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Protecting Children in a Digital Age: The Misuse of Technology in the Abuse and Exploitation of Children: A Research Review

Following the practice begun during the 2009 session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, *Criminologists Without Borders*, now in collaboration with the *International Sociological Association*, have prepared a research review on this year's theme. We have focused on reviewing the research that is generated by local social scientists. First we summarize what is known and unknown from this material, and point the way for future research. Then, examples are given from countries around the world.¹ The last page is a feedback form for your use.

Knowns

- Technology can be misused in a variety of ways to abuse and exploit children, and presents challenges for law enforcement because of its dynamic, ever changing opportunities for innovation. Research highlights the sexual abuse of children, and their exploitation for pornography and human trafficking, but also cyberbullying, mobile phone aggression and online gaming crime. Some of these latter offenses involve harmful behavior committed by children against other children.
- Policymakers are faced with a lack of research this area and with the ever-changing nature of the phenomenon. As a result, they risk either over-reacting or under-reacting. Some parts of the world generate a great deal of research on this issue and others, much less so. The internet cannot be abolished, but it can be regulated and policed and users can be forewarned.
- Police sting operations can be efficient and cost-effective ways to detect technology-related crime, bring offenders to justice and identify victims. This is an area in which the exchange of good practice regarding police tactics and evidence gathering could be particularly useful.

Unknowns


- Despite the abundance of informal and formal prevention efforts, scientific research on the effectiveness of various types of prevention strategies is virtually non-existent, as is research on the treatment of victims.


Future Research

- Surveys are needed of law enforcement agencies that monitor the characteristics and dynamics of the types of cases that come to their attention for prevention ideas for this phenomenon worldwide.
- Studies are needed of the relationship between on-line sharing of child pornography images and sexual exploitation of victims to understand the nature of the supply and demand among offenders.

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 **Algeria.** Khiati, M. (2008). *Cybercriminalité et enfance en Algérie*. Alger: *Observatoire des Droits de l'Enfant*. <http://www.forem.dz/index.php/fr/activites/etudes-et-enquetes>. “Statistiquement, il existe une chance sur trois d’être confronté à des images choquantes sur le Net. Les enfants peuvent ainsi être victimes d’images pornographiques, d’images violentes ou exposés à des réseaux terroristes.” [Statistically, there is a 1 in 3 chance of being exposed to shocking images on the internet. Children thus can be the victims of pornographic images, violent images or exposed to terrorist networks.]


 **Australia.** Choo, K.K.R. (2007). *Online child grooming: a literature review on the misuse of social networking sites for grooming children for sexual offences*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <http://www.aic.gov.au/en/publications/current%20series/rpp/101-20/rpp103.aspx>


Nicol, A. and Fleming, M.J. (2010). “i h8 u”: The influence of normative beliefs and hostile response selection in predicting adolescents’ mobile phone aggression—A pilot study. *Journal of School Violence*, 9(2), 212 – 231. “Approximately 70% of participants reported using their mobile phone aggressively at least once in the previous six months.”


Jayawardena, K. and Broadhurst, R. (2007). Online child sex solicitation: exploring the feasibility of a research “sting.” *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 1(2), 228–48. <http://www.cybercrimejournal.com/jayavardenaiccvol1is2.htm> “... the strongest variables involved were the presence of photographs and email addresses. With these in use, suspicious responses for both vulnerable and non-vulnerable profiles were roughly equal, showing perhaps that these factors encouraged pedophiles to ignore caution and security in favor of gratification.”


 **China.** Chen, Y., Chen, P.S., Hwang, J., Korba, L., Song, R. and Yee, G. (2005). An analysis of online gaming crime characteristics. *Internet Research*, 15(3), 246-261. According to an analysis of online gaming characteristics in Taiwan, most online gaming crime is theft and fraud. The offenders and victims are mainly male and young (15-20). Both groups include in particular students and unemployed persons.


 **Canada.** Tremblay, P. (2002). Social interactions among paedophiles. Montreal: Centre International de Criminologie Comparée. http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/restes/CSEC_Files/Tremblay_R2_020523.pdf. “Internet technology ... allows individual paedophiles to participate in the development of an authentic subculture and ‘community’ and to perceive themselves belonging to ‘a social movement’. The obvious implication is that a stable forum for in-group intimate, albeit virtual, contacts between individuals normally trapped by an unshareable secret will have lasting effects on their commitment and ultimately on the incidence of age of consent offences.”


 **European Union.** Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2009). *EU Kids online: Final Report*. London: London School of Economics, EU Kids Online. www.eukidsonline.net. “There are good grounds to strengthen regulatory frameworks across Europe, especially in some countries, since substantial proportions of children are encountering contact, content and conduct risks, and since many children and parents lack the tools and skills by which they can prevent or manage such exposure.”


 **Germany.** von Weiler, J., Haardt-Becker, A. & Schulte, S. (2010). Care and treatment of child victims of child pornographic exploitation in Germany. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 16, 211-222. “... cases of CPE were of a higher complexity than offline abuse, more demanding for professionals and raised many questions about professional involvement. Identified challenges included the issue of permanence once abusive images have been distributed online, and the coping strategies of children which might foster resilience. ... even though child pornographic exploitation is much talked about, there is still a lack of knowledge in how to identify, approach and help such children.”


 **Ireland.** 2008 Survey of Children's use of the Internet in Ireland. Centre for Technology in Education. <http://www.webwise.ie/article.aspx?id=10611>. "...18 % of the 863 students between 9 and 16 years in 38 Irish schools indicated that they had been harassed, upset, bothered, threatened or embarrassed by someone when chatting online, while 23% reportedly met someone in real life after knowing them on the internet and 6% of these indicated that the person who had introduced themselves as a child on the internet turned out to be an adult."

 **Mexico.** Ruiz Torres, M.A. La explotación sexual de niños en dos ciudades turísticas mexicanas: Cancún y Acapulco. (2003) Azaola, E. & Estes, R.J. eds. *La infancia como mercancía sexual. México, Canadá, Estados Unidos*. México DF: Siglo XXI Editores. "La producción de pornografía con niños en las ciudades turísticas mexicanas, es una práctica que, aunque sospechada desde hace años y detectada en internet, ha sido ya ampliamente demostrada." [The production of child pornography in tourist cities in Mexico is a practice that was suspected for many years and detected on the internet, but is now thoroughly demonstrated.]

 **New Zealand.** The Internet Safety Group (2002). *The net generation: Internet safety issues for young new Zealanders*. www.netsafe.org.nz. "In a study of more than 2500 students aged 7-19, 7% (does not include Primary) reported feeling unsafe or threatened as a result of interactions with someone they met on the Internet. 23% of 7-10-year-olds and 37% of those 16 or older reported having had a face to face meeting with someone they met on the Internet. Although many reported having safety strategies for the meeting, 16% (does not include Primary) didn't think they needed any such strategies."


 **Serbia.** Ilic, N., Anđelković, M. & Rajić, Z. (2006). Human (child) trafficking: A look through the internet window. Belgrade: ASTRA Anti-Trafficking Action. <http://www.astra.org.rs/eng/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/internet-research-eng.pdf>. "The respondents described really impressive number of possible ways of recruitment of human trafficking victims. However, the most frequent categories in all age groups, towns, with both genders and both types of schools are: recruitment over the Internet, abduction, through phony newspaper ads and job offers and giving false promises of better life."


 **Spain** Observatorio de la Seguridad de la Información (2010). *Estudio sobre seguridad y privacidad en el uso de los servicios móviles por los menores españoles*. INTECO and France Telecom España (Orange). <http://www.reicaz.es/reicaz-e/intecomv.pdf>. "Un 4% de los menores entrevistados reconoce haber recibido llamadas o SMS de adultos desconocidos con intención de conocerle, frente a sólo un 0,9% de los padres que creen que les ha sucedido a sus hijos. Sólo el 0,6% de los menores admite haber experimentado la recepción de contenidos pornográficos u obscenos de algún adulto desconocido ... sin embargo, son más las niñas (5,8%) que los niños (2,4%) los que han recibido comunicaciones procedentes de desconocidos." [4% of the underage children interviewed admitted to receiving calls or text messages from unknown adults as an attempt to meet them, compared to only 0.9% of the parents who think this happened to their children...only 0.6% of the children admitted to having received pornographic or obscene content from an unknown adult...but girls (5.8%) are more likely than boys (2.4%) to have received communication from strangers.]


 **South Africa.** Dawes, A. and Govender, A. (2007). The use of children in pornography in South Africa. Final Report Submitted to the Anti-Child Pornography Task Team, The Films and Publications Board. Cape Town. "Policing and prosecutorial teams need highly specialised skills with regard to child pornography including, but not limited to, in-depth knowledge of computers and the Internet. As the necessary expertise is lacking in South Africa collaboration and training with agencies abroad such as the Paedophile, Hi Tech Crime and Intelligence Units of the UK Metropolitan Police New Scotland Yard is highly recommended."

 **Switzerland.** Perren, S., Dooley, J., Shaw, T. & Cross, D. (2010). Bullying in school and cyberspace: Associations with depressive symptoms in Swiss and Australian adolescents. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 4(28). <http://www.capmh.com/content/4/1/28>. "Across both samples ... victims of cyber-


bullying reported significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms, even when controlling for the involvement in traditional bullying/victimisation.”

 **Thailand.** Michelet, I. (2003). Our children at risk online – A survey report. Bangkok: ECPAT International. http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Publications/ICT/Our_Children_At_Risk_Online_ENG.pdf. “[M]any Thai parents and teachers are unaware of the dangers to which their children may be exposed.... even when [they] are aware of the dangers, they tend to dismiss them because they still somehow appear to be unreal and/or insignificant compared with the dangers of the physical world... many fail to appreciate that most of the dangers in cyberspace relate to subjects considered culturally “taboo”. As a consequence, they do not seem to have sufficient incentives to ... start adapting their educational methods to address the virtual dimension of their children’s world. Thai kids are taught not to talk to strangers in the street, but little is said about how to surf the net and not sharing personal details with strangers in chat rooms.”

 **Turkey.** Aricak, T. Siyahhan, S., Uzunhasanoglu, A., Saribeyoglu, S., Ciplak, S. Yilmaz, N. & Memmedov, C. (2008). Cyberbullying among Turkish adolescents. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 253-261. “.intervention programs for cyberbullying should not be limited to teachers, principals and families in a region as with traditional bullying. Rather, programs should be developed to meet an international need to prevent and cope with cyberbullying.”

 **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.** Gallagher, B., Fraser, C., Christmann, K. & Hodgson, B. (2006) International and internet child sexual abuse and exploitation. Project Report. University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/461/> “The police had inadequate resources for the investigation of Internet child sexual abuse (CSA) cases, manifested [by] long delays in examining computers and other new technology for child sexual abuse images (CAIs), little effort being invested in the identification of children featuring in CAIs, and little effort being invested in proactive police operations. There was...very little awareness of, or response to, cases of Internet-initiated incitement or conspiracy to commit CSA.”

Quayle, E. & Jones, T. (2011). Sexualized images of children on the internet. *Sex Abuse*, 23(1), 7-21. “Although the availability of Internet images of the very young are a source of considerable concern, it is the case that prepubertal and pubertal children are more likely to have their images distributed on the Internet, although there are differences within and between ethnic groups.”

 **United States.** D’Ovidio, R., Mitman, T., I-Burki, I.J. & Shumar, W. (2009) Adult-Child Sex Advocacy Websites as Social Learning Environments: A Content Analysis. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 3(1). 421-440. <http://www.cybercrimejournal.com/robertetalijccj2009.pdf>. “The findings indicate that the adult-child sex advocacy websites examined...contain a myriad of tools (e.g. chat rooms, instant messengers, and message boards) to foster interaction among site users and expose users to rationalizations for offending...”

Mitchell, K.J., Finkelhor, D., Jones, L.M. and Wolak, J. (2010). Growth and change in undercover online child exploitation investigations, 2000-2006. *Policing & Society*, 20, 416-431. “The survey found a 280% increase in arrests of offenders identified in undercover operations between [2000 and 2006].... Federally funded Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces showed the largest increase in arrests by 988%. The growth in arrests suggests the successful adaptation of new technology and training to improve police effectiveness.”

Mitchell, K.J., Jones, L.M., Finkelhor, D. and Wolak, J. (2011). Internet-facilitated commercial sexual exploitation of children (IF-CSEC): Findings from a nationally representative sample of law enforcement agencies in the United States. *Sex Abuse*, 23(1): 43-71. “More than half of IF-CSEC arrests involved the purchase or sale of child pornography. The Internet was used in these cases to establish websites requiring paid access to view and download CP, to communicate with potential buyers and sellers, and to send buyers pornographic images via e-mail. The Internet was also integral to the purchase or sale of completed or attempted direct sexual offenses against victims..The Internet provides quick access to potential customers, which was not possible prior to its advent.”



FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear colleague,

Following the practice begun during the 2009 session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, *Criminologists Without Borders*, this year in association with the *International Sociological Association* has prepared a research review on the theme of the Commission, **protecting children in a digital age: the misuse of technology in the abuse and exploitation of children**. A copy is attached to this questionnaire.

In order to ensure that we can continue to provide information that is useful to the delegations at the Commission, we have prepared the questionnaire below. Your feedback is voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Please do not put your name anywhere on this sheet. Please place your questionnaire in the envelope provided and leave it on your desk in either conference room for pick up. Thank you.

1. Name of delegation: _____	Region: _____				
2. How serious a problem do you consider this theme to be in your home country?	1 Not serious	2	3	4	5 Very serious
3. Did you find the coverage of the research review comprehensive?	1 Not comprehensive	2	3	4	5 Very comprehensive
4. Did you find the research review objective?	1 Not objective	2	3	4	5 Very objective
5. Did the research review present information that was new to you?	1 Not new	2	3	4	5 Very new
6. Is this research review useful for your work at the Commission this week?	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Very useful
7. Would the review be useful for others you know in your home country?	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Very useful
8. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?					

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