The Manipulation (Grooming) of Victims of Child Sexual Abuse

A Selected Bibliography

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Scope

This bibliography covers literature relevant to how perpetrators manipulate and groom their victims of sexual abuse. Both contact and cyber grooming are covered. This bibliography is not comprehensive. Scholarly articles, reports, book chapters, and books are included. Links to open source publications are included.

Organization

This bibliography is organized into two sections. Section one (page 3) covers issues of contact grooming in date descending order from 1990-2017. Section two (page 19) covers issues of cyber or Internet grooming arranged in date descending order from 2002-2016.

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Commentary


The concept of grooming has long been identified with language in child sexual abuse. This article reviews a brief history of child sexual abuse with regard to efforts to identify and classify abuser and victim behavior. We examine the evolution of terms used to label different behaviors particularly those used to obtain initial control over the child victim including grooming.


Ken Lanning’s recollections of the origins of the use of the term “grooming” to refer to techniques used by acquaintances to gain sexual access to and control over children is an important contribution to the history of the significant recognition that many cases of child sexual abuse occur at the hands of offenders who are acquaintances of the child and who do not need to use force, threats, or violence to gain the compliance of their victims. That this recognition was slow in coming is obvious in retrospect, as is true of any social problem that remains hidden for centuries only to burst into public consciousness over the course of a few years. In this article, I report the results of searches using Google Scholar to look at the introduction of this use of the term “grooming” to the peer-reviewed literature in 1984 and its increasing use through 2016. Since 2008, the usage has been adopted in hundreds of articles in the professional literature each year, suggesting that this usage of the term “grooming” will remain common in the decades ahead. I also examine the history of the term “seduction” in the context of child sexual abuse, particularly
two archaic uses of the term: as a euphemism for any sexual or sexually stimulating encounter between child and adult and in the context of suggestions that it was the child who seduced the adult. To avoid resurrecting any confusion over these issues, it would be a mistake to abandon “grooming” in favor of “seduction.” I conclude that the best strategy may be that adopted by Lanning of using the terms grooming and seduction in tandem, explaining the parallels between the seduction of one adult by another and the grooming or seduction of a child by an adult.


This discussion is not intended to be a detailed analysis of the complexities and dynamics of grooming. Instead, it will focus on the evolution of the concept and the term. More than an historical narrative, however, this evolution provides valuable insight into recognizing the diverse nature of contact sex offenses against children and important differences among types of cases. In this victimization context, the term grooming generally refers to specific nonviolent techniques used by some child molesters to gain access to and control of their child victims. The techniques a child molester employs are most influenced by the relationship between the offender and the victim. Although acquaintance child molesters are sometimes violent, to avoid discovery, they tend to control their victims primarily through this seduction or grooming process. I believe the term was first used by a group of law enforcement investigators beginning in the late 1970s to describe aspects of a seduction pattern of offender behavior that was poorly understood by most professionals. The term grooming then evolved, as language does, and spread into more common usage by law enforcement, other professionals, and then by the media and laypersons. The term grooming has pretty much supplanted seduction as the term of choice for this behavior pattern. Hopefully, understanding the evolution of the concept of grooming, the diversity of cases, the need for precise and consistent definitions, and the use of nonviolent grooming techniques to access and control victims will help interveners to better respond to and evaluate cases.

Because child sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive social issue affecting up to one in five girls, and one in 10 boys, there have been significant developments in legal responses to the problem of CSA. One such response is to acknowledge the significance of grooming behaviors in the commission of child sex offenses by criminalizing behaviors that are engaged in with the intention of facilitating the sexual abuse of a child. However, grooming behaviors remain underresearched, and current knowledge is based largely upon the perspectives of offenders, with few studies analyzing how grooming is experienced by victims. The purpose of this article is to address key gaps in the grooming literature by analyzing the lived experiences of grooming from the perspectives of 11 adult male CSA survivors. Qualitative analysis revealed novel insights into the characteristics, stages, and impact of grooming for male survivors. The implications of the findings suggest that New South Wales’s (NSW) grooming legislation could better reflect the types of grooming behaviors engaged in by child sex offenders. Tentative evidence for enduring impacts of grooming also indicates the need for further qualitative research into men’s experiences of sexual grooming during childhood with larger and more representative samples.


A preparatory process is widely accepted to be a common feature in the perpetration of sexual offenses. Numerous commentators, however, have documented the difficulties in defining and understanding this process, given its transient nature and its specificity to this one form of criminal behavior. This theoretical review aims to provide a universal model of a grooming process for the achievement of illicit or illegal goals in which achievement requires the compliance or submission of another individual—one that can be applied both to the sexual offending process and beyond. First, an evaluation of three process models of grooming is conducted. Second, using a process of theory knitting, an integrated universal model of illicit grooming is developed. This model unites salient elements of the previous models while seeking to address their limitations. It is founded in control theory and self-regulation approaches to behavior, assumes a goal-directed protagonist, and comprises two distinct phases, namely, (1) a potentiality phase of rapport-building,
incentivization, disinhibition, and security-management and (2) a disclosure phase in which goal-
relevant information is introduced in a systematic and controlled manner in order to desensitize
the target. Finally, the theoretical quality of the model is appraised, and its clinical implications
are discussed.


It has been proposed that sexual grooming behaviors of child molesters are not easily identified
prior to the abuse. The present study investigated whether participants could recognize grooming
behaviors, and if so, identify which stages of the process were most easily identified. Participants
were randomly assigned to read one of six vignettes describing the stages of the grooming process.
Results revealed no differences in likelihood ratings that the person in the vignette was a child
molester and would commit sexual abuse between any of the conditions, suggesting that people
may be unable to identify potentially predatory behaviors of child molesters prospectively

syndrome?: The social work practice implications*. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social
Work*, 28(3), 47-56.

This article focuses on the problem of risk instrumentalism in social work and the way it can
erode the relationship-based nature of practice and with it, the kinds of critical reflexivity required
for remedial interventions to keep children safe. By exploring the relationship between the process
of grooming and the condition known as Stockholm syndrome, the article seeks to address this
problem by offering some concepts to inform a critical understanding of the case dynamics in the
sexual abuse of children which can explain the reluctance of victim-survivors to disclose.
Beginning with an overview of the development of actuarial risk assessment (ARA) tools the
article examines the grooming process in child sexual abuse contexts raising the question: "Is
grooming a facilitator of Stockholm syndrome?" and seeks to answer it by examining the
precursors and psychological responses that constitute both grooming and Stockholm syndrome.
The article identifies the underlying concepts that enable an understanding of the dynamics of child
sexual abuse, but also identifies the propensity of practitioners to be exposed to some of the features of Stockholm syndrome.


An investigation of child sexual abuse (CSA) offenders’ behaviors and manipulation tactics has the potential to increase the existing knowledge in this area to modify prevention and intervention programs for children, families, communities, and societies. The exploration of this matter is highly challenging given the nature of child abuse, in which both offenders and children typically remain silent following reluctance. Most of the literature regarding this issue has predominately been generated from the offenders’ narratives, perspectives, and reports. The current study seeks to shed light on CSA while focusing on the children’s narratives, experiences, and perceptions with respect to the offenders’ behaviors and manipulation tactics. Mixed method analyses were conducted to enhance understanding with respect to these tactics, as well as to describe their frequencies and relations to both children and abuse characteristics.


Recent high profile cases of child sexual abuse have increased interest in the grooming behaviors of child molesters and why these offenders are not identified sooner. This study examined one possible explanation—the hindsight bias. Five hundred and twenty-six undergraduates were randomly assigned to read one of six vignettes and asked to rate the likelihood the person in the story is a child molester. Results supported the presence of the hindsight bias, with participants who were given outcome information overestimating the likelihood they would have predicted that the person was a child molester. Also, participants were able to recognize sexual grooming behaviors when the potential child molester was a relative and nonrelative. Findings indicated that sexual grooming behaviors may be more easily identified than previously proposed, but individuals greatly overestimate the likelihood they would have predicted a person was a child molester once they are given outcome information.

Educator sexual misconduct has received increasing attention over the past decade. The attention has exposed a number of concerning issues, including a lack of formal research in the area and difficulties in recognizing and prosecuting cases. Public responses to high profile cases of sexual misconduct involving female teachers suggest that gender-biased views on sex offenders remain prominent in society. This article will review the literature on female teacher sexual misconduct in addition to what is known about grooming patterns and warning signs. Finally, current dilemmas in resolving cases of educator sexual misconduct will be discussed, and basic prevention strategies will be recommended.


This study examines the use of self-presentation strategies and manipulation by male sex offenders in grooming a victim for a sexual relationship. The study finds that male sex offenders use multiple categories of self-presentation strategies in their interactions with victims with the supplication strategy being present in a majority of reports of such interactions. Furthermore, the research reveals that the male sex offender uses manipulation to isolate and groom the victim for a sexual relationship in conjunction with coercive tactics to ensure the victim does not reveal the true nature of their relationship to other people. Findings are discussed in the context of luring communication theory and applications of the findings.


In most sexual misconduct cases, a form of “grooming” takes place. Preventing it can be very difficult, in part because sexual grooming can be quite subtle and similar to innocent behavior. In fact, many experts are not willing to label conduct as “sexual grooming” until intent has been
established by actual molestation. However, the best way for school districts to prevent the grooming is by stopping inappropriate boundary invasions.


This article presents the results of the Nature and Scope of Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests from 1950 to 2002. Ninety-seven percent of dioceses (representing 99% of diocesan priests) and 64% of religious communities (representing 83% of religious priests) responded to the request for data. Findings showed that 4,392 priests (4%) had allegations of abuse, 10,667 victims made allegations, and the Church paid (at the time surveys were completed) $572.5 million for legal and treatment fees and as compensation to the victims (more than $1.3 billion to date). The study also provided information on the circumstances of the abuse (e.g., types of sexual acts, location, duration), the offenders (e.g., year of ordination, age, ministry duties, other behavioral problems), the victims (e.g., age and gender, family situation), and the dioceses (e.g., differences in abuse rates by region and population size). Importance of these results for policy and practice is discussed.


This article aims to outline current responses to sexual grooming; specific attention will be given to new legislation introduced in England and Wales under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Following an outline of this new legislation, consideration will be given to its effectiveness, including practical difficulties that are likely to restrict its scope. Issues to be discussed include: poor definition and understanding of sexual grooming, scope of legislation in relation to non-Internet grooming, difficulties in identifying sexual grooming, and a failure of the new legislation to be truly preventative. The article concludes by supporting Richard Laws’s suggestion that the most effective prevention of child sexual abuse would result from adopting a public health approach.

This paper examines an unexplored form of communication deviance—the communicative process of entrapment used by child sexual predators to lure their victims into an ongoing sexual relationship. Specifically, using grounded theory methodology to analyze extant literature, a theory of luring communication (LCT) is proposed. The LCT begins by discussing how certain perpetrators gain access to particular types of children. Once in contact with a child, the perpetrator sets in motion the cycle of entrapment, which allows him to communicatively groom and entrap the child into accepting sexual advances. The theory then explores how certain communication responses by the perpetrator and the victim characterize the sustenance or disruption of an ongoing sexually abusive relationship. The essay ends with a series of propositional statements and suggestions for empirically testing and extending the theory.


The current review aims to outline the existing understanding of sexual grooming. Issues of poor definition, the adoption of the term “grooming” and the prevalence of sexual grooming will be discussed. Consideration will be given to how prominent theories of child sexual abuse often neglect sexual grooming. This will be followed by a detailed account of the existing knowledge within the literature. Three types of sexual grooming were thus identified: self-grooming, grooming the environment and significant others and grooming the child. Based on these findings, a new definition of sexual grooming is suggested. Furthermore, the findings correspond well with current models of the sexual offence process. A more comprehensive understanding of sexual grooming is required to facilitate a preventative approach to child protection.

The term ‘grooming’ has been used to describe the offender’s actions during the preparatory stage of sexual abuse. This article will argue that current discourses on grooming have created ambiguities and misunderstandings about child sexual abuse. In particular, the popular focus on ‘stranger danger’ belies the fact that the majority of children are abused by someone well known to them, where grooming can also occur. Current discourses also neglect other important facets of the sex offending pattern. They fail to consider that offenders may groom not only the child but also their family and even the local community who may act as the gatekeepers of access. They also ignore what can be termed ‘institutional grooming’ – that sex offenders may groom criminal justice and other institutions into believing that they present no risk to children. A key variable in the grooming process is the creation and subsequent abuse of trust. Given that the criminal law may be somewhat limited in its response to this type of behaviour, ultimately concerted efforts must be made to foster social and organizational awareness of such processes in order to reduce the offender’s opportunity for abuse.


Amid confusion over what grooming entails and whether this is a specifically online offence, clarification of the new British legislation is provided.


In recent years, there has been increased societal concern regarding the dangers posed to children by sexual abuse and other related acts. For the main part, this article examines the new offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming under Section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. I will address the question of whether the introduction of this offence is likely to meet the Government’s aim of providing greater protection for children against behaviour associated with sexual abuse. In particular, I will consider how difficult it will be to prove the existence of a
harmful ulterior intent in order to make out the offence and why the Government has opted to create this specific offence rather than utilise the existing law of criminal attempt. I will argue that the new offence is a step in the right direction and that the current protection offered to children will be significantly extended by its introduction.


Forty-one professional perpetrators, who sexually abused the children with whom they worked, were questioned about the nature of their offending. Some of their demographic information was compared with a sample of non-work-based child abusers to identify any significant differences between the two groups. It was found that the professional perpetrators were more likely to be sexually interested in same-sex children. Of the study group, 92.5% said that they were aware of their sexual arousal to children by 21 years old and a further 67.5% said that they had already committed a contact sexual offence against a child by age 21. Perhaps the most interesting findings related to the stated motivation of the professional perpetrators in obtaining their employment working with children. Fifteen per cent said that they chose their profession exclusively to provide them with access to children to abuse. A further 41.5% said that, while abusing children was not their primary motivation for working with children, it formed part of their motivation. The study also provided some insight into the grooming and manipulation techniques used by professional perpetrators: 77.5% said that they arranged to meet children outside work for the purpose of facilitating the sexual abuse of that child.

Child sexual abusers' descriptions of their thoughts, behaviors, and relationships were identified by reviewing qualitative research studies published between 1982 and 2001. Offenders used cognitive distortions to meet personal needs, protect themselves from aversive self-awareness, and overcome internal inhibitions against engaging children in sexual activity. Offenders carefully groomed their victims by systematically separating them from their families and peers and socializing them into sexual relationships. Specific cognitive and behavioral processes were used to translate sexual arousal into offending behavior. Offenders justified the abuse by making excuses and redefining their actions as love and mutuality. Throughout the process, offenders exploited the power imbalance inherent in all adult-child relationships. The participants in these studies provided a unique perspective on child sexual abuse that can be used to help victims cope, guide treatment development and evaluation, and suggest new questions for future research.


This series of commentaries is intended to stimulate thinking and discussion about sexual abuse cases that involve what we are calling compliant victims.


Self-disclosure by victims of child sexual abuse (CSA) is critical to initiate legal and therapeutic intervention. Unfortunately, research indicates that lengthy delays in disclosure and even nondisclosure are common. A comprehensive review of the clinical and research literature on CSA and an overview of related bodies of literature was conducted. Areas addressed include the context of sexual abuse as it relates to disclosure, the context and elements of children’s disclosures, motivational factors inhibiting disclosure, and models of the disclosure process. Ancillary and analogue research on secrecy and disclosure are also reviewed. Implications for future research and practice are discussed. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.


In recent years empirical research, clinical observation, and theoretical models about sexual offending have emphasized the importance of problem solving and decision making throughout different phases in the offense chain. This work suggests that sometimes offense planning is explicit, systematic, and analytical, while at other times it appears to be implicit and intuitive. The latter style of decision making has been called seemingly unimportant decisions. We attempt to provide an explanation of offenders' implicit decision making and suggest two social cognitive mechanisms capable of generating these types of decisions. We believe that implicit decision making in offenders has the appearance of automaticity, that is, decision making that is implicit, fast, relatively autonomous, frequently associated with a lack of control, effortless, and occurring without conscious awareness. Drawing from diverse theoretical sources, we hypothesize that these types of decisions are generated by underlying automatic goal dependent action plans. More specifically, we suggest that there are at least two types of automatic goal dependent plans evident in offenders’ decision making: offense scripts and mental simulations. We draw implications for generating future hypotheses and provide suggestions for future research.


Investigated variations in crime scene behavior among child sex offenders. Hypotheses concerning behavioral consistencies were drawn from the literature on child sexual abuse wherein 3 conceptually distinct behavioral themes are identified. These themes are characterized by aggressive (violence, force, threats), intimate (promise of gifts, reassurance, affection), or criminal–opportunistic (stranger victim, outdoors, child alone) modes of offender–victim interaction. Crime scene data from 97 recorded child sex offenses that occurred between 1987 and
1989 in England were analyzed. Victims were 5–12 yrs old (67% were female), and the male offenders were 10–61 yrs old at the time of the offense. The results provide empirical support for all 3 themes, suggesting a multivariate model of offense behavior in child sexual abuse. These findings are seen to effectively demonstrate that pedophilia can exist as both a pathology and a form of criminality. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2012 APA, all rights reserved)


Young athletes frequently suffer from being seen as athletes first and children second. This has consequences for their legal, civil and human rights as children (Kelly et al., 1995) and for the way in which sport organisations choose to intervene on their behalf to protect them from physical, psychological and sexual abuses (Brackenridge, 1994). Sport careers peak at different ages depending on the sport: in some, children as young as 12 or 13 may reach the highest levels of competitive performance; in others, full maturity as an athlete may come late into adulthood or even middle age. Recognition of this variation has given rise to the concept of ‘sport age’ (Kirby, 1986) referring to sport specific athlete development. This concept is of significance in helping to identify the developmental process in terms of athletic, rather than chronological, maturity. The risk of sexual abuse in sport, formerly ignored or denied, has now been documented in a number of studies, using both quantitative and qualitative methods (Kirby & Greaves, 1996; Brackenridge, 1997; Volkwein, 1996). Drawing on data from these studies and from the previous work on sport age and athletic maturation, this paper proposes a possible means of identifying and assessing relative risk of sexual abuse to elite young athletes in selected sports. The concept of a ‘stage of imminent achievement’ (SIA) is proposed as the period of peak vulnerability of young athletes to sexual abuse.


This paper uses a case study (the experience of having been sexually abused as a child) and a review of the relevant literature as the basis for developing a conceptual model of the relationship
between intrafamilial and extrafamilial child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, and the role of adult and child pornography in it. The paper illustrates some of the characteristics and effects of pornography and child sexual abuse including: gender; intra- and intergenerational patterns of victimization; coercion and compliance; the sexualization of the child; pornography and prostitution; and the function of incest as a form of pimping for the perpetrator and as grooming for extrafamilial abuse. It also illustrates the way in which pornography is a part of all forms of intrafamilial and extrafamilial abuse and is itself a form of organized abuse. © 1997 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.


The perception of sexual abuse as an event or a series of events is reinforced through traditional strategies for investigation, the current legal system and single agency responses. If, however, we are to understand the dynamics of sexual abuse, offenders and victims, we need to explore and understand the nature of sexual assault as a process. This process of abuse often starts long before the actual 'hands-on' assault and may continue long after the 'hands-on' assault is over. Recognising all the elements of the process (offender strategies developed in order to perpetrate the assaults and survivor strategies adopted to survive the assaults) is central to our understanding of the dynamics of sexual assaults and, therefore, central to informing our approach to working with the perpetrators of abuse and with those who have been on the receiving end of such behaviour.


The current investigation examined the predictability of adolescent sexual offenders' modus operandi based upon differences in victim, perpetrator, and offense characteristics. Questionnaires regarding modus operandi and history of victimization were completed by 179 male adolescent sexual offenders. Subgroups of perpetrators were delineated based upon their history of sexual abuse, as well as the gender, age, and relatedness of offenders' child victims. Results indicated that a history of sexual abuse was related to the selection of male victims and younger victims.
Furthermore, subgroups of offenders differed significantly in the strategies they employed to build victims' trust, gain compliance with illicit sexual activity, and maintain victims' silence following the onset of sexual abuse. Implications are discussed for child sexual abuse theory and prevention, as well as for victim and offender treatment.


Ninety-one child sex offenders were interviewed about the methods they used to target children, the age range of their victims, how they selected children and maintained them as victims, and what suggestions they had for preventing child sexual abuse. Offenders were selected from treatment programs, probation, special hospitals, and prisons. They were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Results indicate that offenders gained access to children through caretaking, such as babysitting; targeted children by using bribes, gifts and games; used force, anger, threats, and bribes to ensure their continuing compliance; and systematically desensitized children through touch, talk about sex, and persuasion. Nearly half the offenders had no bad feelings about sexually abusing children. The implications for prevention programs are discussed.


Feminist perspectives in sport research have helped to problematise gender relations in sport and to highlight dominating behaviours such as sexual harassment. It is argued that the independent status of many voluntary sport organisations helps to protect coaches from the scrutiny of certain state regulations and, consequently, offers easy targets for individuals with sexual motives. The paper sets the problem of child sexual abuse in sport within this broad context of organisational accountability and raises issues for both research and professional practice.

The authors review the current literature on the sexual victimization of adolescent males with attention given to victim characteristics and victim selection factors and strategies. Following this review, a letter written by a middle-aged man to entice a teenage boy into sexual activity is presented and analyzed. The strategy used by the letter-writer is to refute the usual reservations a teenage boy might have about engaging in sexual activity with a man. The approach used in the letter and the ensuing analysis are generalizable to teenage boys experiencing similar encounters and highlight the sophisticated seduction and grooming strategies used to sexually victimize adolescent males.


Twenty-three child victims (aged 10–18 years) of childhood sexual abuse were interviewed about the victimization process, the person who abused them, and how abuse might have been prevented. Specific questions obtained information about the quality of the relationship between victim and offender, the offender's pre-abuse behavior, the explanation for the behavior given by the offender, and the child's understanding of the behavior. Results suggest that the victimization process involves three overlapping processes: sexualization of the relationship, justification of the sexual contact, and maintenance of the child's cooperation.


Most acts of incest perpetrated by fathers involve coercion without physical force drawing on the research of de Young (evolved incest and courting behavior), Russell (persuasion), Herman (courting behavior), and others, a series of studies was begun in 1986 by a research team consisting of both faculty and graduate students . . . that illuminated the psycho-social process involved in father-daughter incest / we call this form of socialization, the "grooming process"
these studies support the view that perpetrators use trust, favoritism, alienation, secrecy, boundary violations, and evaluation in "grooming" their daughters to participate in sexual activities (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

**Online or Cybergrooming**


Online sexual grooming and exploitation of adolescents is receiving increasing social attention. Drawing on a social influence framework, the aim of this study was to test a model of the direct and mediated relationships between an adult's use of persuasion strategies and online sexual grooming of early adolescents. The initial sample of the study consisted of 2731 early Spanish adolescents between 12 and 15 years old (50.6% female). Of these, 196 adolescents (7.17% of the total; 53% girls) were involved in online grooming (mean age = 14.93, $SD = 0.90$). Persuasion strategies by the adult through internet increased the probability of using deceit, bribery, and the minor's nonsexual involvement. In addition, deceit and bribery were associated with higher rates of sexual solicitation, which in turn increased abusive sexual interactions. Understanding strategies used by adults to groom minors contributes to the prevention of and intervention in this crucial societal problem.


The present study investigated transcripts of adults sexually grooming decoy victims on the Internet. One hundred transcripts were coded for offender characteristics, victim characteristics, and dynamics of the conversation. The results revealed that all of the offenders were male, most of whom believed they were communicating with an adolescent female. The sexual intentions of the offenders were made clear, with the majority introducing sexual content early on into the conversation. The length of the contact ranged from one day to nearly one year, suggesting that the duration of the online grooming process may vary significantly. The majority of offenders also communicated with the decoy victim over the telephone and attempted to arrange an in-person meeting, many within short periods of time. Implications for prevention and future research are discussed.


This study focused on the behavior of convicted offenders who had approached profiles of boys and girls online for offline sexual encounters. A detailed coding scheme was designed to code and analyze offenders’ grooming behaviors in transcripts of conversational interactions between convicted offenders and 52 volunteer workers purporting to be girls and 49 volunteer workers who masqueraded as boys. Behavioral differences and commonalities associated with the gender of the groomed child decoys were examined. Results showed that offenders approaching boys were significantly older and pretended to be younger than offenders approaching girls. When compared to offenders grooming boy decoys, offenders grooming girl decoys typically built more rapport, were less sexually explicit, and approached sexual topics carefully and indirectly. Offenders also used more strategies to conceal contact with girls than with boys.

The aim of this paper is to highlight key themes within the process of online grooming from the victim’s perspective. Eight adolescents who experienced online grooming were interviewed and data were analysed using Thematic Analysis. It was found that participants, who had been both sexually abused online and/or offline, were subjected to a range of grooming experiences. Consistent grooming themes within this sample included: manipulation; deception; regular/intense contact; secrecy; sexualisation; kindness and flattery; erratic temperament and nastiness; and simultaneous grooming of those close to the victim. These themes are similar to those identified by the literature surrounding grooming offline. Analysis demonstrated that once a participant was ‘enmeshed’ in the relationship with the offender, they were more likely to endure negative feelings associated with the grooming, than if the victim was not ‘enmeshed’. This paper supports the notion that grooming is a varied and non-linear process. Recommendations are made for practitioners, parents and carers, as well as suggestions for primary preventative education.


The process of online grooming facilitates child abuse and is a threat to young people across the world. This literature review explores the research surrounding how young people are targeted by offenders on the internet. Definitions, prevalence, and characteristics of online grooming are addressed in addition to consideration of child sexual abuse theories and internet behaviors. There are a variety of techniques used by internet groomers to manipulate young people (e.g., flattery, bribes, and threats) and different ways that young people engage in risk taking behavior on the internet (e.g., communicating with strangers online and sharing personal information). While models and typologies can aid professionals in understanding the crime, it is important to acknowledge that internet offenders, victims, and the dynamics between the two are often unique and varied. This is fundamental to the development of effective preventative education for online grooming and abuse. The review concludes that research concerning the online grooming of young people is limited, and calls for further study in this field. © 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

This review explores risk factors that may make a young person vulnerable to being groomed online. Even though research in this area is extremely limited, adolescents appear to be the age group most vulnerable to online grooming. Other vulnerabilities appear to be consistent with those associated with offline sexual abuse. The review suggests that behaviors specific to online grooming include: engaging in risk taking behavior online, high levels of internet access, and lack of parental involvement in the young person's internet use. Vulnerabilities to carry out these types of behavior and be more exposed to the risk of online grooming, are set within the context of the Ecological Model of child protection, consisting of: individual, family, community, and cultural risk factors. Patterns of vulnerability regarding living environment, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and personality are tentative, but are often interconnected. The more risk taking behaviors the young person carries out, plus greater levels of vulnerability factors, the less resilient they are likely to be towards protecting themselves against online grooming. A protective factor appears to be parental involvement in their child's use of the internet. Therefore, this, in combination with internet safety education at school, is encouraged. Published by Elsevier Ltd.


In the context of the sexual abuse of children, “grooming” is a process by which an individual prepares the child and their environment for abuse to take place, including gaining access to the child, creating compliance and trust, and ensuring secrecy to avoid disclosure (Craven et al. 2007). Grooming can be difficult to identify and define, especially Internet sexual grooming, as it incorporates a variety of behaviors and processes and can differ greatly in duration. This study looks to establish possible strategies that Internet sex offenders use within the grooming process, within the initial hour of contact with a child on-line. Eight transcripts were qualitatively analyzed using thematic analysis. The transcripts that were analyzed featured a “decoy” adult posing as a child, and an adult male who was later convicted following those discussions. Three main themes
were identified in the transcripts: Rapport-building, Sexual Content, and Assessment. Implications for practice are discussed in the article.


This article examines knowledge concerning cases of child sexual abuse involving an international element or use of the internet – risks to children that have received widespread official attention only in the last few years. In particular, it draws upon the authors’ ongoing research, other (completed) research and the wider literature to establish what is known about these cases in terms of their extent and nature, and their implications for policy and practice.


The use of information and communication technologies has become ubiquitous among adolescents. New forms of cyber aggression have emerged, cybergrooming is one of them. However, little is known about the nature and extent of cybergrooming. The purpose of this study was to investigate risk factors of being cybergroomed, to identify various coping strategies and to explore the associations between being cyberbullied and cybergroomed. The sample consisted of 518 students in 6th to 10th grades. The computer assisted personal interview method (CAPI method) was implemented. The «Mobbing Questionnaire for Students» by Jäger et al. (2007) was further developed for this study and served as the research instrument. While being a girl, being cyberbullied and willingness to meet strangers could be identified as risk factors; no significant age differences were found. Furthermore, three types of coping strategies – aggressive, cognitive-technical and helpless – with varied impacts were identified. The findings not only shed light on understanding cybergrooming, but also suggest worth noting associations between various forms of cyber aggression.
This paper presents a number of characteristics of the Internet that makes it attractive to online groomers. Relevant Internet characteristics include disconnected personal communication, mediating technology, universality, network externalities, distribution channel, time moderator, low-cost standard, electronic double, electronic double manipulation, information asymmetry, infinite virtual capacity, independence in time and space, cyberspace, and dynamic social network. Potential sex offenders join virtual communities, where they meet other persons who have the same interest. A virtual community provides an online meeting place where people with similar interests can communicate and find useful information. Communication between members may be via email, bulletin boards, online chat, web-based conferencing or other computer-based media.


In this review we examine the methods by which female sexual offenders may use communications technologies such as the internet in their offending behaviours. We outline the context of sexual abuse of children both by female perpetrators and by those using the internet. The topic is examined based on three criminogenic areas highlighted by Lambert and O’Halloran: (1) interpersonal/socialization deficits; (2) deviant sexual arousal; and (3) cognitive distortions and recognition barriers. We include elements drawn from anonymized clinical cases of female-perpetrated sexual abuse of children involving online technology. We present the argument that the characteristics of this population are likely to suggest that clinicians assessing cases of this nature may find it more useful to refer to the literature on female sexual offenders rather than that of male internet offenders.


This paper is concerned with where the public’s ideas come from about online risks to children and young people. Combining perspectives from criminology, sociology and media studies, it will
be argued that as a culture we are confused about childhood and hold on to highly ambiguous ideas about children and sexuality. Further, despite the media’s inclination to present adult attraction to children as a uniquely “modern” phenomenon, conflicting notions of childhood have always underpinned social and legal norms and were particularly salient in Victorian society. More recently, at precisely the same time as individuals have retreated from public spheres to the “security” of domestic and privatized spaces, we have seen the emergence of one of the most feared phenomena of the age: the online sexual abuse of children.


Findings suggest the need for non-legislative measures to improve Internet safety for children concerning online child grooming, a premeditated behavior intended to secure the trust and cooperation of children prior to engaging in sexual conduct. In particular, initiatives by those that operate social-networking sites and the financial services industry will favorably reduce such contact. Several social networking sites have been proactive in working with law enforcement agencies to protect children against online sexual offenders. Because child-abuse materials often involve payment, an effective strategy is to monitor online payments made to those who provide illegal content for a fee. Online reporting and monitoring systems are also important tools, often including a simple method to report abuse to authorities. Finally, the development of sophisticated computer forensic software that can be used for child-exploitation investigations is increasingly important. Adult awareness and child education are critical preventive measures; educational outreach programs can provide proactive prevention and reporting. This multi-dimensional non-legislative approach should focus on effective coordination and collaboration among the public and private sectors.


This study investigated perceptions of child sexual abuse in a hypothetical cyberexploitation case. Men were predicted to be more negative toward the victim than were women. Victims were
predicted to be more negatively judged when they consented to sex than when they did not and when they were lied to than when they were not. Two hundred and seventy-six respondents read a sexual abuse depiction in which the perpetrator's disclosure about his age (being honest from the outset, lying, or refusing to disclose when questioned) and the final outcome of the meeting (consensual verses nonconsensual sexual intercourse) were varied between subjects. Respondents then completed a 17-item attribution scale. ANOVAs revealed broad support for the predictions. Results have implications for education about cybercrime.


This paper outlines the current literature on what is known about the processes by which individuals utilize the Internet for child sexual abuse. First, three ways in which the Internet is utilized are outlined: (1) by dissemination of sexually abusive images of children for personal and/or commercial reasons; (2) by communication with other individuals with a sexual interest in children: and (3) by maintaining and developing online pedophilic networks. Second, content and availability of abusive images are described, and the difficulties faced by criminal justice agencies in both the definition of abusive images and their prohibition is discussed. Third, the potential for offenders to ‘cross-over’ from online offenses to contact sexual victimization of children is examined and placed within a context of various Internet offender typologies that have been developed. Finally, implications of this body of research for law and public policy are considered.


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. Compounding the problem is the lack of direct governance by an international body, which will curb the illegal content and activity. Most countries already have laws protecting children, but what is needed is a concerted law enforcement
and international legislation to combat child sex abuse. With the enactment of the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, this may soon become a reality in Europe. This current article will discuss some of the recent legal developments concerning online child protection, including the new Convention.


The expansion in Internet use since the mid-1990s has created a completely new and largely unmonitored forum for contacts between adults and children. The anonymity provided by Internet communications has been viewed as creating favourable conditions for adults wishing to develop manipulative relationships with children, and there has been a growing concern about the way the Internet may be used by adults intent on sexually exploiting and abusing young people. Much of the focus of this concern has been directed at adults using the Internet to create opportunities for the commission of offline sex offences. Based on police data from Sweden, this article describes the range of Internet related sexual offences against children currently being brought to the attention of the Swedish justice system. It focuses not only on the range of strategies employed by adults to persuade children to meet them offline for the purposes of sexual exploitation and abuse but also on the different types of online sexual offences that children in Sweden are currently being subjected to.


Over the past 20 years, the internet has provided an expedient mode of communication and access to a wealth of information. The internet is a valuable tool; however, it can also be detrimental to the wellbeing of children due to numerous online hazards. There is the potential for children to be abused via cyberspace through online sexual solicitation and access to pornography. Indeed, the internet is replete with inappropriate material, including pornography, chatrooms with adult themes and access to instant messaging wherein others could misrepresent themselves. Because
children are actively utilizing the internet where unknown others can have access to them or where they can be exposed to inappropriate sexual materials, they require safeguarding and education in safe internet use. The purpose of this article is to provide a discussion of how to safeguard children from and educate them about online sexual solicitation and pornography. We contend that society needs an overall conceptual shift in its attitude towards young people’s internet use. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.


A small scale test of the integrity of Internet Web 2.0 social network sites was undertaken over several weeks in 2007. The fictional identities of four female underage children where posted on three network sites and later introduced to relay chat forums in order to explore the impact of apparent vulnerability on potential selection of Internet victims. Only one of the three social network sites in the study recognised that the postings violated child protection policies and subsequently closed down the underage postings. Two basic identities were created: one that engendered a needy and vulnerable characterisation of a child while the other identity was created to represent a happy and attached child character. The number of contacts and suspicious contacts were monitored to test assumptions about child ‘vulnerability’ and risks of unwanted sexual solicitations. The characters created also included either an avatar and/or contact details. These variants of the experiment showed that the inclusion of an image or access details increased the likelihood of contacts, including suspicious contact regardless of ‘vulnerability’. This small experiment noted that although vulnerable children with additional cues maybe at more risk all children who posted details about themselves on social network sites faced the risk of contact by predators. The need for further research and better means of regulating such sites was suggested.


This article explores the dynamics of cases involving family and acquaintance sexual offenders who used the Internet to commit sex crimes against minors. Although the stereotype of Internet
crimes involves unknown adults meeting juvenile victims online, Internet use can also play a role in sexual crimes against minors by family members and acquaintances. Data were collected from a national sample of law enforcement agencies about arrests for Internet-related sex crimes against minors. Family and acquaintance offenders were nearly as numerous as offenders who used the Internet to meet victims online. They used the Internet in various ways to further their crimes including as a tool to seduce or groom, store or disseminate sexual images of victims, arrange meetings and communicate, reward victims, or advertise or sell victims. Prevention messages and investigation approaches should be revised to incorporate awareness of such cases and their dynamics.


In recent years there has been increasing concern over the use of the internet and other communication technologies to groom children for abuse. The government responded to this pressure by creating an advisory group, The Home Secretary’s Internet Task Force on Child Protection, which proposed new legislation, eventually enacted as s. 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This article explores why this provision was created and considers how it can be used to safeguard children.


Presents an overview of the benefits and risks of Web-based interactions for youth. Discusses, as an illustrative example, the psychosocial effects of online "grooming" practices that are designed to lure and exploit children by enticing them, typically in a nonsexual way, toward a sexual encounter. Suggests constructive solutions and a plan for action to foster protective and productive learning.
O'Connell, R. (2003). *A typology of cyberexploitation and online grooming practices.* Cyberspace Research Unit, University of Central Lancashire. 22p. Available at


This article looks at the issue of protecting children on the internet. It focuses on some of the problems for the law in combating potentially abusive contact on the internet, the response of the Government in framing new laws to combat these problems and the response of the police informing tactics to tackle the area.