

The Online Manipulation (Grooming) of Victims of Sexual Abuse: A Bibliography

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Scope

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

Organization

Publications are listed in date descending order.

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Promise Elpis is committed to upholding the highest standards in child protection and ethical communication. The [Luxembourg Guidelines \(2016\)](#) promote the use of consistent, accurate, and sensitive language - particularly in the context of child protection - that avoids confusion, stigma, and harm, and avoids contributing to further victimization or misunderstanding. The Guidelines are intended to be applied broadly within the field, including the creation of policies, legal documents, reports, and public communication. To best achieve these aims, our work follows the Luxembourg Guidelines and any updates to it. Further, we adapt as terminology evolves by developing internal guidance that aligns with these principles. When citing external sources, we retain the original language to preserve the intended meaning and context, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the cited content.

The Online Manipulation (Grooming) of Victims of Sexual Abuse

A Bibliography

Alonso-Ruido, P., Estévez, I., Regueiro, B., & Varela-Portela, C. (2024). [Victims of Child Grooming: An Evaluation in University Students](#). *Societies*, 14(1), 7.
DOI:10.3390/soc14010007

The appearance of new ways of committing sexual violence via technological media and virtual spaces has produced countless situations where sexual abuse of minors may occur. This is the digital scenario surrounding the phenomenon of grooming. The present study focuses on analyzing grooming experienced by Spanish university students during childhood. The sample comprised 3293 students in higher education, 68.3% of whom were female, 30.5% were male, and 1.2% identified as non-binary. The mean age was 18.83 years (SD = 2.28). The results confirmed that sexual abuse of minors has moved towards virtual environments, indicating a prevalence of 12.2% for grooming, which was more likely to have affected women and non-binary people. In addition, student victims of grooming were more often also victims of sextortion. Consumption of pornography was also shown to be particularly important, with the results indicating that students who consumed it and started consuming it before they were 16 years old were more often victims of grooming. These findings should encourage the educational community to develop preventive actions that match the reality of online child sexual abuse. In summary, the only path towards preventing and detecting grooming is to invest in high-quality digital education and sex education from a gender perspective.

Broome, L. J., Izura, C., & Davies, J. (2024). [An investigation of the linguistic and deceptive characteristics of online grooming types](#). *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 1-18.
DOI:10.1080/13552600.2023.2300470

A defining feature of online grooming (OG) behaviour is the development of a deceptive relationship to hide the intent of sexual abuse. The OG discourse model proposes deceptive trust is central to entrapment and is predominantly achieved through language, yet it is unclear whether the intent of intimacy or sex impacts the communicative and deceptive properties of the chats. Fifty-seven chatlogs categorised according to the European OG Typology were analysed to

address this gap. The results showed that whilst intentions might be distinct, adults develop positive/authentic social bonds with victims, and engage in strategies to match with victims who fulfil their goal for intimacy or sex. The impact of this study on the theoretical understanding of OG informs an updated and empirical definition of OG: “OG is when cyber-technology is used to build an emotional connection with a person to exploit their vulnerabilities and gain their trust causing harm and/or distress”.

Sani, A. I., Vara, M., & Dinis, M. A. P. (2024). Online sexual grooming of children: Psychological and legal perspectives for prevention and risk management. In *Modern Insights and Strategies in Victimology* (pp. 25-55). IGI Global.

The internet has become a prevalent tool for offenders engaging in the sexual grooming of children, posing a serious threat to fundamental rights and unsettling societies. Challenges in defining online sexual grooming, variations in its prevalence, and evolving offender strategies necessitate a cohesive global legislative effort to combat child sexual abuse. This study employs a legal and psychological perspective, utilizing an integrative review methodology to comprehensively understand online sexual grooming. The objective is to formulate a holistic risk prevention and management framework. Examining risk and vulnerability identification mechanisms through empirical research, the study advocates for an integrated approach, encompassing psychosocial and preventive strategies to combat cybercrime. The proposed framework, comprising primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention measures, aims to strengthen the global fight against the disturbing phenomenon of online sexual grooming and its detrimental impact on children, adolescents, and society as a whole.

Soldino, V., & Seigfried-Spellar, K. C. (2024). [Criminological differences between contact-driven and online-focused suspects in online child sexual grooming police reports](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 149. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106696

Differences exist between contact and noncontact-driven online child sexual abuse offenders; however, there is still a notable lack of empirical studies with police samples from non-English speaking countries, including Spain. We address this gap by analyzing the criminological

characteristics of online child sexual grooming (OCSG) suspected offenders from de-identified law enforcement investigations in Spain. We anonymously coded data provided by Spanish law enforcement agencies from 257 OCSG cases (i.e., unique chat logs between a suspect and minor) extracted from 98 police reports with index investigation years from 2008 to 2021. A total of 101,391 messages were analyzed. Three distinct datasets were created: 257 OCSG cases, 120 unique suspects (79 online-focused, 41 contact-driven), and 234 unique victims. Each dataset focused on different criminological variables for analysis, such as grooming strategy, motivation, and victim high-risk behaviors. There were no significant differences between suspects on gender, age, or criminal offense history. Contact-driven suspects were more likely to use positive rapport ($\phi = 0.18$), send unprompted sexually explicit images of themselves ($\phi = 0.19$), and offer something in exchange ($\phi = 0.25$). Victims of contact-driven individuals were more likely to be male ($\phi = 0.52$) and offer something in exchange for sex or sexually explicit images ($\phi = 0.18$). Victims of online-focused individuals were more likely to be younger ($r = 0.26$). These findings suggest criminological differences in the online grooming strategies between contact-driven and online-focused suspected offenders in Spain.

Veleshnja, I., & Hoxha, D. (2024). [Analyzing online sexual grooming of minors and the case of the Albanian Criminal Framework](#). *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 13. DOI:10.36941/ajis-2024-0012

Out of all of the digital sex crimes that have emerged during the revolution that is happening to technology, sexual grooming of minors, is one of the most problematic and unaddressed criminal phenomena. Sexual grooming of minors has moved from the offline realm to the online realm, becoming a tangible concern to all of the children who surf the Internet daily. Today, pervasive internet connectivity has propelled cybercrime to the forefront of law enforcement concerns globally. Particularly, social media platforms have become the favored and easily accessible tools for perpetrators, amplifying the incidence of digital sex crimes. This situation is exacerbated by the inherent dangers of online sexual grooming, which serves as a precursor to child sexual abuse. While not always an obligatory step preceding such abuse, the distinct characteristics of online sexual grooming underscore its heightened concern and complexity. This article delves into the dynamics of the sexual grooming of children, exploring its patterns, offenders'™ and

victimsâ€™ typology, and relevant legal framework in juxtaposition with the analysis of the Albanian criminal framework regarding this issue. For writing this article, we have used the Desk Review approach method as well as analyzing relevant legal frameworks where necessary, among other aspects.

Wefers, S., Dieseth, T., George, E., Øverland, I., Jolapara, J., McAree, C., & Findlater, D. (2024). [Understanding and deterring online child grooming: A qualitative study](#). *Sexual Offending: Theory, Research, and Prevention*, 19, 1-27. DOI:10.5964/sotrap.13147

The prevalence of online child sexual grooming offenses has been on the rise, posing significant risks to children. Child sexual grooming involves sexual communication with minors. This study aims to understand motivations and pathways of individuals who have engaged in online grooming behaviour, as well as propose effective prevention and intervention strategies. A sample of 14 male participants who had engaged in online child grooming were interviewed. Five themes were identified through thematic analysis: Social aspects, Mental health and psychological aspects, Justification for offending, Secrecy and Technology. Within all five themes risk factors and protective factors relating to online grooming behaviour were identified. Three pathways into online grooming behaviour were hypothesised: social connection, addictive behaviour, and fantasy/roleplay. Additionally, the study highlights the complex relationship between online grooming and other child sexual abuse offences, including the sharing and distribution of indecent images of children. The study underscores the need for greater education and awareness about the risks and harms associated with online grooming for those at risk of engaging in this behaviour as well as wider support and situational prevention approaches, including monitoring and use of warning messages on relevant online platforms.

Ali, S., Haykal, H. A., & Youssef, E. Y. M. (2023). Child sexual abuse and the internet—a systematic review. *Human Arenas*, 6(2), 404-421. DOI:10.1007/s42087-021-00228-9

Child sexual abuse is a growing social concern. Today, online communication chiefly facilitates access to vulnerable children and increases cases of child sexual abuse. The current article also aims to highlight digital platforms' role in prevailing online child sexual abuse worldwide. The

researchers conducted a Systematic Review of existing literature and selected a sample of n = 42 articles witnessing the Internet's role in facilitating child sexual abuse. The cited literature indicated that online child sexual abuse widely involves child pornography for commercial and non-commercial purposes. Several online platforms provide scheduled online child sexual abuse sessions that are mostly unidentifiable for law enforcement agencies. Similarly, for non-commercial purposes, predators use different strategies and fulfill their objectives. These predators not only entice children, but also continue extorting the victims. Although the online child sexual abuse method may vary from person to person, the purpose is the same for all. In this regard, the current study gives practical recommendations to mitigate online child sexual exploitation in a better possible manner. Especially in developing countries, counteracting against online child sexual abuse to alleviate the deliberate online exploitation can remarkably decrease children's rights violation.

Borj, P. R., Raja, K., & Bours, P. (2023). [Online grooming detection: A comprehensive survey of child exploitation in chat logs](#). *Knowledge-Based Systems*, 259. DOI:10.1016/j.knosys.2022.110039

Social media platforms present significant threats against underage users targeted for predatory intents. Many early research works have applied the footprints left by online predators to investigate online grooming. While digital forensics tools provide security to online users, it also encounters some critical challenges, such as privacy issues and the lack of data for research in this field. Our literature review investigates all research papers on grooming detection in online conversations by looking at the psychological definitions and aspects of grooming. We study the psychological theories behind the grooming characteristics used by machine learning models that have led to predatory stage detection. Our survey broadly considers the authorship profiling research works used for grooming detection in online conversations, along with predatory conversation detection and predatory identification approaches. Various approaches for online grooming detection have been evaluated based on the metrics used in the grooming detection problem. We have also categorized the available datasets and used feature vectors to give readers a deep knowledge of the problem considering their constraints and open research gaps. Finally,

this survey details the constraints that challenge grooming detection, unaddressed problems, and possible future solutions to improve the state-of-the-art and make the algorithms more reliable.

Duysak, M. (2023). [Legal developments as to “Cyber Grooming”- Actions from the Lanzarote Convention to now](#). *Athens Journal of Law*, 9, 597-610.

According to statistics, internet users have been increasing rapidly, especially since the COVID 19 pandemic. Nowadays, gaming platforms, chat platforms, and video conferencing applications are not only for grownups but for children as well. Minor users, encouraged for educational purposes, are particularly often the target of cybercrimes. One such offense is approaching a child through information and communication technology for sexual purposes, known as cyber-grooming. The act is a solicitation of minors using various techniques. Commonly, the first stage of criminal behaviour is an online conversation between the perpetrator(groomer) and the victim (child). In the second stage of the crime, the perpetrator aims to contact the target physically in person. Even though this is a new type of criminal behaviour, there are already international and national criminalization norms in place to penalize it. The Lanzarote Convention is the first international legal document to refer to these actions as crimes. Aiming to protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the Convention sets out some responsibilities to signatory States. Despite being one of the signatories of the Lanzarote Convention, the aforementioned acts are not considered a separate crime in Türkiye. For that reason, this study will first bring examples of criminalization, and then evaluate the situation in Turkish law. This study seeks to make the issue visible and suggests providing measures to prevent the sexual exploitation of minors by taking the necessary legislative steps.

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Colburn, D. (2023). Which dynamics make online child sexual abuse and cyberstalking more emotionally impactful: Perpetrator identity and images?. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 137. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106020

The migration of offenses against children to the online environment requires a revised understanding of how episode dynamics aggravate the harm. The objective was to assess the contribution of various online offense episode elements to the overall negative emotional impact.

The sample comprised 2639 IPSOS KnowledgePanel members aged 18 to 28, 1215 of whom reported episodes of online sexual abuse or cyberstalking that occurred prior to the age of 18. The analysis was based on 2056 episodes with detailed follow-up information. Participants were recruited online and filled out online questionnaires about online sexual abuse and cyberstalking episodes, their characteristics, and the negative emotional impact (NEI) associated with each episode. NEI was derived from a factor analysis of 8 impact items. Higher negative emotional impact was associated with forms of sexual image misuse: non-consensual sharing, non-consensual taking and threatened sharing/sextortion. Peers made up a majority of offenders, and their impact was just as great as adult offenders. Known perpetrators, including intimate partners, also made up the largest proportion of offenders and their impact was just as great as online strangers or anonymous offenders. Online safety awareness and prevention need a larger focus on peer and acquaintance offenses, particularly around the misuse of sexual images.

Cook, D., Zilka, M., DeSandre, H., Giles, S., Weller, A., & Maskell, S. (2022). [Can we automate the analysis of online child sexual exploitation discourse?. arXiv preprint arXiv:2209.12320](https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2209.12320). <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2209.12320>

Social media's growing popularity raises concerns around children's online safety. Interactions between minors and adults with predatory intentions is a particularly grave concern. Research into online sexual grooming has often relied on domain experts to manually annotate conversations, limiting both scale and scope. In this work, we test how well-automated methods can detect conversational behaviors and replace an expert human annotator. Informed by psychological theories of online grooming, we label 6772 chat messages sent by child-sex offenders with one of eleven predatory behaviors. We train bag-of-words and natural language inference models to classify each behavior, and show that the best performing models classify behaviors in a manner that is consistent, but not on-par, with human annotation.

Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Colburn, D. (2022). [Prevalence of online sexual offenses against children in the US](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.34471). *JAMA network open*, 5(10), e2234471-e2234471. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.34471>

Sexual abuse is increasingly facilitated by technology, but the prevalence and dynamics of such offenses have not been well delineated, making it difficult to design prevention strategies. The objective was to examine the frequency and characteristics of online and technology-facilitated sexual abuse against children and youth. In this nationally representative online survey study performed from November 19 to December 29, 2021, young adults aged 18 to 28 years were asked retrospectively about their childhood (<18 years) experiences of online and technology-facilitated abuse. The 2639 participants were sampled from an online panel. Participants were asked questions about 11 different kinds of online and technology-facilitated sexual abuse with follow-up questions about their dynamics and offenders. Prevalence rates were calculated for several cross-cutting concepts (online child sexual abuse, image-based sexual abuse, self-produced child sexual abuse images, nonconsensual sexting, online grooming by adults, revenge pornography, sextortion, and online commercial sexual exploitation). Survey weights were applied to obtain population prevalence estimates. A total of 2639 individuals (48.5% male, 49.8% female, and 1.8% other gender; 23.7% Hispanic, 12.6% non-Hispanic Black, 53.9% non-Hispanic White, 4.8% other race, and 5.0% ≥ 2 races) were surveyed. Childhood (before 18 years of age) prevalence rates were as follows: online child sexual abuse, 15.6% (SE, 1.0%); image-based sexual abuse, 11.0% (SE, 0.9%); self-produced child sexual abuse images, 7.2% (SE, 0.7%); nonconsensual sexting, 7.2% (SE, 0.7%); online grooming by adults, 5.4% (SE, 0.5%); revenge pornography, 3.1% (SE, 0.5%); sextortion, 3.5% (SE, 0.6%); and online commercial sexual exploitation, 1.7% (SE, 0.3%). The prime age of vulnerability across all categories was 13 to 17 years. Perpetrators in most categories were predominantly dating partners, friends, and acquaintances, not online strangers. The results of this national survey study suggest that a considerable portion of youth have experienced online child sexual abuse. Professionals planning prevention and intervention strategies for online sexual abuse should understand that dynamics include diverse episodes that are often extensions of dating abuse, sexual bullying, and sexual harassment, not only events perpetrated by adult internet predators.

Ortega-Barón, J., Machimbarrena, J. M., Calvete, E., Orue, I., Pereda, N., & González-Cabrera, J. (2022). [Epidemiology of online sexual solicitation and interaction of minors with adults: A longitudinal study](#). *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *131*, 105759. DOI:10.1016/j.chiabu.2022.105759

There have been very few longitudinal studies on online sexual solicitation and the online interaction between minors and adults. Still less evidence exists on the relationship of these problems with minors' Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL). This study aimed to analyze the point prevalence, period prevalence (prevalence over time) and incidence (new cases over time) of online sexual solicitation and interactions between minors and adults throughout three consecutive time periods and to compare the HRQoL among categories of victims (non-victims, new victims, ceased victims, intermittent victims, and stable victims). The participants were 1029 Spanish students (43 % boys, 57 % girls), aged 12–15 years. A longitudinal study was conducted over a 13-month period, with measurements taken at three time points. For sexual solicitation, the point prevalence was 11.3 % at wave 1 (W1), 11.9 % at wave 2 (W2), and 16.1 % at wave 3 (W3). For sexualized interactions, prevalence rates were 4.8 %, 7 %, and 7.1 %, respectively. However, throughout the study, almost 23 % of minors reported some sexual solicitation and 14 % reported some sexual interaction. In this same period of time, the incidence of new cases was 1 in 10. Being a victim during W1 meant that in W3, there was almost twice the risk of having a low HRQoL. In general, those who were not victims of either solicitation or sexualized interactions with adults presented better HRQoL than those who experienced victimization. This study presents the magnitude and seriousness of the problem and discusses the practical implications.

Raine, S., & Kent, S. A. (2022). [The grooming of children for sexual abuse in religious settings: Unique characteristics and select case studies](#). *International Journal of Coercion Abuse & Manipulation*, *3*, 1–25. DOI:10.54208/1000/0003/003

This article examines the sexual grooming of children and their caregivers in a wide variety of religious settings. We argue that unique aspects of religion facilitate institutional and interpersonal grooming in ways that often differ from forms of manipulation in secular settings. Drawing from Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism, and Seventh-day Adventism) and various sects (the Children of God, the Branch Davidians, the Fundamentalist Latter-day Saints, a Hindu ashram, and the Devadasis), we show how some religious institutions and leadership figures in them can

slowly cultivate children and their caregivers into harmful and illegal sexual activity. A number of uniquely religious characteristics facilitate this cultivation, which includes: theodicies of legitimation; power, patriarchy, obedience, protection, and reverence toward authority figures; victims' fears about spiritual punishments; and scriptural uses to justify adult-child sex.

Retornaz, E. E. A. [Online solicitation of children for sexual purposes \(cyber grooming\)](#).
Journal of Penal Law and Criminology, 10(1), 211-233.
DOI:10.26650/JPLC20221112665

As the age at which children use technological devices and the internet decreases, they become easy targets for cybercrimes. Their vulnerability and innocence on the one hand and the accessibility and anonymity of the internet on the other create opportunities for the commitment of sexual offences against children in cyber space. One such offence is cyber grooming, which is very dangerous because of the gravity of its possible consequences on a child's life, but also because of the significantly vague scope of application arising from the difficulties in detecting the real intent of the groomer. International legislation has influenced some national legal systems to criminalize child grooming as a separate offence. Among these, France, Belgium and Italy are of note, as they are also members of the European Union, which has a specific regulation on the subject. Turkish law has not initiated such a reaction yet. However, there exist other courses of action to criminalize cyber grooming in order to prevent such threats to a child's physical and moral well-being. This study aims to examine the offence of cyber grooming of children for sexual purposes in comparative law and its reflection in Turkish law.

Ringenberg, T. R., Seigfried-Spellar, K. C., Rayz, J. M., & Rogers, M. K. (2022). A scoping review of child grooming strategies: Pre-and post-internet. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 123, Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105392>

In this study, we conducted a scoping review of grooming strategies both pre- and post-Internet. Our goal was to enumerate strategies analyzed in both time periods, provide similarities and differences, and discuss how changing datasets and technology have impacted the grooming process in both online and offline environments. We performed a scoping review of peer-reviewed journal articles from 1970 to 2020 within PubMed, Medline, PsychInfo, and ERIC. This resulted

in 19,679 unique articles. Titles and abstracts were screened resulting in 266 articles which were then read in full, resulting in 93 papers which qualified based on inclusion criteria. Grooming strategies identified pre-Internet included: enticements, coercion, isolation, substance abuse, gradual sexualization, and secrecy. In comparison, the strategies identified post-Internet were: enticements, risk assessment, trust, sexualization, fantasy, secrecy, isolation, meeting, media progression, deception, coercion, substance use as a tool, authority, and repetition. While grooming strategies overlapped pre and post-Internet, the timing and scope of concepts differed. Additionally, grooming offline began to incorporate technology post-Internet which functioned to increase accessibility and isolation of the victim in a similar manner to online grooming.

Hernández, M. P., Schoeps, K., Maganto, C., & Montoya-Castilla, I. (2021). The risk of sexual-erotic online behavior in adolescents—Which personality factors predict sexting and grooming victimization?. *Computers in Human Behavior, 114*.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106569>

Information and communication technologies provide new opportunities for adolescents to establish and maintain intimate relationships, as well as exploring their sexuality. However, the young population is particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of violence or online abuse. The aim of this study was to understand to which extent the personality factors (extraversion, narcissism, lack of empathy and disinhibition) are related to sexting and online grooming victimization. The participants were 1763 adolescents between 12 and 16 years ($M = 14.56$, $SD = 1.16$, 50.99% girls). A cross-sectional design with self-report data was used, analyzed by structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicated that boys are more frequently involved in sexting and online grooming activities than girls. Personality profiles differ between sexual-erotic online behaviors, with different patterns for boys and girls. While the combination of a variety of personal characteristics such as narcissism, lack of empathy, disinhibition and extraversion predicts erotic online activities in boys, the personality factors that best predict such online risk behavior in girls are narcissism and disinhibition. When parents or educators perceive that children are showing narcissistic and uninhibited behaviors on social media and the internet, it may be beneficial to assess their sexual-erotic online activities in order to intervene and protect them from becoming victims of online harassment.

Naidoo, L., & Van Hout, M. C. (2021). Child sex offender mind-set and grooming strategies: A discourse analysis of sex offender narratives from South Africa. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 30*(5), 616–635. DOI:1080/10538712.2021.1890296

Violence against children, particularly sexual violence continues to threaten South African society. Whilst severely under-reported, the perpetration of child sexual abuse (CSA) against boys and girls is a significant societal concern, underpinned by adverse childhood familial instability, childhood abuse in particular sexual abuse, violence, inequality and wider structural forces. The research base is growing, despite low disclosure rates and significant barriers to access. In order to better understand unique trajectories of perpetration of CSA, particular to the South African context, we conducted an in-depth qualitative study with twelve male child sex offenders who were attending a therapeutic, rehabilitation programme. They provided open discourse on the forms of enticement, exploitation or entrapment of child victims, including threats of harm, used to elicit compliance into sexual activities. They disclosed trauma dictated fantasy, and that they felt powerful and in control, when they sexually abused their victims. Most of the offenses took place in their own home. By delving into the strategies and mind set of the offender who sexually abuse children, this study provides evidence of a distinct and deliberate, 'grooming process' used by offenders; and emphasizes the cyclic patterns of offending. Understanding these truths explores its potential for the prevention of the CSA. In its entirety, the research deconstructs the strategies of the offender and examines their actual role in the onset of sexually offending behavior against children; in order to draw out the implications of these complexities for policy, practice, crime prevention, particularly in terms of the prevention of CSA.

van Gijn-Grosvenor, E. L., & Lamb, M. E. (2021). Online groomer typology scheme. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 27*(10), 973-987.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2021.1876048>

One hundred and one transcripts of conversations between volunteer workers purporting to be minors and convicted offenders in the United States of America who had groomed minors online for offline sexual encounters were analysed. Based on rapport building, sexual, and concealment variables, five offender profiles were identified using cluster analysis. One cluster was a single offender who built no rapport; and this outlier was excluded from further analysis. The intimacy-

seeking groomers employed rapport-building. The dedicated, hypersexual offenders built rapport, talked about sexual matters, and used strategies to conceal contact. The social groomers built some rapport but talked less about sexual topics and ways to conceal contact. The opportunistic-social groomers spent little time talking online, built very little rapport, and were not concerned about getting caught. Implications for parents, policy makers, and teachers attempting to protect children from online grooming are discussed.

Forni, G., Pietronigro, A., Tiwana, N., Gandolfi, C. E., Del Castillo, G., Mosillo, M., & Pellai, A. (2020). [Little red riding hood in the social forest. Online grooming as a public health issue: A narrative review](#). *Annali di Igiene, Medicina Preventiva e di Comunita*, 32(3). DOI:10.7416/ai.2020.2353

Research of young people shows a lack of understanding of the term grooming in online communications and that internet risks are taken because internet literacy is poor for this group. However, limited research has investigated the perceptions of young adults in this context. The aim of this study was to understand young adults' perceptions of risk, their internet behaviors, and understanding of the grooming concept. Furthermore, to understand the types of risk behaviors young people engage in online, whether they perceive these behaviors as risky, and what implications this has for vulnerability to negative experiences. An examination of internet communication perceptions and the grooming concept focused on 10 young males and females aged between 18 and 23 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at open access youth organizations in the North West of England, UK, and the duration of each interview was approximately 30 min. The data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Emergent themes were (a) grooming as a concept, (b) virtual lives, and (c) perception of risk. The findings concur there is limited understanding of the term grooming but that explanations may not be simply confined to literacy. Risks being taken online were not always perceived as risky. Recommendations include the need for a more nuanced definition of the term grooming and that more information is available to children and caregivers. Further work should focus on younger participants' perceptions of grooming to address wider issues, together with a focus on risk taking behaviors among other vulnerable groups.

Greene-Colozzi, E. A., Winters, G. M., Blasko, B., & Jeglic, E. L. (2020). Experiences and perceptions of online sexual solicitation and grooming of minors: A retrospective report. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 29*(7), 836-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2020.1801938>

Internet predation of minors has become a focus of child sexual abuse research and legislation. Studies reveal that many American youth report experiencing sexual solicitation and sexual grooming online, but the youth perspective of these experiences has not been examined. This study examined retrospective perspectives of online sexual solicitation and grooming experienced as a minor. Participants were 1,133 undergraduate college students at two public institutions in the United States who completed an online survey retrospectively exploring Internet behaviors, experiences of online sexual solicitation or online grooming, and perceptions of the experience. Results showed that one-quarter of total participants conversed with adult strangers online as minors. Importantly, 65% of participants who chatted with adult strangers as minors experienced sexual solicitation from an adult stranger. Twenty-three percent of 1,133 total participants recalled having a long, intimate conversation as a minor with an adult stranger from an online chatroom that followed a pattern of online sexual grooming. While less than half (38%) of the youth who engaged in an intimate online relationship with an adult stranger met the adult in-person, a large majority of those who did meet in-person (68%) reported physical sexual intercourse. Implications for Internet safety and guidelines are discussed.

Lorenzo-Dus, N., Kinzel, A., & Di Cristofaro, M. (2020). [The communicative modus operandi of online child sexual groomers: Recurring patterns in their language use.](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.09.010) *Journal of Pragmatics, 155*, 15-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.09.010>

Online child sexual groomers manipulate their targets into partaking in sexual activity online and, in some cases, offline. To do so they use language (and other semiotic means, such as images) strategically. This study uses a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies methodology to identify recurring patterns in online groomers' language use, mapping them to the specific grooming goal that their use in context fulfils. The analysis of the groomers' language (c. 3.3 million words) within 622 conversations from the Perverted Justice website newly identifies 70 such recurring linguistic patterns (three-word collocations), as well as their relative strength of association to one or more

grooming goals. The results can be used to inform computational models for detecting online child sexual grooming language. They can also support the development of training resources that raise awareness of typical language structures that characterise online sexual groomers' communicative modus operandi.

Klimek, L. (2020). European responses criminalising online solicitation of children for sexual purposes. *Balkan Social Science Review*, 16(16), 7-21.

Online child grooming, solicitation of children for sexual purposes, is a threat at the international level. In 2000's several European States had already made online child grooming a criminal offence through national legislative measures. By the end of the decade, the majority of European States faced a new requirement to stipulate online child grooming as criminal offence at national level. For these purposes two crucial legislative instruments were introduced. First, the Council of Europe in 2007 adopted the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Second, the European Union in 2011 adopted the Directive 2011/93/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography. The objective of this paper is the assessment of online child grooming and its criminalisation in Europe. It analyses relevant literature and legislation, national as well as European. The article will not focus on figures or the number of abused children. Rather, it is focused on common European approach towards the criminalisation of the practice and the impact on the mechanism of judicial co-operation in criminal matters as regards mutual recognition of judicial decision.

O'Brien, J. E., & Li, W. (2020). The role of the internet in the grooming, exploitation, and exit of United States domestic minor sex trafficking victims. *Journal of Children and Media*, 14(2), 187-203.

The Internet (e.g., social networking, online marketing, and encryption technologies) has been identified as a means to facilitate domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST; a.k.a., commercial sexual exploitation of children). At the same time, the Internet is increasingly being identified as a method of primary prevention and intervention for DMST among youth. However, to-date there are limited examinations of the role of the Internet in the lives of youth who experience DMST victimization. The current study aims to consider the role of the Internet in DMST grooming, exploitation, and

exit. In-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 service providers in North Carolina and Texas. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded line-by-line using a grounded theory approach. Results feature two overarching themes in service provider interviews: 1) Initial exploitation and 2) Exit from exploitation. Within each of these larger themes were subthemes including technology facilitated risk and prevention needs. Overall, these qualitative findings reveal the role of the Internet in: (1) Facilitating DMST, (2) Preventing Internet-facilitated DMST, and (3) Victim exit and survivorship. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Schoeps, K., Hernández, M. P., Garaigordobil, M., & Montoya-Castilla, I. (2020). [Risk factors for being a victim of online grooming in adolescents](https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2019.179). *Psicothema*, 32(1), 15-23. [https://doi:10.7334/psicothema2019.179](https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2019.179)

The risk of child grooming has spread exponentially with the massive access of adolescents to social networks and the internet. The aim of the study was to examine the personal factors (body self-esteem and disinhibition) and erotic-sexual factors (sexual initiation strategies and erotic-pornographic sexting) that predict grooming. The sample was comprised of 1,200 adolescents aged between 12 and 16 years ($M = 14.54$, $SD = 1.17$; 50.83% girls). A cross-sectional design with self-report data was used and structural equation modeling (SEM) with mediation analysis was performed. The results indicated two paths explaining child grooming: 1) physical attractiveness and disinhibition are indirectly associated with grooming through erotic sexting and direct sexual initiation strategies; both of which partially mediate this relationship; 2) disinhibited behavior has an indirect impact on grooming; pornographic sexting and coercive strategies acting as mediators. The semi-partial mediation model explains 54% of the variance of grooming. These findings highlight the urgent need to implement prevention programs considering these attitudes and behaviors that function as precursors of victimization and the risk of falling into pedophile networks.

Wood, A. C., & Wheatcroft, J. M. (2020). [Young adult perceptions of internet communications and the grooming concept](#). *Sage open*, 10(1). DOI:10.1177/2158244020914573.

Research of young people shows a lack of understanding of the term grooming in online communications and that internet risks are taken because internet literacy is poor for this group. However, limited research has investigated the perceptions of young adults in this context. The aim of this study was to understand young adults' perceptions of risk, their internet behaviors, and understanding of the grooming concept. Furthermore, to understand the types of risk behaviors young people engage in online, whether they perceive these behaviors as risky, and what implications this has for vulnerability to negative experiences. An examination of internet communication perceptions and the grooming concept focused on 10 young males and females aged between 18 and 23 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at open access youth organizations in the North West of England, UK, and the duration of each interview was approximately 30 min. The data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Emergent themes were (a) grooming as a concept, (b) virtual lives, and (c) perception of risk. The findings concur there is limited understanding of the term grooming but that explanations may not be simply confined to literacy. Risks being taken online were not always perceived as risky. Recommendations include the need for and caregivers. Further work should focus on younger participants' perceptions of grooming to address wider issues, together with a focus on risk taking behaviors among other vulnerable groups.

Arthur, R., & Down, L. (2019). Preventing the criminalisation of children who have been victims of group-based sexual exploitation involving grooming tactics—Understanding child sexual exploitation as enslavement. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 83(5), 370-380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022018319879013>

The United Kingdom has been beset by a series of moral panics concerning grooming gangs sexually exploiting young girls. These moral panics derive from a number of well-publicised cases, the most infamous of which took place in Rochdale, Greater Manchester. Further grooming rings have been exposed in Rotherham, Oxfordshire, Oldham, Derby, Huddersfield and Newcastle. Grooming children has been criminalised by section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. These offences apply to online and offline

communication, including social media. Adult groomers face up to two years in prison and being automatically placed on the sex offenders register. These laws are intended to protect children from abuse and exploitation. However, child victims who have been abused by gangs and coerced into offending may still be liable for prosecution for any offending they have engaged in. These offences will also be recorded on their criminal records. Fear of being prosecuted may stop victims coming forward and prevent survivors from moving on with their lives. This article will examine how the law can be reformulated to ensure protection of children from sexual exploitation and also ensuring children are not charged for committing crimes whilst being groomed or coerced. The article will consider whether the Modern Slavery Act 2015, and in particular the statutory defence available under section 45 of the 2015 Act, potentially offer a means of protecting victims of grooming without the risk of criminalisation.

Jonsson, L. S., Fredlund, C., Priebe, G., Wadsby, M., & Svedin, C. G. (2019). [Online sexual abuse of adolescents by a perpetrator met online: A cross-sectional study](https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-019-0292-1). *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 13(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-019-0292-1>

The current study aimed at exploring adolescents' experiences of online sexual contacts leading to online sexual abuse by a perpetrator whom the victim had first met online. Associations with socio-demographic background, experience of abuse, relation to parents, health and risk behaviors were studied. The participants were a representative national sample of 5175 students in the third year of the Swedish high school Swedish (M age = 17.97). Analyses included bivariate statistics and stepwise multiple logistic regression models. In total 330 (5.8%) adolescents had gotten to know someone during the preceding 12 months for the purpose of engaging in some kind of sexual activity online. Thirty-two (9.7%) of those, the index group, had felt that they had been persuaded, pressed or coerced on at least one occasion. Sexual interaction under pressure was seen as constituting sexual abuse. These adolescent victims of online sexual abuse, the index group, did not differ with respect to socio-demographic background from the adolescents without this experience, the reference group. The index group had significantly more prior experiences of different kind of abuse, indicating that they belong to a polyvictimized group. More frequent risk

behavior, poorer psychological health, poorer relationships with parents and lower self-esteem also characterized the index group. Online sexual abuse, without experiences of offline abuse, was associated with a poorer psychological health, at least at the same level as offline sexual abuse only. The study made clear the importance of viewing online sexual abuse as a serious form of sexual abuse. Professionals meeting these children need to focus not only on their psychological health such as symptoms of trauma and depression but also need to screen them for online behavior, online abuse and other forms of previous abuse.

Kloess, J. A., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E., & Beech, A. R. (2019). [Offense processes of online sexual grooming and abuse of children via internet communication platforms](#). *Sexual Abuse*, 31(1), 73-96. DOI:10.1177/1079063217720927

The aim of the present study was to provide an inclusive and realistic account of the offense processes of naturally occurring, sexually exploitative interactions between offenders and victims that took place via Internet communication platforms, and develop an offense process diagram of online sexual grooming and abuse. Five case series, comprising 29 transcripts of 22 interactions, were analyzed using the qualitative approach of thematic analysis. Police reports were reviewed for descriptive and case-specific information. The five offenders were men aged between 27 and 52 years ($M = 33.6$, $SD = 5.6$), and the number of children they communicated with ranged from one to 12 ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 4.5$). Victims were aged between 11 and 15 ($M = 13.0$, $SD = 1.2$), and were both female ($n = 17$) and male ($n = 6$). Findings revealed that offenders employed either an indirect or a direct approach to conversations with victims and initiating contact with them. The approach offenders employed was also reflected in the types of strategies they used. Only two offenders were found to engage in aspects of sexual grooming as part of an indirect approach; the majority of the interactions by the other three offenders, that lacked features of sexual grooming altogether, were found to be of a direct approach. These findings are discussed in relation to current issues surrounding terminology and definition of sexual grooming, as well as theoretical and practical implications, concluding with suggestions for future research.

Kloess, J. A., Larkin, M., Beech, A. R., & Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E. (2019). Case studies of men's perceptions of their online sexual interactions with young people: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Sexual Abuse, 31*(8), 867-885.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063218769031>

The aim of the present study was to gain an understanding of the perspectives of men who were convicted of committing a sexual offense that included online sexual grooming. It explores their experiences of illegal interactions with young people via Internet communication platforms, which progressed to physical meetings. Semistructured interviews were conducted with two men and analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), providing in-depth accounts of their personal experiences. These are presented in a case study format. Three dominant themes emerged from the analysis: (a) fulfilling an unmet need, (b) spiraling cycle of use, and (c) confrontation with reality. Narrative tones employed by the two men were “being trapped in a lie,” analogous to a problem narrative through which their Internet use was presented as a poor and/or failed coping strategy to deal with life stress. Through a process of habituation, their Internet use spiraled out of control. A progression was described in terms of time spent on the computer, frequency and intensity of online interactions, and the impact this had on the men's personal lives, highlighting the “compulsive” nature of such interactions for them. A consideration of individual and situational vulnerability factors provides new insight into the progression of online sexual behavior and contributes to our understanding thereof.

Lorenzo-Dus, N., & Kinzel, A. (2019). ['So is your mom as cute as you?': Examining patterns of language use in online sexual grooming of children](http://dx.doi.org/10.18573/jcads.31). *Journal of Corpora and Discourse Studies, 2*, 15-39. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18573/jcads.31>

Linguistic research into online grooming is scarce despite both the communicative essence of this form of online child sexual abuse and a substantial body of literature into it across other Social Sciences. Most of this literature has examined small data sets via qualitative methods, primarily Thematic Analysis. This study evaluates the contribution that a Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach can make to this body of literature, with a focus on online groomers' language. The corpus, extracted from the Perverted Justice Foundation archive, consists of c. 3.3 million words produced by >600 convicted child sexual offenders interacting online with adult decoys whom they believed to be children. Lexical dispersion (DPNorm), collocation and concordance

analyses were conducted. The corpus was also run through the software LIWC (Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count), which is the only other software-assisted methodology that has been adopted to examine Perverted Justice data. Our analysis shows that LIWC may not be the most efficient software to analyse online groomers' language due to a lack of general language comparison scores, the non-transparency of some of its analytic variables and a focus on de-contextualised words. Comparatively, CADS methods can shed light upon online groomers' strategic use of language. They can also reveal the complex and nuanced ways in which discourse features such as sexual explicitness/implicitness and interpersonal (in)directness operate alongside these strategies.

McMahon, M., & Kirley, E. A. (Fall, 2019). [When cute becomes criminal: Emoji, Threats, and online grooming.](#) *Minnesota Journal of Law, Science and Technology*. 38 p.

Emoji are widely used and are frequently perceived as cute or benign adjuncts to online communications. Employed to humanise truncated digital messages by conveying humour, emotion and sociability, emoji perform a far more sinister role when used to convey threats or to sexually exploit minors. These activities exploit the emotive function of emoji and/or their role in facilitating trust, albeit for a criminal purpose. This paper explores the role of emoji in both threats and online grooming. Through a review of a sampling of criminal cases from diverse jurisdictions, we examine relevant prosecutions and find that emoji are being increasingly recognized as a facilitator or adjunct to criminal threats and unlawful sexual solicitation made on online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or through private messaging. The review also examines the multiple and diverse ways in which evidence of emoji has been admitted in criminal trials, raising contentious (but hitherto largely unrecognised) issues in relation to the application of the best evidence rule. While noting the distinctive opportunities, challenges and problems posed in relation to how to interpret and best represent these stylised visual representations in criminal proceedings, the article concludes that despite these various difficulties, imposing criminal liability for threats or solicitation conveyed by emoji is a necessary evolution of the criminal law, demonstrating its adaptation to the digital age.

Quayle, E., & Koukopoulos, N. (2019). Deterrence of online child sexual abuse and exploitation. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 13(3), 345-362. <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay028>

‘Cyberspace’ has added a dimension to the ecology of the child and should be a starting point for practitioners (including police) to think about digital media in the context of child sexual abuse. While there is no evidence to suggest that online abuse and exploitation is a more serious offence than crimes occurring offline, the behaviours enabled by social media may present a significant risk factor for some children. This article gives a brief overview of the phenomena and prevalence of online child sexual abuse and exploitation and the role that the Internet may play. This is considered in relation to deterrence, prevention and management of these crimes, and further develops a public health approach to online child abuse and exploitation. Finally, the article critically considers emerging evidence to support this interaction between the individual and the online environment.

Ramiro, L. S., Martinez, A. B., Tan, J. R., Mariano, K., Miranda, G. M., & Bautista, G. (2019). Online child sexual exploitation and abuse: A community diagnosis using the social norms theory. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104080>

This study focused on the drivers of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) among Filipino children and youth, with emphasis on community norms. An ethnographic qualitative study was conducted in two communities in MetroManila that are considered “hotspots” for child sexual abuse. One hundred and forty-four (144) males and females from various age groups served as key informants. Political officials, Internet shop managers, professionals and police officers were also interviewed. Non-participant observations and mapping were used to provide context regarding OCSEA in the communities. The results revealed that OCSEA was committed online by heterosexual and same sex attracted men in their 40s–50s. The usual victims were girls aged 13–17 years, although boys were also noted. The victims came from poor families and were out-of-school. The various forms of online activities leading to OCSEA included sexual chatting, showing of child sex photos and live videos as well as sextortion. The online transactions were usually initiated by the peer group and some enablers. In general, online sexual activities were perceived as “normal” among young people, although regarded as “disgusting”. Online sex activities had

become a source of “easy money” for the child and family. They were perceived as not harmful because of anonymity and the absence of any actual physical contact. People in the community tolerate these online practices and do not report the incidence to authorities. The effects on children and youth were predominantly social and psychological, albeit perceived as economically beneficial. Some preventive and mitigating actions were recommended to curb the incidence of OCSEA in the communities.

De Santisteban, P., Del Hoyo, J., Alcázar-Córcoles, M. Á., & Gámez-Guadix, M. (2018). Progression, maintenance, and feedback of online child sexual grooming: A qualitative analysis of online predators. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 80, 203-215.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.03.026>

The limited literature on online child grooming has focused mainly on studying the characteristics of perpetrators and victims that facilitate the sexual abuse of minors. Little attention has been given to the perceptions of the perpetrators about the abuse process and the strategies used to sustain it over time. In the present study, after identifying a sample of 12 men convicted of online grooming, we used qualitative grounded theory through in-depth interviews and comparisons with the proven facts of their convictions. The results show how aggressors actively study the structural environment, the needs and vulnerabilities of the minors). In this way, the aggressors adapt by using most effective strategies of persuasion at all times, so that the child feels like an active part of the plot. This allows the aggressors to have sexual interactions with minors either online or offline and in a sporadic or sustained manner. This process is maintained with some distorted perceptions about minors and the abuse process, which seem to feed back to the beginning of the cycle with other potential victims. The interaction between the persuasive processes and the distorted perceptions of the aggressor leads to a potential work focus for treatment as well as detection and prevention. Trying to visualize the complexity of the phenomenon could also help researchers to understand processes from this approach that may be applied with other types of vulnerable populations.

Gámez-Guadix, M., Almendros, C., Calvete, E., & De Santisteban, P. (2018). Persuasion strategies and sexual solicitations and interactions in online sexual grooming of adolescents: Modeling direct and indirect pathways. *Journal of Adolescence*, *63*, 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.12.002>

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.

Hanson, E. (2017). The impact of online sexual abuse on children and young people. In J. Brown (Ed). *Online Risk to Children: Impact, Protection and Prevention*, (pp.97-122). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Smallbone, S., & Wortley, R. (2017). Preventing child sexual abuse online. In J. Brown (Ed). *Online Risk to Children: Impact, Protection and Prevention*, (pp.143-162). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Villacampa, C., & Gómez, M. J. (2017). Online child sexual grooming: Empirical findings on victimisation and perspectives on legal requirements. *International Review of Victimology*, *23*(2), 105-121. DOI:10.1177/0269758016682585

This work presents the results of quantitative research into online child grooming carried out with a sample of 489 secondary school students in Catalonia (Spain). Besides determining the rate of victimisation of children by this behaviour, it establishes the profile of the victims and the offenders. In addition, it analyses the dynamics of these processes, victim–offender interaction,

the level of effect that this behaviour has on the victims and the way in which an end was put to the situation. The results obtained in this empirical research do not permit confirmation of the common opinion that the widespread use of information and communication technology has led to an exponential increase in the victimisation of minors through online child grooming behaviour by unknown adults offline, because of which we need to react through the criminalisation of this behaviour.

Vismara, M. F. M., Toaff, J., Pulvirenti, G., Settanni, C., Colao, E., Lavano, S. M., ... & Marotta, R. (2017). [Internet use and access, behavior, cyberbullying, and grooming: Results of an investigative whole city survey of adolescents](#). *Interactive Journal of Medical Research*, 6(2), e6231. DOI:10.2196/ijmr.6231

According to the Digital Agenda for Europe, the way children use the Internet and mobile technologies has changed dramatically in the past years. The aims of this study were to: (1) breakdown the modalities of access and use of the Internet by teenagers to assess risks and risky behaviors; and (2) provide scientific data to evaluate and counsel safe use of the Internet and new technologies by teenagers. The study was conducted under the program “Strategies for a Better Internet for Children” started in May 2012 by the European Commission. It represents the main result of the project launched by Telecom Italia, “Anche io ho qualcosa da dire” (I too have something to say), thanks to which many contributions were collected and used to develop a survey. The questionnaire was structured in 45 questions, covering three macro areas of interest. It was approved by the Department Board at University of Magna Graecia’s School of Medicine. After authorization from the regional high school authority, it was administered to all 1534 students (aged 13-19 years) in the city of Catanzaro, Italy. The data was broken down into three main groups: (1) describing education and access to the Internet; (2) methods of use and social networking; and (3) perception and evaluation of risk and risky behaviors. Among noteworthy results in the first group, we can mention that the average age of first contact with information technologies was around 9 years. Moreover, 78.87% (1210/1534) of the interviewed students reported having access to a smartphone or a tablet. Among the results of the second group, we found that the most used social networks were Facebook (85.78%, 1316/1534), YouTube (61.14%, 938/1534), and Google+ (51.56%, 791/1534). About 71.31% (1094/1534) of the interviewed

teenagers use their name and surname on social networks, and 40.09% (615/1534) of them knew all their Facebook contacts personally. Among the results of the third group, we found that 7.69% (118/1534) of the interviewed teenagers have uploaded pictures or movies of which they felt ashamed; 27.05% (415/1534) have received invitations from people they met on the Internet to meet in real life; and 8.67% (133/1534) have accepted such invitations. The results offer a breakdown of the teenagers' use of the Internet, focusing on how teenagers learn to use and access it while taking into account factors such as parental coaching, schooling, or self-education. It describes how they approach and interact with social networks and how they perceive risks and risky behaviors on the Internet. Information technology must be seen as an instrument and not as a hindrance. For this to happen, parental guidance, schooling, and medical counseling are needed for a sound development of the child in this critical stage.

Winters, G. M., Kaylor, L. E., & Jeglic, E. L. (2017). Sexual offenders contacting children online: An examination of transcripts of sexual grooming. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 23*(1), 62-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2016.1271146>

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.

DeMarco, J., Davidson, J., Bifulco, A., Scally, M., Cheevers, C., Schimmenti, A., ... & Bogaerts, S. (2016). EU online child safety: What does the literature say?. *Crimen et Delictum: International Journal of Criminological and Investigative Sciences*, 11(1), 1-19.

The purpose of this review is to introduce both the research and political context of the European Commission's ISEC Illegal Use of the Internet work programme and the EU Online Child Safety investigation. This includes examining the social, psychological and legal contexts of online crimes perpetrated against children, inclusive of a holistic engagement with the relevant policy, legislation and law enforcement procedures within the European Union. The primary aim of this study is to explore the prevalence of online childhood sexual abuse (online CSA) including the production, distribution and collection of childhood indecent images, online grooming and elements of 'sexting' from the perspective of law enforcement and industry. The study covers four European countries and their associated practices: UK, Netherlands, Italy and Ireland, all of which will provide a comparative perspective of crosscultural procedures and processes in law enforcement, industry practice and victimisation. This paper will address a summary of the key findings from the scoping phase covering all elements of the criminal justice process. Specifically, key summaries and themes emerging from the literature consulted are presented and recommendations are made for progress and as indicators for the project as it develops.

Gunawan, F. E., Ashianti, L., Candra, S., & Soewito, B. (2016, November). [Detecting online child grooming conversation](#). In 2016 11th International Conference on Knowledge, Information and Creativity Support Systems (KICSS) (pp. 1-6). IEEE.

Massive proliferation of social media has opened possibilities for perpetrator to conduct the crime of online child grooming. Because the pervasiveness of the problem scale, it may only be tamed effectively and efficiently by using an automatic grooming conversation detection system. Previously, Pranoto, Gunawan, and Soewito [1] had developed a logistic model for the purpose and the model was able to achieve 95% detection accuracy. The current study intends to address the issue by using Support Vector Machine and k-nearest neighbors classifiers. In addition, the study also proposes a low-computational cost classification method on the basis of the number of the existing grooming conversation characteristics. All proposed methods are evaluated using 150 conversation texts of which 105 texts are grooming and 45 texts are non-grooming. We identify

that grooming conversations possess 17 features of grooming characteristics. The results suggest that the SVM and k-NN are able to identify grooming conversations at 98.6% and 97.8% of the level of accuracy. Meanwhile, the proposed simple method has 96.8% accuracy. The empirical study also suggests that two among the seventeen characteristics are insignificant for the classification.

van Gijn-Grosvenor, E. L., & Lamb, M. E. (2016). Behavioural differences between online sexual groomers approaching boys and girls. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 25(5), 577-596. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2016.1189473>

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.

Ashcroft, M., Kaati, L., & Meyer, M. (2015, September). A Step Towards Detecting Online Grooming--Identifying Adults Pretending to be Children. In *2015 European Intelligence and Security Informatics Conference* (pp. 98-104). IEEE.

Online grooming is a major problem in today's society where more and more time is spent online. To become friends and establish a relationship with their young victims in online communities, groomers often pretend to be children. In this paper we describe an approach that can be used to detect if an adult is pretending to be a child in a chat room conversation. The approach involves a two step process wherein authors are first classified as being children or adults, and then each child is being examined and false children distinguished from genuine children. Our results show that even if it is hard to separate ordinary adults from children in chat logs it is possible to distinguish

real children from adults pretending to be children with a high accuracy. In this paper we will discuss the accuracy of the methods proposed, as well as the features that were important in their success. We believe that this work is an important step towards automated analysis of chat room conversation to detect and possible attempts of grooming. Our approach where we use text analysis to distinguish adults who are pretending to be children from actual children could be used to inform children about the true age of the person that they are communicating. This would be a step towards making the Internet more secure for young children and eliminate grooming.

Black, P. J., Wollis, M., Woodworth, M., & Hancock, J. T. (2015). A linguistic analysis of grooming strategies of online child sex offenders: Implications for our understanding of predatory sexual behavior in an increasingly computer-mediated world. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 44, 140-149. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.12.004>

There is a large body of evidence to suggest that child sex offenders engage in grooming to facilitate victimization. It has been speculated that this step-by-step grooming process is also used by offenders who access their underage victims online; however, little research has been done to examine whether there are unique aspects of computer-mediated communication that impact the traditional face-to-face grooming process. This study considered the similarities and differences in the grooming process in online environments by analyzing the language used by online offenders when communicating with their victims. The transcripts of 44 convicted online offenders were analyzed to assess a proposed theory of the online grooming process (O'Connell, 2003). Using a stage-based approach, computerized text analysis examined the types of language used in each stage of the offender-victim interaction. The transcripts also were content analyzed to examine the frequency of specific techniques known to be employed by both face-to-face and online offenders, such as flattery. Results reveal that while some evidence of the strategies used by offenders throughout the grooming process are present in online environments, the order and timing of these stages appear to be different. The types (and potential underlying pattern) of strategies used in online grooming support the development of a revised model for grooming in online environments. © 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved

Meyer, M. (2015). [Machine learning to detect online grooming](#). Uppsala Universitet.

Online grooming is a major problem in today's society where more and more time is spent online. To become friends and establish a relationship with their young victims in online communities, groomers often pretend to be children. In this paper we describe an approach that can be used to detect if an adult is pretending to be a child in a chat room conversation. The approach involves a two step process wherein authors are first classified as being a children or adults, and then each child is being examined and false children distinguished from genuine children. Our results shows that even if it is hard to separate ordinary adults from children in chat logs it is possible to distinguish real children from adults pretending to be children with a high accuracy. In this report the accuracy of the methods proposed is discussed, as well as the features that were important in their success. We believe that this work is an important step towards automated analysis of chat room conversation to detect possible attempts of grooming. Our approach where we use text analysis to distinguish adults who are pretending to be children from actual children could be used to inform children about the true age of the person that they are communicating. This would be a step towards making the Internet more secure for young children and eliminate grooming.

Moise, A. C. (2015). Grooming in the online environment. *Journal of Law and Public Administration*, 1(2), 102-105.

In this study it is carried out an analysis at the European level on an important offence related to illegal content, such as the grooming or solicitation of children for sexual purposes through the information and communication technology, which is intended to mirror a more and more worrying, that of sexually abused children in meetings with adults they initially met in the cyberspace, such as e.g. within the groups of discussions or online games. The offence of solicitation of children for sexual purposes is more easily committed through online environment than in the offline environment, as the children feel more uninhibited in the online environment than in the offline environment, becoming more vulnerable for the offenders.

Pranoto, H., Gunawan, F. E., & Soewito, B. (2015). [Logistic models for classifying online grooming conversation](#). *Procedia Computer Science*, 59, 357-365.
DOI:10.1016/j.procs.2015.07.536

This work intends to establish a logistic mathematical model to classify whether an online conversation is or is not a grooming conversation. This work is important for a number of reasons: the increasing number of the Internet users across the globe, the increasing number of social media, increasing in the number and types of crime on the Internet, and the crime of sexual abuse in children impacts both physically and physiologically. Online grooming is the most reported suspected Internet activities in 2009–2010 according to Child Exploitation and Online Protection, which is a part of the UK's Home Office Serious Organized Crime agency. Around 160 online script conversations are analyzed to determine characteristics of a grooming conversation. Those scripts are obtained randomly from <http://www.perverted-justice.com> and www.literotika.com. The characteristics are divided into 20 types. The scripts are divided into two sets: 100 scripts for the training set and 59 scripts for the testing set. As the results, five most relevant grooming characteristics are identified from the paired t-test, and a logistic model is established on this basis. The model is evaluated using the testing data set, and the results show that the model has relatively good performance with 95% accuracy, 96% true positive, 4% false positive, 93% true negative, and 7% false negative.

Whittle, H. C., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E., & Beech, A. R. (2015). [A comparison of victim and offender perspectives of grooming and sexual abuse](#). *Deviant Behavior*, 36(7), 539-564.
DOI:10.1080/01639625.2014.944074

This study involved interviews with three victims of online grooming and contact sexual abuse, and the three adults who groomed and abused them. All victims were female and aged between 12 and 14 at the time of the abuse. All offenders were male and aged between 20 and 49 at the time of abuse. Results indicate that victim and offender dyads most commonly disagreed in their accounts of the sexual elements of the relationship, including initiation; stage when sexualization took place; production of photos and videos; and initiation of contact sexual abuse. This high level of disagreement is likely to be a result of both parties (in particular, offenders) attributing the most blame to the sexual elements and thus minimizing the extent of their involvement. All three of the

victims perceived that they were in a relationship with the offender (one even after the end of the abuse). One offender persisted in stating that it was a relationship. The study found that the dynamic between offenders and victims of online grooming and child sexual abuse can be varied and complex. The benefit of a methodology that matches and compares cases is that a greater level of insight can be gained into this complexity of offender and victim dynamics. Findings are discussed in the context of implications for practitioners and prevention.

Cano, A. E., Fernandez, M., & Alani, H. (2014). [Detecting child grooming behaviour patterns on social media](#). In Social Informatics: 6th International Conference, SocInfo 2014, Barcelona, Spain, November 11-13, 2014. Proceedings 6 (pp. 412-427). Springer International Publishing.

Online paedophile activity in social media has become a major concern in society as Internet access is easily available to a broader younger population. One common form of online child exploitation is child grooming, where adults and minors exchange sexual text and media via social media platforms. Such behaviour involves a number of stages performed by a predator (adult) with the final goal of approaching a victim (minor) in person. This paper presents a study of such online grooming stages from a machine learning perspective. We propose to characterise such stages by a series of features covering sentiment polarity, content, and psycho-linguistic and discourse patterns. Our experiments with online chatroom conversations show good results in automatically classifying chatlines into various grooming stages. Such a deeper understanding and tracking of predatory behaviour is vital for building robust systems for detecting grooming conversations and potential predators on social media.

Quayle, E., Allegro, S., Hutton, L., Sheath, M., & Lööf, L. (2014). Rapid skill acquisition and online sexual grooming of children. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 39, 368-375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.07.005>

The limited research on online sexual grooming has largely focused on the stages of grooming, typologies of offenders, or comparisons with people who download abusive sexual images of children. Little attention has been paid to Internet affordances and the role these might play in the offending behavior, the development of expertise and the avoidance of detection. This exploratory, qualitative grounded theory study involved interviews with 14 men convicted of online grooming.

The analysis indicated that the Internet was used to create a private space within which to engage in purposive, sexual behavior with young people. This engagement was for all an aid to fantasy, and for some was a precursor to an offline sexual assault. The opportunities afforded by Internet platforms not only allowed access to young people but facilitated the rapid acquisition of expertise.

Whittle, H. C., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. E., & Beech, A. R. (2014). "Under his spell": Victims' perspectives of being groomed online. *Social Sciences*, 3(3), 404-426.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci3030404>

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.

Martellozzo, E. (2013). *Online child sexual abuse: Grooming, policing and child protection in a multi-media world*. New York: Routledge.

Based on extensive ethnographic research conducted with the police and a specialist paedophile unit, here Elena Marellozzo presents an informed analysis of online child sexual abuse: of the patterns and characteristics of online grooming, and of the challenges and techniques that characterize its policing. Connecting theory, research and practice in the field of policing, social policy, victimology and criminology, this book adds significantly to our understanding and knowledge of the problem of online child sexual abuse, the way in which victims are targeted and how this phenomenon is, and might be, policed.

Staksrud, E. (2013). Online grooming legislation: Knee-jerk regulation?. *European Journal of Communication, 28*(2), 152-167. DOI:10.1177/0267323112471304

The study explores whether or not the perceived threats of paedophiles grooming online cause disproportionate legislative reactions. This is done by reviewing if and how the legislative assumptions about the nature of grooming leading to specific grooming legislation in Norway match the actual user experiences of Norwegian children in general and those subjected to physical abuse following Internet encounters in particular. The expressed political assumptions (about how children use the Internet) leading to the Norwegian grooming legislation implemented in 2007 are compared with the actual experiences of Norwegian children between 9 and 16 years, regarding the same assumptions as documented in nationally representative statistical surveys conducted in 2003, 2006 and 2008. The findings show that the Norwegian grooming legislation was redundant, both legally and practically. The potential implications for prescriptive work, as well as the wider democratic dilemmas are discussed.

Whittle, H., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., Beech, A., & Collings, G. (2013). A review of online grooming: Characteristics and concerns. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 18*(1), 62-70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.09.003>

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.

Whittle, H., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., Beech, A., & Collings, G. (2013). A review of young people's vulnerabilities to online grooming. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 18*(1), 135-146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.11.008>

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.

Williams, R., Elliott, I. A., & Beech, A. R. (2013). Identifying sexual grooming themes used by Internet sex offenders. *Deviant Behavior, 34*(2), 135-152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2012.707550>

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.

Williams, M. L., & Hudson, K. (2013). [Public perceptions of internet, familial and localised sexual grooming: Predicting perceived prevalence and safety](#). *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 19*(2), 218-235. DOI:10.1080/13552600.2012.705341

This paper examines public perceptions of three sexual grooming types: computer-mediated sexual grooming (CMSG), familial sexual grooming (FSG) and localised sexual grooming (LSG). Using data from a national survey of 557 respondents from the United Kingdom, we tested models that predicted perceptions of the prevalence of CMSG, FSG and LSG and the perceived safety of internet, familial and localised grooming spaces. Media-related factors were the most significant in predicting higher levels of perceived prevalence of CMSG and disagreement in relation to safety of internet and public spaces. Knowledge of a grooming victim was most significant in predicting higher levels of perceived prevalence of FSG and LSG and higher levels disagreement in relation to the safety of the home. The findings suggest that the public express too little concern over familial sexual grooming and that initiatives should be introduced to make citizens more aware of the distinctions between types of sexual grooming behaviours, settings and offenders.

Gallagher, B., Christmann, K., Fraser, C., & Hodgson, B. (2012). International and Internet child sexual abuse and exploitation- Issues emerging from research. *Child and Family Law Quarterly, 15*(4), 353-370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2012.707550>

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.

Gupta, A., Kumaraguru, P., & Sureka, A. (2012). [Characterizing pedophile conversations on the internet using online grooming](#). *arXiv:1208.4324*.

In this paper, we study pedophile conversations from the perspective of online grooming theory and perform a series of linguistic-based empirical analysis on several pedophile chat conversations to gain useful insights and patterns. We manually annotated 75 pedophile chat conversations with six stages of online grooming and test several hypothesis on it. The results of our experiments reveal that relationship forming is the most dominant online grooming stage in contrast to the sexual stage. We use a widely used word-counting program (LIWC) to create psycho-linguistic profiles for each of the six online grooming stages to discover interesting textual patterns useful to improve our understanding of the online pedophile phenomenon. Furthermore, we present empirical results that throw light on various aspects of a pedophile conversation such as probability of state transitions from one stage to another, distribution of a pedophile chat conversation across various online grooming stages and correlations between pre-defined word categories and online grooming stages.

Klimek, L. (2012). [Solicitation of children for sexual purposes: The new offence in the EU \(under the Directive 2011/92/EU\)](#). *International and Comparative Law Review*, 12(1), 135-144. DOI:10.1515/iclr-2016-0083

The article deals with the rules for a grant of interim measures in the context of EU law and its application in national judicial proceedings. It covers the key case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU related to the regime, conditions and limits of the interim measures and adds a reflection of practice of Czech courts. Article pays particular attention to the conditions for suspension of the application of national law measures.

McAlinden, A. M. (2012). *'Grooming 'and the Sexual Abuse of Children: Institutional, Internet, and Familial Dimensions*. Oxford University Press.

This book critically examines the official and popular discourses on grooming, predominantly framed within the context of on-line sexual exploitation and abuse committed by strangers, and institutional child abuse committed by those in positions of trust. Set against the broader theoretical framework of risk, security, and governance, this book argues that due to the difficulties of drawing

clear boundaries between innocuous and harmful motivations towards children, pre-emptive risk-based criminal law and policy are inherently limited in preventing, targeting, and criminalising ‘grooming’ behaviour prior to the manifestation of actual harm. Through examination of grooming against the complexities of the onset of sexual offending against children and its actual role in this process, the book broadens existing discourses by providing a fuller, more nuanced conceptualisation of grooming, including its role in intra-familial and extra-familial contexts. There is also timely discussion of new and emerging forms of grooming, such as ‘street’ or ‘localised’ grooming, as typified by recent cases in Rochdale and Oldham, and ‘peer-to-peer’ grooming. The book draws on extensive empirical research in the form of over fifty interviews with professionals, working in the fields of sex offender risk assessment, management, or treatment, as well as child protection or victim support in the four jurisdictions of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Savirimuthu, J., & Savirimuthu, J. (2012). Online sexual grooming of children, obscene content and peer victimisation: Legal and evidentiary issues. In J. Savirimuthu (Ed.), *Online Child Safety: Law, Technology and Governance* (p.61-158). Palgrave Macmillan.

As traditional methods for harming and abusing children become increasingly mediated through Web 2.0 technologies, a new dimension emerges for online child safety governance. Convergence has now made possible new avenues through which harms can be perpetrated against children. Difficult policy issues still have to be confronted as policymakers and regulators grapple with the dilemma of using the criminal law, in an environment where enforcement, rather than the application of its substantive rules, is proving to be a problem (Luüders et al., 2009). Additionally, the ramifications of an expanding child protection agenda for civil liberties and innovation are still uncertain (Lindsay et al., 2008). Policymakers and law enforcement are also having to deal with the issue of whether the criminal law should be used in cases where children become the offenders – sexual solicitation of other minors, hacking into social network profiles, posting hateful messages or defacing websites and distributing self-generated nude images of themselves. Is the criminal law outdated and unresponsive, or does living in a risk society require policymakers to reassess how we approach the strategies for extending legal standards and rules to an increasingly connected and “always-on” society? Indeed, it is a particularly relevant question to ask when

reflecting on how the criminal law addresses these tensions either through direct State intervention or indirectly through the MSIG framework. These matters provide the background to the chapter, which is the legal and evidentiary issues emerging from the use of the criminal law in managing risks in three areas of online child safety governance: online sexual grooming, exposure to obscene content (with particular emphasis on child pornography) and peer victimisation. I integrate into the analysis an account of the key substantive criminal law rules to highlight its role and shortcomings when addressing the regulatory challenges in this area of child protection policymaking. Finally, some caveats may be necessary with regard to the discussion that follows. This chapter does not rehearse or critique the reports or scholarly works undertaken by researchers in this field (Akdeniz, 2008; Shariff, 2009; Brenner, 2010; Kerr, 2009). Neither does this chapter review the role of criminal law in virtual worlds (Lastowka, 2010). Even though these and other works provide some useful insights on the challenges posed by Web 2.0 technologies to the criminal law, the task undertaken in this chapter is deliberately narrowed to a consideration of three specific forms of online child safety incidents/risk-prone activities. The aim of the discussion is to reflect the nuances of online child safety governance with regard to the standards and principles the criminal law aims to uphold and, more specifically, examine the extent to which Web 2.0 technologies can be said to undermine its ability to promote certainty, order, trust and confidence. The governance challenge for law and its ability to secure compliance with its standards and principles lies at the core of the evolving MSIG framework aimed at confronting parental anxieties resulting from the vulnerabilities children face in an environment of decentralised networks and information flows. Secondly, the coverage of these areas will be conducted against the background of the national legal system in England and Wales. Where appropriate, references will be made to relevant legislation, case law and materials from Australia, the United States and Canada, noting that some caution should be exercised when making comparisons between the approaches in these jurisdictions, given that governments ground their legal and policy responses on their “legal traditions, approaches, techniques (e.g. direct regulation vs. self- or co-regulation), and law enforcement practices” (Gasser, et al., 2010: 10). The differences in legal traditions and policy responses do not detract from the tasks undertaken in this chapter. The implications of these rules for evidentiary investigations and online intermediary liability will also be identified and explained.

Wachs, S., Wolf, K. D., & Pan, C. (2012). [Cybergrooming: Risk factors, coping strategies and associations with cyberbullying](#). *Psicothema*, 24(4), 628-633.

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.

Webster, S., Davidson, J., Bifulco, A., Gottshalk, P., Caretti, V., Pham, T., ... & Craparo, G. (2012). European online grooming project.

The sexual abuse of young people via the Internet is an international problem, a crime without geographical boundaries. Solutions both to perpetrators' use of the Internet and to the safety of young people online must be sought and will necessarily involve agencies working to protect young people at local, national and international levels. Action 3.1 of the Safer Internet Plus programme invited proposals for projects that aim to enhance the knowledge of the online sexual abuse of young people, with a particular focus on online grooming. Online grooming is defined as the process by which a person befriends a young person online to facilitate online sexual contact and/or a physical meeting with them, with the goal of committing sexual abuse. The European Online Grooming Project research consortium is comprised of experts from across Europe and was tasked with meeting the following research objectives: describe the behaviour of both offenders who groom and young people who are 'groomed', describe how information, communication

technology (ICT) may facilitate online grooming, identify how young people are selected and prepared by online groomers for abuse online, contribute to the development of prevention initiatives aimed at parents and young people. The project had three separate but interlinked phases. The first was a scoping project that involved a literature review, review of police case files and interviews with key stakeholders. Phase 2 of the research involved in-depth interviews with 33 male offenders convicted of online grooming in the UK, Belgium and Norway. Online groomers' chat-logs were sourced from Italy. Phase 3 encompassed twelve focus groups with young people in the UK, Belgium and Italy. The aim of these groups was to understand young people's online behaviour in the context of the groomers' accounts, and explore young people's view of online risks and current safety initiatives. In addition, seven dissemination events were held with teachers, parents and professionals in Belgium, Italy, Norway and the UK in order to promulgate the key findings from the project. This report brings together findings from the main stages of the European Online Grooming Project - the in-depth interviews with online groomers, focus groups with young people, and dissemination events with key stakeholder groups. The scoping report and literature review have been published and are available for download at the project website.

Davidson, J., & Gottschalk, P. (2011). Characteristics of the Internet for criminal child sexual abuse by online groomers. *Criminal Justice Studies: A Critical Journal of Crime, Law and Society*, 24(1), 23-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1478601X.2011.544188>

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.

Elliott, I. A., & Ashfield, S. (2011). The use of online technology in the modus operandi of female sex offenders. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 17*(1), 92-104.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2010.537379>

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.

Gottschalk, P. (2011). [A dark side of computing and information sciences: Characteristics of online groomers.](#) *Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information Sciences, 2*(9).

The European Online Grooming Project from 2009 to 2011 involved researchers from Norway, Italy, Belgium and the UK. The project had three separate but interlinked phases. The first was a scoping project. The second and third phases involved interviews with convicted online groomers across Europe and dissemination activity respectively. The key features of grooming behavior the study identified do not apply to all groomers in all contacts they have with young people. These features of online grooming include factors that help maintain the behavior such as the online environment, dissonance and offenders perceptions of young people and their behavior. The research also identified salient behaviors in the grooming process such as: scanning the online environment for potential people to contact, the identity adopted by the groomer (be it their own or another); the nature of contact with the young person; the different ways in which the online groomer can intensify the process of grooming and the diverse range of outcomes toward the end of the process. In particular, it is clear from the research that not all episodes of online grooming result in a physical meeting. The first 'type' of groomer identified is the distorted attachment offender. Men in this group had offence supportive beliefs that involved seeing contact with the

young person as a ‘relationship’. The second type is the adaptable online groomer. This group of men had offence supportive beliefs that involved their own needs and seeing the victim as mature and capable. Finally, the hyper-sexualized group of men was characterized by extensive indecent image collections of children and significant online contact with other sexual offenders or offender groups.

Gottschalk, P. (2011). Stage model for online grooming offenders. In J. Davidson & P. Gottschalk (Eds.), *Internet child abuse: Current research and policy* (p.79-103). Routledge-Cavendish.

Kool, R. (2011). Prevention by all means? A legal comparison of the criminalization of online grooming and its enforcement. *Utrecht Law Review*, 7, 46.

My previous description of the development of precautionary criminal law illustrates that this article offers more than just a ‘practical learning opportunity’. First and foremost, I aim to assess the essential and practical effects of making grooming a criminal offence. To this end, I will present an analysis of the criminal-law debate, focusing on the meaning of the criminal provisions, their wording and the entailing problems of evidence (intention, causality and acts towards committing an offence). I will discuss related problems of enforcement, especially the necessity for proactive powers of investigation and relevant risks. First, however, the concept of grooming will be described, including a description of the underlying characteristics of offenders and victims (Section 2). This will be followed by the current state of affairs at the European level (Section 3). After the discussion of the English and Dutch cases (Sections 4 and 5), Section 6 will answer the question of whether the European obligation to make grooming a criminal offence is part of precautionary criminal law and which conclusions can be drawn.

Eneman, M., Gillespie, A. A., & Bernd, C. S. (2010). [Technology and sexual abuse: A critical review of an internet grooming case](#). *ICIS 2010 Proceedings*. 144.

Online grooming is an activity that leads to sexual abuse of children. For this reason a number of pieces of legislation governing grooming have been created on international and national levels. The present paper discusses a specific case that has received a lot of public attention and been

regarded as a high-profile grooming case in Sweden. This particular case is of special interest for the purpose of this paper since it caused the creation of the Swedish so called grooming offence that was implemented 2009. It discusses the English and Swedish legal interpretations of this case in order to then engage in a critical discussion of the legislation. Drawing on the concept of critical research, the paper builds on the ideas of ideology critique and boundary critique to show how such seemingly clear-cut issues as the prevention of sexual abuse of children still require careful attention to underlying assumptions and beliefs. The paper makes an important contribution to the understanding of information and communication technology as a means of behaving in unacceptable way. It makes theoretical and practical contributions to current debates surrounding use and governance of such technologies.

Jewkes, Y. (2010). Much ado about nothing? Representations and realities of online soliciting of children. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 16(1), 5-18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600903389452>

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.

Choo, K. K. R. (2009). [Online child grooming: A literature review on the misuse of social networking sites for grooming children for sexual offences](#). Australian Institute of Criminology.

This report brings together a number of aspects of the research that the AIC undertook in 2008. It reviews recently published academic and policy-relevant research on the misuse of online social networking sites and other forms of communications technologies by sexual predators to groom

children for sexual conduct. Information is also provided on the extent and nature of the problem including some available statistical information. The report begins by defining ‘online child grooming’ and identifying ways in which emerging technological changes may be exploited to facilitate and commit online child grooming. The implications of these developments are then assessed in terms of their impact on policing, policymaking and legislation. Suggestions are also made for responding effectively to these developments – a task that will entail a whole-of-government approach and a closer working relationship among government, those involved in developing new digital technologies and creating the infrastructure in which they operate, and the end users (including parents, children and educators). Awareness and understanding of the threats of online child exploitation will continue to be a vital component of the fight against online child grooming both in Australia and overseas. The report concludes by highlighting the need for a comprehensive research effort where a better understanding of online child exploitation, particularly online child grooming issues, is needed. Specific research is needed to develop insight into the online child grooming offending cycle and to explore the behaviour of online groomers who target children. The research effort will inform policy and policing strategies aimed at curbing the continuing evolution of online child exploitation.

Choo, K. R. (2009). Responding to online child sexual grooming: An industry perspective. *Trends & Issues in Criminal Justice*, 379, 1-6.

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.

Davies, M., Rogers, P., & Hood, P. A. (2009). Perceptions of child sexual abuse in a hypothetical cybersexploitation case: The importance of perpetrator honesty, outcome type, and respondent gender. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 18*(4), 422-441.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10538710903051104>

This study investigated perceptions of child sexual abuse in a hypothetical cybersexploitation 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 versus 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.

Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., & Olafsson, K. (2009). [Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: Cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online](#). EU Kids Online, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

This report seeks to identify and explain the pattern of cross-national similarities and differences in children's online use, skills, opportunities, risks and safety. To do so, it draws on a sizable evidence base in Europe, collated across 21 countries. A series of key research questions and hypotheses were examined in relation to the available findings across Europe. These permit some general conclusions (i.e. cross-national similarities) which hold, with exceptions, and notwithstanding the limitations on data quality, across the European countries examined.

Beech, A. R., Elliott, I. A., Birgden, A., & Findlater, D. (2008). The Internet and child sexual offending: A criminological review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 13*(3), 216-228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2008.03.007>

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.

Kierkegaard, S., (2008). Cybering, online grooming and ageplay. *Computer Law & Security, 24*(1), 41-55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2007.11.004>

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.

Shannon, D. (2008). Online sexual grooming in Sweden-online and offline sex offences against children as described in Swedish police data. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 9(2), 160-180.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14043850802450120>

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.

Dombrowski, S. C., Gisclare, K. L., & Durst, T. (2007). Safeguarding young people from cyber pornography and cyber sexual predation: A major dilemma of the Internet. *Child Abuse Review*, 16(3), 153-170. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.939>

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.

Jayawardena, K. P., & Broadhurst, R. (2007). [Online Child Sex Solicitation: Exploring the feasibility of a research 'sting'](#). *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 1(2), 228-248. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2137390>

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 were 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.

Mitchell, K. J., Finkelhor, D., & Wolak, J. (2005). [The Internet and family and acquaintance sexual abuse](#). *Child Maltreatment*, 10(1), 49-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559504271917>

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.

Gillespie, A. A. (2004). Tackling grooming. *The Police Journal*, 77(3), 239-255.

<https://doi.org/10.1350/pojo.77.3.239.54092>

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.

Berson, I. R. (2003). Grooming cybervictims: The psychosocial effects of online exploitation for youth. *Journal of School Violence*, 2(1), 5-18. https://doi.org/10.1300/J202v02n01_02

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 cybersexploitation and online grooming practices.](#) Cyberspace Research Unit, University of Central Lancashire. 22p.

Gillespie, A. (2002). Child protection on the internet challenges for criminal law. *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 14(4), 411-425.

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.

Implementing the Barnahus Quality Standards throughout Europe

PROMISE is supporting Europe to adopt the Barnahus model as a standard practice for providing child victims and witnesses of violence rapid access to justice and care. We undertake this work to fulfil the PROMISE vision: a Europe where all children enjoy their right to be protected from violence.

A Barnahus provides multi-disciplinary and interagency collaboration to ensure that child victims and witnesses of violence benefit from a child-friendly, professional and effective response in a safe environment which prevents (re)traumatisation. With the formal support from national authorities, PROMISE provides opportunities to translate national commitment into action and engage internationally in the process. In addition, regular networking and strategic communications continually activate our growing network of professionals and stakeholders who are committed to introducing and expanding Barnahus services nationally.

The first PROMISE project (2015-2017) set European standards and engaged a broad network of professionals. The second PROMISE project (2017-2019) promoted national level progress towards meeting the standards and formalised the PROMISE Barnahus Network. The third project (2020-2022) expanded these activities to include University training, case management tools, with a view to establishing a European Competence Centre for Barnahus and laying the groundwork for an accreditation system for Barnahus. The current Project: PROMISE ELPIS (2023-2025) is managed by Charité-University Medicine, Berlin, and promotes multidisciplinary and interagency models for child victims and witnesses of sexual violence, with a specific focus on specialised interventions and excellence in practice in cases where there is a presumed online element of the sexual violence.

Access the PROMISE tools and learn more at www.barnahus.eu



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