

Online Grooming: An Exploration into the Genetic-Social Variables
which Enable Victimisation

by

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Abstract

It is apparent that crime within contemporary society has become centred on digital development and the innovation of criminal practices. Through this, cyber grooming has perhaps become the forefront of online child victimisation, where predators frequently seek out vulnerable children via social networking sites to encourage them to engage in a level of sexual gratification.

Therefore, due to the increasing maturity of online grooming, this research focuses on how the victimisation of a child is enabled through a Genetic-Social (Owen 2012) approach. This attempts to examine the literature from a multifactorial standpoint that considers the formation of crime through several contributing factors: the biological aspect, the psychological element, the social influence, and the environmental circumstance. Consequently, the following literature review will assess multiple pieces of research that have been produced in relation to online paedophilia. This assessment has been subdivided into two intertwining levels that may contribute to the establishment of online grooming: the variables that enable child victimisation and the overall limitations of existing research and the underpinning of Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social framework.

Arguably, such a study is important to identify how a child can so easily become, at times willingly, victimised. Following this data, it is important to discuss how possible prevention strategies and policies could be proposed. The findings from this research provided evidence that there is currently only analysis of the crime and very little development in the proposal for deterrence or preventative means. The results, therefore, attempt to define the key issues that are contributing to the victimisation of children, in addition to recommending changes to policy. I then suggest the formulation of an online app that could enable children to become more resilient to the strategies of victimisation.

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Introduction

The first products of long-distance communication consisted of the telegraph (invented in the 1830s by Samuel Morse), the telephone (invented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876), and the radio (invented by Guglielmo Marconi in 1895). Through the principle and objective of creating a facility for long-distance communication, I argue that these methods of technology have paved the way for the development of the internet within modern society.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that ‘almost nine in ten adults in the UK have recently (from January 2017 to March 2017) used the internet (89%)’ (ONS 2017). Within a ‘Brief History of the Internet’, Leiner (2009) identified the internet as a ‘worldwide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location’ (Leiner 2009, 22). In modern society, this statement is perhaps a snapshot of the capabilities of the internet. For instance, technology allows contemporary society to use the internet in multiple forms ranging from a computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone, television, to a smartwatch. Modern society also uses the internet for a variety of reasons such as online shopping, research, health tracking, streaming, documenting, education, real-time updates, financial transactions, communication and social media engagement, etc. (Hargittai 2010) It is apparent that British society is becoming increasingly reliant on cyberspace.

The Communications Act 2003 placed a responsibility on Ofcom to investigate and research the use of technology amongst children. In 2016, Ofcom found that smartphone and tablet ownership were the most popular forms of digital access. ‘The increases in smartphone ownership from 2015 to 2016 are particularly evident for 8-11s (32% vs 24%) and for 12-15s (79% vs 69%)’ (Ofcom 2016, 7). Within a year, these statistics show the increasing engagement children have in the online world. It is conceivable that the increased access to the internet arguably increases the facility and opportunity for cybercrime.

Moreover, within the past 20 years, it is apparent that there has been a surge in the creation and abilities of communication platforms. ‘Collectively these social technologies have enabled a revolution in user-generated content, global community and the publishing of

consumer opinion, now uniformly tagged as social media' (Smith 2009, 1). I argue that this revolution is dominating the way we use the internet and is now embedded into mainstream society. I suggest that some of the most current and popular social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Each of these social media platforms has a variety of features that equally develop and transform over time. For instance, some social media platforms now facilitate group chats to allow communication between multiple users (such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Snapchat). However, the qualitative research conducted by Ofcom found that 'often the functionality of group chats is now to indirectly facilitate bullying acts, as children are exploiting the ability to add or delete people from these groups in order to exclude or hurt people' (Ofcom 2016, 11). It is apparent that new features of social media are being used to victimise users. For instance, with regards to online grooming, several social media platforms now enable the user to live stream. 'Live streaming is the broadcasting of real-time, live video to an audience over the internet' (Thinkuknow 2018). I argue that such features create new and intensifying risks on the internet, especially with regards to paedophilia. For instance, when concerning live streaming, the user is unaware of who is watching and the probability of exposing intimate information and the user's geographical location is often used without consent. It is plausible that these features enable a new and more intensified level of victimisation.

It is arguable that such online access, technological advances, and increased reliance on social media platforms have expanded and enabled grooming within contemporary society. Due to continuous advancements in technology, it is foreseeable that online grooming requires further research to enable a more efficient prevention system. The following piece of research, which was conducted through a literature review, attempts to evaluate numerous findings and perspectives, divided into two themes, in order to suggest further preventative means.

The first theme discusses how there are numerous variables that enable victimisation. Some of these consist of access and supervision, shifting patterns of perception, and the variables that enable child victimisation within the processes of policing and criminalisation. I propose that a deeper understanding of child victimisation would enable society to create or develop existing ideologies in the prevention of child victimisation. Therefore, I will first discuss some of the variables that potentially enable the crime.

Conversely, the second theme of this piece of work is to consider the overall limitations of existing research. This perspective attempts to consider how existing research is discussing the issues of online grooming through a single perspective. Therefore, I will analyse existing research to identify how their perspectives could be considered from a wider, multifactorial analysis. This will include underpinning Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social framework within the research and examine online grooming as caused by several contributing factors through a metatheoretical approach (Owen 2012). A multifactorial formation will attempt to consider numerous factors that enable online grooming, rather than examining grooming from a unitary perspective.

Background Context

The perception of paedophilia, in which child sexual exploitation is wrong, was socially constructed within British society in the late 19th century when the concept of a child within youth justice emerged. Throughout history, children have been presented as sexual objects. Essentially, this can be identified in the naked presentation or alluring intent of children in artwork, for instance through the depiction of cherubs. Additionally, this can also be recognised in the proposed sexual actions of children or derogatory descriptions of youths within poems and literature, and the perception of the class divide of children when examining the presentation of the rich and poor. These children were often identified as evangelical or romanticist (Fletcher 2010) in nature.

Within contemporary society, it is a common misconception that paedophilia is illegal. There are numerous definitions of paedophilia but arguably all consist of the understanding that paedophilia is a ‘sexual interest in children for six months or more’ (Critcher 2002, 521). Although, it could be argued that there should not necessarily be a time constraint to be deemed paedophilia, the ideology of the paedophile is identified as a psychiatric disorder that disregards the norms of society. The perception and admittance of being a paedophile and having a sexual attraction to children are not illegal. However, acting on this could arguably lead to prosecution. The Sex Offenders Act 1997 lists all people convicted of acts ‘of a sexual nature involving an abuse of power, where the victim is unable to give informed or true consent’ (Greater Manchester Probation Service 1994, cited in Davidson 2002, 26). This refers to several offences including child abuse.

With regards to the offence of grooming, Craven, Brown, and Gilchrist (2006, 63) describe it as:

‘a process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of the child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child’s compliance and maintaining the child’s secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender’s abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions’.

It could be suggested that the perception of child grooming is also a fairly new concept due to the change and advancement of how children are viewed in society. The opinion and purpose of children in society debatably began to change in the late 19th century when the 1870

Education Act came into provision and represented the first interest of children by implementing education on a national scale. However, for many years, this made little difference to the representation of youth as there was a silence of youth sexual solicitation until the 1980s when there was a rapid change in Western society (Smart 1998). In the 1980s the perception of gender roles was re-challenged and there were questions over the labelling and liberation of homosexuality, the rise of second-wave feminism, and questions over child sexual abuse. I argue that this was the first standpoint in which children were deemed as sexually vulnerable and in need of further protection. Fundamentally, it can be proposed that from the 1970s, the concept of paedophilia was caused by a culture shift in British society. Smart (1989) identified the end of the sexual silence on paedophilia in the 1980s during the Thatcher era. It could be suggested that this silence has now shifted towards the online realm and online paedophilia through the normalisation of digital relationships.

Within modern society, predators have used the development of the digital age to enhance their grooming practices. The online world has given the predator a level of ‘safety’ in which they can hide behind a smokescreen of technology through a perspective of ‘Cyber Stature’ (Owen, Noble, and Speed 2017, 34). The ‘Cyber Stature conglomerate comprises of the numerous realms of the private sphere acting as a platform to “give” a cybercriminal status and power through the means of online social networking sites’ (Owen, Noble, and Speed 2017, 34). The digital sphere has also enabled predators to access children with little parental/guardian visibility, in which they can prey on numerous victims.

Research Methods

Introduction

Although, it is perhaps impossible to give reliable statistical evidence for paedophilia within the United Kingdom due to the degree of under-reporting, dark figure crime, and the lack of self-recognition of paedophilic tendencies. The Specialist Treatment Organisation for the Prevention of Sexual Offending (StopSo) found that from June 2013 to October 2016, 38% of their clients wanted help to deter them from viewing digital child abuse videos and images, 9% of the clients required help to not commit a child abuse offence, and 11% wanted guidance after admitting that they had not committed an offence, although they do find children attractive (Stopso 2016). When analysing these statistics, it is apparent that many individuals realise the criminal liability and understand the moral implications of paedophilia, although they still feel insecure about their ability to not act on their desires. Within the overall survey of client sex offenders, 36% of the participants had not been in contact or to their knowledge, had been identified by the Criminal Justice System or social services (Stopso 2016).

Following such evidence, the literature review was conducted to specifically look at the multiple views and aspects of online grooming to propose a new level of prevention. However, it was apparent that there was limited research conducted that chiefly emphasised the perspectives and reasoning behind a child's victimisation. For instance, leading theorists such as MacKenna (2013) and Woods (2014) primarily focus on the rationale and the psychiatric understanding from the paedophiles perspective. However, although psychiatric understanding of paedophilia is evidently important, the degree of paedophiles who have not been identified consequently negates the understanding of the psychiatric disorder. Primarily, if the authorities were unable to identify possible paedophiles due to the negative stigma, degree of shame, and possible moral and criminal implications, a large majority of unidentified paedophiles would not benefit from psychiatric intervention. Therefore, I propose, that by placing the emphasis on the victimisation of the child, the overall limitations of existing research and the underpinning of Owen's Genetic-Social framework, that I would be able to suggest possible developments, in addition to new ideologies.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to discuss and evaluate why children are so easily and increasingly victimised by online grooming while assessing any additional contributing factors. I conducted a literature review to develop a greater understanding of the crime and consider what research already exists within the field. The literature review also enabled me to identify the most prominent and merited ideologies. It was apparent with regards to online grooming that there has been little assessment of the key elements, for instance, the child, laws, the education system, the media, and wider society. This may be due to the newness of the subject. Similarly, due to the sensitivity of the subject, it is apparent that ethical approval for any primary research could be difficult to gain when chiefly trying to assess the child's victimisation. Issues such as confidentiality, access to children, maintaining the safety of a child, avoiding the desensitisation of children, and gaining honest feedback would be foreseeably hard to gain. Therefore, it is probable that such ethical considerations are a reason for the lack of existing research.

The literature review was based on several different articles that each showed individual merit. Each piece of literature was thoroughly read. I highlighted any intriguing statements and collated the significant notions at the end of each piece. When collating the information, I decided to write the literature review under two clear headings to separate the directions of the piece. First, the variables that potentially enable victimisation and second, the overall limitations of existing research and the underpinning of the Genetic-Social framework (Owen 2012). The first section attempted to discuss multiple reasons that contribute to the victimisation of children, enabling paedophilic activity whereas the second section attempted to look at the limitations of the literature and expand on these limitations from a Genetic-Social approach (Owen 2012). By taking a Genetic-Social approach (Owen 2012), I believe that I could discuss online grooming from a multifactorial perspective that considers several contributing factors rather than looking at online grooming from a single perspective or a one-size-fits-all approach.

To add, it was apparent that the only ideology that was prominent or reoccurring throughout the majority of the research was O'Connell's (2003) 'Typology of Child Cyberexploitation and Online Grooming Practices'. The typology developed from O'Connell's (2003) research could be identified as the forefront of the understanding of cyber grooming. It has divided the practices and interdependent levels of cyber grooming into five stages: 'the friendship forming stage, the relationship forming stage, the risk assessment stage, the exclusivity stage

and the sexual stage' (O'Connell 2003, 24). This research was conducted from 'a participant observation methodology, which involved over 50 hours of research in chat rooms conducted intermittently over 5 years' (O'Connell 2003, 5). However, when composing this literature review, I argue that for the level of 'pioneering work', this ideology had very little evidence-based guidance. For instance, when noting that the research took approximately 50 hours over a five-year period, although the range of time would allow the researcher to review the development of online grooming, the level of analysis needed was arguably not present. It is foreseeable that less than one day a year of analysis for five years is not a large enough sample to represent the population. However, the basic division of grooming practices appears to be coherent with research conducted by the EU Kids Online Foundation when subdividing grooming formations. Consequently, although I chose not to review this level of research due to its age, it was acknowledged when exploring the literature and composing defensive ideologies.

Reliability and validity

Brown (2006) maintains that there are specific points that should be considered when evaluating the validity and reliability of research. The first point is a question of purpose. The purpose of this review is to develop, assess, and analyse the pre-existing ideologies that possibly enable levels of victimisation in grooming. Within the current literature and research of online grooming, I maintain that a gap in the research is a multifactorial analysis.

Therefore, following the review of the literature, I have underpinned the Genetic-Social framework (Owen 2012) within the research of online grooming, to discuss online grooming from a wider perspective.

Moreover, Brown (2006) also believed it was important to question the scope of the research. I attempt to discuss the variables that enable child victimisation and the existing limitations of current research and the underpinning of the Genetic-Social perspective. I propose that within current literature the perspective of the paedophile and the reasoning for intent is readily available and reoccurring in the research. I selected which literature to include based on individual merit due to the limited word count available. Individual merit concerned the developments found in their research, ideologies that required further analysis, and the format of the research. Although it could be proposed that I subjectively selected the pieces of

research, it could be maintained that all the literature analysed possessed a level of reliability when regarding the academic backgrounds of all the authors.

With regards to the authority of each piece selected, the reviewed literature has been written by an academic, such as Professor Elaine Campbell of Criminology, Newcastle University, who produced 'Policing Paedophilia: Assembling Bodies, Spaces and Things' (2015). Similarly, all but one (Sorell's (2016) 'Online Grooming and Preventive Justice',) of the articles were written in an academic format and is presumably presented for scholarly and professional interest.

'Developing a Framework for Researching Children's Online Risks and Opportunities in Europe' (Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Stasrud, 2015) is, however, written in a more accessible vocabulary. Arguably, this could be as the piece is written from three separate international perspectives so a higher use of simple language would be more appreciated for translation and transnational use. Additionally, as this piece was presented as research produced by the EU Kids Online organisation, the information needs to be legible to a variety of networks who may not have experience or understanding of academic literature.

Data Analysis and Representativeness

The literature review was based on a combination of books and journal articles, however, during data collection, I did assess statistical evidence from the Office of National Statistics and contemporary media articles to use as examples in the presentation of modern-day grooming. Moreover, the literature was sourced from a variety of bases: libraries, the internet (including academic search engines such as Google Scholar), and recommendations. Although it would have arguably been more effective if this level of secondary data was coupled with primary analysis such as interviews and surveys, the proposed literature review is based on qualitative data, mainly composed of ideologies to identify the leading perceptions in online grooming. It is apparent in the research that very little of the existing data was based on quantitative research. The data extracted for the literature review is the information or ideologies that either seems most relevant to the topic with the need of further discussion, or perceptions that could be argued.

It is clear when analysing data in the current literature, the following themes arise: the paedophiles' intent and psychological state, their practices and deception techniques, the child's willingness and vulnerability, societal influences with regards to the media, legal standards and societal morals, and the connection of online grooming with other offences. However, within this review, there is very little evidence-based research as a large degree of the current literature has been deciphered through armchair theorising. As armchair theorising typically does not involve the collection of primary data, most of the literature review was based on further reviews.

It is apparent that the subject of online grooming has a 'newness' element due to the continuous development of technology and the varying fads of social networking sites. The lack of substantial data is perhaps due to the rapid evolution of a digital society. For instance, the image-based networking site, Instagram, enables an individual to follow their friends, family, and wider society. However, the site has optional security settings that either enables anybody with a profile on the website to access a user's personal images or only allows access to approved users. Similarly, the general age requirement for Instagram is 13, however, it is apparent many users are under this preliminary age. Messaging on Instagram is now encouraged and sites such as this, possibly make online grooming easier by giving additional optional access to the child. For instance, it is now possible to link social networking sites. I maintain that the association of a child on different social networking sites arguably enables the predator an intensified level of 'Cyber Stature' (Owen, Noble and Speed 2017, 34), by enabling them to cyber stalk the child from different perspectives. For instance, it could be proposed that Facebook, could be used in a predatory manner to gather background information on a child as it often encourages them to display their personal information. Such information could include their town, location, school information, date of birth, and personal contact information (such as email and phone number). Additionally, following this, many children who do display their phone number on Facebook are then often contactable through Snapchat. Although Snapchat and Facebook are not directly linked, they do enable each other. The purpose of Snapchat is to send instant updates to your followers. A predator can easily use this insight to identify where a child is, who they are with, their level of supervision, and their interests with which they can use to gain trust in conversations. Likewise, children also have the ability to directly link Twitter and Instagram to their Facebook. Twitter is perhaps similar to Snapchat and can often be used as a way to detect

interests and propose commonalities. However, Instagram gives further visual perspective by enabling the predator to look at how the child presents themselves and their interests.

Accordingly, it is evident that there is very little research or analysis on the current effects of the most popular social networking sites. Although it is apparent that there are numerous popular social networking sites, it is plausible that Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat are currently amongst the most popular that encourage digital communications. A proposed gap in the literature could possibly be the analysis and different uses of each social networking site and how they may enable online grooming in different ways. It is plausible that a higher level of access to the child through social media enables the predator to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives. Perhaps, there has been very little research conducted on the sites themselves due to the continuing and arguably unpredictable hype of each social networking site, in which research could become obsolete with the evolution of a new digital trend. However, it could also be plausible that such continued research needs to be conducted to facilitate a deeper parental and educational understanding of the potential dangers. For instance, YouTube launched the evolution of 'YouTube Kid Tube' in 2015 and this was presented to parents as a safe method for children to have access to suitable age-appropriate YouTube videos without having to worry about parental guardianship or desensitisation. However, there have been many complaints to YouTube Kids as disturbing videos have been uploaded to desensitise children under the pretence of a cartoon. For instance, the popular children's character Peppa Pig has been presented as a gangster and is often under attack by weapons such as knives and rotating saws. The character is also presented in torturous circumstances (Palmer and Griffiths 2016). Although it is arguable that this may not be directly linked to paedophilia, it is perhaps an accessible practice that attempts to desensitise children in general before commencing the messaging contact.

Additionally, it could be considered that another issue within the research is the very little recognition and importance placed on the role of online grooming within different facilitators. For instance, it is apparent that online gaming has become increasingly popular due to the developments in imagery, realism, and projection. The online gaming network arguably presents a new level of danger for children. For instance, online gaming allows children to play with individuals across the world in real-time. Such networks propose a question of truthful presentation in which unlike a social networking site, a user does not have to fill in a profile and give details about themselves.

Similarly, online gaming can allow the child to chat live. Supposedly, this could be both an advantage and disadvantage to the predator. For instance, the paedophile would have the ability to communicate on a more intensified level with dialogue. However, the child would perhaps have a better perception of danger by linking a strangers' voice to public sphere dangers. Similarly, as online gaming does not have the physical presence of a keyboard, I suggest that it is foreseeable that parents often do not recognise the same risk within online gaming due to the difference in communication style and the negated use of a keyboard. Perhaps the presence of a voice has more impact on an individual than visual dialogue. For instance, the audio commandment to do something may sound more authoritative rather than a conversation written on the screen.

Additionally, as online gaming often includes inducing and creating a fantasy sphere of interaction, it could be that this level of fantasy is used to desensitise players for the sexual purposes of predators. When comparing this to online grooming using social networking sites, it is plausible that as the child is already willingly engaging in the online gaming sphere, which often enacts a fantasy sphere, the child then finds it harder to identify the danger. Fantasy can be defined through the use of the imagination, which is often exaggerated and undetermined. Due to the nature of online gaming, which could be identified as unrealistic, children may not be able to consider the victimisation due to the fake atmosphere. For instance, Breck Bednar, a 14-year-old boy was an online gamer who was killed in 2014. Breck was speaking to a computer engineer, Lewis Daynes, through a live headset and soon became under the influence of Daynes (Smith 2015). This type of solicitation through online gaming perhaps shows a gender preference (if any) with online grooming.

Overall, it is apparent when analysing the current literature that there is a gap in modern research regarding online gaming. Here, it is apparent that I have used my primary knowledge and experience to note the possible dangers of specific digital applications and online gaming. However, there needs to be a large degree of research conducted into the specific elements of victimisation that are consequently enabled by specific social networking sites and online games. This will enable a more evidence-based outlook to the research.

Literature Review

The Variables That Enable Child Victimization

It is apparent that there are numerous causes that enable the victimisation of children. In the following chapter, I will discuss some of the variables that enable and lead to the victimisation of children in the online world.

Access and Supervision

Within contemporary society, it is clear that the development of technology is at the forefront of public interest due to the re-innovation of digital capabilities. I suggest that the motivating factor behind innovation is to improve current technology and to create technological advances that simplify or improve everyday life and also aim to increase the efficiency of current processes. Consequently, due to the continuous advancements in technology, I argue that society has become reliant upon the technology that provides such ease and efficiency.

For instance, from an educational standpoint, numerous classrooms are increasing their uses of tablets and apps. According to the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA 2018, 2) ‘around three quarters of schools were using tablets in 2015, for over half of lesson time’. This first decreases the amount of marking a teacher may have to do when compared with writing on an answer sheet and it also makes an activity more interactive and appealing for children. However, this has perhaps changed the perspectives of children. Arguably, within the past ten years, the increased reliance on technology has further enabled the access children may have to the online world. Perhaps the idea of playtime now involves the use of a digital device and the norms of physical play and interaction have arguably been affected by the increase in and attraction to digital innovation. Accordingly, the increased presence of children in the online world increases the probability and opportunity for a child to become victimised online.

Consequently, due to the increased access to the online world, it can be suggested that children are now more digitally savvy. I propose that modern-day children are now developing their primary and secondary socialisation through online access. It is plausible

that children are becoming increasingly digitally savvy due to their ability to retain more information and learn at a quicker speed. This is similar to Prensky's (2001, 2) notion that 'as a result of this ubiquitous environment and the sheer volume of their interaction with it, today's students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors'. I suggest that as children are more proficient with technology, it is perhaps foreseeable that there is a decreased degree of supervision of children as they have surpassed the knowledge and capabilities of a large degree of adults. For instance, it could be identified that a large degree of the ageing population does not access or understand how to use the online world. According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS 2018, 5), in 2017 only 'four in ten adults aged seventy-five and over, have used the internet in the last 3 months' (ONS 2018). Therefore, it is perhaps probable that adults do not know how to properly supervise their children when they are using the internet as these adults are unaware of how to use a large degree of the internet. This is especially relevant when considering grandparents and their knowledge of technology.

Similarly, another factor that could contribute to the lack of supervision could be the increase in full-time working parents. 'Parental supervision is seen in each of these jurisdictions (roles of the individual, society and state), as an essential element of protecting young people from online dangers' (Steeves and Webster 2008, 5). As contemporary society has changed, the number of nuclear families has decreased and the variation in types of families has increased; this includes same-sex couples, single-parent families, and stepfamilies, etc. It could be suggested that as the institution of the family has changed, the roles within the family have diverged in which there is no longer the cultural norm of the homemaker. For instance, it could be identified that within previous generations, children would be supervised to a higher degree as they would have the stereotypical mother running the household. However, as there have been economic shifts in the current economic climate, there has been an increase in the need for working parents. For instance, in 1975 'the female employment rate (aged 16 to 64) was at 55%, however in 2018 the female employment rate (aged 16 to 64) had increased to 71%' (ONS 2018, 7). Therefore, this may alter the degree and type of supervision a child may receive.

In addition, access to the online world has also diverged and multiplied. Children can now access the online world from multiple devices that can be used in numerous geographical locations. Therefore, compared to the original digital device, the computer, which could be

kept in a central point within the home where the supervision of online use could be monitored, now digital devices do not have a single geographical standpoint that would limit the degree of unsupervised access. Therefore, children usually can access their digital device with little or no supervision when they please.

Shifting Patterns of Perception

It could be suggested that as technology develops, terminology and norms diversify. For instance, in *Cybercrime and Society*, Majid Yar (2013, 128), a Professor of Criminology at Lancaster University highlights the link between cyberstalking and cyber grooming, in which ‘cyberstalking can be understood as an online variant of similar behaviours that take place in other non-virtual contexts and environments’. Within contemporary society, it is perceivable that the norms of cyberstalking are becoming unconstrained and conversely enable cyber grooming. Within our digital society, cyberstalking ‘is less likely to entail direct, face to face harassment in which the perpetrator and victim are physically co-present’ (Yar 2013, 134). It is conceivable that due to the developments in online technology, such behaviours have become normalised and are a reflection of contemporary society. For example, I suggest that the notion of a Facebook stalker has become an increasingly used outlook on the personal use of social networking sites. Such concepts could be linked to the norms of online cultures in which there is a perceived benchmark of engagement. Essentially, this could be identified by the digital pressures of the younger generation to create as many online connections as possible. It is debatable that such tendencies and online habits are then reflected and supported within the strategies of online paedophiles due to the increase in the ease of connection. Such norms and concepts could be identified as enabling child victimisation.

Yar (2013) also expands his discussion by contemplating the links between online paedophilia and fear-inducing moral panic. Principally, it could be suggested that the media have presented numerous youth orientated moral panics that have enhanced child vulnerability in society. Such examples include the recent culture of celebrity paedophiles who have been accused of committing numerous sex attacks on children. Such perpetrators that have been branded as paedophiles include Gary Glitter, Rolf Harris, and Jimmy Saville. Similarly, a more recent paedophilia epidemic could be identified as the paedophile sex rings that have become widespread across the nation. Lord Macdonald, a former Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales argued that there was ‘a major problem in particular

communities of men viewing young white girls as “trash” and available for sex’ (Sharman 2017, 4). It has been suggested that there has been little movement in the identification of paedophile sex rings due to the misconception that such rings are often only within the Muslim community due to the connection with the Rotherham paedophile ring.

Consequently, it could be proposed that such moral panics within public sphere paedophilia have counteracted or mitigated the awareness needed for online paedophilia. This, therefore, effects society’s awareness of online grooming.

With regards to social norms, many individuals are often more vulnerable to the dangers online as there is increased social mobility and communication. Perhaps, the sense of risk is compromised when considering the effect of the ‘Bedroom Culture’ (McRobbie and Garber 1975, 9) and their perception of the online and offline world. This is apparent in several situations, where the individual is unable to identify or comprehend the same presence, abilities, risks, and dangers in the online world, in comparison to the offline world. This is perhaps due to the lack of physical presence and is apparent when a child is transgressing between the online and offline world. For example, if they are in the process of public sphere communication, but are simultaneously active on a social networking site through a digital device, they perhaps characteristically prioritise their abilities, risks and dangers in the offline world due to the physical presence. I identify this perception as a camouflage due to the hidden presence of dangers online. Overall, I argue that the individual (especially a child) is unable to identify the merge within the public and private sphere due to an inability to be equally present in both spheres.

Moreover, Yee and Bailenson (2007, 271) similarly discussed that individual actions are instead affected by the ‘Proteus Effect’. This effect ‘demonstrates that as we change our self-representations online, our behaviour changes’ (Whittle et al. 2012, 67). For instance, within social networking sites, there are numerous variations in which individual physical, emotional, and social norms expand and diversify online. When discussing the physical elements, it could be proposed that the self-imagery varies in the representation used. For instance, arguably, one’s profile picture often does not express a realistic portrayal of the individual. Within contemporary society, this could be identified when children post photos online that are arguably too provocative or not age-appropriate, which consequently could make them more vulnerable. It could be suggested that a degree of children purposely sexualise themselves to seek out desensitisation. This effect has consequently been renewed

through the progression of filters within digital applications such as Snapchat, which often encourages digital natives (Prensky 2001) to alter their digital perception.

Equally, regarding the differences in emotional norms, it could be suggested that the online sphere gives the individual the opportunity to enhance their characteristics through a different facility, for instance, ‘the fragmentation hypothesis states that the ease with which possible identities can be crafted online may fragment personalities’ (Valkenburg and Peter 2010, 121). Within contemporary society, there is an ever-increasing digital presence of communication that has vastly affected the physical public sphere presence of dialogue. I suggest that there is a subconscious difference in online and offline communication. Typically, it could be proposed that the public sphere presence of dialogue gives a filter to our actions and outcomes by increasing our sense of consciousness and self-awareness. Arguably, this characteristically alters within the online world due to a diminishing quality of authentic communication, clear content, and palpable situations online. An example of this would be the use of digital emojis in comparison to real-world facial expressions. It is apparent within modern society that digital culture often encourages the use of emojis, ‘which are small digital images of icons used to express ideas or emotions in electronic communication’ (Donovan 2016, 23). However, it is plausible, that in the public sphere such extension or representation of ideas or feelings do not exist beyond the normality of facial expressions. Therefore, it could be suggested that due to the change in communication between the online and offline world, the change in risk or cues of danger are also otherwise identified. This could consequently make children more vulnerable.

Policing and Criminalisation

It could be suggested that a degree of individual policing, criminalisation, and legal stances enable the victimisation of children. For instance, research conducted by Savirimuthu (2012, 68) recognises that ‘sexual grooming laws not only delineate the standards of behaviour expected from individuals towards children but its provisions also identify the types of conduct, which if entered will give rise to criminal liability’. When considering the types of conduct that could be recognised as a criminal offence, it is possible that many individuals fail to distinguish between the lines of acceptable actions and risk provoking behaviour. For instance, it could be proposed that as cultural norms and social values are continuously being re-challenged, a portion of society is unable to recognise the different categorisations of age.

Consequently, this could affect their ability to recognise an act that may be criminally liable. An example of this could be the integrating merge between childhood and adult life. The blurred lines or absence of distinction are apparent when considering the legal standards of behaviour. For instance, the legal age of marriage is 16 years old, which could be compared to the legal age to purchase alcohol at 18 years old. This can similarly be highlighted through the facility to join the army at 16 years old, compared to the legal capacity to buy a DVD or violent game that has been given a certificate of 18 years old. It could be maintained that the legal confusion of age combined with the sexualisation of childhood within the media could potentially evoke further paedophilic behaviour. For instance, I suggest that a large degree of society does not recognise that a 17-year-old person as legally a minor. Therefore, this may increase the attempts to sexually engage with a child. Correspondingly, this ideology resembles the intention of the paedophile by giving them a weak defence to avoid prosecution by maintaining that they did not intend to sexually solicit a child. I suggest that there needs to be a move towards transparency in the law by indicating and creating the same definitions of childhood and adulthood.

Furthermore, when examining the effect of the actions governed by the Criminal Justice System, it could be proposed that a large degree of society fail to consider to what degree public preservation and patrolling assemblages stem from professional policing, for instance, when regarding the ‘computer generated Sweetie’ (Campbell 2015, 348), which is a fake online profile the police use to engage with paedophiles. It could be proposed that the inclination of creating fake profiles immensely encouraged and intensified online paedophilia. Perhaps, the fault was not in the creation of ‘Sweetie’, which consequently gave paedophiles a similar ideology of altering their self-portrayal to the identity of another or fake profile but in the announcement of the creation, development, and actions of ‘Sweetie’. For instance, although this technology may deter a minority of paedophiles from interacting online, it is arguable that the consensus of creating a fake profile has raised, and perhaps normalised, the acceptance of fabricating online characters. Arguably, further evaluation should be conducted into how the components of the ideological state apparatus (Althusser 1969), possibly encourage or enhance paedophilic ideologies and strategies.

Additionally, Sorrell (2016, 8) questions ‘whether it is justifiable to criminalize steps in a harm-producing process if the steps come before the attempted full-blown crime’. Within the online grooming process, it is debatable where the justified criminalised steps would be. For

instance, would it be when attempting to create a fake social networking profile or would it be the point of online gratification in which sexual acts may be requested through imagery, video chat, or 'cyber rape' (Yar 2013). Perhaps a justified step of criminalisation would be before the point of physical contact. The threshold for online grooming as a preparatory offence is unclear and potentially fluctuating due to the diversification of the crime. When discussing the views of online grooming as a preparatory offence, Sorell (2016) does not acknowledge that the identity of a paedophile is not a criminalised offence unless these attractions are acted on. However, by extent, it could be proposed that the self-confessed identity of a paedophile, with no level of intervention (for instance medical assistance), could be by extent recognised as a possible preparatory offence. Although there is a level of freedom of speech and freedom of thought that should be considered, could it be suggested that the extension of preparatory offences would act as a sufficient deterrent?

It could be proposed that society also places too much emphasis on the 'Paedophile Hunter' who is in the minority and who does not investigate to the extent of the police. For instance, Campbell (2015, 346) highlighted an array of policing methods and innovative software such as 'Net Nanny, Cyber Patrol, Pure Sight, Cyber Sitter, Safe Eyes, Teensafe and Footprints'. Yet there is little emphasis placed on these institutions that arguably have more power and influence in the prevention of online grooming. Perhaps there needs to be additional research conducted into an overview of paedophilia prevention patterns and an evaluation into their degree of successful intervention.

Similarly, it could be maintained that prevention strategies maintain a one-size-fits-all approach. For instance, it is apparent that children with severe disabilities can often be identified as more vulnerable by a predator due to their increased online access and often their good-natured perspectives on the world. There is a lack of online awareness and policing specifically catered towards disabled individuals in contemporary society. Many online safety campaigns often address all children, however, this may not include the practices or alternate perspective that would help a disabled child understand. Campaigns such as 'SafeSurfing', which is run by Mencap: The Voice of Learning Disability, Cerebra, and 'Staying Safe on Social Media and Online' run by The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, are arguably not widely used or well known. It is arguable that the lack of awareness of such campaigns enable victimisation as the majority of society uses a singular approach for a range of children.

Overall Limitations of Existing Research and the Underpinning of Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social Framework

Explanation and examples of the Genetic-Social framework (Owen 2012)

Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social framework is a development on Sibeon's (1997) original anti-reductionist framework. However, Owen considers the Genetic-Social framework from a standpoint that draws upon evolutionary psychology, behavioural genetics, and neuroscience in addition to numerous philosophies of social sciences such as sociology, criminology, and psychology. The purpose of the Genetic-Social framework is to consider the cause of human behaviour and criminal behaviour via a four-fold lens: socio-environmental, genetic, neurological, and psychological. Owen (2014, 3) recognises that:

‘crime may be socially constructed, in the sense that human actors ascribe meaning to the world, but that there is still a reality ‘out there’ in the sense that environmental conditions are potential triggers of genetic or physiological predispositions towards behaviour that may be labelled criminal’.

Within this perspective, which acknowledges a number of contributing factors that are simultaneously internal and external to an individual, Owen categorises how he believes the framework contends a multitude of invalid modes of theoretical justification. Owen (2017, 29) identifies such attempts of ‘illegitimate reasonings’ as ‘cardinal sins’. Following this, when considering the explanations and reasoning for online grooming, I believe that Owen's (2012) use of the Genetic-Social framework enables crime to be reasoned through a multitude of contributing factors. For instance, as online grooming can vary depending on the child's outlook and influences, the paedophiles intent and strategies, the contributing factors of external life (such as school, laws, and the media), and the use of the social media platform, I maintain that cyber grooming is consequently a subjective process, dependent on the interaction of the paedophile and the child. Therefore, Owen's outlook of the Genetic-Social perspective, which identifies a number of factors behind the reasoning of criminalisation and victimisation, could be considered as an anti-reductionist (Owen 2014) framework that unifies a number of perspectives.

For instance, when considering the Genetic-Social framework (Owen 2012) within the identification of the Proteus effect, which is the notion that online we change and alter our self-representation, ‘to conform to the behaviour that others believe would expect of them to

have' (Yee and Bailenson 2007, 274). This could be identified within one of Owen's (2016) 'Cardinal Sins: Functional Teleology'. According to Owen, 'Functional teleology is an invalid form of analysis involving attempts to explain the causes of social phenomena in terms of their effects, where effects refer to outcomes or consequences viewed as performances of functions' (Owen 2017, 30). Furthermore, within the Proteus effect, it is unclear if individuals have the intention to change their representation for the purpose of conforming to expectations and this level of analysis does not maintain an outcome of an effect. It is apparent that the 'Cardinal Sins' (Owen 2012) could be used to identify the shortcomings of such research.

Consequently, in addition to the 'Cardinal Sins' (Owen 2012), Owen also recognises a number of meta-concepts that identifies key factors in a multi-perspective response to the reasoning for criminal behaviour.

For instance, Williams et al. (in submission cited in Whittle et al., 2012, 71) discuss how as a 'part of the rapport building process, an offender often synchronises their behaviour and style of communicating with the young person's, generating commonality and making them comfortable'. This is an important part of the predatory process that could be referred to as the trust formation. Often the purpose of the offender synchronising their behaviour is to create a luring perception of identifiability. It could be suggested that a child's sense of trust heightens, which consequently impacts on their level of communication when they consciously and unconsciously identify with an additional party. When referring to Owen's Genetic-Social framework that considers the 'Biological Variable' (Owen 2017, 33) as a contributing factor to committing the crime, it could be suggested that the unconsciousness of trust could possibly be linked to the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) that actively considers the similarities and differences between the individual and the other (Harris and Fiske 2007). If the offender did not attempt to identify with the child, this would consequently affect the activity within the mPFC by creating a higher level of suspicion and questionable status. This ultimately 'refers to the "feedback loop" which embraces both genes and environment, acknowledging plasticity and mutuality' (Owen 2017, 33). Similarly, the 'Infra-humanization theory' (Leyens et al. 2009) maintains 'that people see some groups as less human than others; they judge outgroups themselves as not experiencing complex emotions to the same extent as the ingroup does' (Harris and Fiske 2007, 46). Therefore, with respect to online grooming, the predator often attempts to synchronise their profiles and level of conversation

with the child. Within this strategy of online grooming, the paedophile arguably uses the biological variable (Owen 2012), the environment, and psychological techniques to enhance the levels of conversation. Perhaps this example reinforces the perspective of ‘embodied cognition’ that ‘conceives the human mind as the product of the brain, the body and the interactions in the outside world’ (Owen 2017, 33).

Conversely, when examining the EU Kids Online Model (Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Stasrud 2015), which was initially proposed as a linear model that identified several contributing factors that enabled online grooming. It demonstrated a cause-effect design that broke down the stages of the offence. The model was based on Bronfenbrenner’s ‘ecological approach, in which he proposed encircling layers of social influence- from close to distant’ (Bronfenbrenner 1979, cited in Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Stasrud 2015, 4). Arguably, this could be likened to Owen’s (2012) Genetic-Social approach, although rather than identifying the main influence from ‘close to distant’, the Genetic-Social (Owen 2012) perspective would entail using a stance of ‘Flexible Causal Prediction’ (Owen, Noble, and Speed, 2017). Here, by cautiously conceptualising the combination of effects, ‘the researcher using the framework would be able to gain a picture of the most likely combination of variables’ (Owen et al. 2017, 38). However, although the model attempts to incorporate a cluster of statistic, theory, and evidence-based knowledge, it could be suggested that the model neglects to consider juvenile cyber danger from a biological positivist perspective when concerning Owen’s (2012) Genetic-Social framework. For instance, it could be proposed that children are genetically predisposed to certain characteristics due to their genetic makeup. Therefore, when considering a specific individual with features such as a degree of resilience, vulnerability, or passivity, it could be suggested that they are genetically prompted. This could be linked to Owen’s (2017, 33) identification of ‘psychobiography’ which ‘refers to the largely unique asocial components of an individual’s’ dispositions’. Another example could be in relation to the underdevelopment of the prefrontal cortex, which has been recognised as a key to impulsivity (Carrion et al. 2009). This could enable children to make decisions with less clarity and act with more haste, as they lack the full ability to comprehend the consequences of their actions, however, the effect of this is arguably subjective and dependant on their psychobiography.

Limitations of existing research and drawing upon the Genetic-Social framework (Owen 2012)

Within the following chapter I will critique the principles of existing research on child sexual exploitation and I will give examples of how drawing upon Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social framework may expand and progress their notions.

When considering Finkelhor's (1984) precondition model (although this could be considered dated when discussing online grooming) it attempts to identify the steps leading to abuse. This concerns 'a motivated perpetrator, overcoming the inhibitions through rationalisation and justification, overcoming the external constraints or barriers to gain access to the child, and finally reducing the child's resistance to engaging in sexual activity' (Savirimuthu 2012, 69). When considering the ideology of motivation, it is apparent that paedophiles are motivated by many causes. For instance, at an academic conference held by the University of Cambridge, the theme discussed was that paedophilia is sexually motivated by having a natural attraction to children. Finklatter (2013) maintains that 'there may be some vulnerabilities that could be genetic, but normally, there are some significant events in a person's life, a sexually abusive event or a bullying environment. I believe it is learned and can be unlearned' (Finklatter in Johnston 2013, 16). This notion could be identifiable with Owen's (2014, 165) notion of the feedback loop where Owen maintains 'that there is a feedback loop that embraces genes and environment, a mutuality which means that genes predetermine the broad structure of the human brain and absorb formative experiences, and react to environmental social cues'. However, when considering the precondition model (Finkelhor 1984) and the feedback loop (Owen 2014), it is potentially arguable that there is not a requirement to 'overcome the inhibitions through rationalisation and justification' (Savirimuthu 2012, 69). For instance, if a perpetrator has learned a particular behaviour which, in their perspective, is normalised, they perhaps do not need to rationalise their actions if they believe it is normal. Therefore, although it is subjective to the perpetrator, they may not need to justify their actions.

Similarly, when considering Quayle's (2017, 3) review of online grooming which starts by identifying the possible behaviours that could induce criminal offending and consequently cause a form of problematic digital behaviour such as 'compulsive masturbation or addiction to online pornography', Quayle mainly comments on the motivations and possible downfalls

of the victim through the digital sphere they engage with. However, it could be suggested, similar to Quayle's (2017) ideology, that prevention of such harmful behaviour would primarily exist within the prevention of the paedophilic or sexually perverted self.

Pratt and Fernandes, (2015) ask the question as to why most young people are 'able to view pornography without sexually abusing others, while for others pornography seems to provide high levels of sexual stimulation and represents a manual on "how to do sex", as well as lowering inhibitions to engage in sexually abusing behaviour'

Quayle 2017, 13.

As stated, 'the report considers the role of electronic media in sexually harmful behaviour although it acknowledges that reasons behind the growth in online grooming, the viewing of online pornography, and the making and distributing of sexual images is poorly understood' (Quayle 2017, 4). Arguably, it would not be realistic to give fault to a singular factor that could have solely caused the harmful sexual actions of an individual. This perspective would entail the framework arising out of reductionism (Owen 2017). 'Sibeon distinguishes between "non reductive multi-factorial explanation", in other words, explanations which draws upon a cluster of variables and compounded reductionism' (Owen 2017, 18). It is arguable that when discussing the effects of online pornography, sexual imagery, and other external factors, that Quayle should also acknowledge factors that are not part of the digital culture. For instance, within Quayle's (2017) review, there is a large emphasis on the differences between paedophilic contact offenders (offline offenders) and online pornography offenders. However, I suggest that Quayle did not take into account the perspective of the child. It is probable that within contemporary society, a number of children willingly victimise themselves in order to desensitise themselves so that they are sexually knowledgeable. This is one of the many factors that could contribute to the victimisation of a child. I consequently suggest that Quayle should be analysing grooming from a multifactorial perspective that looks at 'Micro-Macro' variations (Owen 2017, 32). For instance, 'Micro-macro refers to differences in the units or and scale of analyses concerned with the investigation of varying extensions of time-space' (Sibeon 1997 in Owen 2014, 119). Therefore, when considering online pornography, perhaps Quayle should discuss in terms of micro-macro (Owen 2014) the extent of the effect that pornography may have on an individual, in comparison to other contributing factors.

Contrariwise, it is also apparent that the purpose of online grooming should be questioned. Whittle et al. (2012, 63) argue that ‘the purpose of grooming behaviour remains consistent across environments, despite potential variation in specific grooming techniques’. It could be argued that when grooming for online gratification, the predator often craves the virtual interaction rather than the physical interaction. I suggest this could be identified within Merton’s (1938) strain theory, in which a degree of individuals with a paedophilic mentality accept the cultural norms where grooming is criminalised and, therefore, is aware that it is not a socially acceptable norm. However, the individual deviates from the digital institutionalised means of living by transgressing against the norms online. This possibly could be identified as a digital innovator in which the predator creates a separate virtual self-representation of themselves to engage with online interactions. It could be suggested that perhaps Merton’s ‘deviant adaptations’ (1938, 177) have been enhanced and extended with the development of technology. For instance, when specifically concerning online paedophilia, it could be proposed that there has been an increase in innovators who commit the crime due to the intensity of the ‘Online Disinhibition Effect’ (Suler 2004). This effect can be defined as ‘a lowering of behavioural inhibitions in the online environment’ (Lefler and Barak 2012, 434). However, it is questionable to what degree the internet – a machine – enhances our behaviour. Owen (2017, 97) maintains that distinguishing between ‘human agency, motivations and culpability from non-human objects and cyber technology could arguably lead to excuses being made for online criminal offending’. Therefore, it could be suggested that online access gives new opportunities to enhance characteristics, however, the purpose of online grooming may change as ‘human agency, motivations and culpability’ (Owen 2017, 97) also change. For instance, if the culpability of online grooming changed and was punishable by death, it could be suggested that a new motivation for online grooming would be an attempt at suicide.

Overall, I maintain that the use of Owen’s (2012) Genetic-Social framework offers an insight which enhances current literature. The Genetic-Social (Owen 2012) approach offers a wider perspective which can be applied to all levels of research. The use of the ‘Cardinal Sins’ (Owen 2017, 29) creates a better justification for each perspective by analysing the possible critiques which could arise in research. By maintaining a more justified approach, the data produced arguably increases the credibility of the research. Similarly, the ‘Meta-Concepts’ (Owen 2017, 31) enable the research to create and maintain a wider perspective which accounts for a number of approaches which could be discussed with regards to their

individual impact. For instance, the 'Meta-Concepts' (Owen 2017, 34) considers the 'Time-Space' dimension of research. This 'refers to significant but neglected dimensions of the social and reflects concerns with temporality and spatiality' (Owen 2017, 32). Therefore, the Genetic-Social (Owen 2012) framework does not only consider the basis and multi-dynamic perspectives within research, but also the opportunity and degree of effect in terms of time and space. I believe this framework enables a researcher to create a more substantial, creditable outcome by considering multiple influences which could affect the reliability, scope, representativeness and validity of research.

Proposal

Introduction

It is apparent in the current literature that there is a lack of preventative recommendations, solutions, or suggestions created for the online safety of children. It could be considered that due to the digital context of the crime, many academics consider online grooming as uncontrollable as it exists between shifting patterns and is continuously developing. Therefore, within the following proposal, I have first updated O'Connell's (2003) 'Typology of Cyberexploitation and Online Grooming Practices' to ensure the possible stages of online grooming are modernised and can be clearly understood (see appendix one).

As previously discussed, it is apparent within a large degree of research, that online grooming is grounded upon O'Connell's six-stage process of grooming: 'selecting the victim, forming a friendship, forming a relationship, assessing the risk, exclusivity and the sexual phase' (O'Connell 2003, cited in Groenestein, Baas, and Van Deursen 2017, 2). However, it is noticeable that this process of online grooming is becoming aged when considering the rapid development of technology. For instance, this could refer to the live streaming capabilities of social networking sites. Therefore, I propose a notion of transition stages based on O'Connell's (2003) original typology that incorporates a perception of intent that could be applied to numerous technologies.

The necessary research would investigate if the intent of the paedophile deciphers the zone of practice. For instance, I have suggested that the type of gratification needs to be divided depending on the type of intent. For instance, the planned gratification is where the predator signifies the intent to meet and is perhaps the most dangerous outcome. Within this type of gratification, the online predator attempts to gain gratification within the offline world through the physical presence of the child. Second, the prolonged gratification creates an ideology of a relationship status and includes continued conversation. This could be identified as a digital predatorial relationship. Then the immediate online gratification typically includes a shorter level of interaction with a faster level of desensitisation and satisfaction. An example of this would be encouraging a child to strip on webcam, discontinuing the conversation, and then moving on to the next child. Within forthcoming

research, although the three categories intertwine and may correspond, it would be useful to investigate whether a different level of gratification is more likely to involve a deeper or prolonged use of a zone of practice (see appendix one). This assessment, if conclusive, would identify the zone that needs to be magnified, which could then correlate which type of practice is more likely to be met on different types of social networking sites and online applications. Here, Owen's (2017, 32) ideology of 'Flexible Causal Prediction' could be used to predict the most likely outcome. For instance, it could be suggested that immediate online gratification would most likely be encountered within such applications as Snapchat, Airdrop, and websites such as Chatroulette. This is identifiable due to the instant update and correspondence. Furthermore, this assessment could also correspond to the different grooming strategies. For instance, when Groenestein, Baas, and Van Deursen (2017, 3) identified three grooming strategies: 'the complimentary strategy, the mentor and the experienced congruence', I propose that the mentor and the experienced congruence who seek more in-depth conversation may transmit to an ideology of prolonged gratification by creating a status of relationship – whether it may be a romantic status or a mentoring parental status.

By identifying what applications have a higher probability of being used for a certain level of predatory activity, it could be proposed that by conducting and publishing such research, this would enable a more efficient level of prevention by creating a higher level of societal awareness with regards to the categorisation of risk.

Policy Development

The development of digital devices has arguably inhibited a child's real-world perspective. It could be suggested that children now compute equally within the online and offline world, however, perhaps they lack the support. I propose the identification of 'socio-digi support'. This is the proposition that children are consistently advancing their development within the private sphere on a diverging level to their real-world emotional development. It could be proposed that primary and secondary socialisation no longer holds the fundamental key to education. However, this is arguably not recognised within contemporary society. For instance, behavioural, emotional, educational, and social skills are at the forefront of primary and secondary socialisation and are a crucial cornerstone of education. However, the necessary socio-digi support, which attempts to socialise children into using the online world

in the safest manner, is not introduced into the PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic development classes) scheme, until deemed appropriate. Although there is a basic level of elearning within PSHE from an early age, which includes password and personal information safety, it is apparent that it is not until Key Stage 4 in which children are recommended to learn about online relationships. The PSHE Association (2017, 24) recommends that a core value of Key Stage 4 development (typically identified as school years 10 and 11 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) is to focus on ‘how to deal with risky or negative relationships including all forms of bullying and abuse, sexual and other violence and online encounters’. I propose that elearning education for an age between 14 and 16 years old would debatably mean very little to a teenager who has already gained a large variety of their own experiences of the online world. Therefore, I propose the implementation of an app within education to increase levels of resilience.

I suggest the implementation of an app within education due to their increased popularity and availability amongst digital devices. A report produced by ‘Flurry’s global footprint, which includes 940,000 applications, across 2.1 billion devices, in 10 billion sessions a day’ (Flurry’s Global Footprint 2017, 6), maintained that app usage has increased by 28% in 2016. Applications are easily accessible to digital device users and can be used for multiple purposes. Therefore, it can be suggested that an educative app could be used within an educational setting or at home to target all ages.

Online Resilience Application

Within contemporary society, many children interact with the digital world through games and videos from a young age. This is often without being educated on internet safety due to their level of understanding. This is similarly continued within secondary education where they are not taught about internet safety until they reach an age where they are able to comprehend the dangers. Due to the increasing dangers and development of cyber grooming, I maintain that society specifically needs to identify the root causes of victimisation to enable further prevention. Here, dependent on the child’s reaction to adverse risk and their degree of resilience, this arguably dictates the outcome of the contact. Predominantly, a child’s resilience to risk indicates whether they would become easily victimised or not. However, it is apparent that there has been little emphasis placed on the resilience of the child who primarily either does or does not consent to the interaction. Therefore, it could be considered

that the focus of online grooming needs to be concentrated on the establishment of a child's resilience.

In regard to the overall approach, it is apparent that resilience related to victimisation within online paedophilia has not been tested within contemporary society. However, numerous studies have researched a more generalised approach in terms of the relationship between resilience and victimisation. For instance, 'social support has widely been recognized as important for resilience in studies of depressed mothers who were survivors of sexual abuse (Wright, Fopma-Loy, & Fischer, 2005), firefighters (North et al., 2002; Regehr, Hill, & Glancy, 2000), canine rescue handlers after the 9/11 terrorist attack (Alvarez & Hunt, 2005), and adults who were abused and neglected as children (DuMont et al., 2007)' (Dutton and Greene 2010, 217). Digital resilience would arguably be formed from several contributing factors that lead to a higher probability of safety online. This approach is similar to Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social theory. I propose the educational use of an application that would concentrate on enhancing the four proposed characteristics to enable a higher level of resilience. These include adaptability, psychological empowerment, impulse control, and cyber intelligence (see Appendix Two).

Intended After-effect

The purpose of the tool is to embed and reinforce the ideologies of four varied characteristics, which will enhance the resilience of the individual.

First, adaptability 'refers to the ability to adjust and accommodate to changing and often unpredictable physical, interpersonal, cultural and task environments' (National Research Council et al., 2015, 128). Online grooming is unpredictable where it can manifest within numerous dynamics of the online sphere (chat rooms, online games, and blogs). The aim of adaptability is to cope with the risk with an emotionally regulated response. This will contribute to making the child more resilient by learning to deal with a variety of online situations.

The component of psychological empowerment is enhancing the child's ability to recognise the seriousness of the situation, while encouraging them to understand and encounter the situation. 'ChildLine 2012 facilitated over 200 counselling sessions for situations where

grooming had occurred, 60% of which related to online child sexual exploitation, of these, 82% of the victims did not consider themselves as being a victim of sexual exploitation' (McGuire and Dowling 2013, 10). This component is giving the child justified self-assurance to be resilient towards a potentially hazardous activity and to comprehend the after-effect in an emotionally mature manner. Similarly, it is also making the possibility of being victimised relatable to the child without trying to desensitise them.

Furthermore, when considering impulse control, this specifically draws on the ideologies that children are more likely to act carelessly due to contributing neurological components (such as the underdevelopment of the prefrontal cortex) and trying to manage and regulate these emotions. 'Drawing on studies and surveys under the "UK Children Go Online Programme", it was suggested that children do not possess the same analytical or evaluative skills with regards to engagement with digital content when compared with adults' (Livingstone 2003a; 2003b; in Livingstone et al. 2005a; 2005c). This resilience model is aimed at impulse control by educating children through risk identification and scenario training to increase their risk assessment skills, which would expectantly combat their impulsivity in the digital world.

Similarly, when concerning the element of cyber intelligence, it is evident that children need to be more aware of the possible dangers and hazards online. Increasing cyber intelligence by using scenarios, quizzes, and fact-finding games will emphasise the relevance of danger online. Correspondingly, this will decrease the emphasis on digital gatekeepers keeping children safe and increase the awareness and responsibility within self-regulation online.

Individual Analysis

Primarily, to track a child's resilience, their level of vulnerability needs to be identified. It could be proposed that a subjective vulnerability scale needs to be composed. Here, a child could watch a cartoon scenario and then select from a series of answers (A, B, C, or D) what their actions would most likely be. For instance, this could include children deciding what reaction to make when viewing a video depicting a web page where an unknown individual has started speaking to them in a provocative manner. This could be likened to research by Groenestein, Baas, and Van Deursen (2017) where focus groups consisting of teenage females aged 12-17 attempted to decipher if they were communicating with a peer or adult.

O'Connell (2003) claimed that the process of online grooming consists of five stages: 'the friendship forming stage, the relationship stage, the risk assessment stage, the exclusivity stage, and the sexual stage' (O'Connell 2003, 9). Here, it could be proposed that the resilient reaction would primarily happen within the first two stages where the child would identify and counter the risk. Therefore, within the online scenarios, to best equip the child for possible online grooming interactions, it would be useful to use common paedophilic phrases such as 'hello beautiful', 'age doesn't matter to me' and 'have you got any photos to send' so that the child can similarly re-identify this type of characterised language if they are targeted (Egan, Hoskinson, and Shewan 2011). The missing relevant research to comprise this data would be gaining the relevant access to contemporary child grooming conversations to identify the keywords and phrases in addition to imitating the language used. This would make the simulation feel as real as possible and would also depict a realistic scale of vulnerability when concerning grooming.

The assessment would also analyse other key points of interest, which gives the opportunity to illustrate vulnerability or display resilience. For instance, by examining how a child initially responds to the unknown online. For example, what is their reaction when unknown individuals add or connect with them? Here, the quiz will test the child's perspective and vulnerability level in terms of the stereotypical white male in comparison to the view of an unknown teenager connecting with them. The tools in the 'enabling factory' will later strive to dismiss these stereotypes to make children aware that approximately a third of online grooming is conducted by under 18s, and anyone could be a potential predator (NSPCC PowerPoint 2017, 5).

The Enabling Factory

The enabling factory is the tools and games used to implement an online grooming defence mechanism. By engaging children in a game scenario that will include audio, visual, and kinesthetic learning, the learning tool would arguably be more effective for a higher number of children. Kato et al. (2008, cited in Tobias, Fletcher, and Wind 2011, 468) 'found improved behaviours, knowledge and efficacy attributable to a game amongst young cancer patients'. By making the learning process interactive through a point-based game system, the user feels individual accomplishment and will be more likely to retain/use the information gained when placing it into digital practice.

Target Identification Quiz

the first component of the enabling factory consists of a target identification quiz.

‘Approximately 30% of UK young people aged 9 to 19 years appear to have met or befriended someone they do not know offline’ (Livingstone and Bober 2005; Eynon 2009; Livingstone et al., 2011 cited in McGuire and Dowling 2013, 6). Within grooming, as the child and the predator are the primary interactors, this is the first point of defence. Within the game, a child will identify the most likely online predator and they will have to use their risk assessment skills to assess the potential online grooming hazards. Additionally, these ideologies would also combat the over-mediated labels of stranger danger by also placing the emphasis on persons that are known to the child.

This quiz would primarily focus on magnifying the different relationships within the merge of the online and offline world. I suggest that the relationships for children within the online and offline world are very simplistic and may often displace association. For instance, it could be suggested that the majority of children categorise people into the orientations of family, friends, teachers, and strangers. However, it needs to be questioned from a child’s perspective to what degree a stranger is identified as an unknown individual. For a child, if they are aware of someone’s name does this mean they are not a stranger? If they are a friend of a friend, or a neighbour, or someone who goes to the same school, they are arguably not classed as a stranger and placed as friends through displaced association and familiarity. Perhaps this was a contributing factor to the victimisation of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman who were murdered by their school janitor, Ian Huntley in 2002.

Conversely, this notion then transfers to the online world where children arguably allow any individual with a degree of familiarity or resemblance on social networking sites to become their friend, follower, or connection. By emphasising and defining through games who children should deem as an outsider rather than a friend, this would increase resilience and subsequently decrease vulnerability by making a child more proactive when considering their connections online.

Risk Management Puzzles

When regarding the second component of the enabling factor, the risk management puzzles would aim to help children to know what to do when they have identified the risk and teach children how to deal with the after-effects of grooming. Chen and Siegler (2013, 346) maintained that we ‘find out more reliable means of creating the presence of physical intuition in problem solving behaviour’. Therefore, the primary learning for this component would be a four-stage process. First, by encouraging the blocking of any risky behaviour, second, to encourage the child to inform a trusted person and to then express their feelings, and finally to distract themselves from worrying and causing more stress. This could possibly be represented in terms of an acronym: block, inform, express, and distract (BIED). The puzzles would be split between these four main components to emphasise and explain the ideology behind each component. For example, the block puzzle could be a word search that would emphasise the words that express notions of removing themselves or the predator from the situation. For instance, by trying to find the words ‘block’, ‘safety’, ‘remove’, ‘disconnect’, and ‘disengage’. There would also be an explanation given with each word found. For instance, when the child has found the word ‘remove’, an explanation could highlight how it is important to remove yourself or the threat from your online situation.

Similarly, the inform component could consist of rearranging the letters to form a word. These words would be to stimulate the communication between a victim and a trusted known associate (i.e. family member, friend, or teacher). This component would include words such as ‘inform’, ‘trust’, ‘confide’, ‘release’, ‘disclose’ and ‘understanding’. Again, once each word has been rearranged in the correct order, there will be an explanation for each phrase. For instance, when composing the word ‘confide’, the word would highlight the explanation: ‘when you confide in someone you will feel better about the situation by dealing with the problem together’. These techniques of the word search, rearranging letters, and additionally, crossword puzzles, would also be used within the components of express and distract in a similar manner. The purpose of this stage is to increase perceptions of communication and create a shared consensus of trust.

Scenario Training Tool

Consequently, the last stage of the application this is where the user will embed and reinforce their ability to be resilient by using a scenario training tool. Here, it could be proposed that the game is a miniature quest. According to Van Eck (2006, 6) ‘adventure games, which are narrative-driven open-ended learning environments, are likely to be best for promoting hypothesis testing and problem solving’. Within this game, the child would be given an aim such as passing the realms of virtual reality safely to win as many resilience points as possible. This could be compared to the ideology of the driving hazard perception test. This would attempt to reinforce everything they have learned within the enabling factory and give them the opportunity to see how they react to possible paedophilic responses online.

Individual assessment and enhancement

Consequently, at this point, it is perhaps important to create an evaluation stage to analyse the child’s progress through the enabling factory. Again, this would consist of the multiple-choice quiz and the subjective vulnerability scale to see if a child had advanced in their vulnerability rating. Here, it could be suggested that the quiz should differ between two sets of similar questions, the first set to test the child’s primary level of resilience before the use of the enabling factory and the second set used to measure the progress after the use of the enabling factory.

The stage of priority learning would then focus on building on the gaps in their knowledge and ability by reinforcing the resilient ideologies. By distinguishing which possible risk factors the child has failed to identify in their primary use of the enabling factory, the evaluation stage can be identified as a second chance basis to teach and fuel resilience abilities. This stage could use a risk or safe game. For instance, showing or explaining a scenario or circumstance to the child, where the child would identify if they believe the scenario is risky or safe. The idea of being able to differentiate between the two categories encourages the child to not stifle their opportunities online. This could be likened to the perspectives of Livingstone, Mascheroni, and Stasrud (2015) that focuses on the equal emphasis on online safety and digital opportunities.

Re-established mindset

The overall aim of the application is to re-establish the mindset with regards to resilience and enhance a prepared grooming defence disposition. This emotional regulation through resilience could possibly help children within multiple areas of risk assessment. Similarly, these abilities could also transfer and merge into safety within the public sphere.

The emphasis should be placed on the adult to create and provide the correct support, tools, and education to enable the child to act more safely online. By teaching the child how to act (or not to act) online, society is not giving them the responsibility of safeguarding themselves, but rather giving them the opportunity to prevent risk. Ultimately, safeguarding should be provided by the adult, where children are encouraged to confide in a trusted individual when distressed by an action online or offline.

The approach would be based on testing new ideas and could possibly be tested through a series of evaluative self-report open- and closed-ended questionnaires. This would allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of a child's perspective and would allow for comparative reasoning. The questionnaire would be used to determine the child's most likely actions when placed in a scenario. The results would then be used to create the multiple-choice test when determining a child's stage of vulnerability. These results would also help to identify different levels of vulnerability and could be used to highlight the most pressing issues where children need help. By using a self-report questionnaire, children would be able to answer them anonymously and without any conflicting influences. The questionnaire would contain no desensitising issues and would simply ask what the child would do next.

Overall, due to a child's mindset and their primary involvement in the interaction of grooming, I believe the power and emphasis of resilience should be placed on them. Like Sorell's (2016) suggestions, this application could be considered a web 2.0 technology (which can be recognised as the second generation of the internet). In general, the application would aim to construct and enhance a child's digital resilience to decrease their degree of vulnerability to grooming. By attempting to increase a child's resilience through varying games, this could be likened to Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social approach by looking at the crime through multiple contributing factors, rather than taking a reductionist perspective (Owen 2014) and analysing grooming from a singular approach.

Conclusion

On reflection, I maintain that the literature review upheld the purpose of discussing the current research and suggested proposals for new preventative measures. The literature review attempted to critically evaluate models, notions, and frameworks that were presented within current research. Here, it was identified that there was a lack of formulated recommendations that enabled the improvement of child cyber safety. Within this research, I attempted to identify the various levels of victimisation rather than examining online grooming from a unilateral response. As a result, it was apparent that there is a lack of primary data that sufficiently examines the child's position. Children are the primary interactors and are perhaps the first level of prevention when considering soliciting. Therefore, it is foreseeable that children's resilience should be enhanced to assist them when encountering a predatory situation.

Additionally, in terms of technological advances, there is a lack of research with regards to individual social networking sites and how they specifically enable online grooming. It could be proposed that by identifying the risks from each digital application, a warning code could be produced for children, parents, and the education system to enhance their understanding. Perhaps, this would create a better societal awareness. Similarly, such research also needs to be conducted with regards to sexual soliciting within online gaming and how the practices differ online.

When regarding the downfalls of this research, it is apparent that primary research would have been more conclusive and useful in testing the proposals such as the online resilience application and the notion of displaced association. However, due to the time scale and ethical considerations, this was not possible. Consequently, I also acknowledge that perhaps future research should place more emphasis on the paedophiles who are initiating the contact. Possibly by preventing the predator, the contributing factors would not have to exhibit a defensive standpoint. For instance, it could be proposed that many paedophiles do not feel the need to rationalise or justify their actions as they do not label or categorise themselves as a paedophile. Many individuals recognise and label themselves as a type of family member, such as a daughter, son, brother, sister, father, or mother. Or correspondingly, label themselves following the indication of their job title. However, by unconsciously not

associating themselves with the ideology or the concept of a paedophile, even though their actions may contradict their beliefs, they, therefore, may not feel the need to justify or rationalise their actions as they do not associate themselves with the negative label. Perhaps this suggests that there needs to be more research conducted into how a paedophile internalises and rationalises their judgement and predatory actions.

To date, it is apparent that research within the current field focuses upon the analysis of online grooming, whereas it is maintained within this literature review that the emphasis should be placed on suggesting possible preventative strategies following the examination of the topic. Overall, it is apparent when analysing online grooming from a Genetic-Social perspective (Owen 2012) that the cause of victimisation is a formulation of contributing factors. I argue that current research discusses online grooming from a very narrow perspective that consequently limits the value of research. By analysing online grooming and the victimisation of children from Owen's (2012) Genetic-Social framework, this formulates an analysis which would consider different contributions of research. For instance, a Genetic-Social (Owen 2012) approach could consider all research that has been conducted quantitatively, qualitatively, and through armchair theorising to create an approach to victimisation that could consider multiple academic aspects. The likelihood and outcome of victimisation could then be discussed through Owen's (2012) notion of flexible causal prediction, which could then rate the probability and likelihood of victimisation in terms of risk identified through research.

Following this, future research may involve collaboration with Dr Tim Owen, which would test these notions and attempt to consider further defensive solutions.

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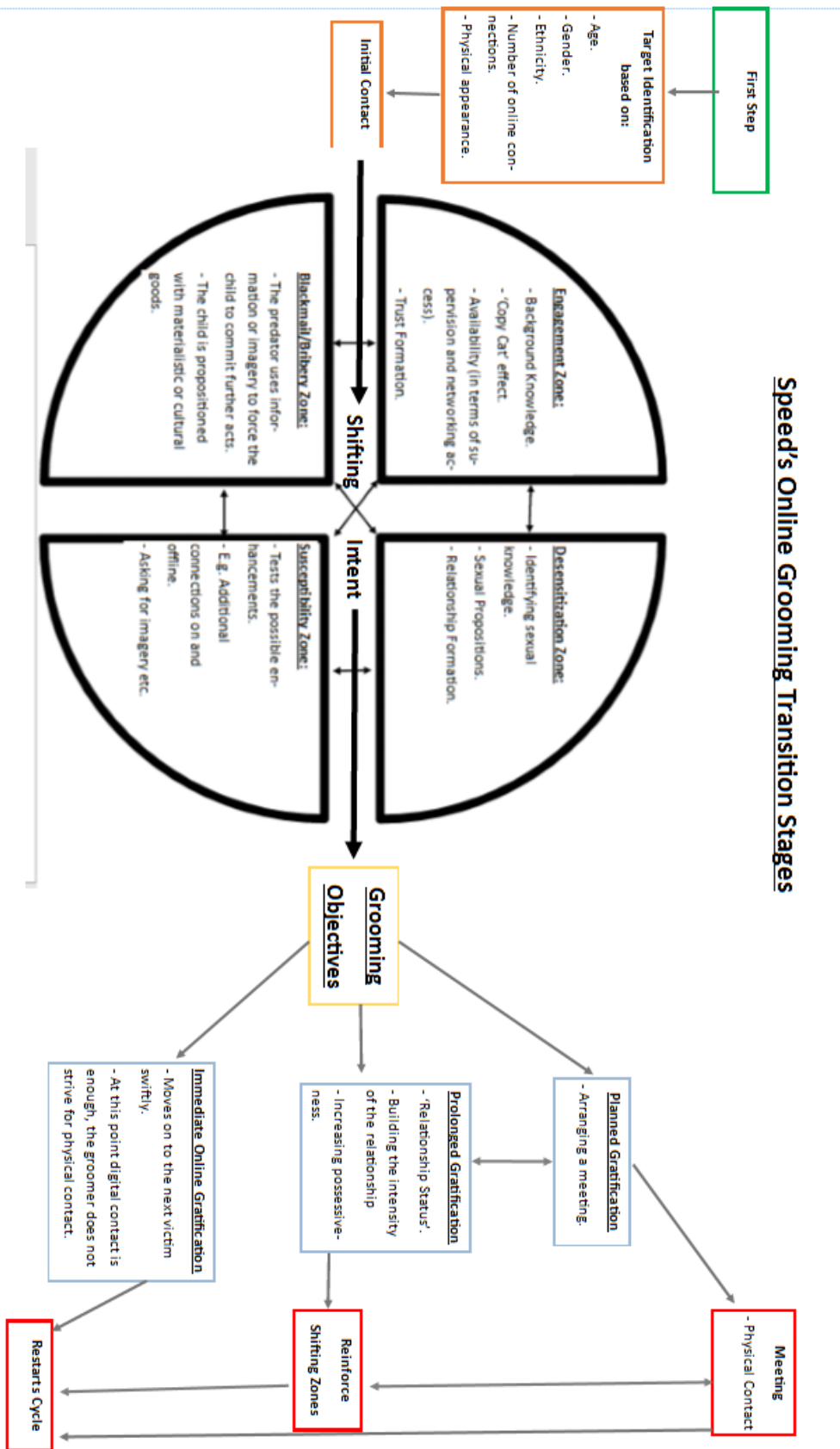
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Appendix One: Speed's Online Grooming Transition Stages (based on O'Connell's (2003) typology)



Appendix Two: Grooming Resilience Training

