial that young Internet users should be prepared beforehand for such experiences and be able to adequately understand the information he/she can find on the Internet (Safer Internet Centre of Russia 2010).

Today the problem of Internet safety is becoming even more urgent because children are entering the ‘virtual world’ in ever greater numbers. Underage users of the web enter it with a significantly weaker level protection against potential harm and poorer awareness of all the problems awaiting them there. Unfortunately, the Russian legislation provides us with practically no regulative instruments over the virtual world. What is more: it contains no such legal term defining or referring to a “website”.

Based on existing knowledge (ECPAT International 2008), it is often recognised that in addition to the trauma of the abuse, the child victims fear that they will not be understood; they may be embarrassed over their victimisation or feel guilty about what happened. Domestically produced child abuse images can also serve as a vehicle for interacting with other individuals with similar criminal interests, whose connection is facilitated by the Internet. Whereas in the past, individuals with sexual interests in children may have been isolated and/or ostracised, the Internet now provides a space for them to interact and justify their deviant sexual attraction by sharing it with others.

Mr. Eugeny Bepalov (2009), General Director of the Friendly Runet Foundation highlights in his paper that this problem has to be tackled collaboratively by governmental, private, public and international bodies. One of the factors undermining the efficient international partnership in this area is the differences which exist between local and other countries' legislation and norms: the line which separates child from adult pornography may be at a different age, one country's child pornography is another's erotica which is legal to produce, own and circulate.

Although there are a number of publications relating to sexually abused children and offenders in Russia there are few studies which research CSEC specifically. One of them is a research done by the NGO "Stellit" (Bodanovskaya et al 2010) among 53 specialists from different types of organisations and institutions asked about the nature of abuse researched 20 mentioned cases of child prostitution and 12 of child pornography. Research in Russia into offline sexual abuse related to online contacts and grooming almost does not exist.

## 6.6 Sweden

Carl Göran Svedin

During the 1990s two major child pornography operations were exposed by the police in Sweden. These could be described as the start of the Swedish public awareness of the existence of child sexual exploitation and child pornography. As a result, a project was initiated by the Swedish National Police force and the University of Linköping with the purpose of collaboratively gathering knowledge about the children in the images. The first ten identified cases were described in a book which concluded that what were considered to constitute child pornography at that time were explicit pictures of sexual abuse of children and that children do not speak out about their abusive experience (Svedin & Back 1996). The book was released in connection with the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children on Child Sexual Exploitation in Stockholm 1996. The materials seized in the operation were mainly photos and video-films but the investigation did not uncover evidence that any of these abusive images were spread across the Internet. In 2003, with an additional 20 cases, the picture had changed (Svedin & Back 2003). In the years that had elapsed the technical evolution had made the electronic camera affordable for most people and the Internet had become available in almost every home. This rapid development is shown by a case from 2000 when during a search of perpetrators apartment more than 47,000 child pornographic pictures and 800 video films were stored on his computer and he was networking intensively on the Internet with people all around the world. The Internet had established itself not only as a tool for communication, networking and as a source of endless learning but also as a media for distribution of sexual abusive images and later as a means by which to commit abuse. Despite this it was not until 2006 that the general debate took off after the exposure of the so called "Alexandramannen". The 29 year old man was charged with rape, sexual abuse and many other crimes committed against 58 victims. He had made contact through the Internet and groomed the girls promising for example that he could get them work as a photo model (Wagner 2008, Leander et al 2008).

### Use of Internet

In a Swedish study conducted in 2005, 38% of children between 9 and 15 years old reported that they had a computer with or without Internet access in their room (Medierådet 2005). Three and five years later, 40% and 61% respectively, of the same age group reported that they had a computer with Internet access in their room (Medierådet 2008, 2010). According to the World Internet Institute (Findahl 2008) almost all children in Sweden have access to Internet in their homes and younger and younger children are starting to use the Internet. In 2008 21% of children aged 3 years had used the Internet and by 5 years old 51% had used the Internet.

Forty percent of the 12–15 year old respondents in 2005 and 28% in 2008 said that they had inadvertently or deliberately visited a website showing sexual acts, intercourse or pornography (Medierådet 2005, 2008). In 2010, 21% reported that someone had talked to them about sex over the Internet. The question was neutral in the sense that it could have been taken as referring to both wanted and unwanted contacts but only 8% had talked about sex with an unknown person.

### **Sexual solicitation and grooming over the Internet**

In Sweden three larger studies have been performed looking into occasions where someone has asked a child to talk about sex over the Internet when they did not want to. In the first study, carried out within the framework of an EU project for a more secure use of the Internet (SAFT, 2003), 32% of 1,000 children aged 9-16 years responded that they had been asked to talk about sex when they did not want to. In the last survey (Mediarådet 2008) 15% of 12-16 year old children said that someone had talked to them over the Internet when they did not want them to. In that survey it was three times more common for girls to report this unwanted experience than boys (23 compared to 7%).

Nilsson (2004) analysed police reports and judgements which concerned 151 children who were victims of sexual abuse with the addition of sexual exploitation. Of these 12 children, who were all girls, had made contact with the perpetrator through the Internet. Four of the girls (11-14 years of age) had been sexually abused by two different men who had met them via chat sites on the Internet. Five girls (16-17 years of age) had responded to an inquiry on the Internet to take part in erotic and pornographic films for money. In two cases the girls agreed during their chat room conversation with the perpetrators to having sexual intercourse without remuneration.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) was commissioned by the Government 2006 to develop a database of the number adult contacts made with children over the Internet for sexual purposes. Three studies were performed (Brå 2007a, 2007b).

In the first study, carried out in 2005 nearly 7,500 students from grade 9 (14-15 years of age) from 107 schools were asked if they had been contacted by unknown adults who made sexual suggestions. Twenty-five percent responded that they had been subject to sexual advances or been asked for sexual services through the Internet in the last year (girls 38% and boys 12%). Nine percent reported that they had been sent an invitation of a sexual nature through their mobile phone (girls 11% and boys 6%). Only 2% of both girls and boys had been contacted with sexual suggestions by an adult outside the Internet only. These figures suggest that the Internet plays a central role as a tool enabling contact of sexual nature between adults and children.

In this study children at risk of being contacted by adults with a sexual agenda were found to have a lower satisfaction with school and family relations and been subjected to bullying, thefts and violence more often. They were also more likely to spend time with older friends, had been drunk more often and had a higher rate of truancy.

In the second study a web-based questionnaire was sent to 4,750 youth members (15-17 years of age) of a web-panel. After over 1,000 answers were gathered the panel was closed and 1 019 answers were analysed. Almost 70% of the girls reported that they had had an unwanted sexual contact over the Internet and almost 59% stated that this was the case during the last year. Corresponding figures for the boys were 20% and 15% respectively. The person who made the approach over the Internet was in 92% of cases older than 18 years of age (49% > 25 years of age) and male. In 95% of cases they were unknown to the child. The contact experienced was described as unpleasant by 67% of the respondents ('slightly' 27%, 'quite' 23% and 'very unpleasant' 18%).

The third study (Shannon 2008) was a free text search of relevant words and terms that were in police reports concerning sex offences against individuals under the age of 18 (children). The search covered offences reported to 14 of Sweden's 21 police authorities, including those covering Sweden's 3 metropolitan counties. The reports concerned suspected sexual offences

reported during a 33 month period between 2004 and 2006. In all 315 cases were identified as having some form of Internet connection. Four groups of Internet related crimes could be seen: (1) In 179 cases the perpetrator and victim had only been in contact online, (2) cases where perpetrator and victim had been in contact both online and offline (e.g. by phone), but where the material provides no sure indication of a sexual offence having taken place at an offline meeting (n=45), (3) cases where an adult perpetrator who already knew the child offline has used the Internet to develop the existing relationship for sexual purposes (n=22) and finally (4) 69 cases where the perpetrator and victim came into contact with one another online, and where the perpetrator has subsequently committed a sexual offence against the victim at an offline meeting.

In the forensic interview (in Sweden done by the police) it became obvious that there was a strong discrepancy between the victims' feeling of safety when they were online and the fact that the situation felt strange and unpleasant immediately when they met in real life. Leander, Christiansson and Granhag (2008) investigated how adolescent girls, who had been sexually (on- and off-line) deceived and abused by an Internet hebephile, reported these acts. Through the documentation of 68 girls' conversations (i.e. chat logs) and involvement with the perpetrator, they were able to gauge what the victims reported during the police interview against this detailed documentation. In contrast with findings from previous research, the majority of victims reported the off-line activities (real-life meetings) with the perpetrator. However, the victims omitted and/or denied more of the on-line activities, specifically the more severe sexual on-line acts (sending nude photos and participating in sexual web shows). There is probably a gap between what the victims reported and what they presumably remembered about the on-line activities. Factors that might have affected the victims' pattern of reporting are discussed by the authors.

### **Selling sex through the Internet**

In 2003-2004 the first study of sexual exploitation in the form of selling sex was performed in Sweden (Svedin & Priebe 2007). In that study, of 4 339 high school seniors (aged 17-19) 1.4% (1.8% of the boys and 1.0% of the girls) had ever sold sex for money or other remuneration. The most common way to get in contact with the buyer was, among both girls (30%) and boys (35%), through friends. Using the Internet as a way of establishing a contact with the buyer was the option for 16.7% in 2003. Six years later, in 2009, this way to make contact had increased to 56.9% although the number of children who had sold sex was relatively unchanged (Svedin & Priebe 2009).

### **Exposing oneself sexually online**

In Sweden a number of studies have been performed where various forms of sexual display or exposure online has been the main focus, one of the sub-questions or superficially touched on during the course of wider research. There have been both qualitative and quantitative studies (e.g. Daneback & Månsson 2009, Svedin & Priebe 2009) which reveal that a large majority of children and teenagers are restrictive when it comes to exposing themselves sexually online.

In a representative Swedish study consisting of 3500 youths in secondary school (17-19 years old) almost all students used the Internet and 91% used the Internet daily (Svedin & Priebe 2009). Approximately 10% had experience of posting images of themselves undressed. To post photographs of themselves undressed was associated with poorer mental health and lower self-esteem but also a weaker sense of cohesion and an experience of less care and

more control in the family. A larger proportion, 11.9%, of the male students and 16.4% of the female students answered that they had posed nude in front of a webcam or mobile phone. A smaller proportion (6.1% of the males and 4.9% of the females) stated that they had masturbated in front of a webcam or mobile phone. The participants who had exposed themselves sexually in this way also showed worse psychosocial health, lower self esteem, loss of cohesion and an experience of less care and more control in the family than the rest of the participants. (Svedin & Priebe 2009).

In the same publication "Se mig" Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (Ungdomsstyrelsen 2009) analysed data from their Youth survey 2009. It was a nationwide representative survey where a questionnaire was sent to the homes of 6000 young people of 16-25 years, with a response rate of 50%. In the 16-19 year olds age group 9.4% of the girls and 6.3% of the boys reported that they had posted sexual pictures /videos of themselves online and 2.5% of the girls and 2.4% of the boys had sexy pictures/videos posted online against their will. It was more common among the young people (16-25 years of age) that had posted sexy pictures/videos that they also had been paid for sex (42.3%), bought sex (12.4%), been homosexual, bisexual or transsexual (HBT) (18.8%), been threatened with physical violence (18.6%) and/or been physically hurt (21.5%).

In a qualitative study Nigård (2009) interviewed 20 young people aged 18-25 years (10 men and 10 women) that had posted images on pornographic sites. Nigård describes the need to be seen as a kind of "self medication" that is linked to individuation and narcissism. She also mentions two other themes that were common in the interviews; sexual exposure as a way to distance themselves from cultural restraints and ambivalence towards pornography. Nigård describes how children can be ambivalent when it comes to exposing themselves sexually which also is a finding in the Online Project.

With financial support from World Childhood Foundation and Telia Sonera, BUP-Elefanten initiated the Online Project to gain knowledge about children who have been victims of online sexual abuse. BUP-Elefanten is a child and adolescent psychiatric clinic at the University hospital of Linköping, Sweden. The unit specialises in the treatment of children who are victims of sexual abuse and/or physical abuse. The project started in 2006 and finished in 2010 and has included work with abused children, professionals who have been in touch with victimised children as well as researchers in the field. The work of the project is published in two reports, *Abused Online* (Nyman 2006) and *Children and sexual abuse via IT* (Jonsson, Warfvinge & Banck 2009). In summary, one of the main findings from the project was that children who suffer sexual abuse offline are already in risky situations while children who suffer sexual abuse online enter into risky situations, i.e. on the Internet, where the abuse takes place. The child's own risk-taking and personal activities has been the most significant feature characterising the children in the Online Project.

### Conclusions

This short overview of Swedish research covers both qualitative and quantitative studies and performed with different methodology by interviews, document reviews and epidemiological surveys. What strikes one first is the rapid development in the area and that research tends to be perishable. The need for further research is therefore continuous. The second impression is that the results from the studies converge in the sense that the different forms of design end up with roughly similar patterns which strengthens the validity of the different studies.

## 6.7 United Kingdom

Ethel Quayle

Concerns about the use of information technologies by children and young people in the UK were evidenced in the establishment of the Internet Watch Foundation in 1996, Childnet in 1997 and the Children's Charities' Coalition for Internet Safety with the Home Secretary announced the setting up of the Internet Taskforce on Child Protection on 28 March 2001 in response to a report by the Internet Crime Forum, which made a number of recommendations that included the display of safety messages and the improved supervision of chat rooms. More recently has seen the publication of government commissioned reports such as the Byron Review (Byron 2008) and Sexualisation of Young People Review (Papadopoulos 2010) expressing concern about the use and impact of information technology on children and young people. There have also been important publications by NGOs such as the NSPCC (Renald et al 2003) and Barnardos (Palmer 2003) as well as the Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety. Although there is a history of population based surveys on the prevalence of child sexual abuse in the UK (e.g. Baker & Duncan 1985, Burton et al 1989, Department of Health 1995, Cawson 2000, Oaksford 2001, Kelly et al 2001) as well as official data, there are fewer empirical studies which have looked at the extent of technology related child sexual abuse and exploitation (e.g. Gallagher 2007, Gallagher et al 2006, Carr 2004). The majority of these studies are quantitative using survey designs, although more recently there have been qualitative studies using small sample sizes (e.g. Leonard 2010). A recent survey was conducted by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in 2009 of 1761 young adults aged 18-24 years and 2275 children aged 11 - 17 years. To date, only a summary of the findings are available ([http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/statistics/prevalence\\_and\\_incidence\\_of\\_child\\_abuse\\_and\\_neglect\\_wda48740.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/statistics/prevalence_and_incidence_of_child_abuse_and_neglect_wda48740.html)) but these suggest that one in nine young adults (11.3%) and one in 20 children (4.8%) have experienced contact sexual abuse. Specific survey questions were asked in relation to online abusive activities but this data is not yet available.

Concerns have been expressed about the role that social networking sites may play in the 'interdependencies between opportunities and risks', particularly in relation to 'at risk' children (Livingstone & Brake 2010). This is especially of concern as US research (Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak 2010) has indicated that a considerable number of arrests for Internet sex crimes against minors have a SNS nexus to them. In the UK a survey from Sharples, Gabor, Harrison and Logan (2009) indicated that 74% of the children surveyed have used social network (SN) sites and that a substantial minority regularly interact socially online with people they have not met face-to-face. However, outside of survey data on sexual messages between peers online in the most recent EU Kids Online survey, there is little empirical evidence about the number of children approached with sexual requests from adults. The comparative data from the EU Kids Online survey (Livingstone et al 2011) indicated that 15% of European children aged 11-16 say that they have seen or received sexual messages on the internet in the past 12 months and that there is a marked age trend with older children having higher levels of exposure. National differences were found to be relatively minor.

There now exists a substantial body of literature relating to children and young people's use of the Internet and risk-taking behaviour arising from the work of Sonia Livingstone at the London School of Economics (Livingstone & Das 2010, Livingstone et al 2010, Livingstone 2010, Livingstone & Haddon 2009, Livingstone 2009, Saksrud & Livingstone 2009) and the

related work arising from the EU Kids Online Project which, “centres on a cross-national survey of European children’s experiences of the internet, focusing on uses, activities, risks and safety. It also maps parents’ experiences, practices and concerns regarding their children’s online risk and safety”. Twenty-five countries participate in this project. The most recent data indicated that in the UK Internet use amongst young people is high with 49% having access in their own bedroom and a further 47% accessing the Internet in their home: 21% own a handheld device and 29% have mobile access (Livingstone et al 2011). Young people’s attitudes towards the positive aspects of the Internet suggested that in the UK 51% of young people in the sample believed that there were a lot of good things on the Internet with only 4% believed that this was not true.

In the 2010 report (Livingstone et al 2010), country differences were seen in relation to children and young people having been exposed to sexual images

“The greatest exposure to sexual images online is among children in Northern (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands) and Eastern European countries (Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania), with around one third having seen sexual images either online or offline. Least exposure is in large ‘older’ members of the EU- Germany, Italy, Spain, Ireland and the UK.” (p 54).

This may reflect the voluntary code of practice by Internet Service Providers in the UK to remove some content, although at present this only relates to known child abuse images. The 2010 data also suggested that cases of online bullying was relatively rare but that parents are most aware of being bullied online in Northern countries (Finland, UK, Netherlands, Denmark) and least aware in some Southern and Eastern European countries. Parents also underestimated the amount of sexual messaging compared to their children in all countries, except in the UK and Italy, where children and parents report about the same percentage. The report also indicates that young people are most likely to have gone to an offline meeting with a contact first made online in some of the Baltic countries (26% in Estonia and 24% in Lithuania), and that such offline meetings are least common in Turkey (2%), and then Italy (3%), Ireland and the UK (each 4%). The UK ranked amongst the lowest in relation to sending/receiving sexual messages online and meeting new people online. The overall finding of the report was that the level of Internet use was associated with encountering one or more risk. However there were exceptions to this with a small group of countries (Belgium, Poland and the UK) characterised by high use and medium risk. The UK extensively has made available educational packages and programmes, both online and offline, in schools and for home consumption and this has been achieved through government organisations (such as CEOP and BECTA) as well as non-government organisations (NSPCC and Childnet for example). While rigorous evaluation of these packages is often lacking (e.g. Davidson et al 2009) it may be as, has been suggested by Finkelhor (2009), that such an approach “offers promise and should be further developed and evaluated” (p 182).

In the UK there has been a substantial investment into research on those who perpetrate online crimes against children (often termed Internet sex offenders). In the context of grooming, theoretical models have been proposed by Craven et al (2006, 2007) and Chase and Statham (2005), with more empirical work by Davidson and Martellozzo (2008a, 2008b, 2005) and the development of offender typologies such as that by O’Connell (2001, 2003) and O’Connell et al (2004). With regard to offenders who produce, exchange and download abusive images of children the early work of Taylor and Quayle (2003) and Quayle and Taylor (2002) used qualitative research strategies to explore the function of images in the offend-

ing process, which has in part been replicated and extended by Howitt and Sheldon (2007) and Sheldon and Howitt (2008). Further theoretical work by Beech et al (2008) and Elliott and Beech (2009) has explored the relationship between online crimes against children and contact sexual offenses and has developed empirical research with large data sets of Internet sex offenders (e.g. Henry et al 2010, Elliott et al 2009, Middleton et al 2006, Webb et al 2007). Of note, this has led to the only accredited treatment programme for Internet sex offenders (iSOTP), which has published post-intervention data in 2009 (Middleton et al 2009) demonstrating its positive impact on psychometric scores of offenders. This would support the effectiveness of this form of dedicated intervention and is an important step in the reduction of further online sexual violence against children. The most recent study (Osborn et al 2010) to look at recidivism in this offender population would suggest that conviction rates for Internet sex offenders are lower than those seen with contact sex offenders.

There has also been an increasing interest in the impact of technology-mediated crimes on children (Leonard 2010, Palmer 2005, Renold et al 2003) at both a theoretical and empirical level, and in the UK we have seen the development of the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre - internet safety (CEOP) agency, which is primarily a policing organisation mandated by the government to co-ordinate child protection strategies. This organisation also produces strategic overviews of intelligence related to technology-mediated crimes against children in the UK (CEOP, 2009; 2010) and was responsible for the publication of the law enforcement response to online child sexual abuse for the 3rd World Congress (Baines 2008). CEOP also collaborated recent research examining a sample of images of children accessed from their data base of seized images (Quayle & Jones 2011). This quantitative study indicated that there was a significant difference between the number of female and male children within the images. The odds of the abuse images being female versus male was about 4 to 1, and the odds of the images being of White children versus non-White children was about 10 to 1. Compared with females, male children depicted in the images were more likely to be pre-pubescent or very young and less likely to be pubescent. There have been very few studies that have examined such victims of Internet sexual crimes, but these results support findings from other cohorts outside of the UK.

## Conclusion

Concerns about the role of technological change in relation to sexual crimes against children, sexual exploitation and potential harm have been expressed in the UK for some considerable time and have been reflected in a change in legislation with respect to abusive images of children (child pornography), grooming and violent content. There have been a number of studies conducted by academics, government and non-government organisations and the publication and dissemination of educational materials for both young people and their carers. Internet access by young people is now virtually universal, with the majority of children having access at home and an increasing proportion using handheld or mobile technology. Of interest, such high levels of use do not seem to be related to high levels of risk within the UK. There has also been a parallel investment in research, policy and practice with men convicted of Internet sex offending, with the development of a dedicated nation-wide treatment programme. The initial results of this are promising. In addition, organisations such as Stop It Now have taken a proactive stance in providing information to those who are concerned about their own or other’s online activities. There are still considerable challenges in ensuring that policy is driven by evidenced based research, that we achieve some unanimity in relation to the operational definitions used in this area, and that we conduct more research to explore our understanding of harm to children posed by technological change.



# Conclusions and further research needs

Lars Lööf

The ROBERT project collected research in order to highlight a number of issues of concern to researchers, practitioners, child rights organisations and policy makers. In the following section the ten questions originally posed, **i – x**, are revisited and conclusions are made regarding the answers received from studying the material. The last part of this section is dedicated to the identification of further research needs.

## **I. What patterns can be observed from the review on a European level that relate to areas of concern across different countries?**

Concerns which have been studied across different countries in relation to online sexual abuse include online grooming, sexual solicitations, online actions leading to offline meetings, the collection of sexually abusive images of children, sexting, chat room behaviours and the connection between collecting abusive images and offline abusive behaviours. According to the studies approximately half of European adolescents have been subjected to sexual harassment or solicitation online at some point in their lives and a substantial number have had such experiences more than once. (IPSOS 2010, ACPI/PROTEGELES 2002)

### **Victims and risks**

Victims of online sexual abuse or online sexual solicitations are studied often and so is the prevalence of so called risk behaviours. Risks are studied and several reports hypothesise about different behaviours being risky, but none have attempted to qualify what actually constitutes a risk. The risk behaviours usually included as such have not been validated.

### **Offline meetings**

A concern across countries relates to children meeting online acquaintances offline and studies have looked at how young people protect themselves by bringing someone with them to the meeting or letting someone know that they plan to have such a meeting. Some studies have looked at children's experiences of offline meetings with online acquaintances but none have looked at the initiation of the meeting. Studies seem to take for granted that the child asked is not the initiator.

### **Online and offline perpetrator**

Since the best known online perpetrator is someone collecting, distributing and sometimes producing abusive images of children this is the subject of several studies. The concern here is usually to assess how likely it is that the online perpetrator would offend offline with attempts at looking at differences and similarities between online and offline offenders. (Bates & Metcalf 2007, Elliott et al 2009, Neutze et al 2009)

Literature covering only online activities is prevalent which may have to do with the number of reports and papers that look into abusers collecting child abusive images. Second to this are studies that look at online actions leading to offline meetings.

### **Grooming strategies and manipulation**

There are concerns about the manipulative strategies that perpetrators deploy to catch young people's attention and how young persons respond to these. (Briggs et al 2010). It seems that different forms of offers connected to performing; acting or modelling, i.e. opportunities that are uncommon and sought after, carry significant attraction to several young people and that such offers given in chat rooms will attract the attention of and possible response from several girls, (Wagner 2008). Studies of European police reports would indicate such offers being a concern. The quality of the Internet and its immediacy here seems to work for the initiator, making such offers seem plausible. (Nilsson 2004)

### **Sexting**

Self produced sexually suggestive images that are voluntarily produced and sent to a recipient, so called "sexting" are seen on the one hand as an expression of how young people use the information technologies in their own way. On the other hand it is however also noted as a concern that these images are used and exploited for other purposes and audiences than was the initial intention. (Heverly 2008)

## **II. How do different data collection methods impact on the type and the quality of the data obtained? (For example, telephone interviews, paper based surveys responded to in class-room settings, online questionnaires etc).**

### **Qualitative and quantitative**

Studying the phenomenon of online sexual harassment and solicitations, qualitative research methods have often been deployed in order to better understand the phenomenon more deeply and to interpret more fully the processes in play. Quantitative methods are commonly deployed to measure the occurrence and interaction strength between different acts. A number of reports use both methods.

### **Cross national studies**

Cross national studies are few. The year when EU Kids online published their articles saw a noticeable increase of cross national reports based on this data set. Over the past years an increase in Meta analysis of reports has been noticed. The growing number of reports has typically created a need for analysis of existing research.

### **Samples**

Representative samples are used by a majority of the quantitative studies on the subject with two thirds of the samples being representative by age, gender and region. Few studies are representative according to ethnicity and socio economic status.

### **Type of data collection method**

Self-completed surveys are most common when investigating the prevalence of online sexual victimisation and the same method is employed when studying victim's experiences. This method guarantees the anonymity of the participants and is considered to improve the reliability of the information gathered. In a Finnish survey and in a Danish survey looking into children's experiences of abuse and violence, computers were used in classroom settings ensuring a high level of privacy and seclusion when responding. (Ellonen et al 2008, Helweg-Larsen et al 2009). Some studies used the interview form e.g. the EU Kids Online study employed face to face interviews in the homes of the interviewed child, with a paper based part for the more sensitive questions completed during the face-to-face interview. YISS 1 and 2

employed telephone interviews in the children's homes. (Livingstone et al 2011, Mitchell et al 2001, Mitchell et al 2007).

The prevalence of solicitations online for sexualised images, requests to talk about sex or being sent sexualised images or content as a concern across countries has been studied. Reports on this however give substantially different figures on how common it is for young people to receive such solicitations. Figures range between 6% (Mitchell et al 2011) and 59% (girls, Brå 2007b). Different data collection methods and different groups studied make more detailed analysis of these figures difficult. Interviews done at home seem to give fewer positive responses than those done using school surveys.

Meeting a stranger offline that you only know from online interaction is a behaviour the prevalence of which also differs very much between countries and between studies. Prevalence ranges from 14% in some studies to 40% in others. Differences between countries in studies are substantial ranging from a mere 2- 3 % of young people reporting having gone to offline meetings in Turkey and Italy up to 26% stating they have done so in Estonia and Lithuania. (Livingstone et al 2011)

Prevalence figures for having been subjected to sexual abuse at an offline meeting vary in the few studies that have looked into this. Some data would indicate that sexual abuse or attempts at forcing the child into sexual acts is as common online as offline with prevalence figures around 5 – 8%. It is indeed interesting to note that the figures for boys in some surveys are higher than that for girls. (Helweg-Larsen et al 2009). Another study done with very similar methods and with the same age group shows much fewer incidences. (Ellonen et al 2008).

All of this challenges our thinking around these topics and makes it important to look into the methodologies deployed. With more and more research using computer assisted survey methods where each young person will receive his or her individual log in that they can use when they feel comfortable in doing so, will presumably assist in comparing across age groups and countries.

### **III. When compared with other research on difficult and sensitive issues involving young persons, what is indicated in relation to disclosure and how does this compare with official statistics?**

#### **Boys and girls**

As far as we can see, online sexual abuse seems to target girls in the ratio 2 – 4 times as much as boys. These figures are similar to those for offline sexual abuse without any online component.

#### **Previous history of abuse**

The fact that children and young people with a history of sexual or physical abuse receive many more sexual solicitations online may be because the two are interlinked: similar factors appear to be at work to children at risk of being sexually abused offline as being sexually solicited online. (Wolak et al 2007). Psychological distress however, makes a young person more vulnerable to further victimisation and it may well be that the psychological distress caused by abuse is taken advantage of by the perpetrator, exploiting the emotional vulnerability of the young person. (Cuevas et al 2010).

#### **Under reporting**

Disclosure of sexual abuse offline is difficult. It seems that the online interaction is under-reported by young people having been abused offline as a result of the online contact. Careful investigation into the online exchanges prior to the offline meeting in some studies reveals that the victims will not report the online abusive experiences as fully as they will the offline abuse. The more severe online sexually abusive acts, like sending nude photos and participating in sexual web cam shows would not be reported. (Leander et al 2008). This seems to suggest that online abusive acts are even less reported than offline sexual abuse. This is also in line with previous studies of children's disclosure where pictures have been taken of the sexual abuse. (Svedin & Back 1996).

### **IV. Which behavioural patterns and risks seem to differentiate between specific groups of young people (for example in relation to gender or sexual orientation)?**

#### **Gender**

Girls are more at risk of being sexually solicited online. The ratio is that girls are 2- 4 times as likely to be targeted with sexual online requests and suggestions. (Baumgartner et al 2010, Ellonen et al 2008, Mainardi & Zraggen 2010).

Boys use the Internet more frequently for sexual activities than girls do. Adolescent boys talk more often about sex online and they also engage in more sexual activities online than girls. Boys are more likely than girls to pose naked in front of the web cam or show or display themselves sexually than girls. (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Antal & Lazlo 2008, Peter & Valkenburg 2010, Wolak et al 2006, Wolak et al 2007).)

Meeting someone offline you have only had contact with online is a widespread behaviour among adolescents, more so than among younger boys and girls. (Livingstone et al 2011). Boys and girls seem to do this equally often but some studies would indicate that boys are more prone to offline meetings with online acquaintances than girls. (Suseg et al 2008)

Boys and girls both suffer sexual abuse as a result of an offline meeting. Studies would indicate that boys are put under pressure to engage in a sexual act they did not want to more often. Very few boys and girls were actually forced to do the act. (Helweg-Larsen et al 2009)

#### **Age**

There is an increase in the risk of receiving sexual messages or unwanted pornographic material with age. (Wolak et al 2004, Livingstone et al 2010). Some studies would however claim that there is a peak at around 18 – 20 years of age, after which the risk remains stable. The fact there are so few studies made on young adults however makes this a somewhat contentious conclusion to make.

#### **Sexual orientation**

Being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, GLBT, seems to indicate a higher risk for being targeted by online solicitations and sexual requests as is shown in several studies. (Wolak et al 2004, Suseg et al 2008, Svedin & Priebe 2009). However, studies looking at how young GLBT persons use ICT and the risks they recognise and encounter are scarce.

### **Frequency of Internet use**

The frequency with which the Internet is used by the adolescent seems to have consequences for the individual's adjustment in general. Symptoms of depression were associated with both excessive use and with no use at all. (Bélanger 2011).

### **Depression**

Across several studies, depression, depressive feelings like sadness, emptiness or difficulties in concentrating along with perceived problems in life in general are associated with problematic online experiences and unwanted sexual advances over the Internet. (Ybarra et al 2004a, De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006). Studies have also associated young people posting images online or exposing themselves on web cam to have less of a sense of coherence in their lives and to be more lonely, worried and abandoned. (Jonsson et al 2009, Nigård 2009).

### **Risktaking online**

Risktaking online is an important and possibly contentious factor. The behaviours connected to this are generally accepted as risky behaviours and appear as a variable in most studies looking at online risks. The factors that are considered "risky" have not been validated as such and the strength of the different factors either as standalone risks or their accumulated potency in creating sexually abusive situations have not been studied. (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Katzer 2007).

### **Abilities/disabilities**

Children's abilities have not been looked at in relation to their experiences of online sexual requests or harmful experiences. Studies have shown that children with some form of disability are exposed to more sexual abuse offline than other groups (Kvam 2001, SISO & SUS 2007) but no studies have looked at whether this is true also in the online world. Online contacts may be highly preferred by young people with a disability as the technology often will put them on equal footing with others.

### **Previous abusive experiences**

In studying specific traits and behaviours that seem to predict a higher level of solicitations, a study showed that girls with previous abusive experiences did indeed receive more solicitations as did those presenting themselves in a provocative way. The two risks were however unrelated. (Noll et al 2009). The likelihood of receiving online sexual solicitations increases substantially if the person has been physically or sexually abused in their lifetime. (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006, Mitchell et al 2007b, Wolak et al 2008)

### **Selling sex**

Young people selling sex do so increasingly online, even if the number of young people doing this is unchanged over the years in the country where the study was repeated. (Svedin & Priebe 2007). Those selling sex experience problems in various areas of their lives and receive a lower score on the scale measuring their sense of coherence. This group is exposed to higher levels of exposure to threats and violence and they have higher levels of drug and alcohol use. (Svedin & Priebe 2009).

### **Educational level**

A higher educational level has, in a few studies, been associated with being less targeted by online sexual requests. (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006).

### **Socio Economic factors**

Children from low income families were less likely to be exposed to unwanted sexual material than those from higher income families. (Livingstone et al 2011, Mitchell et al 2003) This is possibly explained by the higher level of Internet access in high income families.

### **Ethnicity**

Some studies indicate that young people with migrant background may be more at risk of being targeted by online offenders. The suggestion being that they are regularly less familiar with the customs of the new country and may therefore live in less protective contexts. (Svedin & Priebe 2007). Similarly studies have also shown that young people with a minority background may more frequently report meeting strangers offline. (AS Turu-Uringud 2006).

## **VI. Are there any reports that explore the perception of the young person with regard to the expression of their sexuality online and their interpretation of abusive practices?**

### **Self exposure**

Youth are restrictive when it comes to exposing themselves online with around 10% of older teens reporting having posted sexualised images. (Svedin & Priebe 2009, Daneback & Månsson 2009). A higher proportion however will report having posed nude in front of the web cam, 12% for boys and 16% of the girls. Fewer again have masturbated in front of the web cam. The reported actions were not reported as being abusive but as part of their online activities, however, those reporting this behaviour had less of a sense of coherence and reported less parental care than those that had not participated in this kind of (voluntary) exposure. (Svedin & Priebe 2009). In the EU Kids online survey only three percent of the children reported having posted sexualised images which to some extent is explained by the lower age of the respondents and the different methodology used: home interviews rather than a classroom questionnaire. (Livingstone et al 2011).

### **Sexual expressions online**

A majority of the online abuse cases studied in the US relate to statutory rape where the young person was aware of the sexual intentions of the perpetrator before the meeting. This would point to the young adolescent's use of the Internet as a possible venue for exploring their sexuality and for sexual expression. The offences were in some cases repeated, as many of the victims would agree to meet the perpetrator more than once. Whatever view we take on young people's age appropriate sexual expression these statutory rape cases would indicate a need to communicate more fully with young people about such sexual expression and how online encounters may develop. This should also be done in countries where such meetings would not be criminal per se since age of consent in Europe is lower than in most US states. (Wolak et al 2008)

### **Sexting**

Sexting is a part of the online sexual behaviour of young people. Several young people have sent sexy images and even more young people report having received such images. (Lenhart 2009). To some this use of online technologies to express your sexuality is at least ambiguous, they claim that whereas young people have the impression they use the online technologies for their sexual gratification and curiosity they may not recognise that they in turn are used by the media as images are being exploited and used in other ways than was the initial intention. (Heverly 2008).

### **Web cam sex**

Requests for sexual activity online, such as posing in front of the web cam are not always met with disapproval: 17% of the girls and 72% of the boys in one study that received requests to do something sexual in front of the web cam stated that they did not disapprove of the request. Boys use the Internet more frequently for their sexual activities than girls. Adolescent boys talk more often about sex online and they also engage in more sexual activities online than girls. Boys are more likely than girls to pose naked in front of the web cam or expose themselves than girls. (De Graaf & Vanwesenbeeck 2006)

## **VII. What studies have examined specific behavioural patterns that can be seen as leading from online contact to abusive experiences?**

### **Accessing pornography**

Experience will tell us that abuse over the Internet appears on a sliding scale from innocence and curiosity to a more active possibly sexual behaviour on the side of the young person. To be exposed to pornographic material is one example of this. It is claimed that most hits for porn are the result of an active search. The images or films can naturally be shocking to the child even so but maybe pornography does not attack children quite as often as is sometimes claimed. Exposure to pornography online can be described as a normative experience which does not mean that some children and young people, especially girls will not find it highly disturbing. (Svedin & Priebe 2011). This is an area where there are differences in the number of children that in studies will report having searched for pornography online. Nordic studies tend to reveal a higher proportion of young people reporting having watched pornography with boys being those accessing porn the most. (Svedin & Priebe 2011, Wolak et al 2007, Sørensen & Kjørholt 2007, Sabina et al 2008))

### **Talking about sex online**

Talking about sexual matters online is considered risky in some studies but in a few it is argued that discussing sex and sexuality online can actually be seen as protective. Some studies will show that one in five children has indeed discussed sex on the Internet and in follow up questions most have stated that it was a good experience. (Swedish Media Council 2010)

### **Offline meetings**

In some studies the number of young people that have met online acquaintances offline is high. Even though most meetings ended well, almost 5% of those did not, or ended with the young person being indeed pressured or threatened into having sex. (Suseg et al 2008). Most meetings that went wrong were with peers so probably ought not to be described as cases of grooming in the regular use of the term but as dates that went wrong. Reports indicate that boys to a higher degree than girls in these meetings felt pressured into having sex. Few were forced into having sex. (Helweg-Larsen et al 2009).

### **Chat room discussions**

Chat room offenders have been characterised as different from other online offenders. It is interesting to note that they seem to be characterised by less criminogenic factors but also that they avoided relationships irl and engaged in sexually compulsive behaviours to a higher degree than other online offenders. The typical chat room offender would then possibly be a person that knows a lot about being lonely but that would not appear to be like a criminal to a young person. Data indicates that a subgroup of chat room offenders would primarily be interested in engaging in cyber sex without any direct wish to meet in real life. The second

subgroup would on the other hand be specifically motivated by the desire to meet offline for sex. Exploratory studies have looked into how the behaviour in the chat room of the offender links to the behaviour of the young person in the chat room as the perpetrator will typically respond to the young person's need for confirmation and contact. (Briggs et al 2010, Wagner 2008)

### **Social Networking Sites**

Young people active on Face Book and other Social Networking Sites, SNS, receive more sexual requests. The behaviours of online perpetrators on these sites seem to be to use the search possibilities to find and target possible victims. Information on these sites is set up in a way so that it may trigger online search behaviours which in themselves for some online offenders have sexual connotations. (Wise et al 2010)

## **VIII. How can we understand resilience in relation to young people's online behaviour?**

### **Avoiding dangers**

Few if any studies have looked at resilience to adverse online situations. When accidentally or purposefully viewing pornography most children will say that they were not overly bothered by it and this is one way of looking at children's resilience. Out of those reporting having seen porn online, two in three were not bothered by the experience. (Livingstone et al 2011). Protective factors also come out of the studies where children's experiences of online solicitations are studied as many children interact online with unknown people, sometimes discussing sex, without being exposed to unwanted sexual solicitations or other negative consequences. (Wolak et al 2008). This may indicate that experienced internet users may acquire skills in identifying attempts at turning the online contact into something unwanted. Experienced bloggers for example, did not report being sexually solicited to a higher degree than others. (Mitchell et al 2008)

### **Online interaction as protective**

Young people perceive online communication as being more protective and easier as the screen provides some protection and sharing sexual experiences online are perceived as being less risky than similar activities offline. This also comes up in interviews with people that have voluntary online sex. (Olsson 2010, Fluckiger 2007)

### **Developing protective skills**

GLBT persons have described strategies to avoid meetings going wrong, including risk reduction by ensuring that someone has information of their whereabouts when going to offline meetings with online friends, meeting in a public place or using screening procedures in the online conversation trying to assess the reliability of the online acquaintance. (Bauermeister et al 2010)

## **IX. Do the reports indicate new emerging research needs as yet uncovered?**

### **Links and risks**

The link between environmental risk factors, individual risk factors and their relationship with the behaviour of the young person would need to be studied. As with research on children's vulnerabilities to adverse experiences it may be fruitful to look at the links and the strengths between risks as these are accumulated in the individual young person. Doing

this may lead to a better understanding of how young people would understand and react to sexual requests. To understand how children's vulnerability to sexual advances online manifests itself, especially when they have suffered previous offline abuse, is of importance.

### **CSEC**

The way online technologies are used to further commercial sexual exploitation of children and young people, CSEC, has not been studied. In a number of cases victims have reported on agreeing to sell sex or to perform for some kind of remuneration. The way these offers have been made and how victims were persuaded is an area that should be studied.

### **Behaviours and interactions**

Behaviours online of the perpetrator in relation to grooming have been studied less than the behaviour of the young person. There is a definite knowledge gap in how the behaviours of one interact with strategies of the other. Research into perpetrator behaviour has largely been done without taking into account how the responses of the young person to requests and suggestions might trigger new advances by the offender leading the process towards violence and abuse. The typical online offender studied is the abuse images offender where the interaction is with images, films or other non-responding objects. It is fair to assume that the strategies employed by online offenders wishing to engage the young person in sexual acts online or offline would be different and more influenced by the responses received. (Alexy 2007, Krone 2004, Lanning 2008). The online perpetrator taking contact with children to meet for sex or to engage them in cyber sex has not been extensively studied. (Babchishin et al 2010) Studies have shown that online perpetrators that collect images have a higher level of arousal to pictures of children than do offline child sexual perpetrators. Where the online grooming offender fits in this analysis is not known.

## **X. What are the individual risk factors, or risks related to the environment, leading to sexually abusive experiences?**

### **Risk background**

Children with a risk background tend to be both at higher risk of receiving online sexual solicitations whilst exhibiting sexually aggressive behaviour online themselves.

### **Depressive feelings**

The link between depressive feelings and sexual requests is still unclear. Young people with depressive feelings seem to be more likely to respond to sexual questions and requests and perpetrators seem to be able to detect if young people are depressed and thus susceptible to sexual advances. This may not be a very sophisticated process and could be merely coincidences stemming from the fact that online sexual requests are sent to so many that some will fall into the category of being depressed. Even so, this stands out as one individual risk factor.

### **Family situation**

A risk factor seems to be if the young person lives in a single parent household or in a step family. (Gallagher 2007, Mitchell et al 2010, Mitchell et al 2007b) What it is in the household

situation that makes the child more susceptible to online requests is unknown and since these studies are mainly US based we do not know whether there is a correlation in European countries. The link between these environmental factors and online sexual requests and solicitations merits consideration in future studies. Conflicts with parents and a lack of close relationships with parents also seem to indicate a higher risk of receiving and responding to sexual requests. (ICAA 2004, Sørensen 2007). From the few studies that have looked at this, it seems that the lack of close relationships with parents will mean a higher likelihood to form relationships online and consequently of children exposing themselves to risks. The explanations to this may be that young people will not then talk to parents about experiences they have online or offline but may also mean that their loneliness and need for contact is greater.

## **XI. How have the complex ethical issues in involving children been negotiated across studies?**

The ethical principles employed are usually not carefully described in articles. Some describe how they attempt to minimise discomfort or how they ensure privacy during the survey. Typically surveys will add information about where the young person can turn should he or she experience any discomfort after having completed the survey. (Mossige et al 2007). Where this is not possible to fully ensure, such as in telephone interviews, other means, for example following up with children that gave signals of discomfort (however minor) or of being at risk have been used. (Mitchell et al 2007).

Few studies actually discuss in depth the complex ethical issues that exist regarding the child's ability to fully comprehend what the study will mean or the issue of how the privacy of the child is ensured. It seems that ethical boards and scientific journals should encourage this kind of information to be set out in articles submitted for publication.

### **Identified gaps**

- The risks need to be clearly defined operationally.
- Comparative research over time is needed
- More analysis is needed as a result of international surveys and the recent cross-national international surveys need to employ a more analytical approach
- A stronger focus in the research on sexual offences between peers and how this kind of offence influences how young people use the Internet
- Data regarding young people that make their first (unwanted) sexual experiences via online contacts
- Studies on how young people perceive their world as one or if there still exists borders between the online and the offline world
- Understanding of what experiences that cause harm and those that do not.
- Surveys covering both offline and online sexual violence in order to be able to better identify differences including protective factors and risk factors.
- Studies on effective parent-child communication on matters relating to online risks and harm.

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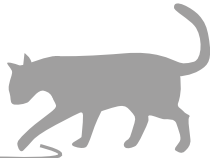
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## Footnotes

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<sup>2</sup> p2p stands for “Peer to Peer.” In a P2P network, the “peers” are computer systems which are connected to each other via the Internet. Files can be shared directly between systems on the network without the need of a central server. In other words, each computer on a P2P network becomes a file server as well as a client.

<sup>3</sup> Sexual grooming is a process by which a person prepares a child by befriending the child online and gaining his/her trust and compliance for the abuse of this child (see also Glossary).



RISKTAKING ONLINE BEHAVIOUR  
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH  
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

# ROBERT

ROBERT project intends to make online interaction safe for children and young people. This will be achieved through learning from experiences of online abuse processes and factors that make young people vulnerable as well as those that offer protection. Perpetrators' strategies in relation to grooming of children online will also be explored along with developing an understanding of how abuse may develop in the online environment. Children and young people will be empowered in order for them to better protect themselves online. Groups of children perceived to be more at risk will specifically benefit from chances of improved self-protection. The ROBERT project is funded by the EU Safer Internet Programme.



Kingston University London



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