



Strasbourg, 31 August 2005

MC-S-IS(2005)007

**GROUP OF SPECIALISTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

(MC-S-IS)

**Harmful content
prepared by Rachel O'Connell,
Director of Research, University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom**

Preface

This paper has been commissioned to inform the work of the steering committee on the mass media (CDMM). Under the authority of the CDMM, and following the Political Declaration and the Resolution on Human Rights in the Information Society adopted at the 7th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy (Kiev, March 2005), the MM-S-IS will:

- *elaborate the meaning of “harmful content”, as referred to in Council of Europe instruments, in order to promote coherence in the protection of minors in all media in the Information Society;*
- *set up a pan-European forum on Human Rights in the Information Society, comprising Member States and all other interested stakeholders, in order to:*
- *examine the roles and responsibilities of different Internet actors so that guidelines may be developed to promote their ethical conduct and responsibility, while being respectful of freedom of expression;*
- *examine ways to promote the Council of Europe standards concerning Human Rights in the Information Society, for example through the setting-up of national contact points and develop strategies:*
- *to promote digital inclusion, inter alia by means of media education;*
- *to encourage respect for Council of Europe principles and standards by the different actors in the Information Society, with particular regard given to the transparency of their work in the processing and presentation of information;*
- *follow the implementation of the Committee of Ministers Declaration on freedom of communication on the Internet by member States;*
- *examine whether the principle of Recommendation No. R (99) 15 on media coverage of election campaigns should be reviewed in the light of the development of digital broadcasting services and other new communication services.*

Specifically, the aim of this draft paper is to inform the processes of reaching consensus about the meaning of “harmful content”, as referred to in Council of Europe instruments, in

order to promote coherence in the protection of minors in all media in the Information Society. It is anticipated that the questions raised and the actions points identified throughout this paper will be reviewed by each Member State and processes of consultation and research will help to inform the further development of this draft paper.

Furthermore, on 13 May 2005 the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on human rights and the rule of law in the Information Society. The declaration was prepared by a special committee of academic experts and government representatives. According to the press release, "the declaration is the first international attempt to draw up a framework on the issue and breaks ground by updating the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights for the cyber-age." It confirms that "all rights enshrined in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) remain fully valid in the Information Age and should continue to be protected regardless of new technological developments" and a firm statement that "Both the content and traffic data of electronic communications fall under the scope of Article 8 of the ECHR and should not be submitted to restrictions other than those provided for in that provision." The right to privacy, freedom of speech and access to knowledge stipulated in other regulatory documents are reiterated in the declaration. The declaration is a pivotal document and this paper raises many questions around the challenges of protecting human rights, in particular, those of children and young people, in an evolving communications technologies environment.

In conclusion, readers are encouraged to recognise that this is a draft version of the paper. In effect, this version is a consultation document wherein the authors have mapped numerous areas of concern for consideration and feedback as an adjunct to the final drafting process. The subject matter of this document is so broad ranging that we have tried to be as comprehensive as possible in terms of at least signposting relevant research findings and mapping new territory. We believe that the 'Risk of Harm' taxonomy will be extremely helpful in terms of organising risk of harm related activities along continua from normal to illegal behaviours, and we expect that this will prompt a host of new programmes of research to inform discussions on this topic. However, each category within the taxonomy is worthy of a Doctoral dissertation in itself and given time constraints, it was not possible to do more than map the existing and sometimes sparse research findings. In addition, both authors are academics with strong research backgrounds, and we are conscious that sections of this paper may read more like an academic paper than the types of documents readers may be more accustomed to reading in this context. We ask the reader to bear these points in mind when reading this document and we look forward to receiving your constructive criticism and feedback for incorporation into the final draft of the document.

Author's biographies

Dr. Rachel O'Connell

Dr. O'Connell is the Director of the Cyberspace Research Unit, Department for Forensic and Investigative Science at the University of Central Lancashire. The Cyberspace Research Unit strengths lie in many areas: in its capacity as policy advisor, trainer, teacher, and media spokesperson, but principally as researcher. Research activities with respect to the impact of the Internet on specific sections of society are largely funded by external sources, the findings of which often contribute toward policy making at a governmental level. A variety of research methodologies and evidence-based practice inform the development, implementation and evaluation of programs of education, training and capacity building for a wide range of target audiences. The Cyberspace Research Unit is currently the UK co-ordinator and partner in a project funded by the European Commission entitled INSAFE, which is working towards a multinational Internet safety awareness campaign see www.saferinternet.com and www.internetsafetyzone.com. Rachel sits on the Department for Education & Skills Schools Internet Safety Strategy Group and she currently chairs the Public Awareness sub group of the UK's Internet Task Force for Child Protection on the Internet. Rachel is also well known for her research publications in relation to online criminal activity.

Dr Jo Bryce

Dr Bryce is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Central Lancashire. Her research and publications focus on the psychological and social aspects of Information Communications Technologies, including mobile devices, the Internet, and computer gaming technologies. This research falls into four broad categories: the psychological and social consequences of media consumption and ICT use; access constraints to the use of ICTs with a specific focus on gender; the development and implications of regulatory policies for the mobile, gaming and media industries and consumers; and the social and psychological dynamics of the consumption of counterfeits and downloading. She has edited special editions on digital gaming for "Game Studies" (2003) and "Information, Communication and Society" (2003). She has previously worked on the EU funded mGain Project, and was the Project Manager for the Intellectual Property Theft & Organised Crime (IPTOC) Project (www.iptocproject.org).

Executive summary:

Subordinating the term Harmful Content

From the outset this document adopts the view that the concept of 'Harmful Content' is too limited to denote the scope, scale, nature and extent of activities and behaviours that children and young people may encounter or engage with in either online or in related offline environments. Therefore, it is proposed that harmful content is more successfully characterised as a sub-category of a much broader category of activities. The rationale for subordinating the term harmful content is illustrated throughout this paper, but specifically in chapters 1 and 2.

Super-ordinate term: Risk of harm from online and related offline activities

Arguably, a more inclusive, super-ordinate term is needed which captures the true scope of children and young people's opportunities to harness the capabilities of interactive communications technologies, i.e. to be creators, producers and disseminators of both content and communications. The authors propose that the super-ordinate term 'Risk of harm from online and related offline activities' is a more encompassing term.

'Risk of harm' encapsulates the interactive nature of the environments children and young people inhabit online.

- The term 'risk of harm' includes the risks posed to children and young people that we have traditionally explored, i.e., exposure to pornography, misinformation, violent and /or racist material, and being solicited by adults online to engage in abusive cybersex or to meet face-to-face offline.
- Furthermore, the term captures the scope for children and young people to be active initiators of and participants in deviant online and related offline activities, e.g., activities that infringe on other user's privacy and rights, identify theft, hacking, using the works of others without permission and engaging in unauthorised downloading of music, games and software. The more serious end of the spectra of risk of harm activities include, cyberbullying, cyberstalking, creating and disseminating pornography, i.e., dangerous, high risk or criminal activities, which places children and young people in a position where they pose a risk of harm not only to themselves but also to others.

In summary, the term risk of harm from online and related offline activities encompasses situations where children and young people can both fall victim to harmful content, services or communications but also pose a risk of harm to others, including children and young people,

adults and organisations by actively initiating, engaging in risk of harm behaviours, which may involve the commission of a crime.

Taxonomy of Risk of Harm

A useful taxonomy of risk of harm from online and related offline activities (see next page) has been developed by the authors, which situates specific risk of harm activities along a number of continua. The purpose of the taxonomy is to propose a range of possible activities and behaviours which may be deemed to pose a 'risk of harm' to children and young people, but crucially to situate them in relation to both normal and illegal activities. By contextualising risk of harm from online activities in this manner, it is hoped that readers will gain an appreciation of the embedded nature of risk within a host of online and related offline activities. It is essential that educators and policy makers explore these issues using an ecological approach, i.e., considering how children and young people respond to, and to interpret, perceived risk of harm from online and related offline activities within the context of their everyday lives and utilisation of new and emerging social networking and communications technologies, as well as traditional media channels.

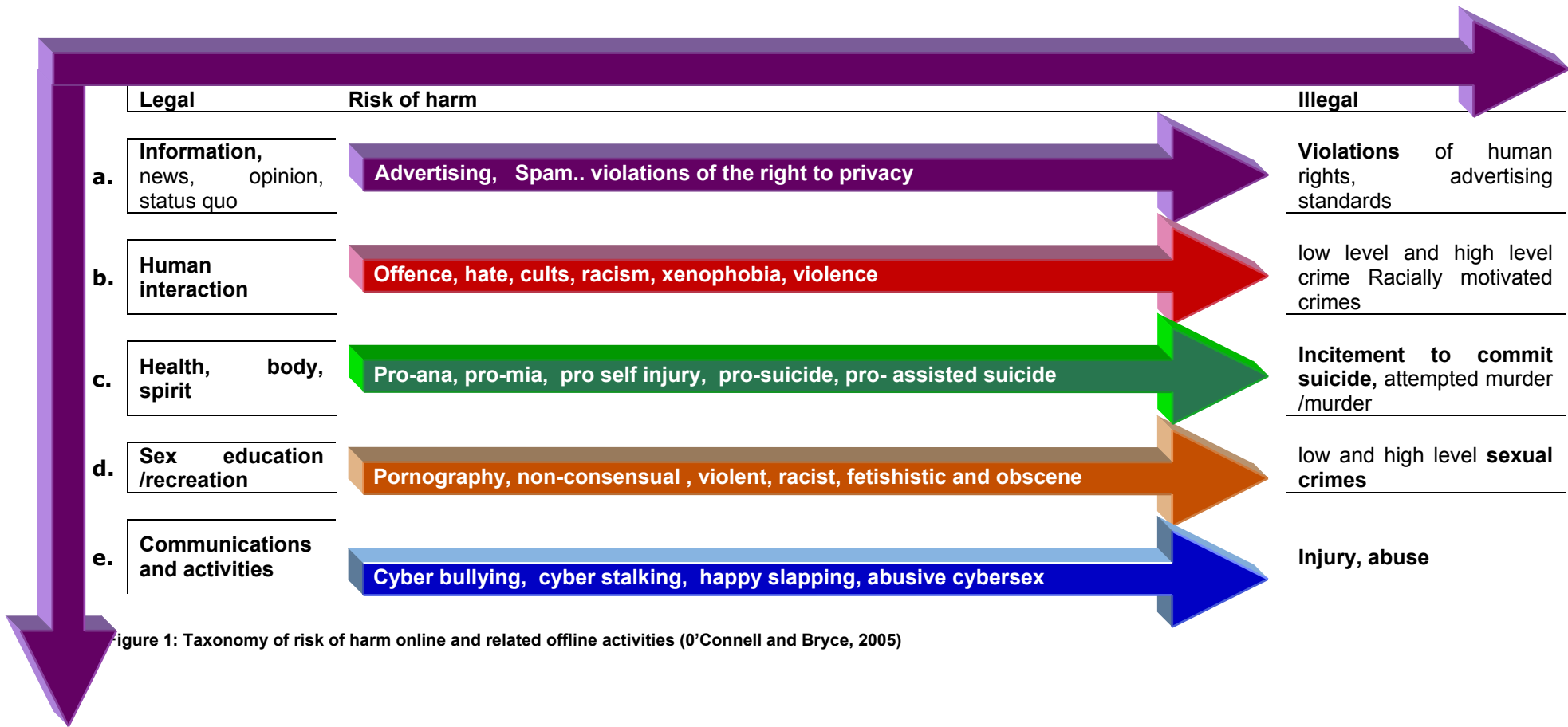


Figure 1: Taxonomy of risk of harm online and related offline activities (O'Connell and Bryce, 2005)

Democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer

We are in the midst of an information evolution which is bringing about significant changes in our society. We are shifting from a reliance on government sources and mass media for authoritative information and expert opinion on issues, toward embracing an online environment where people are looking to other sources, i.e., user generated content to gather information, views, and opinions from those directly affected by events. For example, in a digital TV environment broadcasters ask for peoples views on news items, online newspapers are operating newsblogs to which users are invited to contribute. In addition to the shared space for information exchange and knowledge transfer that has been created by traditional and new media, user generated blogs provide insights into ordinary people's lives. The user generated blogs that are particularly fascinating include, for example, blogs maintained by people in the midst of conflict, e.g., in Iraq or mobloggers caught up in the London bombing incidents. We are seeing the emergence of more inclusive, democratic systems of information exchange and knowledge augmentation. It is incredibly exciting for adults, but also for children and young people growing up in this emerging participatory society, characterised by the democratisation of information exchange. It is essential to consider how best to safe guard human rights whilst this information revolution unfolds.

Paradigm shift: theoretical and research framework

Traditional programmes of research designed to explore the consequences of exposure to 'harmful content' have been restricted in many respects by the conceptualisation of consumers as passive recipients of information. Arguably, viewing children and young people as passive recipients of harmful media content is not sustainable in current online environments. The traditional view has hampered progress toward a more holistic approach to exploring the interrelated factors that underpin children and young people's involvement, experiences and interpretation of both online and related offline activities. Re-conceptualising children and young people as active consumers and producers of online content and communications has significant implications for the protection of their human rights and associated regulatory and educational policies, as well as associated programmes of research.

The paradigm shift which arises when children and young people are viewed as active consumers and producers of online content and communications, together with the included taxonomy of risk of harm from online and related offline activities developed in this document, provides a useful departure point for necessary theoretical, empirical and policy-based research. Throughout this paper a theoretical and research based framework is proposed

which examines the nuances and complexities of exploring, measuring and calibrating risk of harm from online activities and behaviours.

Bridge the Gap by utilising existing and emerging knowledge and expertise

It is increasingly apparent that a large knowledge gap exists between parents, carers, teachers, children and young people. It is proposed that responsibility for addressing that gap lies largely with the government in each European Member State. Over the last five years or more, awareness raising campaigns about internet safety have been conducted in various European countries, often funded in part by the European Commission. In addition, the industry has often taken the lead in terms of developing programmes of education around internet safety and security issues designed for parents, children and young people. In summary, there is a great deal of relevant information already accessible online and a number of existing projects are collating 'best of breed' internet safety information, e.g., www.internetsafetyzone.com.

Certificated courses and tax incentives:

- **Existing support / advice systems:**
- In many European countries, addressing parental concerns about children and young people's use of communication technologies has relied on various grassroots organisations, e.g., parent's organisations, child welfare organisations and various NGO's to develop and disseminate materials designed to address parental concerns and deficits in knowledge. It is recommended that ministers explore which sources of information /advice/ support and guidance are most frequently accessed by parents, carers and educators in their country which relate to risk of harm from online and related offline activities. It is important to establish for example, in which languages content and services are available, what sort of advice is dispensed and the effectiveness of such services. In addition, it is important to establish the skill resources and training requirements of these organisations, if they do exist, and what if any relationship they have with law enforcement agencies and the involved industries. The shortcomings of the grassroots approach relate largely to the limitations associated with funding, staffing and resources, resulting in a patchy deployment of skills and information. The issues are far too complex for governments to continue to rely on this grassroots style approach. However, there are numerous lessons to be learned from this approach, and perhaps one way to move forward is for governments to harness the wisdom and insights gained by these organisations in

an inclusive consultation process prior to rolling out specific programmes of education at the member state or pan-European level.

- **New systems of knowledge augmentation**
- It is imperative that the ministries of education in each member state are encouraged to work with experts in the field to design, develop, and deploy certificated information literacy courses which include modules on internet safety and security. Tax incentives could be utilised to ensure that parents, carers and teachers engage with, and complete, certificated courses designed to educate and empower parents, carers and teachers with the requisite tools, knowledge and skills to navigate the internet safely. In addition, the courses should include lessons designed to equip parents, carers and teachers with sufficient knowledge and understanding of how to educate children about safe use of communication technologies, and also about risk of harm from online and related offline activities. It is imperative that the existing gap in knowledge and understanding of communication technologies between parents, teachers and children and young people is bridged. It is proposed that the only effective means to facilitate the requisite augmentation of parents, carers and teachers knowledge is for ministries of education and universities to develop certificated courses which can be delivered online or through schools. The courses need to be designed in such a way that end users' core competencies are taken in account, i.e., designed for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, rigorous assessment methodologies employed, and upon completion of a course module parents become eligible for a tax break.
- In addition, certificated courses designed for social workers, youth workers and counsellors, i.e., people who come into contact with children and young people and who need to be equipped with the appropriate knowledge and have a full understanding of the issues.

Integrate into school curriculum

Crucially, information literacy and in particular, safe use of the internet, should be an integrated part of the school curriculum. It is proposed that age appropriate information literacy and internet safety programmes of education begin during a child's first year at school and should continue throughout a child's school career. Arguably, this is the only way to ensure that children are uniformly and comprehensively educated about the opportunities and risks associated with internet use. Ministries of education bear a high level of responsibility to ensure that children and young people are sufficiently educated about safe use of the communication technologies, so that they are inspired to be imaginative, creative and astute in their use of communication technologies. There is a vital link between the nurturing and

maintenance of knowledge economies, and the provision of such programmes of education for children and young people. Arguably, it is an undeniable right of a child to expect the provision of adequate information throughout the school curriculum about how to safely navigate the complexities associated with their use of communication technologies.

De-regulation and co-regulation: monitor efficacy of these solutions

The European emphasis on de-regulation in a harmonised and horizontal regulatory environment requires governments to consider the challenges posed by the current separation of regulation of content and network traffic in the context of the blurring of boundaries between content and services referred to throughout this document. This situation demonstrates the need for an integrated and coherent regulatory policy. Such a policy must incorporate an evaluation of the ability of existing regulatory mechanisms to successfully protect human rights, the dignity of minors and freedom of expression in an increasingly complex cross-media European content environment. In addition, there are a number of challenges associated with devising and implementing integrated policies that are sufficiently robust to meet the challenges of the risk of harm associated with the development of new social networking technologies and their increasing use by children and young people.

Work closely with industry: predictive risk mapping

As new products are developed and deployed across different platforms, new and emerging patterns of social networking evolve. Product developers and those involved in designing internet architecture in both fixed and wireless modes are key players who ought to be included in consultation groups concerned with children and young peoples' safe use of the Internet. It is important for ministers to be aware of the value of consultation at this level, and the importance of programmes of research in particular, those which include predictive risk mapping strategies. Research is the key to keeping pace with evolving communications technologies landscapes and Member States need to ensure that excellent research teams are identified and funded to enable a much more pro-active and informed approach towards empowering children and young people, and protecting their rights online. Information about new products and emerging trends ought to be provided to educators so that they are suitably informed and in a position to develop appropriate safety messages and advice prior to or as close as possible to deployment of new products. In this way it would be possible to adopt a more pro-active and informed approach to addressing both the challenges and opportunities that evolving communication technologies and emerging trends present for children and young people.

Table of Contents

Preface.....	3
Executive summary:	6
 CHAPTER 1.....	 19
Harmful content or risk of harm?	16
1.1. Theories of mass communication	17
1.2. Blurred boundaries and emergent online behaviours:	18
1.3. Forging a music career.....	
1.4. Gamedev.net.....	
1.5. Sponsorship	
1.6. User-Generated Content.....	
In summary:.....	
 CHAPTER 2.....	 30
Traditional conceptualisations of harmful content and consequences of exposure.....	
2.1. What constitutes harm?	
2.2. Proposed effects of exposure to harmful content	
2.3. Emotional: Experience of negative emotions such as fear, shock and lack of understanding of viewed content	
a. Attitudinal: Development of scripts and schemas which guide behaviour, desensitisation and disinhibition.....	
2.4. Ideological Reinforcement, legitimisation and justification of attitudes and behaviours.....	
2.5. Behavioural: Modelling and repetition of viewed behaviours	
2.6. Moderating variables	
2.7. Evaluation.....	
 CHAPTER 3.....	 35
Mapping theoretical, and regulatory frameworks	34
3.1. 'Risk of harm' theoretical framework: Mapping a new approach	34
3.2. Regulatory policies, mechanisms and technological solution.....	5
Combating illegal and harmful content on the Internet and the multi-annual action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet (Decision No 276/1999/EC)	6
E-Commerce Directive	
<i>Notice and take down</i>	
 CHAPTER 4.....	 44
Mapping a new theoretical and research framework.....	44

4.1	<i>Community building</i>	47
3.1.1.	Hyperpersonal interactions.....	47
3.1.2.	Attributions to individual and group selves	48
3.1.3.	Disclosure and Disinhibition	49
3.1.4.	Relationship formation.....	51
3.1.5.	Relational development.....	52
3.1.6.	Multiple Identities.....	52
3.1.7.	Gender swapping during role-play	53
3.1.8.	Addiction.....	54
CHAPTER 5.....		56
Socio-political landscape and the democratisation of information		56
5.1.	Information literacy and source criticism.....	
5.2.	Source criticism	
5.3.	Information literacy.....	
5.4.	Are schools deploying the optimal strategies designed to facilitate children and young people becoming information literate?	
5.5.	Cognitive developmental issues.....	
5.6.	Changing pedagogics.....	
5.7.	Complexities of source criticism.....	
5.8.	Newsblogs:.....	
5.9.	Self regulatory mechanisms.....	
CHAPTER 6.....		72
Taxonomy of risk of harm		72
CHAPTER 7.....		78
Hypothetical continuum 1: Advertising and Spam.....		78
7.1.	Growth of m-commerce and advertising targeted at children and young people	
7.2.	M-commerce	
7.3.	Case Study: Jamster ring tones.....	
7.4.	Brand loyalty.....	
7.5.	Privacy issues:	
7.6.	Children and young people and Spam.....	
7.7.	Regulation and Directives regarding Unsolicited Commercial Emails or Spam (UCEs)	
7.7.1.	Consent and privacy issues relating to children and young peoples personal information posted to publicly accessible online environments.....	
CHAPTER 8.....		97
REPRESENTATIONS OF Violence		
8.1.	Commercially produced violent content distributed via traditional media channels...	
8.2.	Distribution of commercially produced violent content via online delivery channels .	
	
8.4.	Access to violent content and services online	

8.5.	Commercially produced violent content:	
8.6.	Interactive co-produced violent content	
8.7.	User-generated content	
8.8.	Awareness raising	
8.8.1.	How will such a system actually work in a cross-media environment?	
8.9.	Racist and discriminatory content	
8.10.	Content distributed via traditional media channels	8.12.
	What is the harm associated with this type of content?	
Chapter 9		
Pornography		108
Distribution of non-commercially produced sexual content via online delivery channels		110
Preferences for types of pornography		115
Use of pornography as a mechanism lower victims' inhibitions		115
Pornography as justification		116
Use of computers and the internet in sex education		117
CHAPTER 10.....		119
Pro anorexia, Pro bulimia, self injury and suicide forums.....		119
<i>Prevalence of Pro-Ana and Pro-Mia forums</i>		119
<i>Regulatory implications</i>		125
<i>Case study 1</i>		131
<i>Case study 2:</i>		132
<i>Case study 3</i>		132
Chapter 11		
Cyberbullying, cyberstalking, happy slapping		135
Bibliography.....		145

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1: TAXONOMY OF RISK OF HARM ONLINE AND RELATED OFFLINE ACTIVITIES (O'CONNELL AND BRYCE, 2005).....	8
FIGURE 2 SHANNON'S (1948) MODEL OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS.....	20
FIGURE 3 INTERACTIVE MODEL OF COMMUNICATION PROCESSES.....	20
FIGURE 4 SHOWS THE LOCATIONS OF ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS ACROSS THE WORLD AND THE ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO PARTICIPATED AT EACH LOCATION.	23
FIGURE 5 HTTP://MAKEIT.KAZAA.COM/	24
FIGURE 6 HTTP://GUIDE.KAZAA.COM/US/FEATURES/MAGNETLINKS.HTM	24
FIGURE 7: MUSIC BLOG HTTP://WWW.ARJANWRITES.COM/	25
FIGURE 8.....	26
FIGURE 9.....	26
FIGURE 10.....	27
FIGURE 11.....	27
FIGURE 12: THE FOUR DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES, THE CORRESPONDING AGE RANGES, AND THE MAJOR FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH EACH STAGE.....	63
FIGURE 13 : IMAGE SHOWN IN ONLINE EDITION OF WASHINGTON POST	65
FIGURE 14: REUTERS LONG-SHOT PHOTO OF FIRDOS SQUARE.....	65
FIGURE 15: BLOG MAINTAINED BY PERSON LIVING IN IRAQ. HTTP://HEALINGIRAQ.BLOGSPOT.COM/ ..	66
FIGURE 16: YAFRO BLOG.....	66
FIGURE 17: GUARDIAN ONLINE NEWSBLOG.....	66
FIGURE 18: GUARDIAN BLOGGING SITES	67
FIGURE 19: USER GENERATED BLOG A LINK TO WHICH WAS SUPPLIED ON HTTP://BLOGS.GUARDIAN.CO.UK/NEWS/	67
FIGURE 21: TAXONOMY OF RISK OF HARM ONLINE AND RELATED OFFLINE ACTIVITIES (O'CONNELL AND BRYCE, 2005).....	77
FIGURE 23: : HYPOTHETICAL CONTINUUM 1: ADVERTISING AND SPAM.....	78
FIGURE 24: SHOWS THE OPERATION AND PARTNERS OF MX TELECOM:	79
FIGURE 25: NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN EACH COUNTRY.	80
FIGURE 26.....	81
FIGURE 27.....	81
FIGURE 28: SHOW THE CRAZY FROG CHARACTER, A VERY POPULAR JAMSTER CHARACTER.....	83
FIGURE 29: SHOWS THE NUMBER OF HITS THE SEARCH TERMS JAMSTER RING TONES GENERATES.	84
FIGURE 30: SHOWS THE COCA COLA WEBSITE	88
FIGURE 31: SHOWS THE FRENCH COCA COLA WEBSITE.....	88
FIGURE 32.....	89
FIGURE 33: SHOWS IMAGES OF CHILDREN POSTED TO TEXTAMERICA BLOGGING SITE.	94
FIGURE 34: SHOWS THE IRATE BLOG OF A FATHER WHO POSTED PICTURES OF HIS 5 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER ONLINE AND RECEIVED DISTURBING COMMENTS	94
FIGURE 35: SHOWS HYPOTHETICAL CONTINUUM B.....	97
FIGURE 37: SHOWS HYPOTHETICAL CONTINUUM D.....	108
FIGURE 38.....	108
FIGURE 39: RECTAL ROOTER SITE PROVIDES ACCESS TO VIDEO AND TEXT BASED ACCOUNTS OF A SEXUAL ENCOUNTER.....	109
FIGURE 40: PENISBOT BONDAGE AND S&M GALLERIES	109
FIGURE 41: SHOWS A LIVE AN INTERACTIVE SITE.....	110
FIGURE 42: SHOWS A WEBCAM SITE.....	110
FIGURE 43: SHOWS A NEWSGROUP FEATURING BLACK AMATEUR PORN	110
FIGURE 44: SHOWS A NEWSGROUP WHICH CONTAINS IMAGES FROM A WEBCAM SESSION DEPICTING AN AMATEUR FEMALE TEEN.	111
FIGURE 45: SHOWS FRONT PAGE TO A PORNOGRAPHIC SITE WITH RACIST OVERTONES.....	111
FIGURE 46: SHOWS A SADOSLAVES SITE	112
FIGURE 47: SHOWS EXPLOITED BITCHES SITE	112
FIGURE 482: SHOWS WWW.BEASTIALITY.COM	112
FIGURE 49: SHOWS GOOGLE RESULTS USING SEARCH TERM PRO ANA.....	120
FIGURE 50: SHOWS EZBOARD SHOWS NUMBER OF TOTAL VISITS TO PRO-ANA-SUICIDE-SOCIETY AND THE AVERAGE DAILY VISITS.	120

FIGURE 51: SHOWS PICTURES OF MODELS POSTED ON PRO ANA WEBSITES.....	121
FIGURE 52: EXAMPLES OF IMAGES SHARED BY USERS ON PRO ANA SITES	122
FIGURE 53: SHOWS A PRO-ANA SITE WITH LINKS TO OTHER PRO-ANA SITES.....	125
FIGURE 54: SHOWS A SUICIDE SITES REPOSE TO THE RECENT CHANGES IN LEGISLATION IN AUSTRALIA TO THE CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (SUICIDE RELATED MATERIAL OFFENCES) BILL, WHICH CRIMINALISES THE PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION ABOUT FOR EXAMPLE SUICIDE METHODS.	128
FIGURE 55: SHOWS AMAZON SITE SELLING BOOKS ON TOPICS SUCH AS SUICIDE METHODS	130
FIGURE 56: SHOWS SITE THAT CONTAINS DETAILS STORIES OF GAY TEEN SUICIDES.	ERROR!
BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.	
FIGURE 57: SHOWS A NEWSGROUP WHICH PROVIDES DETAILS OF THE AMOUNT OF DAVRON AND PHENOBARBITAL TO USE TO COMMIT SUICIDE	130
FIGURE 58: SHOWS THE POPULAR ALT.SUICIDE.HOLIDAY NEWSGROUP	131
FIGURE 59: SHOWS A SITE WHICH OFFERS A GUIDE AND A DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC OF HOW TO COMMIT SUICIDE.	131
FIGURE 60: A HAPPY SLAPPING INCIDENT.	141
FIGURE 61: SHOWS SECOND SHOT OF HAPPY SLAPPING INCIDENT	141
FIGURE 62 PHONE CHICKEN.....	141

CHAPTER 1.

Harmful content or risk of harm?

In this chapter the term 'harmful content' is examined within the context of existing theories of mass communication and the range of activities children and young people engage in online. In particular, the increasing blurring of boundaries between static and interactive online experiences, the exponential rise in the volume of user-generated content, and the admixture of content and contact related issues, all suggest the need to map a new approach to our understanding of the online activities of children and young people. Nowadays children in online environments are not merely 'receivers' or 'consumers' of information. They have the opportunity to be the producers of content, as authors, editors, filmmakers, music artists, counsellors, gamers. In addition, they may act as intermediaries or gatekeepers to content and communications, i.e., publishers, distributors, censors, regulators and moderators. The full spectrum of mass communication and social networking processes are accessible to, and utilisable by, children and young people. It seems reasonable to suggest therefore, that children and young people's relationships with mass media ought to be conceptualised in terms much wider and more multifaceted than as simply 'passive consumers' of mass media content. The authors suggest that the increasing variety of online activities in which children and young people engage, together with the increasing use of social

networking products, sufficiently alters their experiences of potentially harmful online content and encounters to necessitate the re-categorisation of the term 'harmful content' as a subcategory of a super-ordinate category, i.e., 'risk of harm from online and related offline activities'. In conclusion, this chapter summarises the preceding paragraphs in an effort to more succinctly articulate the meaning of the term 'risk of harm'.

Theories of mass communication

The recent growth of online communications has not only opened up new communication channels and delivery mechanisms, but also challenged scholarly understanding of such fundamental communication concepts as source, medium, and receiver. For the purposes of signposting a key argument; that traditional conceptualisations of children's relations to mass media, in particular the Internet, ought to be re-examined given children's use of social networking products, the following paragraphs provide a brief review of traditional theories of mass communication.

This chapter posits that, broadly speaking, there are two major conceptualisations of audiences' relations to the media: 'Transmission' (referencing a linear model of communication – see Fig 1) and 'dialogue' (referencing a transactional model – see Fig 2). According to Foulger (2004), a number of mass communication models share a common "injection model" in which message reception is automatic.

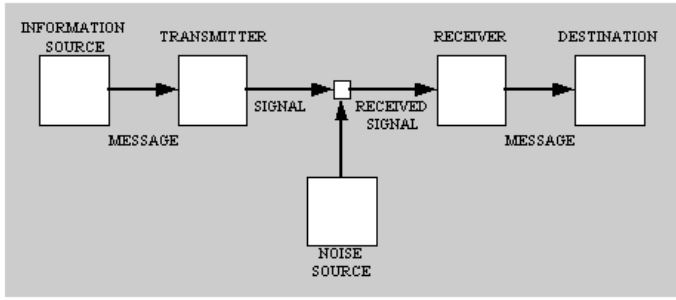


Figure 2 Shannon's (1948) Model of the communication process.

There are many derivative models of communication processes, some of which discuss the role of intermediaries, e.g., Katz, (1957), and still others which explore the cybernetic concept of feedback (Weiner, 1948, 1986). However, an in-depth discussion of the nuances of various communication models is beyond the scope of this chapter.

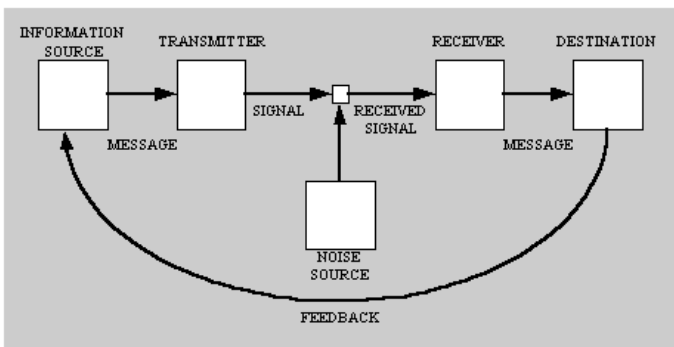


Figure 3 Interactive model of communication processes

Despite the multiplicity of limitations associated with traditional reception studies, there have been a number of recent developments as differing theoretical and methodological perspectives consolidate. Schröder, Drotner, Kline & Murray (2003) identify three broad strengths of the reception tradition; its willingness to deal with the 'wholeness' of audience responses and seeing these in the context of the rest of

people's lives; the rise of comparative studies; and the increasing attention being given to interactive audiences. These developments are encouraging, particularly as in the future reception studies will need to explore issues such as end users' creation of content and its subsequent dissemination over a number of platforms via social networking products. The following paragraphs explore the dynamics underpinning these communication processes in greater depth.

The aim of outlining previous theories of communication processes is to highlight the prior assumptions that are often inherent in discussions about children and harmful content; that children are simply the 'receivers' or 'consumers' of content. Arguably, this limited perspective is no longer tenable, particularly when we recognise that nowadays children in online environments are not merely receivers of information. They now have the opportunity to be the producers and distributors of content. This, together with the variety of mass communication and social networking technologies available to children and young people, suggests the need to re-conceptualise their use of media as a more active process. The internet affords children and young people the opportunity to become co-constructors of multiple realities, to shape their own experiences and those of other online users including other children and young people. In this context, it is clear that the term 'harmful content' is a subcategory of a far more complex relationship between

children, young people and the various types of online content and services to which they have access. These all have the potential to impact upon both their online and related offline behavioural and cognitive repertoires. Therefore, the authors propose that a new umbrella term which incorporates the multifaceted nature of children and young peoples' relationships with cross media content and communication services be employed. It is proposed that 'risk of harm' is a more inclusive, descriptive term which encompasses the potential for the online experiences and activities engaged in by children and young people to pose varying degrees of 'risk of harm', either to themselves and/or to other children and young people.

Due to the recent involvement of children and young people in many of the online behaviours outlined in this document and the dearth of associated research, it is only possible to hypothesise about the effects of these social networking products on children and young peoples' perceptions of socially networked virtual spheres and their potential consequences. In a section exploring multidimensional parameters contributing to 'risk of harm' later in this document, a number of psychological factors and previous research findings will be explored with a view to mapping the possible relationships, consequences, and outcomes associated with children and young peoples' online and related offline activities.

Blurred boundaries and emergent online behaviours:

'The key to the power of mobiles - including hybrids like two-way pagers, BlackBerry emailers, personal digital assistants merged with phones, wireless laptops, and phones merged with two-way radios - is that they liberate people from their desktop telephones and computers, moving the action out to that much larger portion of life that encompasses wherever and whenever humans roam. "My friends call me on my mobile even when I'm at home," says one teenager who is a child of divorce, "because they don't know whether I'm at my mum's house or my dad's." Joel Garreau, "Cell Biology," The Washington Post, July 31, 2002

Innovations in technology, content, and services in the contemporary European media environment have blurred boundaries between static and interactive content and services, and increased contact between users. "Anywhere-Anytime-Anything" is a slogan often used by telecommunication companies, television producers and content developers to describe the information, communications and entertainment (ICE) markets of the future. The slogan refers to the delivery of media content via a variety of channels.

Within this context one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications exchanged via SMS, MMS, IM, email between mobile and /or fixed internet connections has altered the levels of accessibility of an individual and/or a

group online presence¹. This has resulted in the permanent and ubiquitous accessibility to people and groups 'whenever' and 'wherever' on an unprecedented scale. It is now possible to message others whilst in conversation with somebody else, and to forward and share connections with others much faster than was previously possible by text or voice.

In the cultural sphere, people are now creating and publishing their own books, blogs, movies and music online. Social networking² products, for example, weblogs and instant messenger programs, have become increasingly integrated aspects of young peoples' lives, particularly with the increasing sophistication of mobile devices. 'Always on' internet access via a mobile phone, in combination with picture messaging capabilities, has catapulted blogs and moblogs into children and young peoples' repertoire of online activities. Alterations of this scale must be considered when evaluating the impact of communication technologies on development and everyday lives of children and young people.

¹ Presence: The ability to detect whether other users are online and whether they are available. Presence services are commonly provided through applications like Finger and instant messaging clients, although a number of companies are developing products in other areas that leverage presence, such as VoIP.

(2) The term Web presence refers to having an established existence, through a Web site or a collection of Web files, on the World Wide Web.

² Social networking (n). Using a Web site to connect with people who share similar personal or professional interests, particularly where the people in the site's database are connected to each other as friends, friends of friends, and so on.

Arguably, user generated forms of "targeted media" are displacing 'mass media' on the Internet and via other forms of computer-mediated communications. The growth of social networking tools have led to the emergence of online participatory societies whereby, for example, people look to blogging sites of ordinary Iraqi people during conflict to get a clear picture of what is taking place in the country, rather than relying solely on official news reports. This emerging aspect of children and young peoples' online activities will be explored in greater depth in a later chapter. In addition, the organization of anti-war protest marches and rallies across the world largely took place via the Internet. In the UK, for example, <http://www.stopwar.org.uk/> was a key site for anti-war protestors to access information about events. According to journalist Joel Garreau (2003) in an online article entitled '*The age of swarming*³', 'At a moment's notice, the mob gathers - thanks to the mobile phone, which is propelling nothing less than a social revolution'.

³ —Joel Garreau, "Cell Biology," *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2002

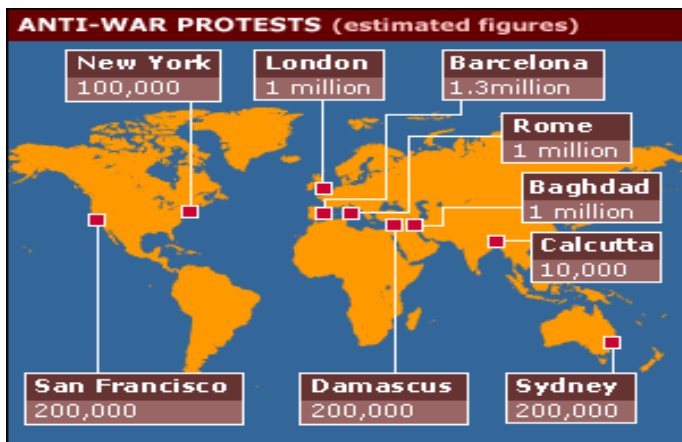


Figure 4: Shows the locations of anti-war demonstrations across the world and the estimated numbers of people who participated at each location.

In short, particularly over the past decade, a web of technological, economic, cultural, and socio-demographic forces of social change have provided the basis for participatory structures and processes. These alterations in patterns of usage of the Internet, the scope for interactivity and generation of user content, cascades to classrooms and homes, where children and young people have far greater scope for engaging in a host of online activities, including the production of user generated content at school and in the home. The role of schools in educating children and the emerging fields of information literacy with respect to Internet use will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

These alterations have significant implications for how we conceptualise children and young peoples' online activities. The interactive nature of many new services, in addition to their potential for increased circulation of inappropriate textual and visual material, has placed limitations on traditional forms of media regulation. This change, as well as those

associated with changing forms of citizenship and social participation, have coincided with a move from a specific focus on protecting 'vulnerable' users from inappropriate and harmful content as the main goal of regulation, towards a combination of this with increased education, media literacy, agency and individual responsibility.

The following examples of websites and social networking products provide some insights into the opportunities currently available to children and young people. These include online authorship, content dissemination, co-construction of realities and varying degrees of involvement, engagement and immersion in both online and related offline activities. Children and young people may aspire to becoming famous musicians, artists, authors or game developers. It is now possible to create, package and brand content, often with the free support offered by experts online. Furthermore, by harnessing the capabilities of communication technologies, it is possible for children and young people to distribute their work to hundreds, thousands, maybe millions of people. The following paragraphs illustrate the nature and scope of the opportunities available online to children and young people provides a glimpse of how attainable those dreams may be.

Making it though peer-to-peer networks

Kazaa is a file sharing service that in 2003 claimed the record number of total downloads from any web site (more than

230 million since it went online). According to the Kazaa / Make it site, it is possible to do the following;

You can promote and publish short films, poetry, stories, your opinions, art ...in fact any music, videos, games, software, documents or images that you've created and own.

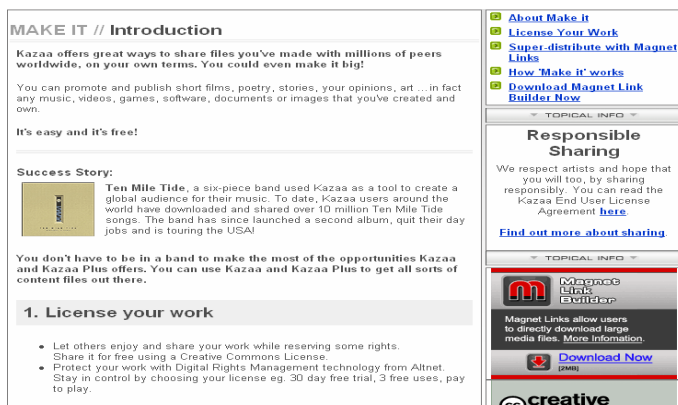


Figure 5 <http://makeit.kazaa.com/>

Ten Mile Tide is the name of a six-piece band that used Kazaa as a tool to create a global audience for their music. To date, Kazaa users around the world have downloaded and shared over 10 million Ten Mile Tide songs. The band has since launched a second album, quit their day jobs and is touring the USA!

Kazaa also offers young people, the opportunity to super-distribute content using KaZaA. Magnet Links. The following easy to use instructions are provided to users;

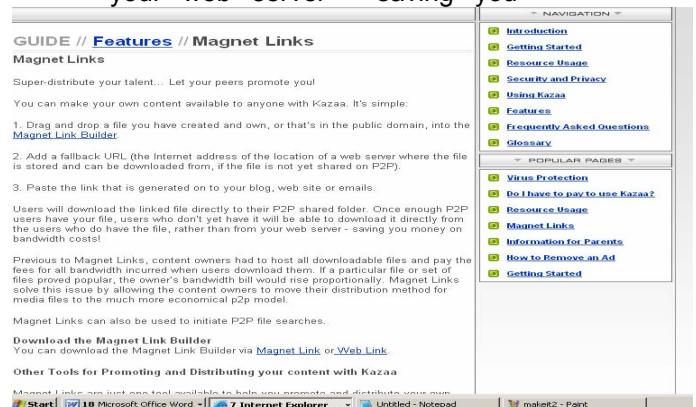
You can make your own content available to anyone with Kazaa. It's simple:

1. Drag and drop a file you have created and own, or that's in the public domain, into the Magnet Link Builder.

2. Add a fallback URL (the Internet address of the location of a web server where the file is stored and can be downloaded from, if the file is not yet shared on P2P).

3. Paste the link that is generated on to your blog, web site or emails.

Users will download the linked file directly to their P2P shared folder. Once enough P2P users have your file, users who don't yet have it will be able to download it directly from the users who do have the file, rather than from your web server - saving you



money on bandwidth costs!

Figure 6 <http://guide.kazaa.com/us/features/magnetlinks.htm>

Bullet point 3 in Fig 5 instructs users to *Paste the link that is generated on to your blog, web site or emails*. Noticeably blogs are referred to along with website and emails, which illustrates how peer-to-peer networks encourage end users to harness

the capabilities of social networking products. In effect, a file sharing platform and any number of social networking tools would work in concert. In terms of generating hype around a user's material, blogs can be a very effective tool. The totality of weblogs or blog-related websites is often called the blogosphere. When a large amount of activity, information and opinion erupts around a particular subject or controversy in the blogosphere, it is sometimes called a blogstorm or blog swarm.

In addition, it is important to recognise that blogs typically provide an effective means for content distribution. The tools for editing, organizing, and publishing weblogs are variously referred to as "content management systems", "publishing platforms", or simply "weblog software". Syndication is a term used to describe the sharing of content among different web sites and blogs. The term is normally associated with licensed content such as television programs and newspaper columns, however, increasingly syndication is an integrated feature of user generated websites and blogs. Therefore, publishers, webmasters and bloggers provide content and news in an RSS⁴ feed. Other users view the content of interest in an RSS reader or news aggregator. The aggregator or

reader contains the collection of feeds that are of interest to the user. As the RSS feed is updated the content in the reader or aggregator updates with the new information. At any point, users can remove a feed from their aggregator or reader, and no longer receive information from that source. It is also possible to get real-time blog post alerts via email, MSN Messenger or on a wireless device. Ultimately, the user chooses the news and content they wish to view.



Figure 7: music blog
<http://www.arjanwrites.com/>

Furthermore, blogs are increasingly searchable, which has further implications in terms of connecting to other users. Technocrati is one of many search tools which affords users the opportunity to search millions of blogs for information.

⁴ RSS: Short for RDF Site Summary or Rich Site Summary, an XML format for syndicating Web content. A Web site that wants to allow other sites to publish some of its content creates an RSS document and registers the document with an RSS publisher. A user that can read RSS-distributed content can use the content on a different site. Syndicated content includes such data as news feeds, events listings, news stories, headlines, project updates, excerpts from discussion forums or even corporate information.



Figure 8
<http://www.technorati.com/>

Forging a music career

A number of interesting alterations in opportunities to learn about a particular subject for recreational purposes or to forge a career in creative spheres have been made possible by the Internet. Routes to gaining expert advice and guidance are available via sites like Artistopia, i.e., a 'one-stop shop for artists and professionals to meet under one roof and speak one language - potential success. According to the information on the front page 'Artistopia' takes pride in pioneering the next revolution in the music industry i.e., how independent artists and musicians are discovered.

Mission Statement: To build and foster a proactive online community where artists and professionals from all corners of the music industry come and develop opportunities.

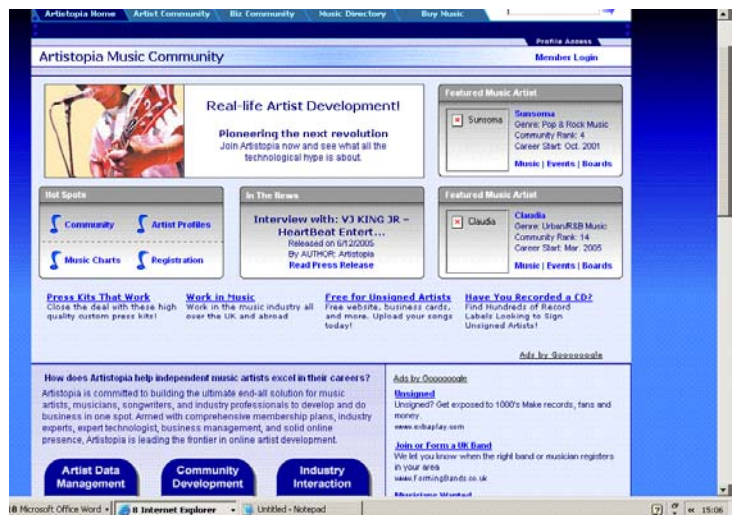


Figure 9
<http://www.artistopia.com/>

Gamedev.net

Games development is an area of interest for a large number of young people, and sites such as Gamedev.net provide an online community for game developers of all levels, from beginner to the seasoned industry veteran. According to the information on the front page of gamedev.net 'Over 250,000 developers from around the world return here regularly to take advantage of our frequently updated developer news, thousands of articles and other resources, amazingly active forums, and most importantly to be a part of the growing international community of game developers'.



Figure 10
<http://www.gamedev.net/>

Other aspects of life, for example, supporting friends in a sponsored charity run are now possible by completing a form online. The possibility to engage in a whole host of everyday activities has shifted online, and this movement has helped to foster the growth of a participatory society in which a generation of children and young people are playing an active role. It is this automatic expectation that technologies such as the internet are available for use to complete a variety of recreational, educational, business, and everyday tasks that is important when considering how best to minimise the 'risk of harm' from the various aspects of children and young peoples' online activities. Increasingly, routine everyday activities like shopping, banking and purchasing gifts, along with both educational and recreational activities are being conducted by families online.

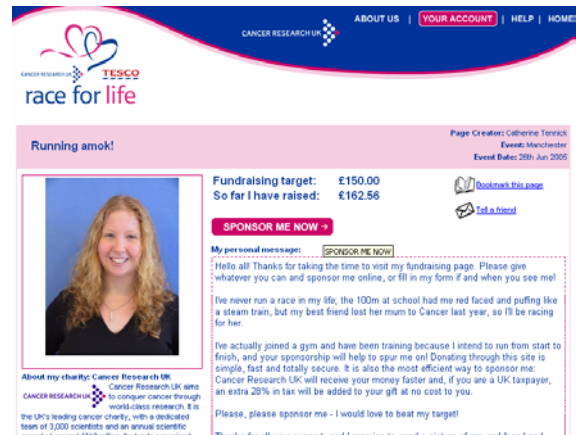


Figure 11
<http://www.raceforlifefunders.org/pages/?pid=181375>

User-Generated Content

As outlined above blogs⁵ and moblogs⁶ are examples of social networking products that are characterised by user-generated content⁷. User generated content poses a number of important challenges to the issue of harmful content, and by necessity widens the focus from minors simply as recipients of content to creators and communicators. There are risks, for example, associated with minors viewing inappropriate and harmful content on other people's blogs. However, there is still a need to decide who bears the responsibility for user-generated content:

⁵ Blog: short for Web log, a blog is a Web page that serves as a publicly accessible personal journal for an individual. Typically updated daily, blogs often reflect the personality of the author. A blog is a collection of text or multimedia postings published on a web page and listed in reverse-chronological order (newest first).

⁶ Moblog: (A mobile blog) A moblog is a blog published directly to the web from a phone or other mobile device. Moblogs postings usually include photos, and therefore are usually used in conjunction with camera phones.

⁷ Content that has been created, disseminated and accessed by users on different platforms.

Should the blog Service Provider be deputised to be responsible for moderating user-generated content?

Furthermore, technological developments such as blogs, have confused the demarcation between content and contact in the following ways:

The facility to post comments to other user's blogs can result in minors being exposed to bullying, threatening or harmful comments, or

- A blog comment can serve as a point of contact between a minor and a user with ill intent. This contact may progress to communication via Chat, Instant Messenger, email, SMS or a phone conversation.
- Similarly, the information that minors post is searchable using search engines or via systems internal to the blogging community, e.g., lists of 'Updated blogs' and/or lists of 'New blogs'.
- In addition, the content minors upload to blogging sites can be tracked. Other users can choose to add a minor's site to a newsreader or aggregator, so that a notification is sent to the user each time a minor uploads new information to his/her blog. This facility can be used for legitimate purposes, e.g., a family wanting to view another family member's holiday photographs as soon as new images are posted. However, there are some concerns about minors' content being syndicated in this manner particularly by users with ill intent, who in effect can harvest information about potential victim's daily activities.

- Furthermore, the option to 'syndicate' also affords users with ill intent the option to supply this information to other users with ill intent, i.e., sharing minor's content with each other.
- This situation is problematic from a child protection perspective, as it facilitates those people interested in targeting and tracking a minor to receive notifications when a minor updates new information to a blog.
- These concerns also relate, not only to the current absence of guidance on this issue, but also to the current contention surrounding whether or not minors can give informed consent for their information to be distributed in this manner.
- Arguably, the personalised nature of services afforded by new technologies increase the difficulties for direct state or legal intervention into the domestic spaces and private lives of citizens. It is important to consider who is responsible for monitoring and/or moderating content on user generated and/or personalised services.
- Can the industry be deputised to address these issues, in which case, which part of the industry is responsible for user content?
- Should there be agreed codes of practice with respect to user generated content?
- Should the scope of hotlines be extended to address reports of harmful content on new services?
- Should users be encouraged to use content labelling systems, i.e. self regulate content?

In summary: The purpose of providing a brief sketch of what is possible online, and how different social networking products are interconnecting, is to provide readers with an overview of the current and evolving social networking capabilities available to children and young people online. The zeitgeist, and rightly so, is for children and young people to become integrated members of a knowledge based society. The aim of this paper is to elaborate the meaning of harmful content, and the specific aim of this chapter is to illustrate the changing context within which children and young people are currently operating. This will better place readers to consider the parameters of 'risk of harm' to minors within the context of the nature and scope of online activities that children and young people can engage in. The focus of this chapter has deliberately been on user generated content, which typically has not been a prominent aspect of previous discussions about 'harmful content. It is only by sketching the full spectrum of activities that children and young people can engage in online that we can adequately discuss the activities which may involve greater 'risk of harm' to a minor.

CHAPTER 2

Traditional conceptualisations of harmful content and consequences of exposure

What constitutes harm?

According to the Council of Europe⁸ harm can be defined as follows;

“Bearing in mind the differences in national criminal law concerning illegal content as well as the differences in what content may be perceived as potentially harmful, especially to minors and their physical, mental and moral development, hereinafter referred to as “harmful content”.

[http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/media/4_Documentary_Resources/CM/Rec\(2001\)008&ExpMem_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/media/4_Documentary_Resources/CM/Rec(2001)008&ExpMem_en.asp)

And⁹

“Aware that this may impair the physical, mental or moral development of the public, particularly young people, by

⁸ COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS RECOMMENDATION No. R (2001) 8 OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON SELF-REGULATION CONCERNING CYBER CONTENT (SELF-REGULATION AND USER PROTECTION AGAINST ILLEGAL OR HARMFUL CONTENT ON NEW COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SERVICES) (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 September 2001, at the 762nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

⁹ COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 19 OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON THE PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE IN THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 October 1997 at the 607th meeting of the Ministers' deputies)

creating, for instance, growing insensitivity to suffering, feelings of insecurity and mistrust; “

Traditionally, the concept of ‘harmful content’ is premised on the notion of protection of minors from certain categories of media content that are proposed to have a detrimental effect on their physical, psychological, moral and social development. Whilst the general protection of human rights underpins this concept, the specific protection of minors is central to regulatory policy and legislation at both the member state and European level.

The most common focus in Council of Europe (CoE) and other regulatory policy instruments is on the portrayal of violence and sexually explicit material in film, TV, computer games and print literature. Vertical systems of regulation have developed for these different media channels. Illegal material such as child and violent pornography has also received attention in statutory criminal legislation at member state level and within CoE and European Commission regulatory instruments relating to cybercrime and internet safety.

The blurring of content and services discussed in the previous chapter have led to their utilisation for the communication, reinforcement and legitimisation of racist, homophobic and extreme political and religious ideologies. These are also considered harmful and pose challenges for existing regulatory systems, protection

of human dignity, freedom of expression and the rights of minors. This has led to an expansion of the remit of many regulatory systems to cover regulation of this type of content.

Whilst a central aim of this document is to evaluate the extent to which new technologies and services challenge traditional notions of harmful content, the following paragraphs provide a critical evaluation of the evidence base supporting the claimed consequences of exposure to harmful content currently central to regulatory policies and systems within Europe.

Proposed effects of exposure to harmful content

Definitions of harmful content are premised on its proposed negative effects, and this necessitates a brief critical evaluation of the evidence base, reliability and validity of research results examining these proposed effects. Specific concerns over the effects of exposure to sexually explicit material and representations of violence in film and TV, led to the development of a number of theoretical perspectives and methodological paradigms which have formed the basis of research. These have subsequently been incorporated into an examination of the potential consequences of harmful content in computer games, music and content accessed through the internet¹⁰.

¹⁰There are a large number of review papers critically evaluating the proposed effects of exposure to harmful media content. It is beyond the scope of this document to provide a detailed review, but the

Emotional: Experience of negative emotions such as fear, shock and lack of understanding of viewed content

An important effect of exposure to harmful content, particularly for younger children viewing content inappropriate to their age, is the experience of shock, fear and lack of understanding. Despite the potential impact of such experiences on childhood psychological development, there has been a lack of research on this particular consequence. The classification of certain types of content as illegal (e.g., child pornography) and systems of age-certification for film, TV and computer games, seek to address such possible effects by labelling content as appropriate for certain ages, and providing a guide on the nature of content for parents to enable them to regulate their child's media consumption.

There are also negative emotional effects for those involved in the coercive or non-consenting production of certain types of media content, specifically violent and/or child pornography. Such effects have received less attention in the media effects literature, though the psychological effects of sexual and physical abuse are well-documented in the psychiatric and childhood development literatures.

reader is directed to the references included in this chapter to examine this issue in greater detail.

Attitudinal: Development of scripts and schemas which guide behaviour, desensitisation and disinhibition

Exposure to violent and sexually explicit media content has been claimed to encourage the development of cognitive schemas which emphasize aggressive and or sexually/coercive behaviour, inform the interpretation of the actions of others, and lead to such behaviours being performed. It has also been claimed to lead to a desensitisation to viewed content which reduces any associated negative emotions and increases perceptions of such behaviour as normal and acceptable. These processes potentially increase the likelihood that individuals will behave in ways consistent with viewed content and associated behavioural schemas in real life situations. It may also create increasing desire for further exposure and potential escalation in the extremity of the content sought.

Ideological: Reinforcement, legitimisation and justification of attitudes and behaviours

This category of proposed effects is consistent with the moderating influence of personality and predisposition towards certain attitudes and behaviour. That is, individuals who are predisposed towards violence, sexual aggression and/or sexual interest in children may be attracted to media content which is consistent with, justifies and reinforces these pre-existing dispositions. Exposure to such media content further reinforces cognitive

schemas and legitimises those attitudes which guide behaviour. However, this suggests that it is unlikely that exposure to harmful content alone will result in subsequent attitudinal change and behaviour where no predisposition exists, other than those emotional responses associated with shock, fear and offence.

Behavioural: Modelling and repetition of viewed behaviours

The modelling and reinforcement of behaviours represents one of the processes by which exposure to violent and sexually explicit media content increases aggressive and/or sexually deviant attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Bandura, 1973, 1986, 1994). Developmental research suggests that children learn appropriate behaviours through processes of socialisation and systems of reward and punishment by parents, family members, peers and the media (Bandura, 1977; 1986; Huesmann, 1997; Anderson et al., 2003). This involves processes in which observed behaviour is imitated, and such effects have been claimed to be particularly strong when the person being imitated is strongly identified with, when the context is realistic, and the viewed behaviour rewarded (Bandura, 1977; Anderson et al., 2004). From this perspective, frequent exposure to violent and/or sexually explicit media content may increase imitation of viewed behaviours by minors, and frequent exposure may reinforce the belief that such behaviour is acceptable.

Moderating variables

Moderator variables are factors which influence the association between exposure to harmful content its proposed effects on attitudes and behaviours. Factors such as age, individual differences or personality, gender, intelligence, family variables, and peer-group relationships have all been proposed to moderate the potential effects of exposure to harmful content, specifically violent TV, film and computer game content (Anderson et al., 2004).

The major focus of research on the potential influence of moderator variables has been on individual personality characteristics, and exposure to multiple risk factors has been claimed to predispose certain individuals towards violent and aggressive behaviour (Bushman et al., 2003; Kiewitz and Weaver, 2001; Anderson and Dill, 2000). These results are consistent with the 'justification hypothesis' which states that highly aggressive individuals are attracted to the use of violent media as a means of reinforcing and justifying their existing attitudes and behaviours (Anderson et al., 2004; Bushman, 1995; Huesmann et al., 2003, Gunter, 1987). Similar arguments have been made in relation to the consumption of violent pornography (see Chapter 9 of this document for further examination of this issue).

Evaluation

Although these proposed effects have been examined by researchers in relation

to exposure to a variety of different forms of harmful media content (e.g., violence and sexually explicit content in film, TV and computer games, pornography), the results have often been conflicting and inconclusive. A number of government commissions in the UK, USA and European states have reviewed evidence in these areas and reached varying conclusions as to the validity of claimed consequences. For example, conclusions of such commissions investigating the proposed claims of exposure to pornography have varied; from concluding that sexually explicit material is virtually harmless (Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, 1970), to that of the Longford Committee (1972) that pornography use produces an ever-growing appetite for sexually explicit material. Similarly, the Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship (1979) were unable to conclude that pornography promotes the utility of sexual violence.

The reliability and validity of theoretical and methodological approaches to research, the interpretation of results and their implications for individual and social well-being continue to be strongly debated within the academic media effects literature. Given the ethical limitations on the methodologies which can be used in such research and the often artificial nature of experimental research in comparison to the everyday contexts in which media content is viewed and interpreted, it is unlikely that definitive evidence supporting or refuting the validity of the proposed consequences of

exposure to harmful content will be unequivocally demonstrated. Despite this, many researchers have concluded that exposure to harmful content in the absence of other predisposing characteristics (e.g., physiological, psychological, developmental, environmental) is unlikely to have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviour of individuals. However, systems of age-related content classification and associated initiatives to improve parental awareness and monitoring continue to play an important educational and protective mechanism.

There is a need to critically evaluate current understanding of the processes of reception and interpretation which surround exposure to harmful media content. It has often been assumed that those exposed to harmful content engage in similar practices of reception and understanding which have similar impacts on subsequent attitudinal, ideological or behavioural outcomes. The notion that all harmful content will negatively affect all viewers in the same way is a simplistic understanding of a complicated process of reception, interpretation and subsequent outcome of exposure to harmful media content.

Such approaches utilise the injection model of media communication processes as outlined in the previous chapter. As we argued previously, there are a number of difficulties with conceptualising the consumer of media content and interactive services as a passive recipient. Re-conceptualising children and young people as active consumers and producers of

online content has significant implications for the protection of their human rights and associated regulatory and educational policies.

SUMMARY

- This chapter provided a brief overview of the proposed negative effects of exposure to traditional forms of harmful content and evaluated the associated evidence base.
- The proposed negative effects are summarised in this chapter as emotional, attitudinal, ideological and behavioural:
- The results of research examining these different potential outcomes of exposure have often been conflicting and inconclusive.
- Many researchers have concluded that exposure to harmful content in the absence of other predisposing characteristics (e.g., physiological, psychological, developmental and environmental) is unlikely to have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.
- There is a need for further examination of the contexts in which harmful content is received and interpreted, and the multiplicity of factors which moderate the relationship between exposure to harmful content and subsequent attitudinal, emotional, behavioural and ideological outcomes.

CHAPTER 2.

MAPPING THEORETICAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

Traditional notions of harmful content are situated within the history of media effects research. This perspective conceptualises the viewer as the recipient or receiver on whom media content has an effect. As outlined in previous chapters, children and young people have far greater scope in terms of creating, producing, exchanging and disseminating content and communicating via new interactive technologies.

Such changes suggest that whilst the concept of harmful content has provided a useful denotative function for sexually explicit and/or violent media content, the term is not broad enough in scope to cover the blurring of boundaries between online static and interactive content, communications and user generated content which may be considered harmful to the psychological and social development of children and young people.

This demonstrates the need for a critical and systematic evaluation of the variety of categories of content which may be harmful, how harm is conceptualised and quantified, and how this relates to existing regulatory polices and systems.

'Risk of harm' theoretical framework: Mapping a new approach

Advancing scientific understanding, as Thomas Kuhn showed in his classic *'The structure of scientific revolutions'*, consists of the displacement of one paradigm which has become increasingly incapable of explaining newly discovered facts by a new paradigm which accounts for those facts in a much more satisfactory fashion. According to Kuhn, 'to be accepted as a paradigm,' a theory must be better than its competitors, but it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted'. This chapter aims to conceptually model and signpost key issues relating to the concept of 'risk of harm' from online and related offline activities. A scientific model is a constructed framework used to consider and evaluate problems. The proposed 'risk of harm' framework is elaborated below according to Deutsch's (1952) four functions of scientific models:

1. Organizing: This document outlines the 'risk of harm' taxonomy in order to organise our understanding of risk of harm from online and related offline activities.
2. Predictive: A number of possible future programmes of research are highlighted throughout this document. A variety of methodological, theoretical, psychological, developmental, sociological, and regulatory issues will be addressed with a view to examining the issues surrounding 'risk of harm' activities, and to map

both existing and future 'risk of harm' activities in a predictive manner.

3. Heuristic: By adopting the approach outlined in this document, it is anticipated that the proposed lines of exploration will lead to knowledge augmentation and new methods of inquiry.
4. Measurement: Deutsch (1952) outlined the need for realized predictions to be expressed as a ranking, a ratio, or a unit. It is proposed that the discussion and research to which this paper contributes, and the mapping conducted herein, will assist in the processes of determining the nature of risk of harm from a variety of activities in terms of both quantitative and qualitative units.

The authors propose a multidimensional ecological approach to 'risk of harm' which moves away from examining reception and use of individual media towards the whole ecology of media content and services in which audiences are enveloped. The utility of the concept of harmful content is limited by its focus on static media representations of violent and sexual content, and is more effectively conceptualised as a subcategory of a super-ordinate category 'risk of harm'

The following paragraphs examine a number of factors which comprise the ecology of online interactions and experiences surrounding 'risk of harm' to minors from online and related offline

activities. The authors utilise the ecological model proposed by Foulger (2003)¹¹ as a basis on which to develop their approach. It will be useful to keep this model in mind when reviewing subsequent sections of this chapter as they attempt to highlight a number of key elements of interactive online experiences which are central to risk of harm to minors from online and associated offline activities.

The ecological model of communication (Foulger, 2003) shown in Figure 3, asserts that communication occurs in the intersection of four fundamental constructs; communication between people (creators and consumers) is mediated by messages which are created using language within media; consumed from media and interpreted using language. Foulger's ecological model of communication considers the effects including (in a rough ordering to increased complexity) observation, learning, interpretation, socialization, attribution, perspectives, and relationships.

¹¹ This model has been published online but does not appear to have been through a peer review process. Despite this the authors feel that it forms a useful basis for the development of the proposed ecological model of the media use of children and young people.

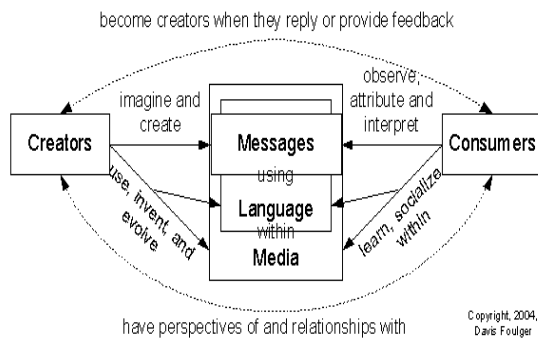


Figure 3: Foulger's ecological model of communication

A number of relationships are described in this model (Foulger, 2003). Crucially, the roles of consumer and creator are reflexive. People become creators when they reply or supply feedback to other people. Creators become consumers when they make use of feedback to adapt their messages to consumers. People learn how to create messages through the act of consuming other peoples' messages. In addition, messages are created within the context of their creators' perspectives on, and relationships with, anticipated consumers of their messages. Consumers of messages interpret their meaning within the context of their perspectives on, and relationships with, creators of messages. Consumers make attributions of meaning based on their opinion of the message creator. People form these perspectives and relationships as a function of their communication.

This outline of an ecological model of communication processes serves as a useful backdrop to highlight that 'risk of harm' from online and associated offline

activities covers situations where children and young people are exposed to, or involved in creating, disseminating and exchanging particular types of content, communications. This concept also recognises the central role of context in judgements of what may be deemed harmful, and the variety of moderating factors influencing risk of harm and associated outcomes.

The 'risk of harm' concept more adequately addresses the reciprocal relationships that exist between children, young people and harmful content and communications, and potentially risky behaviours manifested in both online and related offline contexts. It is a broader concept than that of harmful content, and one that recognises the multiplicity of factors that interplay in determining the potential risk of harm associated with access to media content and services. In the following chapter the interplay of factors in relation to 'risk of harm' to minors from online and related offline activities are explored in greater depth.

Regulatory policies, mechanisms and technological solution

This section will provide a brief overview of regulatory mechanisms relevant to the concept of risk of harm from online activities. Throughout the subsequent chapters of this document, regulatory gaps and shortfalls highlighted by specific 'risk of harm' activities will be examined, and action points at both the European and member state level outlined.

Vertical regulatory systems regulating representations of violent and sexual content have developed historically for print media, television, films, and computer games. These are based on age-appropriate classification of content which delineates suitability of different types of content according to the amount and nature of representations of sex and violence contained within them.

Statutory legislation of the media and, in recent years, internet content and services has been limited. For regulatory systems based around issues of media content and freedom of speech government preference in liberal democracies is for self-regulation. However, Price and Verhulst¹² (2000) claim that self-regulation must involve some degree of interdependence of government and the relevant industries to enable a degree of threat of government intervention should the involved industries be unable to develop sufficiently robust and effective self-regulatory policies and mechanisms. Self-regulatory mechanisms are generally only supported by statutory legislation where content and services are involved in the commission of violent or sexual criminal offences, or those which relate to incitement of hatred, or discrimination based on ethnicity, religion etc.

Self-regulatory approaches are central to European regulatory policies, and a variety of Directives and other policy documents form the basis for industry self-regulation. These policies fall into two categories; those which relate to the regulation of network traffic and those which relate to the regulation of audiovisual content.

Traditionally, technical and regulatory solutions designed to reduce 'risk of harm' from exposure to media content and online activities have been based on self and co-regulatory frameworks, and associated age-appropriate content rating and filtering solutions, hotlines, notification and takedown procedures (NTD).

In the next section of this chapter, these two categories will be examined before highlighting their potential overlaps and the challenges posed by new interactive content and social networking tools.

Audiovisual policy and media content regulation

Content regulation continues to be managed at the national level according to the cultural and legal standards of different member states, though this operates within the general Community objectives of consumer protection, protection of minors and the provision of legal honest and decent services.

Television Without Frontiers Directive - COM (1999) 657

¹² Price, Monroe E. and Stefaan G. Verhulst (2000). In search of the self: charting the course of self-regulation on the Internet in a global environment. In Marsden, Christopher. (ed.) *Regulating the Global Information Society*. Routledge: London pg.62

This Directive established the legal framework for ensuring freedom to provide TV broadcast services in the European Community, taking direct account of the community objectives of protection of minors, human dignity and freedom of speech.

The Directive specified that the protection of minors should incorporate the development and use of filtering and blocking technologies, as well as transparency and coherence in the mechanisms by which age-ratings are attached to audiovisual content. It also highlighted the central role of education of parents, educators and minors about the nature and potential effects of harmful content, as well as action to take to report content if viewed.

The Council Recommendation (98/560/EC)

The Council Recommendation (98/560/EC) also makes recommendations on mechanisms for the protection of minors and human dignity from illegal, inappropriate and harmful content. It represents an update of the TWF Directive to encompass the delivery of audiovisual content via new communications networks (e.g., fixed-line and mobile networks).

It reinforces the need for the protection of child and human dignity in electronic communications and entertainment across member states, and the need to encourage media literacy and the education of parents and children to meet this objective.

It recommends the development of self-regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct by the operators of electronic communications and entertainment services across Europe. These should be consistent with the right to freedom of expression, protection of privacy and technological feasibility within general Community objectives

The Recommendation states that self-regulatory codes should support parental control mechanisms such as filtering software, and provide clear information about complaints procedures and hotlines by which operators can be alerted to illegal content or services delivered via their networks.

Combating illegal and harmful content on the Internet and the multi-annual action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet ([Decision No 276/1999/EC](#))

On 24 September 1998 the Council adopted a recommendation on the development of the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and information services industry by promoting national frameworks aimed at achieving a comparable and effective level of protection of minors and human dignity.

Most importantly in terms of achieving these aims, a multi-annual action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet was recommended. [Decision No 276/1999/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 January 1999 adopted a

Multi-annual Community Action Plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks. This included racist, discriminatory and inciting content and communications, as well as illegal sexual and violent media content.

European Regulatory Framework Directive

The regulatory policies outlined in the previous section focus on the regulation of media content at the member state and European level. The regulation of network traffic and the guarantee of the privacy and security of commercial and private communications are provided for under the European Regulatory Framework Directive¹³. This proposes the harmonisation of regulatory policies across Member States and between different communications and media industries. It proposes a number of actions at both the national and European level for achieving regulatory harmonisation, standardisation and interoperability of ICE services within the context of technological neutrality. The ultimate goal of these actions is to create a technologically innovative, competitive and profitable internal European ICE market. It recognises the need to restructure the current vertical regulatory systems of

separate media and communications industries given increasing technological convergence and cross-media content delivery.

The direct implications of to the Directive for the protection of human rights and minors from harmful content are unclear. However, specific Directives which fall under the umbrella of the framework do include provisions for protection of privacy, protection of minors and restrictions on racist and xenophobic content and communications. However, social and cultural aspects of regulation appear to be secondary considerations to those which are economic and technological in the rationale for the framework. It is also unclear the extent to which the proposed harmonised, horizontal regulatory systems can accommodate the economic, cultural, political and technological complexities associated with the regulation of cross-media content and associated interactive services.

Privacy Directive (2002/58/EC)

The European Union Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications (2002/58/EC) aims to guarantee the security and privacy of consumer communications, whether for commerce or communication. It identifies the need for an appropriate technological infrastructure and a program of consumer education, communicating the potential security and privacy risks, and countermeasures which consumers may take to reduce such risks. The Directive states that the provisions

¹³ DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services. COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES Brussels, 12.7.2000 COM(2000) 393 final 2000/0184 (COD) <http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/infosoc/telecompolicy/review99/com2000-393en.pdf>

must be consistent with European human rights and freedom of speech legislation, as well as the constitution of individual member states.

E-Commerce Directive (2000/31/EC)

The e-commerce Directive¹⁴ has been instrumental in attempts to restrict the circulation and the storing of racist and xenophobic images and text, as well as incitement to discrimination, hatred and violence. As a matter of principle, the Directive states that ISPs are not obliged to monitor the Internet or to seek for illegal activities on the web. However, a Member State may compel an ISP to inform public authorities about illegal data and infringements reported by the users of their services. ISPs may also be obliged to communicate information enabling the identification of their subscribers at the authorities' request. Moreover, the Directive explicitly mentions the possibility for national courts and administrative authorities to require both access and hosting providers to filter or to remove illegal material, such as racist and xenophobic speech.

¹⁴ Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market ('Directive on electronic commerce') *Official Journal L 178*, 17/07/2000 P. 0001 – 0016 http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=32000L0031&model=guichett

Notice and take down

Article 14 of the e-commerce Directive states that the hosting provider will not be liable in relation to the unlawful material that it has been storing as long as it is not aware of its illegal nature. However, as soon as it obtains such knowledge, it must take immediate action to block or to remove this material in order to retain the benefit of the immunity. This provision requires hosting providers to voluntarily take down illegal material whenever they are notified, either, formally by public authorities or informally by a watchdog, a victim or any private party, about the illegal data. The 'Notice and take down' procedures provided by the e-commerce Directive appear to operate effectively in relation to illegal content. Although the First Report on the application of the E-Commerce-Directive¹⁵ states that the Directive does not specifically deal with the liability for providers of hyperlinks.

Freedom of Speech and Human Rights

In the European Union (EU), media violence, sexually explicit and racist or discriminatory content is viewed as a direct infringement of the principles of human rights, since such content may

¹⁵ [First Report on the application](#) of Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market (Directive on electronic commerce); Brussels, 21.11.2003; COM(2003) 702 final http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/rpt/2003/com2003_0702en01.pdf

incite violence and other crimes against ethnic minorities or religious groups. Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, states that the right to free speech does not extend to speeches that threaten, deny or even lead to the destruction of human dignity and human integrity. No protection is given to speeches that either directly incites harm, or advocate violent behaviour against other human beings.

In summary, regulation of static media content has developed through vertical systems focused on specific media channels. However the blurred boundaries between content and contact, content and services, and users and producers, pose a number of challenges for the straightforward translation of these regulatory systems in online environments.

These challenges are demonstrated by the separation of regulation of content and network traffic outlined in this chapter. The blurring of boundaries referred to above demonstrates the need for an integrated and coherent regulatory policy. Such a policy must incorporate an evaluation of the ability of existing regulatory mechanisms to successfully protect human rights, the dignity of minors and freedom of expression in an increasingly complex cross-media entertainment environment in Europe. It must also be sufficiently robust to meet the challenges of the risk of harm associated with the development of new social networking

technologies and their increasing use by children and young people.

Regulation of content alone is not sufficient to afford acceptable levels of protection to those potentially at risk from exposure to harmful online content and services. Given such circumstances, an increased focus on education of the user/child and young person, as well as parents and educators, is required to provide adequate protection and support regulatory policies and mechanisms. This is particularly important where children and young people are active participants in services and/or the producers of content.

Key issues:

- What are the implications of the re-conceptualisation of harmful content to 'risk of harm' from online activities for the regulatory policies outlined in this chapter?
- What are the implications of new content and services, particularly user generated content, and children as active producers and consumers for existing regulatory mechanisms?

- **SUMMARY**

- Children and young people have far greater scope in terms of creating, producing, exchanging and disseminating content and communicating via new interactive technologies.
- Whilst the concept of harmful content has provided a useful denotative function for sexually explicit and/or violent media content, the term is not broad enough in scope to cover the blurring of boundaries between online static and interactive content, communications and user generated content which may be considered harmful to the psychological and social development of children and young people.
- There is a need for a critical and systematic evaluation of the variety of categories of content which may be harmful, how harm is conceptualised and quantified, and how this relates to existing regulatory polices and systems.
- The chapter included a brief overview of regulatory mechanisms relevant to the concept of risk of harm from online activities in order to provide a basis for an examination of the regulatory gaps and shortfalls highlighted by specific 'risk of harm' activities throughout the rest of the document.
- The separation of regulation of content and network traffic

outlined in this chapter creates a challenge given the blurring of boundaries referred to throughout this document, demonstrating the need for an integrated and coherent regulatory policy.

- Such a policy must incorporate an evaluation of the ability of existing regulatory mechanisms to successfully protect human rights, the dignity of minors and freedom of expression in an increasingly complex cross-media entertainment environment in Europe.
- It must also be sufficiently robust to meet the challenges of the risk of harm associated with the development of new social networking technologies and their increasing use by children and young people.

CHAPTER 3.

Mapping a new theoretical and research framework

One of the key recommendations arising from this paper is that programmes of research ought to be funded, so that our understanding of the nature and effects of engagement in risk of harm from online and related offline activities is augmented. This chapter explores a number of factors that may influence children and young peoples' levels of involvement in 'risk of harm' type online and related offline activities. A clear starting point involves research designed to map the patterns of children and young people's use of communication technologies, so that norms can be estimated in relation to children and young people's use of communication technologies, and emerging trends can be identified. In addition to gathering baseline norms, it is important to design programmes of research which explore in greater depth interrelated factors which may underpin children and young peoples involvement in risk of harm from online and related offline activities. The first author has conducted extensive research into criminal activity online, and in a recent paper she proposed a number of statistical techniques which can be utilised to calibrate patterns of user involvement, engagement, and immersion in online and related offline activities.

- Initial involvement and interest in specific sites may not be sustained, and an individual or group interest may

wane over a period before becoming extinct. However, their interest may increase and they may become more engaged with a particular site, web ring, or chat room.

- An individual's or groups' level of engagement can be calibrated according to a range of factors which are listed below, and explained in greater depth throughout this chapter. An individual's level of engagement may lapse and fall back into involvement, may cease abruptly or gradually over time, or it may move on to another level.
- Immersion, i.e. spending significant amounts of time online, being involved in community building, proselytising particular ideologies, or playing a significant role.

The lifecycle of involvement, engagement, immersion and cessation is not necessarily linear. However, it is important to explore these patterns if we are to better understand the nature of children and young peoples' involvement in risk of harm related activities.

The interrelated factors and processes listed here are not exhaustive, and methodologies have not necessarily been tested. Each of the factors referred to in this paragraph will be explored in greater depth in the following paragraphs, and appropriate definitions have been included in footnotes. We propose that the new programmes of research should explore ways to calibrate the extent of an individual's or groups' involvement in risk

of harm related activities; including community building and hyper-personal interactions. In addition, researchers need to consider the nature of the attributions to individual and group selves that occur in risk of harm online and related offline contexts, the extent of disclosure and disinhibition that occurs either online and / or in related offline environments, and the perception of risk associated with disclosure. Key to the conceptualisation of children and young people's online and related offline behaviours are levels of relationship formation, relational development, and the nature, scope and extent of the impact of online on offline behaviours and vice versa. Issues such as the creation, maintenance and cessation of single or multiple identities, levels of engagement, or immersion in fantasy enactment and co-construction, in addition to role playing behaviours and gender swapping during role-play, need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, it is important to explore the levels of involvement, engagement, immersion or addiction to specific behaviours which may pose a risk of harm to an individual or group.

Programmes of research are essential to provide insights into crucial factors such as how young person(s) in risk of harm situations interpret what is taking place, and what sorts of reinforcement they are receiving which maintains, heightens, or leads to the cessation of their involvement or exposure to 'risk of harm' activities. The task of proposing a research framework within which it is possible to

explore 'risk of harm' to minors from online activities is challenging. The process is hampered by the shortage of research-based or theoretical accounts of the online public creation, exchange, maintenance and evolution of a host of content and services, some which communicate alternative ideologies deemed to potentially pose a 'risk of harm' to minors.

The paucity of research into online real-time chat rooms, blogs, newsgroups, peer-to-peer networks, webring, particularly, those concerned with harmful or criminal activities, means that scoping out this new area of research requires a large amount of exploratory work. This will involve a critical examination of the applicability of differing research frameworks from other related fields in an effort to draw up a useful road map.

The current shortfall of programmes of research designed to examine the online activities which would fall under the umbrella of 'risk of harm' means that this introduction to the area is theoretical and relies on utilising findings from a number of research areas. These include; computer mediated communication studies, criminal activity online (O'Connell, 2005) media effects research and traditional research on cognitive distortions and deviant fantasies and behaviours.

Essentially, the aim of this chapter is to introduce a range of psychological, social and contextual parameters that might impact upon individuals' levels of engagement or immersion in content and activities deemed to pose 'risk of harm' to

children and young people. The following paragraphs briefly explore clusters of parameters which may impact on a child's levels of involvement with risk of harm online and related offline activities.

Furthermore, the Risk of Harm taxonomy (O'Connell, and Bryce, 2005) devised by authors as a result of research conducted to write this paper is outlined in the chapter 9 serves as an organising framework for future research. The taxonomy affords the reader an opportunity to explore the range of behavioural and verbal repertoires involved in the exchange of ideologies across a number of hypothetical spectra within online environments. Unfortunately, to date there has been very little research into assessing the influence of specific ideologies in different areas of the internet. For example, the contention that pro-anorexia sites are necessarily harmful has not to the authors knowledge been substantiated by reliable research findings. Instead there is a 'perceived risk of harm', but as yet there has been no research conducted to fully explore the interrelated factors that may underpin these sites posing a low, moderate or high risk of harm to particular individual or groups of children and young people. It is important to explore which moderating variables are most effective in ameliorating these harmful effects, although we are not in the optimal position to address the concerns that such sites raise in an informed manner.

As outlined above Risk of harm is a super-ordinate categorical designation that

encapsulates a number of activities which the construct harmful content was incapable of encompassing. In the preceding chapter a theoretical framework was proposed and in this chapter a research framework which builds upon the theoretical ecological communication processes model will be mapped out.

Extent of involvement in risk of harm activities

There has been a lack of research examining factors which influence children and young peoples' levels of involvement in 'risk of harm' activities. There are a wide variety of factors which have a potential influence on involvement, engagement and immersion and subsequent outcomes, the relevant literatures and research findings are reviewed in the following paragraphs. Arguably, programmes of research designed to explore levels of involvement in risk of harm online and related offline activities and to map outcomes are essential to provide insights into crucial factors such as how young person(s) in risk of harm situations interpret what is taking place, and what sorts of reinforcement they are receiving which maintains, heightens, or leads to the cessation of their involvement or exposure to 'risk of harm' activities.

Crucially, the amount of time an individual spends online; involved, engaged or immersed in specific risk of harm online activities may be important, particularly given the research findings which suggest that correlations have been found between excessive amounts of time spent online, and psychiatric illnesses such as manic

depression, anxiety, eating disorders or obsessive-compulsive disorders. Internet addiction will be examined more closely below.

4.1 Community building

The community building aspects of online risk of harm contexts are key. Risk of harm related online activities are not simply a case of dealing with static content. Therefore, conceptually it is important to consider level of engagement with risk of harm from online and associated offline activities on a spectrum from accidentally stumbling across something once and never going there again through a midpoint of some level of interest, to critical engagement or immersion and acceptance of a specific ideology

Furthermore, reviews of literature about virtual communities persistently refer to factors such as anonymity and levels of engagement in fantasy related activities. The possibility to be someone you are not when operating online allows people to engage in role-play and fantasy exchange. Despite this, children and young people often regard their online friends as precisely that, and believe that similar rules of friendship apply online as offline.

The following paragraphs explore factors that may influence risk of harm from the perspective of the user. It considers the contribution of psychological theory on how people interact, attribute and interpret what they view online to the current framework. This refers to children and

young people viewing online harmful content, as well as how varying levels of involvement relate to psychological factors such as disinhibition and disclosure.

3.1.1. Hyperpersonal interactions

According to Ahuna (2001) online community formation is essentially a semantic world of sharing knowledge, solving problems, working as a team, playing, building, quarrelling, cooperating, planning and forming relationships. A person's impressions of an online communication partner are based upon whatever information the partner has chosen to reveal about him or herself (Cooper & Sportolari, 1997; Walther, and Burgoon 1992). The following paragraphs explore recent research findings on the nature of interactions in computer-mediated environments, which has direct relevance to the risk of harm from online activities.

In an effort to explore computer-mediated communication within a task-oriented framework, and by drawing on Social Identity Deindividuation¹⁶ (SIDE) theory, Walther (1996) developed an explanation for what he termed a 'hyper personal'

¹⁶ Deindividuation is the technical term that is used to connote a multi-faceted construct that involves

- (a) the specific environmental conditions (e.g., group involvement, arousing activities) that
- (b) promote a particular psychological state (e.g., lack of self-awareness, time distortion), which in turn
- (c) facilitate certain types of behaviors (e.g., uninhibited, impulsive, antinormative)

(Diener 1979; Dipboye 1977; Prentice-Dunn and Rogers 1982; Scheier and Carver 1982; Zimbardo 1969).

effect. This posits that computer-mediated-communication can exceed face-to-face communication in certain interpersonal aspects, affording users the opportunity to present themselves in an ideal light. According to Walther, mediated interaction may become hyper personal when users experience commonality and are self-aware, physically separated, and communicating via a limited-cues channel that allows them to selectively self-present and edit; to construct and reciprocate representations of their partners and relationships without the interference of environmental reality. Furthermore, Walther (1996) posited that:

"When participants are led to perceive that they are in a group relationship, each tends to hold a 'social self-categorization' rather than an 'individual self-categorization,' [resulting in] attributions of greater similarity and liking with one's partners" (p. 18).

This has implications for risk of harm from online activities as aspects of these aspects of hyper personal communication may apply in, for example, pro-anorexia sites. In such communities, the persona presented may or may not necessarily relate to the actual person, or represents an 'idealised' view of self.

According to Bem's (1972) self-perception theory, people decide on their own attitudes and feelings from watching themselves behave in various situations.

This is particularly true when internal cues are so weak or confusing; they effectively put the person in the same position as an external observer. A key element that needs to be explored with respect to risk of harm from online activities relates to whether or not there is an association between extensive amounts of time spent in risk of harm online activities and alterations in both self-perceptions and perceptions of health, body and spirit. Furthermore, dissonance¹⁷ is most powerful when it is about self-image. Feelings of guilt are dissonance in action, and in order to alleviate the discomfort of dissonance justifications play a key role, and the processes of justification will be explored in the following analysis. There are a plethora of psychological factors that may interplay in a risk of harm context and as such warrant further examination through programmes of research.

3.1.2. Attributions¹⁸ to individual and group selves

According to Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) external justification processes

¹⁷ Cognitive dissonance: A condition of conflict or anxiety resulting from inconsistency between one's beliefs and one's actions, such as opposing the slaughter of animals and eating meat.

¹⁸ Attribution Theory: Attribution theory is a Social Psychological theory that relates to the way in which people explain their own behaviour and that of others. According to this theory, people tend to attribute (or explain) psychological or external causes as the determining factor in behaviour. For example, if someone acts mean to you one day would you attribute the behaviour to the person being a jerk (internal attribution) or to the person having a bad day (external attribution)? Attribution theory examines the ways in which people make these attributions.

occur when we do something that causes uncomfortable cognitive dissonance, and individuals have a greater tendency to justify their actions by making external attributions, blaming it on something outside of themselves. According to Jones and Davis, (1965) when an individual believes that they have done something wrong, he/she is more likely to use external attribution, attributing causes to situational factors rather than blaming the self. Attributions are also significantly driven by our emotional and motivational drives. Blaming other people and avoiding personal recrimination are very real self-serving attributions. Typically, wrong doers tend to blame victims (of us and of others) for their fate as the wrongdoer seeks to distance him/herself from the thoughts or actions.

Similarly, attributions such as an 'us', and them can be employed to justify risk of harm activities, i.e. an ideologically based minority such as pro-anorexia forum users, and medical professionals or more general non Pro-anorexia supporters respectively. Such processes have implications for addressing the producers of risk of harm material.

The psychological processes that underpin engagement in online risk of harm related activities require further research. The relationship between self-perception, disordered behaviours, cognitive dissonance, and deviancy also requires further research.

3.1.3. Disclosure and Disinhibition

It seems reasonable to suggest that given the nature of online 'risk of harm' related activities, online environments provide more opportunity to disclose an interest in activities which may be perceived to be deviant, immoral and unacceptable within general society due to a lower risk of reprisals (e.g., perpetrating racial violence, sexual interest in children, self harming). Membership of an online community of like-minded people appears to contribute to be a high level of disclosure and disinhibition.

Cooper & Sportolari (1997) suggest that due to the perceived distance, relative anonymity, and safety in CMC, people may reveal more about themselves than they normally would in real life. When people interact in real world contexts mutual self-disclosure has been found to be a central ingredient in developing intimacy between people (Brehm, 1992). These findings are mirrored in online computer mediated communication. According to the findings of where new acquaintances have been found to match each other's level of self-disclosure (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1983). One partner will disclose more if the other person discloses, and will hold back when the other withdraws. If one partner feels liberated to share intimate information about him/herself, the other will tend to view him/her more favourably, and should in turn respond with his/her own self-disclosure. Furthermore, findings suggest

that if this cycle of mutual disclosure were sustained, it leads to a greater sense of relational closeness (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1983).

Arguably, a degree of disclosure of an interest in risk of harm related activities occurs when people join a chat room or contribute to a forum organised around a specific behaviour or ideological belief. It seems reasonable to assume, with the exceptions of individuals joining a group to express disgust with a specific belief or behaviour, that those interacting in a chat room entitled for example 'white supremacist' are by the very fact of being there proclaiming some level of interest in racist related activities, though their motivations may be varied.

A proportion of users may view 'risk of harm' related content without ever engaging with the associated community. They are in effect surreptitiously witnessing the ideas, feelings and interactions of the active participants. According to King (1996) lurking can be regarded as a voyeuristic aspect of cyberspace participation, which may have greater salience for some users than others.

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that disinhibition is characteristic of CMC in general (Kiesler, Siegal & McGuire, 1984; Serpentelli, 1993). It appears to be a generally accepted finding that individuals are less inhibited when interacting and role-playing, than they might be in real life circumstances (Reid, 1991; Bruckman,

1993; Carlstrom, 1992; Curtis, 1993; Roush, 1993; Elmer-Dewitt, 1993; Penkoff, 1994; Snell, 1994). Theorists have posited that disinhibition may be attributable to the lack of regulating social context cues (e.g. body language, tone of voice, etc.) and that the lack of such cues are read as an obscuring of the boundaries which delineate the forms of behaviour deemed acceptable or unacceptable (Kiesler, Siegal & McGuire, 1984; Reid, 1991). However, other researchers have attributed this phenomenon to such causes as real life anonymity (Cutler, 1994; Escobar, 1994) and immunity from physical reprisal (Serpentelli, 1993, Rheingold, 1993). Interestingly however according to Marshall (1993), who explored high bandwidth systems with full audio/visual interface, disinhibition in CMC remained quite high, even when it seems reasonable to assume that the degree of anonymity is mitigated by the fact that it is possible to both see and hear others.

Reid (1994) argues that such disinhibition does not necessarily indicate that these environments are "lawless and socially chaotic", but are substitutes for the contexts and atmospheres that we rely on to regulate and define our behaviour translated to online environments.

It seems important to develop a methodology for measuring degrees of disclosure, disinhibition, and a gradient against which it is possible to measure the extent of disclosure an individual engages in.

Perception of risk associated with disclosure

Clearly, making accessible or disseminating evidence of eating disordered behaviours or self-harming may be regarded by the person involved as a risky level of disclosure. In the chapter 10, the reader will encounter a selection of images that pro-anorexia community members share with each other, images that allegedly portray an individual's weight loss. Often the images do not show the individuals facial features or the face is occluded. Therefore, it seems reasonable to propose that users may perceive risks associated with disclosure of identifying information. A picture is a uniquely identifying piece of personal information that could be incriminating in situations, for example, if an individual is trying to deny involvement in pro-ana sites.

3.1.4. Relationship formation

What is the nature of the relationships formed between people who only communicate via online environments? Are these relationships /friendships somehow different or indeed similar to face-to-face friendships? Howard Rheingold reports "Your chances of making friends (in cyberspace) are magnified by orders of magnitude over the old methods of finding a peer group" (Rheingold, 1994). It is easy to see the significance of online communities to, for example, white supremacists, given that there is a high probability that aside from

online contexts, it would be difficult to locate and communicate with a similar community of young people with racist belief structures offline. Research conducted by one of the authors found that whilst there was evidence of a cooperative matrix in operation in criminal communities in Usenet newsgroups and Internet Relay Chat environments, there was also a sense of a hierarchy with respect to particular individuals related to the extent or nature of their activities (O'Connell, 2000). To date however there has not been sufficient research into the nature and strength of relationships between general users, or children and young people who interact in online 'risk of harm' environments.

Some users of risk of harm online environments are likely to form relationships with one another as they become aware of each other's patterns of online activity over time, as well as individual preferences with respect to the topic of the risk of harm online environment. Research on the development and quality of online relationships has found that most relationships are ordinary and relatively similar to those developed offline (Parks & Floyd, 1996; Parks & Roberts, 1998). Similarly, in a study of relational development that looked at participants in real-time, text-based virtual environments called MOO's (Multi-User Dimensions, Object Oriented), Parks and Roberts (1998) reported that the majority of the respondents rated their online relationships above the midpoint on nearly

every measure of level of relational development. In addition, the online relationships reported by participants did not differ significantly in terms of breadth, depth and code-change dimensions from their offline counterparts. However, to date there has not been any research into the nature and quality of relationships between users of risk of harm online environments.

3.1.5. Relational development

One way in which people overcome the technical limitations of computer mediated communication (CMC), is to extend CMC to other channels of communication. Parks and Floyd (1996) found that nearly two thirds of relationships that began on newsgroups were at some point supplemented by mail, telephone, or face-to-face interaction. Moreover, about one third of relational partners reported that they eventually met face-to-face. Parks and Roberts' (1998) findings suggest that 80% of the respondents who reported that they had relationships that began on a MOO had also contacted their relational partner via email. Furthermore, over two thirds had spoken on the telephone, over half had communicated by writing (cards or letters), and over a third reported that they had gone on to meet their partner in person. The increase in the number of contexts in which interaction occurs is typical of relational development in general (Parks, 1997). It seems reasonable to suggest therefore, that similar processes of relational development occur between users of risk of harm online environments.

There is clearly a need for ethnographic research utilising a participant observation methodology designed to explore the multifaceted nature of online and offline interactions in risk of harm online communities.

Impact on offline behaviours

As outlined in the Chapter 2 the findings from existing programmes of research exploring the outcomes of children and young peoples' engagement in activities that fall under the concept 'risk of harm' have been inconclusive, arguably due to methodological constraints and the absence of a coherent theoretical framework. Moreover, there has been little research examining the effects of 'risk of harm' activities in the real world sphere.

3.1.6. Multiple Identities

The notion of multiple identities may be relevant in the context of users' online risk of harm environments. Sociologist Jay Chaskes' (1995) research on the "reinvention of self" in online gaming environments suggests that it is common practice for individuals to assume several identities, which are employed for different purposes throughout various virtual worlds. As a disembodied entity, one may "appear" as whatever one wishes. Other researchers (Dibbell, 1993; Reid, 1994; Rheingold, 1994) have also documented the phenomenon of adopting different character names and personae for use in various settings. Furthermore, there are likely to be a number of psychological factors that underpin the nature, extent

and scope of creation and maintenance of multiple identities in online 'risk of harm' communities. In addition to the role a user assumes whilst presenting a particular identity, the context may also influence the presentation of that identity.

Fantasy and role play in risk of harm contexts

Role-play and fantasy are common features of a number of online interactive environments. It is not clear, at this juncture, if users of risk of harm online environments engage in role play and fantasy exchange. An online arena in which fantasy exchange and role-play are typical is Fantasy Role Playing Games (FRPG's). Research on FRPG's has focused on a number of key elements; relationship formation, hyper-personal interactions, disclosure, disinhibition, relational development, and gender swapping. Some or all of these are relevant factors when reviewing online risk of harm online and related offline activities. Clearly, there are numerous caveats on drawing parallels between role-play in a gaming environment and role play children and young people may engage in a risk of harm environment. However, it may be that role-play in a number of online contexts shares a number of characteristics, and these relate largely to the context in which the activities occur and the key elements of fantasy maintenance and exchange coupled with role-play. The authors are not suggesting that there is a link between online gaming

and risk of harm related activities except that they are at different points along a spectrum from safe to potentially harmful behaviours. This positioning of gaming on a continuum with online risk of harm related activities facilitates the utilisation of research findings on the experience and social organisation of online gaming to supplement the lack of specific research on risk of harm related activities on the Internet.

3.1.7. Gender swapping during role-play

Motivations underpinning an individual's involvement in risk of harm online forums may have an experimental aspect. Researcher Amy Bruckman has studied the phenomenon of gender swapping in online gaming environments, wherein individuals adopt an identity of the opposite sex. She has found that this is a common practice, though it is not necessarily indicative of real-life homosexuality or transvestism (Bruckman, 1993). Other researchers have also documented gender switching (Serpentelli, 1992; Rheingold, 1993; Kennedy, 1994; Penkoff, 1994; Reid, 1994). Interestingly, the vast majority of those adopting opposite genders seem to be men; women rarely report such behaviour (Serpentelli, 1992).

In both tabletop and computer role-playing games, it is possible to assume the role of either a woman or a man and to display female and/or male characteristics. It would appear that at some level it is useful

to regard these activities as recreational and experimental, and it is important to highlight that in the context of online interactions and gaming, both gender swapping and role-play are common features. Curiosity about the experiences of the opposite sex in a chat environment dedicated to e.g., eating disorders, or self-harm, may be one of a host of possible catalysts for initial engagement with a risk of harm online community. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that there may be a range of additional individual psychological needs that may be met by engaging with others in these processes, e.g., affiliation and cohesiveness. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that a certain amount of positive reinforcement arises from these interactions, and serves to maintain involvement with particular risk of harm online environments.

3.1.8. Addiction

With respect to Internet addiction the challenge for health-care professionals is to determine when Internet use is dysfunctional and whether it is a lone disorder, or a vehicle for the expression and fruition of other psychiatric illnesses (e.g., manic depression, anxiety, eating disorders or obsessive-compulsive disorders). Recent studies involving users who defined themselves as addicted to internet use had an average of five pre-existing psychiatric problems such as bipolar disorder, depression or alcohol use (Shapira, Goldsmith, Keck, Khosla, and McElroy, 2000). According to Shapira et al. (2000), this subset of users tended to

be online more than 30 hours a week, and their non-essential Internet use was 10 times more than their essential work- or school-related use. Shapira (2000) suggested that Internet use becomes unhealthy when it begins to interfere with a normal lifestyle that includes healthy relationships and interests beyond a computer.

Research findings with respect to addiction to MUD¹⁹ found that some people preferred their online lives so much that they actually begin to abandon their "real" lives, spending up to 18 hours per day living in virtual reality (Kelly & Rheingold, 1993). Little is known about this new form of addiction, but a preliminary draft of the DSM-V includes a section delineating some of these types of "Cyber Disorders" (Zenhausen, 1995). The relevance of internet addiction to risk of harm online activities relates not only to quantifying the extent of an individuals involvement in risk of harm online and related offline activities but it also raises the issue of clusters of pathologies that may underpin varying levels of involvement.

In summary, this chapter highlighted the interrelated factors that may underpin children and young people's levels of involvement, engagement and immersion

¹⁹ Short for Multi-User Dungeon (or Multi-User Dimension) a cyberspace where users can take on an identity in the form of an avatar and interact with one another. Originally, MUDs tended to be adventure games played within enormous old castles with hidden rooms, trap-doors, exotic beasts, and magical items. Nowadays, the term is used more generically to refer to any cyberspace. MUDs are also known as 3-D worlds and chat worlds.

in risk of harm online and related offline activities. It is imperative that new programmes of research are conducted so that our knowledge and understanding of these factors and processes is increased and we are better placed to make informed decisions with respect to minimising the risk of harm to minors. Equipped with informative research findings, programmes of education can be designed for parents, carers, teachers, children and young which will address complexities that parents, and educators need to be aware of so that they are best placed to guide children and young people so that risk of harm is minimised.

CHAPTER 4.

Socio-political landscape and the democratisation of information

In the opening sections of this chapter 'risk of harm' from online and related offline activities are explored against the wider socio-political landscape of the development of a knowledge economy, and the attendant changes in systems designed to educate efficient knowledge workers. The increasing emphasis on information literacy and source criticism are examined within the context of traditional print broadcast and new media. To be information literate requires the ability to combine the skills or competencies that together make for effective use of information.

Traditional pedagogies are being supplanted by new pedagogies designed to facilitate the growth of knowledge based economies. However, it is unclear how closely governments have considered the implications of alterations in the role of traditional custodians, and intermediaries of information and knowledge (i.e., parents, carers, teachers, and librarians) for children and young people operating within the emerging knowledge based society.

Throughout this paper, the issue of whether parents are being adequately informed about the practicalities associated with fulfilling their changing roles is considered. This includes helping children and young people to understand and interpret the full spectra of ideologies from acceptable and colourful, deviant and

criminal, which children can access online. Arguably the roles of parents and carers, as gatekeepers to information their children are exposed to, has diminished. An example in relation to news and current events, reported in traditional broadcast media and the internet, illustrates this point below. This diminished gatekeeper role is due, in part, to the massive amount of information readily accessible online. Arguably, as parents' gatekeeper role diminishes, there is a corresponding reduction in their role as intermediaries, i.e., mediators who assist children to critically evaluate and contextualise the information, opinions, images they have encountered. The absence of sufficiently inclusive educational policies, designed to integrate parents into the processes of playing an active role in facilitating children and young people to becoming increasingly information literate, needs to be explored in greater detail. Clearly, it is no longer sufficient to simply state that parents need to play an active role in monitoring the internet-related activities of their children. The situations and strategies available to parents and how best to communicate them require further consideration.

The intermediary role of parents is particularly pertinent with respect to children and young people accessing and engaging with 'risk of harm' online and associated offline activities. The implications of the absence of coherent strategies designed to empower parents to become active and informed participants in supporting children and young people

as they develop the skills required to participate in knowledge based society need to be considered.

The final paragraphs of this chapter explore the remarkable processes which are currently taking place online, and which result in the democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer. Definitions of democratisation include the following:

‘Democratization is the transition from authoritarian, or semi-authoritarian systems to democratic political systems, where democratic systems are taken to be those approximating to universal suffrage, regular elections, a civil society, the rule of law and an independent judiciary. Definition from <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/democratization>

The democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer is being brought about online through social networking tools, for example, user-generated blogs: Examples from the London Bombing on 07/07/05 and moblogs of American soldiers in Iraq illustrate this process. In addition, newsblogs run by established traditional mass media portals are making significant contributions to this process. We are indeed in transition from relying solely on government sources and mass media, toward embracing an online environment where not simply the words of politicians and journalists are no longer necessarily

regarded as authoritative, but where people are looking to other sources to gather information, views, and opinions from those directly affected by events. Universal suffrage approximates the fact that everybody’s views matter, and increasingly in a digital TV environment broadcasters are asking for peoples views on news items. We are seeing the emergence of more inclusive, democratic systems of information exchange and knowledge augmentation. It is incredibly exciting for adults, but also for children and young people growing up in this emerging participatory society, characterised by the democratisation of information exchange and expert opinion. It is essential to consider how best to safe guard human rights whilst this information revolution unfolds.

Information literacy and source criticism

Many articles and books have been written on the subject of information or media literacy, and the majority of commentators agree that information literacy is integral to the success of educating knowledge workers. An in-depth analysis of the various theoretical and research frameworks relevant to information literacy fall outside the scope of this paper. However, a key issue is that information literacy is a dynamic process, which is ongoing as more information becomes available and perspectives shift.

The online reporting of news and current affairs represents one example of the non-

static nature of the process of critically evaluating information. Furthermore, online news coverage illustrates the potential for children and young peoples' access to communication technologies to diminish the role of parents as gatekeepers and intermediaries. Prior to the advent of the Internet, a parent might decide certain news reports were unsuitable for their child. The parent could act as gatekeeper and custodian of information by suggesting the child does not view the news item on TV, but instead reads a book, views a different channel, or retires to bed. Alternatively, a parent may decide to sit through the news item with the child, and explain and discuss the news reports in an appropriate manner. In this situation, gatekeepers had far greater scope for control and decision making about what children and young people viewed.

Similarly, school curricula have traditionally been structured with an understanding of the how to augment children's knowledge whilst being cognisant of their developmental status. Traditionally, for example, school project work was conducted at home using encyclopaedias, or at the library with or without the assistance of parents. Librarians, therefore, also acted as custodians of information. This suggests that there was a degree of homogeneity in the nature and type of information children encountered within domestic and educational environments.

The increased penetration of computers with Internet access into these environments have significantly altered, the relationship between children and information, and the roles of teachers, parents and librarians as custodians, gatekeepers and intermediaries.

Children and young people typically have a high level of control over their activities in online environments, and there are potentially there are fewer restrictions on the information they access. Furthermore, whilst online a child may visit a large number of sites which present a variety of different views on a given subject. Typically parents are not sitting alongside the child as they might do if, for example, they were watching TV. Children's online experiences are often not shared or communal, but self directed. Given this, they may be unique and individual experiences, compounding the difficulties associated with parents' and teachers' efforts to act as effective intermediaries.

It is also important to consider who or what replaces parents as intermediaries in online environments. The potential for this role be supplanted to some degree by weblogs requires some consideration. The rise in popularity of weblogs discussed in chapter 1 raises questions about their potential to emerge as the means by which communal knowledge exchange and critical evaluations of news, events and current affairs can be shared and experienced online.

In sections of this chapter, bloggers' responses to the London bombings will be explored as an examination of how blogging allows the democratisation of information and sharing of interpretations of the world. According to Emily Bell, the editor-in-chief of Guardian Unlimited;

"Blogging is essentially about every person responding to things..."

Paul Mason, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) 'Newsnight' correspondent believes that there is a place for blogging technology in mainstream media. He points out that 'whereas blogs are more usually focused on the narrow, and frequently bizarre, interests and lives, the top eight searches on blog-tracking service Technorati on the morning after the London bombing were all about the terrorist attacks on London. According to Technorati chief executive Dave Sifry, the number of postings to blogs was up 30% from the previous day on the day of the London bombings.

The online environment is constantly changing and the emergent role that blogs appear to play in relation to news and world events requires research. It is imperative that information literacy curricula are responsive to the changes in information exchange and knowledge transfer that evolve online, and that teaching is tailored accordingly. In the past, for example, schools in the UK typically did not allow children to access Chat and Instant Messenger programs, reflecting the assumption that these were

essentially recreational activities. The lack of access to such technologies within educational environments mean there was a lack of onus upon schools to educate children and young people about the advantages and risks of using them.

Clearly, blogs are an important aspect of online interactions, and it is imperative to ensure that the information literacy curricula adopt a holistic approach to teaching children about all aspects of their use of communication technologies. It is not sufficient to exclude blogs on the assumption that they are not reliable sources of information and, therefore, will not be utilised as part of a child's school related work.

Source criticism

In the following paragraphs a range of source criticism techniques suggested by Brandt (1996) for evaluating the reliability of information will be examined in relation to the UK government's reports about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. This example, although contentious, is used to illustrate just how amorphous, fluid and context bound the processes of engaging in source criticism can be. Readers are invited to consider the multiplicity of potential responses to, and interpretations of, the selected pieces of information presented below to interpret the meaning of news reports and their wider local, regional and global implications. These may be ideological, political, pragmatic, or sceptical, be accompanied by emotional responses,

and rely on readers' cultural background and knowledge of historical events. Information literacy skills sit within the wider context of citizenship and participation in culture, society and the world. This highlights the need for intermediaries and/or the facilitation of dialogue about these issues between children, young people and adults.

There is a need for adults to help children make sense of information about specific events and their relationship with wider issues. This demonstrates that information literacy and source criticism are not static processes, but a continuous and dynamic part of processing available information in which the role of parents and complementary intermediaries is central.

News and current affairs, in particular the events preceding and during the Iraq war, illustrate how mainstream online media address contentious issues, and also how people respond to them. Newsblogs and blogs communicated a host of views about how the behaviour of world governments. Photographs were sent by soldiers in Iraq which revealed the nature of the military's activities in prisons in Iraq. Information exchanges and information from non mass media sources also provided important additional insights.

An important question raised by this document is how news forums focus on mainstream topics as opposed to the narrow ideological focus of anti Jewish or pro-bulimia or suicide forums. In the following chapters a range of risk of harm

online content, communities and forums which present ideologically based arguments will be explored. As will be highlighted throughout the relevant chapters, there is a lack of consensus whether or not such content and sites should be censored. This raises the issue of how the exchange of views and experiences be viewed positively in one situation but negatively in another. For example, after the London bombings on 7th July 2005, there was an outpouring of support from people all over the world on various blogging services, but support for a girl who posted pictures mapping her weight loss on a pro-anorexia site is viewed as detrimental to both the individual in question, the pro-anorexia community to which the pictures were posted, and society in general. The extent to which these different responses are due to the polar opposition of the majority of pro-anorexia, and their lack of interest in multilateral discussion of anorexia requires further consideration. Given that the Internet provides children and young people with the opportunity to access multiple views, perhaps information literacy courses should urge children to seek a multiplicity of views on any topic before forming an opinion. Arguably, this would potentially reduce the potency of the narrow ideological focus of particular sets of forums dedicated to specific topics. Notwithstanding the opportunity to access a multiplicity of views, it is important to remember that children and young people bring predispositions and motivations to their use of the internet which may be significant factors in determining the

information sources and forums they use and their potential influence on the social and psychological development of the individual.

It is important to reiterate that as our understanding of how children and young people interact with risk of harm online activities and policies increases, curricula must evolve accordingly. There is a need to develop an inclusive approach in which parents are also educated about the various risk of harm online activities which may be encountered online, and how best to address them with their children.

Information literacy

The internet can be characterised as a proliferation of a vast network of ever-growing, unfiltered information sources. In a number of European countries 'information literacy' initiatives started in the school sector (e.g., UK, Netherlands, Spain), while in other countries they originated in academic libraries (e.g., Scandinavia, Germany). Although initially information literacy skills were taught separately, now there are trends towards the integration of information literacy into the wider educational curriculum.

Commentators stress the importance of users being able to determine whether or not the information they access is valid, reliable, authoritative, and pertinent (Hundley, Anderson, Bikson, Neu, 2003). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has highlighted the role of information-related

competencies in several reports. The report entitled 'The Knowledge-based Economy', discussing the increasing demand for more highly skilled workers, includes the following observation:

“The knowledge-based economy is characterised by the need for continuous learning of both codified information and the competencies to use this information. As access to information becomes easier and less expensive, the skills and competencies relating to the selection and efficient use” of information become more crucial. Capabilities for selecting relevant and discarding irrelevant information, recognising patterns in information, interpreting and decoding information as well as learning new and forgetting old skills are in increasing demand”. (OECD, 1996: 13).

A knowledge worker is defined as:

“Anyone who works for a living at the tasks of developing or using knowledge. For example, a knowledge worker might be someone who works at any of the tasks of planning, acquiring, searching, analyzing, organizing, storing, programming, distributing, marketing, or otherwise contributing

to the transformation and commerce of information and those (often the same people) who work at using the knowledge so produced. A term first used by Peter Drucker in his 1959 book, 'Landmarks of Tomorrow', the knowledge worker includes those in the information technology fields, such as programmers, systems analysts, technical writers, academic professionals, researchers, and so forth. The term is also frequently used to include people outside of information technology, such as lawyers, teachers, scientists of all kinds, and also students of all kinds.

http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid11_gci212450,00.html

Are schools deploying the optimal strategies designed to facilitate children and young people becoming information literate?

The OECD report expressed concern that many students lack experience in information handling, and in effective independent learning (OECD, 2000: 72), and encourages schools to develop the learning environment in ways that give students a more active role;

“Support the ability to find information and transform it into knowledge’ and provide skills ‘how to find interesting, **relevant and reliable information**, and how to work with it” (OECD, 2000: 104).

The report entitled ‘Learning to Change: ICT in Schools’ notes:

‘In a world with easy access to huge stores of information, the skills of accessing, handling and using data and materials become more important than the ability to recall in detail ever greater amounts across many fields of knowledge.’ (OECD, 2001b: 19).

At present, the implications of this shortfall in requisite information literacy skills are unclear. This situation is further complicated when cognitive developmental factors are considered. Children at age 8, 9 or 10 typically are not able to engage in hypothetical reasoning and critical evaluation of ideas.

Cognitive developmental issues

Children in specific age groups may not have the requisite cognitive skills to process information as outlined in the OECD report ‘Learning to Bridge the Digital Divide’:

“...the ability to seek and exchange informationcalls for basic competence in being able to **choose, classify and critically evaluate the information that becomes accessible**”. (OECD, 2000: 102)

It is important not to underestimate that the role of parents as intermediaries includes an awareness of their child’s

cognitive developmental status. For example, typically parents tailor their conversations, explanations, and interactions in a manner that is sensitive to their child's developmental status. Typically, parents filter children and young people's exposure to TV and films in accordance with what broadcasters and regulators have deemed to be appropriate for particular age groups.

The assumption underlying judgements often relates to cognitive developmental stage theories. For example, Piaget proposed that children pass through four periods of development. Figure 11 lists the four developmental stages, the corresponding age ranges, and the major features associated with each stage.

Stage	Age	Major Features
Sensorimotor	Birth to 2 years	Infants use their bodies to form cognitive structures
Pre-operational	2 to 7 years	Use of symbols; rapid language growth
Concrete operational	7 to 11 years	Can reason about physical objects
Formal operational	11+ years	Abstract thinking leads to reasoning with symbols

Figure 12: The four developmental stages, the corresponding age ranges, and the major features associated with each stage.

According to Piaget, a child's cognitive development centres on the formation of schemas or organized mental representations of the world. Forming mental representations of the environment involves two processes, assimilation and

accommodation (Gerow²⁰, 1996). Assimilation involves taking new information and fitting it into an existing schema. Accommodation involves changing or revising existing schemas in the face of new experiences. Children assimilate and accommodate when they confront something new they are confused and go through a period of disequilibrium. Assimilation and Accommodation help the child to re-achieve equilibrium.

It is only at the 'Formal Operations' stage that children can manipulate abstract concepts and reason through hypothetical problems. In other words, they can work through problems in their mind (Gerow, 1996).

There are a wide variety of cognitive developmental and learning theories. In addition, a number of researchers have conducted experiments which illustrate that children can shift from one stage to the next earlier than Piaget outlined. However it is beyond the scope of this paper to review relevant theories. The central issue is the need for a review of Information literacy strategies for children and young people in different age groups, along with a study of the patterns of children usage of the internet, in order to determine whether existing curricula are suitably tailored to address the young peoples' online activities. In particular, those associated which may give rise to risk of harm, as well as whether there has been sufficient consideration of the

²⁰ Gerow, Josh R. (1996). *Essentials of Psychology*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.

implications of cognitive developmental status.

Changing pedagogies

Changes in educational policies, pedagogy and the integration of information literacy into school curricula are bringing about significant changes in how children are learning in school environments.

This requires alterations in the ways in which parents facilitate children becoming active learners, and augment children's critical reasoning strategies. There appears to have been little or no provision made to educate parents about changes in how their children are being educated, and how these changes impact on parents' roles in their children's learning.

Complexities of source criticism

One of the major tenets of information / media literacy is the recognition of the need to educate children and young people how to engage in source criticism. In the following paragraphs a number of examples are used to illustrate the complexities associated with effective source criticism in the context of online news reportage utilising Brandt's (1996) suggestions for accurately appraising information sources. The explosive growth of the internet has offered the opportunity for publishers of newspapers and broadcasters to disseminate news online (Tsao and Sibley, 2004). This has made information, news and opinion more easily accessible. Furthermore, it is possible to

sign up for news alerts supplied by national broadcasters such as the BBC, so that links to breaking news are sent to users desktops or mobile phones as soon as the information has been uploaded by their chosen news provider.

News and information from 'trusted' online sources will be examined in the following paragraphs using Brandt's heuristic as a guide. The following examples are utilised to illustrate some of the difficulties and challenges that may be associated with evaluating the veracity of news reports disseminated by national broadcasters who are obliged to remain impartial, and should therefore be relied upon to report accurately.

According to Brandt (1996) when information is reviewed, authenticated, and evaluated, users come to trust the source and accept an expert's assessment that it is valid and authoritative. If this isn't the case, end users must assess and evaluate the information themselves.

Firstly, Brandt (1996) recommends that if information is written and/or issued by an authoritative source, such as the government or a reliable organization, it is generally **accepted at face value as having validity**. Secondly, Brandt (1996) suggests that if information is authenticated as part of an editorial or peer review process by a publisher, it is generally accepted as reliable.

On April 9th 2003 a report in the online edition of the *Washington Post* newspaper illustrates how the reliability of editorial

review processes might be questionable. In particular, the controversial image depicting the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue which accompanied the headline "Iraqis Celebrate in Baghdad".

[washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

Hussein's Baghdad Falls as Tanks Roll Through City

Jubilant Iraqis Take to Streets, Topple Baghdad Statue of Dictator

By Thomas W. Lippman and Terry M. Neal
Washington Post Staff Writers
Wednesday, April 9, 2003, 9:40 PM

After three weeks of war, Saddam Hussein no longer rules Baghdad.

U.S. tanks rolled unmolested into the center of Iraq's capital city today to a tumultuous welcome from jubilant residents. The White House and U.S. military leaders proclaimed an end to Hussein's control of Baghdad, stopping just short of declaring victory in the campaign to oust the Iraqi president and destroy his regime.



Figure 13 : Image shown in online edition of Washington Post

The *Washington Post* journalists wrote about '**a tumultuous welcome from jubilant residents**'. However, if the picture that Reuter's news service recorded during the event is examined, arguably a slightly different depiction of the scene emerges. Interestingly, Reuters long-shot photo of Firdos Square taken simultaneously shows it to be nearly empty (see Figure 14).



Figure 14: Reuters long-shot photo of Firdos Square

These sorts of editorial decisions create a number of challenges for people attempting to identify reliable sources.

This example illustrates how important it is to utilise multiple sources of information before one can be satisfied about the reliability, validity or otherwise of an information source.

The advantage of the Internet is that checking for alternative views is incredibly easy. However, it is unclear how well children and young people are being equipped with the requisite skill sets to engage in the processes of checking and re-checking the veracity of reports, and the reliability of sources.

Democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer

Juxtaposed with traditional sources of information are user generated blogs some of which may allege to be reliable sources of information. User generated content is facilitating the growth of a participatory society, and the

democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer. Throughout the conflict in Iraq, soldiers have been sending images to moblogging sites, most relatively unremarkable; however, a number included the horrifying images of torture and abuse from the Abu Ghraib prison.

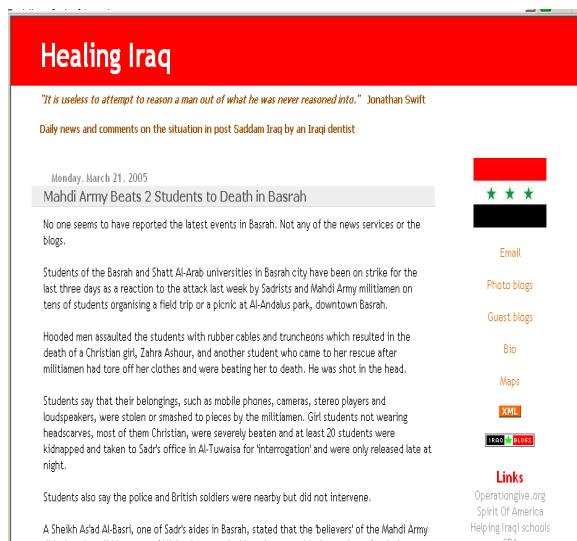


Figure 15: Blog maintained by person living in Iraq. <http://healingiraq.blogspot.com/>



Figure 16: YAFRO blog

Newsblogs:

Traditional mass media also run what are termed as news blogs, e.g. Guardian newsblog which is a team blog from the British newspaper's news team, augmented with dispatches from their journalists around the world. Presumably, the authentication of information through editorial processes that typify traditional mass media reports are applicable in the context of these blogs generated by journalists.



Figure 17: Guardian online newsblog <http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/news/>

Comments and responses to the journalists' views are presumably moderated by the online editorial team. Arguably, the codes of practice relating to impartiality to which traditional mass media adhere may be complicated by facilities which ask users to comment see Figure 17.



Figure 18: Guardian Blogging sites

Newsblogs can also contain links to blogs which are solely generated by users. In the following example the link information was as follows:

[Wonderland at G8](#) - Christian anti-poverty campaigners Emily and Rachel blogged alongside us at our Edinburgh internet cafe HQ. Here they record their G8 experiences.



Figure 19: User generated blog a link to which was supplied on <http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/news/>

Content made available by journalists which is disseminated via an online portal maintained by a mass media source, but contains links to user generated content certainly blurs a number of traditional boundaries between fact and opinion, user and producer or editor. Overall, these

processes suggest that information, news and opinion has been democratised. The question is what sorts of obstacles we can envisage to these continuing processes of democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer.

One possible flashpoint maybe for example, the latest proposed counter-terrorism legislation which the UK government has proposed criminalising indirect incitement of terrorist related activities. The legislation covering offences of preparing, training for and inciting terror acts, will come before the Commons and Lords from October but one wonders how this piece of legislation will apply in an online context, particularly in a blogging situation where people exchange views. There are also issues concerning human rights and freedom of expression associated with these types of legislation.

Weblogs prove their worth²¹

According to Emily Bell, the editor-in-chief of Guardian Unlimited

'The power and reach of internet diary weblogs have been proven in the aftermath of yesterday's bombings in London, according to media executives. With one of the most dramatic domestic stories in living memory breaking over a period of hours, people in the UK began writing and reading blogs as a real-time way to share and access information

²¹<http://www.guardian.co.uk/online/news/0,12597,1524376,00.html?gusrc=rss>

faster than could be achieved through other media’.

Emily Bell further commented:

"The key thing about blogs is that they are not like [internet or newspaper] front pages, where you get the most important thing first. With blogs you get the most recent thing first. When you are following a major story, you want the most recent thing first."

Emily Bell went on to say that

‘blogs acted as a quicker way of updating a story than writing a full, traditional news story, and that people turned to the internet to get more up-to-date information than was being offered on TV, as well as using the blogs as a place to connect emotionally with events’.

Blogs excel as an arena for people to exchange first-hand experiences, and many witnesses to the events in London told their tales online while bloggers from around the globe sent messages of support and condolences.

In future a myriad of complexities may emerge in relation to regulatory provisions with respect to journalistic and user generated content provision via news portals. Notwithstanding, information literacy pedagogies need to take these sources of information into account and provide clear guidance to children and

young people on interpreting and evaluating the content of Newsblogs and user generated blogs.

User generated information sources could potentially be an adjunct to mass media sources, though such a situation lends itself toward a confusing situation for children and young people. However, the development of such social networking technologies means that Internet users are not solely dependent on traditional media to provide them with news and views, and provide opportunities to form opinions based on information and opinion from a multiplicity of views.

Regulatory implications

A number of key regulatory issues are raised by the multiplicity of online sources of news and opinion afforded by social networking technologies.

The extent to which the self-regulatory codes of print media are applicable and effective in the context of the Internet is unclear. According to Leonardi, (2004), the UK PCC, the German Press Council, the Catalan CIC, the Swedish Press Council and others are now accepting complaints against the online publications of their members. However, the proliferation of blogging and moblogging sites described in this document highlight a number of potential difficulties in attempting to enforce the regulatory objectives of press councils in online environments.

The concerns specific to online publications stem from concerns about the scope, scalability, and applicability of the existing self regulatory approaches to meet the anticipated rise in the number of complaints regarding online publications. Further challenges relate to the wider issue of jurisdiction, geographic location of the publisher and the applicant, and even more broadly who should play the role of regulator in online environments.

With respect to user generated content the BBC's editorial guidelines provide a useful example of how a national broadcaster manages editorial issues that may arise in these publicly accessible shared online spaces as follows;

BBC's editorial guidelines in relation to user generated content online

The guiding principle is that we offer shared space for our users to enjoy. Successful online communities operate by consent and encourage a genuine sense of ownership among their users. To enhance the experience of contributors who wish to publish their own content we should ensure there are clear rules and that any messages which break them, for example if they contain abusive or inappropriate material, are removed. We must also be able to implement a swift and robust escalation strategy for example if illegal material is posted or illegal conduct is suspected.

Every online space where user generated content is published must have someone editorially responsible for that content and should have a host to provide a visible and

active presence and a moderator who can remove illegal or inappropriate content. User generated content is moderated in one of three ways:

1. Pre-moderation is where material cannot be accessed by visitors to the website until the moderator has seen it and decided it is suitable for posting. Sites designed to appeal to children are pre-moderated. Sites which invite users to email pictures are pre-moderated.

2. Post-moderation is where the moderator sees the material after it has been posted and decides whether it is suitable to remain. This is likely to be appropriate for websites, which attract robust debate about current affairs.

3. Reactive moderation is where visitors to the website alert the moderator to an inappropriate or offensive message. It is likely to be suitable for a mature online community where few messages have to be removed. It is not suitable for a site which is likely to attract a high proportion of children.

Any proposal to reactively moderate a site with user generated content must be referred in advance to Head of Editorial Affairs, New Media & Technology, and Editorial Policy

The rapidly changing socio-political landscape demonstrated by the examples outlined in this chapter serve to illustrate the potential regulatory and educational challenges posed by the democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer via the internet. There are a number of

emerging complexities associated with protecting human rights and particularly the rights of children and young people within this context. It is vital for policy makers, legislators, teachers, and parents to be cognisant of the interplay of the dynamic socio-political context with evolving social networking and communication technologies, and how these elements influence children and young people's experiences and interpretations of the world around them.

SUMMARY

- In this chapter 'risk of harm' from online and related offline activities were explored against the wider socio-political landscape of the development of a knowledge economy, and the attendant changes in systems designed to educate efficient knowledge workers.
- This diminished gatekeeper role of parents as gatekeeper has also reduced their role as intermediaries assisting children to critically evaluate and contextualise the information, opinions, images they have encountered.
- The absence of sufficiently inclusive educational policies, designed to integrate parents into the processes of playing an active role in facilitating children and young people to becoming

increasingly information literate, needs to be explored in greater detail.

- There is a need for a review of Information literacy strategies for children and young people in different age groups, along with a study of the patterns of children usage of the internet, in order to determine whether existing curricula are suitably tailored to address the young peoples' online activities, particularly those associated which may give rise to risk of harm, as well as whether there has been sufficient consideration of the implications of cognitive developmental status.
- The increasing emphasis on information literacy and source criticism are examined within the context of traditional print broadcast and new media, and demonstrate that information literacy pedagogies need to take these sources of information into account and provide clear guidance to children and young people on interpreting and evaluating the content of Newsblogs and user generated blogs.
- The development of such social networking technologies means that Internet users are not solely dependent on traditional media to provide them with news and views, and provide opportunities to form opinions based on

information and opinion from a multiplicity of views.

- There are a number of potential regulatory and educational challenges posed by the democratisation of information exchange and knowledge transfer via the internet, as well as the emerging complexities associated with protecting human rights and particularly the rights of children and young people within this context.
- It is vital for policy makers, legislators, teachers, and parents to be cognisant of the interplay of the dynamic socio-political context with evolving social networking and communication technologies, and how these elements influence children and young people's experiences and interpretations of the world around them.

CHAPTER 5.

TAXONOMY OF RISK OF HARM

In this chapter the organisation of the concept of 'risk of harm' along five hypothetical continua from legal to illegal is discussed. In the following table, categories and subcategories of 'risk of harm' from online and related offline activities are plotted.

The hypothetical continuum A examines online targeted advertising within the context of children and young peoples' purchasing power and ability to conduct transactions which utilise the billing systems for mobile phones.

Hypothetical continuum B explores representations of ethnic or religious groups that encourage discrimination, hatred and racial violence.

Hypothetical continuum C explores pro-suicide and pro-anorexia (pro-ana) sites, in addition to self-harm and suicide forums. This section explores the nature of the 'risk of harm' that these online communities pose to children and young people.

Hypothetical continuum D explores different categories of sexual imagery. Pornography is a topic that has been discussed in great depth as a definitive type of content harmful to minors. The regulatory challenges posed by user-generated content and interactive services are considered in greater detail.

Hypothetical continuum E explores online and related offline communications and encounters involving bullying, stalking, online solicitation, and happy slapping. The potential for these online activities to result in increased risk of harm to children or young people in offline contexts are an important addition to previous discussions about risk of harm in online contexts.

The diversification of content types, services and delivery channels outlined in the taxonomy, which potentially afford children and young people increased possibilities for access to, and engagement with, 'risk of harm' from online and related offline activities. Children and young people can access, create, encounter, interact with, publish, distribute and engage with online content and activities which may be categorised as posing a 'risk of harm'. Importantly, many of these activities currently occur in the absence of parental knowledge. A key issue that needs to be addressed is who is responsible for keeping parents informed about the alterations in the nature, scope and extent of risk of harm from online and related offline activities that children and young people may encounter in a constantly evolving communications technology environment. Furthermore, how parents can be expected to address these issues with children and young people in the absence of requisite education, advice and guidance.

There are a plethora of factors that have a potential impact on the extent of 'risk of harm' from either viewing or engaging with the various types of content and

communications discussed in the rest of this document. These include authorship, levels of interactivity, age of child involved, and cultural and social particulars of the child or group of children in addition to content and context.

In the following paragraphs a number of broader issues are sketched, i.e., from a legal perspective the 'fantasy defence' and the related psychological issues around 'self regulation'. These issues permeate each of the categories and sub-categories in the taxonomy to some degree. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into these issues in great depth at this juncture but it is recommended that the reader consider these issues when reading about each category particularly those that aspire to ideological tenets.

Fantasy defence

Arguably, the demarcations between reality, fantasy and both online and related offline alleged risk of harm and criminal behaviours will be tested with increasing frequency within the criminal justice system. The issues of criminal intent and mitigating factors are becoming increasingly pertinent as more and more alleged offenders plead a 'fantasy defence' in an effort to mitigate charges where, for example, it has been alleged that an individual tried to incite a young person to commit suicide. The fantasy defence might be, for example, '*I never intended that the child to carry out any of the activities I spoke about online in a real world context...it was all fantasy*'. Furthermore, a defence may utilise an

alleged offenders engagement in e.g., Fantasy Role playing Games (FRPG's) or Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG's), to illustrate that an individual has a history of engaging in online fantasy based activities. The proposition might be that in the same way that one is unlikely to go on a murderous spree in the real world after playing a role-playing game involving killing Artificial Intelligence characters, one is unlikely to commit suicide after exchanging details of suicide fantasies (see chapter 10 section on cyber suicides) Furthermore, the 'fantasy defence', particularly in the context of inchoate²² offences present a challenging set of issues to deliberate on. As mentioned earlier, at present, in the UK a number of new counter terrorism measures are being discussed which may include legislative measures designed to criminalise 'indirect incitement'. It would appear that the aim is to cover situations whereby for example, religious leaders praise the actions of suicide bombers. It is unclear at this juncture whether or not the proposed measures, if in fact they ever do become law could, would or indeed should be applied in an online context and if so, to what degree. What is interesting in terms of risk of harm forums, e.g., pro-ana and a self harm site is whether or not, such sites could be cited as causing indirect incitement.

²² Inchoate, adj. Or adv. An activity or something which has begun, but has not been completed. Used to define an impending crime that was begun but not perfected or finished (buying the explosives, but not yet blowing up the bank safe), a right that is dependent upon an event (receiving property if one outlives the grantor of the property), or a decision or idea which has not been fully considered, such as a contract that has not been formalized.

In addition, the dialectical tensions between the proportionality of the legislative changes introduced in response to, for example, racist activity (Germany) and online paedophile activity (UK) relate to whether or not these new measures can be regarded as necessary to combating both racist and paedophile activity, or as dangerously excessive and a threat to civil liberties. These sorts of dialectical tensions need to be considered in relation to risk of harm online and related offline activities that pose a risk of harm to children and young people.

Arguably, the feature that serves to differentiate between 'risk of harm' from online and related offline activities appear to relate to the nature scope and extent of preparatory acts or incitement and criminality. Specifically, the *nature, origins, intentions, and effects* of the criminal acts conducted both within online and offline settings. To explore these dialectical tensions a little further the contextual elements of both deviant and non-deviant online activities need to be explored in greater depth.

At a most basic level, a key philosophical question is whether or not, it is meaningful to draw a distinction between real world and online fantasy based worlds? Conflicting research findings typify this dialectical tension, i.e. findings suggest that the Internet leads to increased social isolation., yet other research findings suggest that the Internet increases social interconnectivity. Additional tensions, which may be key to the 'fantasy defence',

relate to the question of whether or not the internet can be said to facilitate associated catalytic epiphenomena, (O'Connell, 2005) i.e. increased motivation/desire to either engage in fantasy based activities or activities which allow a person to act on their personal fantasies, viewing risk of harm content, engage in fantasy exchange and role play, or to commit offences against children, young people and adults. The issue of whether or not a 'fantasy defence' could be substantiated is beyond the scope of this paper, but has obvious relevance to the potential risk of harm associated with the variety of risk of harm activities outlined in the provided taxonomy.

Self-regulation versus Justification

One of the main aims of examining risk of harm activities in the context of hypothetical continua was to illustrate the progression of behaviours situated on the risk of harm section of the continuum. It was also interesting to juxtapose risk of harm activities with those on both the safe and illegal sides of the continua. Crucially, each of the chapters exploring aspects of risk of harm online and related offline activities illustrates the need to conduct further research. In particular, research designed to examine the language employed by individuals' and groups when negotiating online relationships in persistent risk of harm related communities is essential. The findings of programmes of research would help to shed light on some of the important questions about how otherwise, presumably regular people can disengage

from the self-regulatory mechanisms that prohibit engaging with risk of harm activities. Arguably, for at least some of the children, young people and adults with an interest in risk of harm online and related offline activities a number of dialectical tensions may exist, for example, between self-regulatory measures and justifications of their involvement with these communities. According to Bandura (1999), in a paper entitled *Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities*, '*moral agency is manifested in both the power to refrain from behaving inhumanely and the proactive power to behave humanely*'. Furthermore, Bandura posits that '*moral agency is embedded in a broader sociocognitive self-theory encompassing self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and self-regulatory mechanisms rooted in personal standards linked to self-sanctions*' (pg.193). Arguably, in an online context the self-regulatory mechanisms governing moral conduct may come into play when individuals both initially, and on subsequent occasions, decide to interact with risk of harm online communities. However, what is vital to understand are the mechanisms whereby the activities, which are either problematic from a moral perspective or illegal, can become normalised, e.g. talking about suicide, or teens exchanging pornographic images of themselves which technically speaking can constitute a criminal offence, i.e., if the young person involved is below the legal age of consent in the country of origin. Self-regulation is a complex, multifaceted process, and presumably therefore it can

break down in several different ways. Various control theories address the issue of self-regulation, for example, Baumeister, Heatherton and Tice's (1994) conception of self-regulatory failure is grounded in the negative feedback loop model. According to Bandura (1999), there is a serious question whether the feedback loop is equipped to bear the explanatory burden placed on it given the complexities of human self-regulation. Theorists concur that it is not possible to identify a single cause or causal sequence that will explain all instances of self-regulation failure. According to Kirschenbaum (1987), despite the substantial progress in studying how self-regulation can function, relatively little effort has been devoted to direct examination of failures at self-regulation. A comprehensive review of current research findings in relation to Control theories is beyond the scope of this chapter and interested readers are encouraged to refer to the relevant literature -see reference section. However, it is important to note, as evidenced throughout this paper there are a number of psychosocial manoeuvres, by which moral self-sanctions are selectively disengaged from the acts of for example, creating and distributing pornography, subscribing to racist groups, supporting deviant ideologies, self harming fantasy exchange, role-play, bullying, stalking and other acts of aggression with a variety of risk of harm online and related offline activities.

Group polarisation

In addition, a number of experiments have been designed to investigate the effects of group interaction and risky shift (Wallach, Kogan & Bem, 1964). A body of evidence seems to suggest that group polarisation can occur, i.e., the tendency of group members during group discussion, to shift toward more extreme positions than those initially held (Burnstein, 1983; Lamm and Myers, 1978). This is an important aspect of online activities particularly, group based activities to bear in mind when thinking about e.g., pro-anorexia sites, pro-suicide sites etc.

The taxonomy outlined in the following chapters' highlights that the position of specific content and activities along the continuum from 'safe' through 'risk of harm' to 'illegal' is relative dependent on the online context and level of individual or group involvement, engagement and immersion in the activity. Violations of human rights are characteristic of illegal activities but one of the central questions this paper raises is the extent of violations of human rights and particularly those of children and young people occur in risk of harm online and related offline activities. The taxonomy outlined on the following page provides a conceptual framework for discussion, analysis and the development of future research programs.

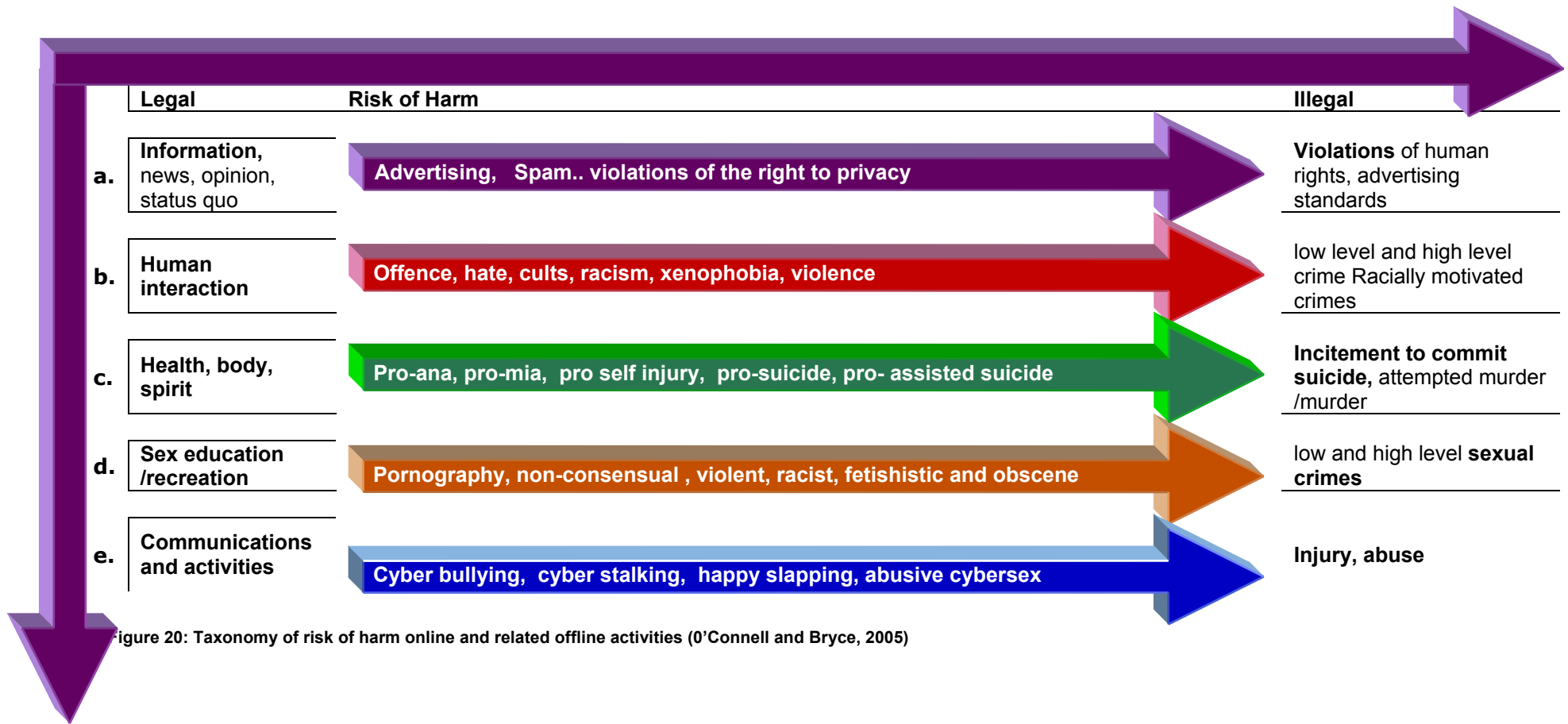


Figure 20: Taxonomy of risk of harm online and related offline activities (O'Connell and Bryce, 2005)

CHAPTER 6.

HYPOTHETICAL CONTINUUM 1: ADVERTISING AND SPAM

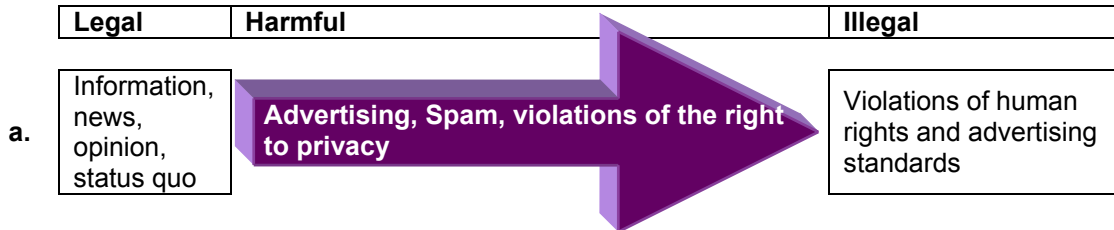


Figure 21: Hypothetical continuum 1: Advertising and Spam

In the following paragraphs issues involving m-commerce²³, children and young peoples' purchasing power via mobile phones, and targeted advertising campaigns aimed at exploiting this new market, will be explored. Issues around Spam texting, Automatic Calling Equipment (ACE) and misleading or corrupt websites with popup boxes that trick users into downloading premium rate number dial-up software. According to ICSTIS (2005) there has been 'a huge growth in mobile content services that seem to entice users with low-price or 'free' offers and then tie them into subscription deals that are difficult to escape'. The final paragraphs of this chapter explore the regulatory bodies operating across Europe who are tasked with counteracting these harmful service4s.

The Jamster Company's recent advertising campaign provides a useful case study which illustrates the implications of employing targeted

advertising campaigns aimed at children and young people, and the resultant 'risk of harm'. Wider concerns about marketing to children and young people will be explored using the French Coca-Cola website site as an illustrative example, before moving onto issues around privacy.

Growth of m-commerce and advertising targeted at children and young people

Recent years have seen rapid growth in the provision and accessibility of digital content. Whether through the web, interactive media or mobile devices, consumers have access to a wide range of content in a variety of formats. Content providers have been keen to explore ways in which to monetise this content, allowing them to maximise their revenue streams. The ability to use Premium SMS to charge customers through their mobile phone bill has provided a lucrative solution. The rapid take up of SMS services clearly shows this, with 5 digit short codes becoming as recognisable as web site addresses in the marketplace, and downloads on and off portal increasing exponentially.

²³ (Mobile-COMMERCE) Using smart phones and handheld computers with wireless connections to place orders and transact business over the Web.

The following paragraphs will focus on the actions of companies with more immediate monetary goals which involve harnessing children and young peoples' new found purchasing power facilitated by mobile phones. Furthermore, even though companies may state that they are advertising to 16+ age ranges, there is no way of checking whether or not the person purchasing the product is 16+.

Purchasing via mobile phones, plus aggressive advertising campaigns aimed at children, potentially creates a myriad of challenges with respect to ensuring the protection of children's rights in the face of online advertising.

M-commerce

There are a number of companies exploring different ways in which content providers can implement effective micro payment systems. For example, The MX Telecom Reverse Billing SMS Service sends a Reverse Billing SMS to customers so that companies can generate immediate revenue - the user is billed for receiving the Reverse Billing SMS Text Message. According to MX Telecom Reverse Billing SMS system is perfectly suited to both large and small corporate systems, as well as being easily accessible through a variety of interfaces via the Internet. Furthermore, the MX Telecom IVR Service is a unique combination of delivering SMS Text Messages to customers whilst charging them via their phone bill.

Similarly, Vodafone m-pay allows companies to bill users directly on their mobile phone bill. According to information on MX Telecom's site, there is no need to send customers an SMS each time a company wish to bill a user. Instead, users are billed when they enter their username and password details on the web or WAP site where they are purchasing content.

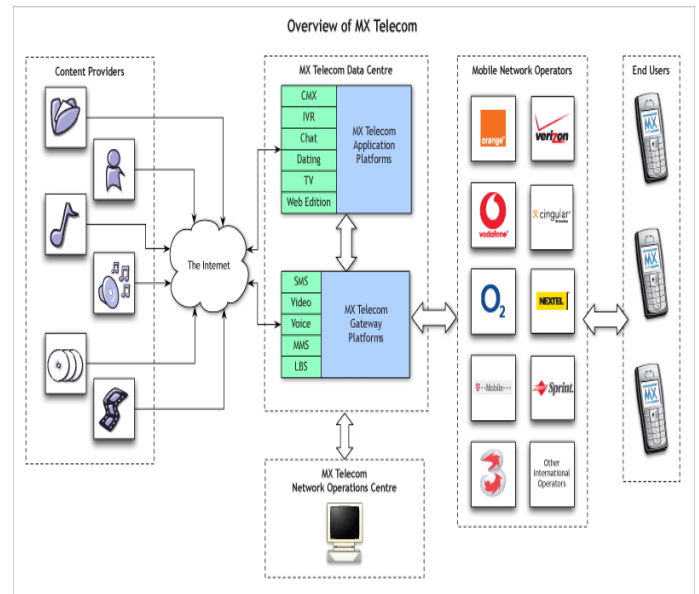


Figure 22: Shows the operation and partners of MX Telecom:

The TNS OK²⁴ Report (December, 2003) focussed on 6 to 15 year olds across the world and provides some interesting insights into the children and young peoples' use of mobile phones as purchasing tools.

²⁴ TNS OK is an international market research platform

France	2,430
Germany	2,784
Holland	8,053
Italy	1,772
Sweden	2,233
UK	2,250
USA	660
Total Base Sample	20,182

Figure 23: Number of children and young people interviewed in each country.

The following graphs illustrate the proportion of children and young people aged between 6 and 15 years old, from different European countries who made purchases via mobile phones. It is important to remember that this research was conducted in December 2003, and it is therefore relatively old. However these findings do give a good indication of an emerging trend.

**KIDS AND MONEY: What do you do with your mobile phone?
Download games**

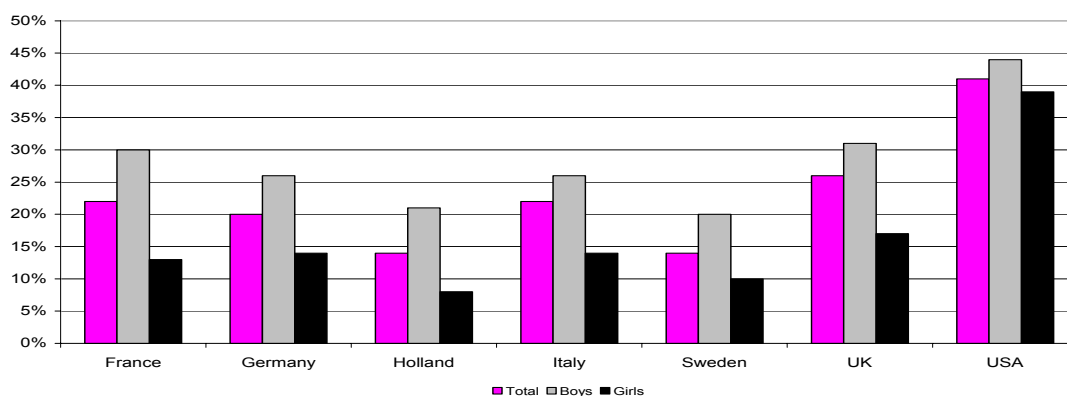


Figure 24 Graph shows the proportion of children who download and pay for games using their mobile phones

Figure 24 show the highest proportion of young people downloading games to their mobile devices, 41% occurs in the US and the lowest proportion in Sweden and Holland both at 14%. The UK is the European country with the highest proportion of young people downloading games 26%. Furthermore, there is a consistent pattern evident in this graph which suggests that more boys than girls download games via mobile phones in all countries, the greatest gender difference appears in France and the smallest reported gap between boys and girls occurs in the US.

**KIDS AND MONEY: What do you do with your mobile phone?:
Download ring tones**

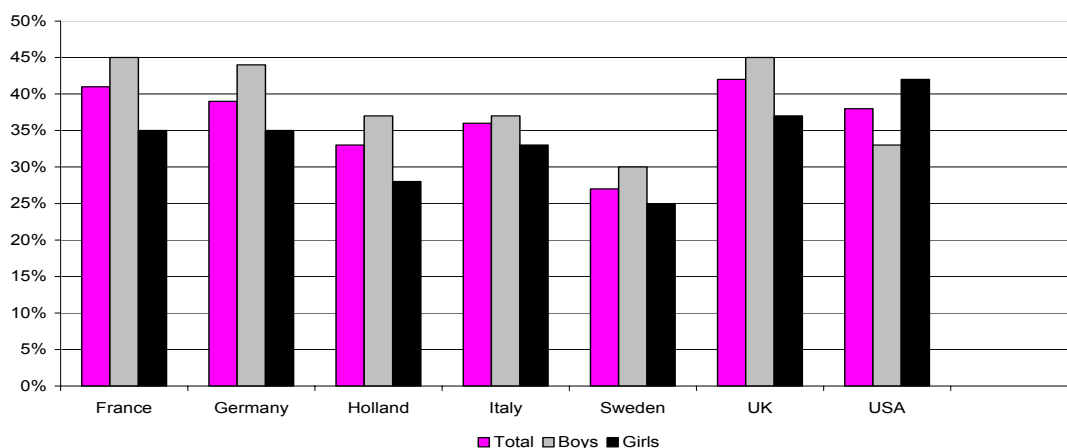


Figure 25 Graph shows the proportion of children who download and pay for ring tones using their mobile phones

Figure 25 shows the highest proportion of young people downloading ring tones to their mobile devices, occurs in the UK, followed closely by France, 42% and 41% respectively. The country with the lowest proportion of young people who report downloading ring tones is Sweden, (26%). The extent of gender differences in reported levels of downloading ring tones are noticeably reduced across all European countries, however, in the US the findings suggest that more girls than boys report downloading ring tones.

Case Study: Jamster ring tones.

The Jamster Company was acquired by VeriSign in 2004. VeriSign²⁵ Inc. is a company based in Mountain View, California, which operates a diverse array of network infrastructure, including two of the Internet's thirteen root servers, the generic top-level domains for .com and .net, one of the largest SS7²⁶ signalling networks in North America, and the RFID²⁷ directory for EPCglobal²⁸. VeriSign also provides a variety of security and telecom services ranging from digital certificates, payments processing, managed firewalls to mobile call roaming, toll-free call database queries, and downloadable digital content for mobile devices. The company groups all of these functions under the banner of 'intelligent infrastructure' services.

The Jamster Company specializes in cellular downloads and market research.

²⁵ (NASDAQ: VRSN
(<http://quotes.nasdaq.com/asp/SummaryQuote.asp?symbol=VRSN&selected=VRSN>))

²⁶ Signaling System 7 (SS7) is an architecture for performing out-of-band signaling in support of the call-establishment, billing, routing, and information-exchange functions of the public switched telephone network (PSTN). It identifies functions to be performed by a signaling-system network and a protocol to enable their performance.

²⁷ RFID: radio frequency identification, a technology similar in theory to bar code identification. With RFID, the electromagnetic or electrostatic coupling in the RF portion of the electromagnetic spectrum is used to transmit signals. An RFID system consists of an antenna and a transceiver, which read the radio frequency and transfer the information to a processing device, and a transponder, or tag, which is an integrated circuit containing the RF circuitry and information to be transmitted.

²⁸ EPCglobal is leading the development of industry-driven standards for the Electronic Product Code™ (EPC) to support the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

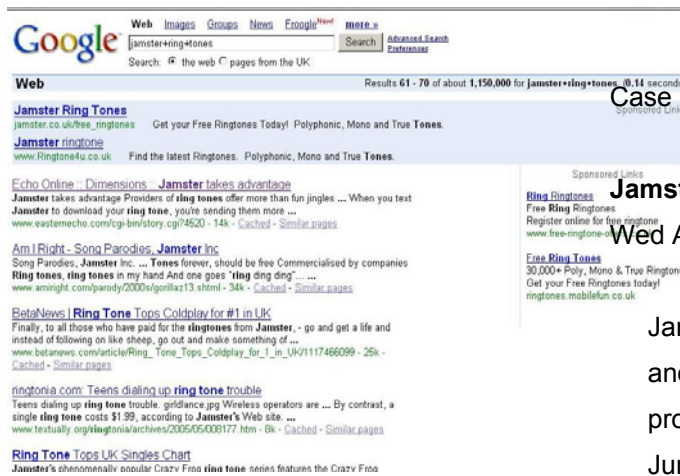
In December 2004, the Jamster Company began an aggressive Press, TV and new media advertising campaign in both Europe and the US offering ring tones and screensavers to the general public. In the UK, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld a series of complaints about adverts the company was running, saying that the fact that customers would be signing up for a subscription service was not made clear. Jamster Company had provided written assurances in the past to the ASA that the body copy of its advertising would make it clear a subscription service was being offered. The ASA concluded that the Jamster Company had not made this clear and that



the advertisement was misleading.

Figure 26: Show the Crazy Frog character, a very popular Jamster character

children and young people to big industry players.



Case Study

Jamster Sued For False Advertising

Wed Apr 06, 2005 11:39 pm

Figure 27: Shows the number of hits the search terms Jamster ring tones generates.

Furthermore, depending on the download, the "contract" is for the supply of downloads for either a week or a month, as opposed to a single one. Jamster can continue to charge children and young people per week if they don't specify what type of download they wish to receive.

Jamster business practices have raised concerns over their legitimacy and authenticity, and in the US, Jamster is being sued for false advertising, fraud, unfair business practices, and violations of California's Consumers Legal Remedies Act. Jamster's ability to advertise on children's TV channels, e.g., Cartoon network and Nickelodeon will also be scrutinised during the court case.

It is interesting to note that it was a member of the public and not a regulatory body that filed the lawsuit against Jamster. In addition, this case illustrates the importance of highlighting the rights of

Jamster, the U.S. name of Jamba and German mobile content provider that VeriSign acquired in June 2004, has been sued for allegedly misleading young consumers into paying for expensive text messages. The lawsuit, brought by Charles Ford, claims his daughter was lured into the service. According to, Robert W. Thompson, counsel for the plaintiffs in advertisements marketed to kids on MTV, Nickelodeon on the Cartoon Network, and online, Jamster! promises a free ring tone to mobile phone users who send a text message to Jamster! What the ads fail to make clear is that consumers who respond are automatically registered to receive additional ring tones each week for which they are charged US\$1.99 up to US\$5.99 in addition to the carrier's standard per-message charge. <http://www.mobiledia.com/news/28953.html>

This case study raises a number of important questions about the coupling of

m-commerce and advertising, and how it is targeted at children and young people. Furthermore, this case raises issues around the roles and responsibilities of key industry actors with regard to children's rights.

VeriSign is one of the major digital certification companies used to limit children and young peoples' access to pay per view pornography sites. Furthermore, a large part of VeriSign's business relates to trust and reputation. A VeriSign customer gets a "trustmark" which is posted on his or her website.

This case study raises a number of regulatory issues which require consideration at both the member state and European level:

Do mobile operators have a duty of care toward children and young people, in regards to which companies they allow to exploit the billing service the mobile operators run?

What role did the existing self or co-regulatory bodies play in relation to, for example, the circumstances that characterised the Jamster case and does the extent of their involvement align with their responsibilities?

- What measures have been taken to ensure that children and young people are fully aware of the implications of entering into a legally binding contract when purchasing content via SMS?

- Can children and young people under 16 be regarded as being in a position to give informed consent to the terms and conditions, and contractual obligations associated with these sorts of payment systems?
- What sort of recourse is available to children and young people if they wish to terminate a contract?
- Who are the arbiters of what types of content should be made available to children and young people?
- How can content providers authenticate /verify the age of the consumer?
- Is there a case for children and young people being able to purchase content at reduced costs, much like child fares on bus routes and cinema tickets?
- Are there any regulatory systems in place to delineate these sorts of age based cost distinctions in an online environment?
- What sorts of measures are in place to limit the use of these micro payment systems by Spammers?
- Should mobile operators be so compliant in facilitating, what in some instances, amounts to scams to collect money from children and young people?
- Where does the duty of care lie in terms of regulating these sorts of activities?

The International Audiotex Regulators Networks²⁹ (IARN) has been addressing these sorts of issues. IARN plays an important role in working to ensure that the development of premium rate services within the European Union goes hand-in-hand with effective consumer protection. European Members of IARN include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands and Sweden

IARN members exchange information about regulatory methods and legal and administrative arrangements and co-operate in identifying malpractices. In addition, IARN has developed a set of guidelines, which are been set down in the IARN handbook – see <http://www.iarn.org/>. Section 3.7 of the handbook addresses children's services and states the following;

Children's services, and any associated promotional material, must not;

- Contain anything which is likely to result in harm to children or which exploits their credulity, lack of experience or sense of loyalty,
- Include anything which a reasonable parent would not wish their child to hear or learn about in this way,
- Involve an invasion of privacy of any child,
- Make direct appeals to children to buy, unless the product or service is one which they could be

reasonably expected to afford themselves

- Encourage children to ring other premium rate services or the same service again.

The Independent Committee for the Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services (ICSTIS) is the UK member of IARN and in the preface to their 2004/05 Activity report ICSTIS notes that 'premium rate charging is now being used across all communications platforms to buy a seemingly infinite range of information, entertainment and other services. Premium rate activity is now worth over £1 billion a year and is continuing to grow'.

ICSTIS report highlights that' in 2004 complaints levels in the UK rose to over 78,000, their highest ever level. To stop the abuse ICSTIC have introduced tough new licensing requirements, increased sanctions and made greater use of their emergency powers to close harmful services overnight. ICSTIS has worked with Ofcom. and the Department of Trade and industry, networks and others to implement new governance arrangements, a new code of practice, tough new rules on payment cycles, an alerts system to fast-track problem services, and a programme of work to better inform and empower consumers. In 2005, ICSTIS report that the complaints levels are half the level they were a year ago.

Ofcom carried out a review of premium rate regulation in 2004. The report identifies the key causes of consumer harm and concern. The key

²⁹ <http://www.iarn.org/>

recommendations arising from Ofcom's review were as follows;

- Phone companies that lease premium rate numbers to service providers must provide ICSTIS with detailed and accurate information on the identity of their service providers.
- Phone companies must not pass revenue onto their service providers for 30 days.
- Service providers must have adequate customer service and redress processes.
- Where ICSTIS order a service provider to refund customers, phone companies must make funds withheld by them available for three months for consumers to claim redress.
- ICSTIS will be able to impose sanctions, including fines, directly against phone companies if they fail to meet their obligations under our Code of Practice.
- The DTI should consider increasing the maximum fine, currently £100,000 that we can impose.
- Ofcom and ICSTIS should take the lead in encouraging phone companies to produce a voluntary code of practice covering the monitoring of call traffic and information sharing.

Furthermore, the Mobile Entertainment Forum and mobile operators in the UK

have developed a code of practice that requires that:

- Consumers must be able to switch off the service with the universal "stop" command.
- When consumers sign up they must be told what they get, how much it costs and for what time period.
- Consumers must get monthly reminders about the subscription and what it costs.
- Consumers must get a reminder for every £20 they spend on ring-tones.
- Content providers must place regular print advertisements spelling out prices, time periods and details of ring-tones offers.
- The rules allow for offenders to be cut off if they do not let consumers know exactly what they get for their money and how to turn off the services.

These new rules came in to force on 15 January 2005 and under the new regime many firms cautioned for not honouring them see ICSTIC Activity report 2004/05. Andrew Bud, regulatory head of the MEF and executive chairman of messaging firm MBlox. "It's all about transparency," he said. "Consumers have to be told what they have got themselves into and how to get out of it."

Fostering brand loyalty amongst children and young people

A related but wider issue concerns the implications of big brand companies offering free music downloads, chat rooms or games on an interactive site which helps to ensure that children and young people will repeatedly return to the online location. As the numbers of children and young people on the Internet grows the focus of online marketers on this section of the market intensifies. Children are attracted to Internet commercial sites which are colourful and engaging, offering games, information, and items and products that children and young people recognize. Major companies focus on the teen and younger market to build brand familiarity. This is achieved by aligning certain products that are attractive to children, e.g., music, games, ring tones and other downloads, with the actual product that is being promoted.

The Coca-Cola site illustrates the strategies that big brand companies employ. These tactics raise questions, about the levels of responsibility these companies have toward protecting children's rights?

There has been a blurring of boundaries between informational content and advertising in online contexts, and there are obvious concerns regarding compliance on websites to standards that apply in other media, e.g., TV advertising to children. Television advertising guidelines state the need for a separation between advertising and content, but this is not the case on the Internet (Nestle³⁰, 2000). Online sites use information to build brand awareness, or link favourite brand cartoon characters to games and education information, encouraging children to build a consumer mentality and various brand loyalties (Nestle, 2000).



Figure 29: Shows the French Coca Cola website

According to Hays (1998) soft drink companies seek new markets among younger and younger children. Hays (1998), has compiled a list of the various methods that large companies employ to capture children and young peoples' attention (see Table 1). Presumably the



Figure 28: Shows the Coca Cola website

³⁰ Nestle M. Soft drink "pouring rights": marketing empty calories. Public Health Reports 2000;115:308-319. Copyright Oxford University Press, 2000.

extent to which multi-nationals can engage in these sorts of activities will vary across Europe.

Marketing methods targeted to children outside of school	
1	Television advertising
2	Internet advertising
3	Internet interactive computer games
4	Toys, clothing, and other items with logos
5	Discount cards, coupons
6	Telephone cards
7	Celebrity endorsements
8	Motion picture sponsorship
9	Product placements in movies
10	Supermarket placements
11	Fast food chain tie-ins
12	Prizes
Marketing methods targeted to children at school	
1	Channel One (required television watching, with commercials)
2	Soft drink "pouring rights" agreements
3	Logos on vending machines, supplies, sports facilities
4	Hallway advertising
5	Advertisements on school buses
6	Sports uniforms, scoreboards
7	Contests
8	Free samples
9	Coupons for fast food
10	Club and activity sponsorship
11	Sponsorship of school sports, other events
12	Teaching materials

Figure 30
Examples of methods used by soft drink companies to market their products to children in and out of school. (Nestle M. Soft drink "pouring rights": marketing empty calories. Public Health Reports 2000; 115:308-319. Copyright Oxford University Press, 2000)

Given the pressure of advertising on the Internet and the blurring of the line between content and advertising, Nestle (2000) suggests that parents should;

- Talk to children about the real purpose of these commercial

sites, and give them the tools to recognize when they are being targeted as a consumer.

- Talk to children about advertising on the Web.
- Point out advertising techniques such as linking logos, popular brands, and cartoon characters with content and games.
- Limit children's Internet use and watch where they go and the sites they visit.
- Instruct children never to give out personal information.
- Ensure children use a screen name in a chat room.
- Build a list of sites that children can use that are advertisement free. (Nestle, 2000)

Nestlé's (2000) research findings suggests that there is a need to critically evaluate the status of regulatory frameworks in relation to children and advertising on the internet, with a view to contributing towards considering the following issues;

- The blurring of boundaries between information and advertising on sites aimed at children.
- How should, would or could advertising standards currently applied in traditional media operate online?
- Who should be involved in enforcing these standards in an online global context?

- How best to address the deficit in regulatory controls in different media.
- The roles and responsibilities of key actors in relation to advertising and new media?
- The need for dialogue between parents, carers, teachers, children and young people about advertising on the Internet.
- The need to seek clarification in relation to compliance issues surrounding web advertising.

Privacy issues:

Any discussion about advertising, and the facilitation of consumer purchases by children and young people, inevitably raises issues of children and young peoples' privacy and ability to give informed consent to subscribe to services conclude contracts or be contacted for direct marketing purposes. The following sections review a number of unresolved issues relating to self-regulatory perspectives on privacy. There are four key aspects in which privacy concerns are related to the risk of harm from online activities for children and young people:

- Advertising targeted at minors
- Consent and opt-in for subscription services
- Protection of contact details and information about purchasing behaviour
- User generated content

Of relevance to the current document are the limitations placed on content and

service providers concerning what happens to information harvested from children such as personal details and buying patterns collected via cookies³¹, and to whom that information is passed.

Children and young people and Spam³²

The Spamhaus project defines Spam in the following ways;

The word "Spam" as applied to Email means Unsolicited Bulk Email ("UBE").

- I. Unsolicited means that the Recipient has not granted verifiable permission for the message to be sent.
- II. Bulk means that the message is sent as part of a larger collection of messages, all having substantively identical content.

A message is Spam only if it is both Unsolicited and Bulk.

An electronic message is "spam" if:

³¹ Cookie: A message given to a Web browser by a Web server. The browser stores the message in a text file. The message is then sent back to the server each time the browser requests a page from the server. The main purpose of cookies is to identify users and possibly prepare customized Web pages for them. When you enter a Web site using cookies, you may be asked to fill out a form providing such information as your name and interests. This information is packaged into a cookie and sent to your Web browser which stores it for later use. The next time you go to the same Web site, your browser will send the cookie to the Web server. The server can use this information to present you with custom Web pages. So, for example, instead of seeing just a generic welcome page you might see a welcome page with your name on it. Definition from www.webopedia.com

³²

- 1) the recipient's personal identity and context are irrelevant because the message is equally applicable to many other potential recipients;

and

- 2) the recipient has not verifiably granted deliberate, explicit, and still-revocable permission for it to be sent.

According to Spamhaus (2004) Spam is an issue about consent not content. Whether the UBE message is an advert, a scam, porn, a begging letter or an offer of a free lunch, the content is irrelevant - if the message was sent unsolicited and in bulk then the message is spam.

Spam is not a sub-set of UBE, it is not "UBE that is also a scam or that doesn't contain an unsubscribe link", all email sent unsolicited and in bulk is Spam.

This distinction is important because legislators spend inordinate amounts of time attempting to regulate the content of spam messages, and in doing so come up against free speech issues, without realizing that the spam issue is solely about the delivery method. Furthermore, the sending of Unsolicited Bulk Email ("UBE") is banned by the vast majority of Internet service providers worldwide.

According to research by Applied Research (2003) and commissioned by Internet security company Symantec,

more than 80 percent of Net users between the ages of 7 and 18 years old get "inappropriate" unsolicited commercial e-mail on a daily basis. More than half the 1,000 young people surveyed said the spam made them feel "uncomfortable" and "offended."

A sizeable majority of respondents to the Applied Research survey reported receiving sweepstakes messages (80%), "relationship-related" e-mail (62%), finance ads (61%), weight-loss ads (55%), pharmaceutical ads (51%) and spam with links to pornographic sites (47%). Applied Research reported that 21% of survey respondents opened and read their spam.

More than three-quarters of young people surveyed said they had at least one e-mail account, and nearly half said they didn't ask permission before giving out their e-mail addresses. More than one in five of those surveyed said their parents had not spoken to them about spam.

Regulation and Directives regarding Unsolicited Commercial Emails or Spam (UCEs)

The Privacy Directive briefly described in an earlier chapter of this document states that unsolicited commercial emails or UCEs (including email, SMS and MMS) should be regulated using a harmonised system of opt-in lists throughout EU states. Consumers must give consent to receive UCE, unless there is a pre-existing customer relationship. However, there is a lack of clarity within the Directive concerning what constitutes informed

consent, whether consent will refer to content and services in general or to specific services, whether consent will be transferable between different operators and/or service and content providers, and the period of time for which consent is valid.

Crucially, there is a lack of consideration of how, and by whom, consent will be obtained and managed for content and services available to minors. The lack of distinction between adults and minors complicates the notion of prior customer relationship and consent. Differences in the legal age for making a legal contract, and disclosure of other personal information between member states, creates a potential source of confusion for operators and parents in determining how their children may be protected from UCEs.

The Jamster example outlined above suggests that privacy issues may not have been made sufficiently clear to subscribers to the ring tone service. Arguably, the 'opt-out' system requires too much vigilance and effort on the part of consumers. Furthermore, according to Solove (2001), 'opt out' almost always provides consumers with a limited choice between blocking all uses of the information and enabling the unfettered use of that information.

Consent and privacy issues: user generated content

Furthermore, it is important to consider both consent and privacy issues relating to children and young peoples personal information that is posted to publicly accessible online environments either by children and young people or by adults.

Issues around informed consent and children become even more complicated when considering the increasing production and distribution of user-generated content via fixed-line and mobile networks. Fig 31 illustrates the content which can be accessed using the search term 'kids+textamerica' in the Google search engine. The search results listed a blogging service, text America which depicts images of children, presumably uploaded by adults such as parents and family members.

User generated content on web, blog and mblogging sites raise crucial questions in relation to informed consent. A key issue is whether adults have sufficient awareness of the potential 'risk of harm' associated with such content and services to enable them to make informed decisions about what types of information about children and young people to post in

publicly accessible online forums, particularly those which typically have search facilities.

It is wonderful to share images with friends and family, and clearly some adults wish to share images of children and young people with everyone. But, as Fig 31 illustrates adults posting pictures result in the creation of a permanent digital record of information pertaining to a particular child. Posting this information on a searchable public forum provides the facility for other users to syndicate the content and to track any further uploads about a specific child or group of children. Issues of tracking and child safety in such instances have been briefly considered in the case study of user-generated content in chapter one.

In Figure 32 a father details why he has set up a Club after he had received comments on the photos of his 5 year old daughter that he had posted on his blog. He refers to the commentator as a 'sick paedophile' and says 'I would kill the bastard if I could find him!'

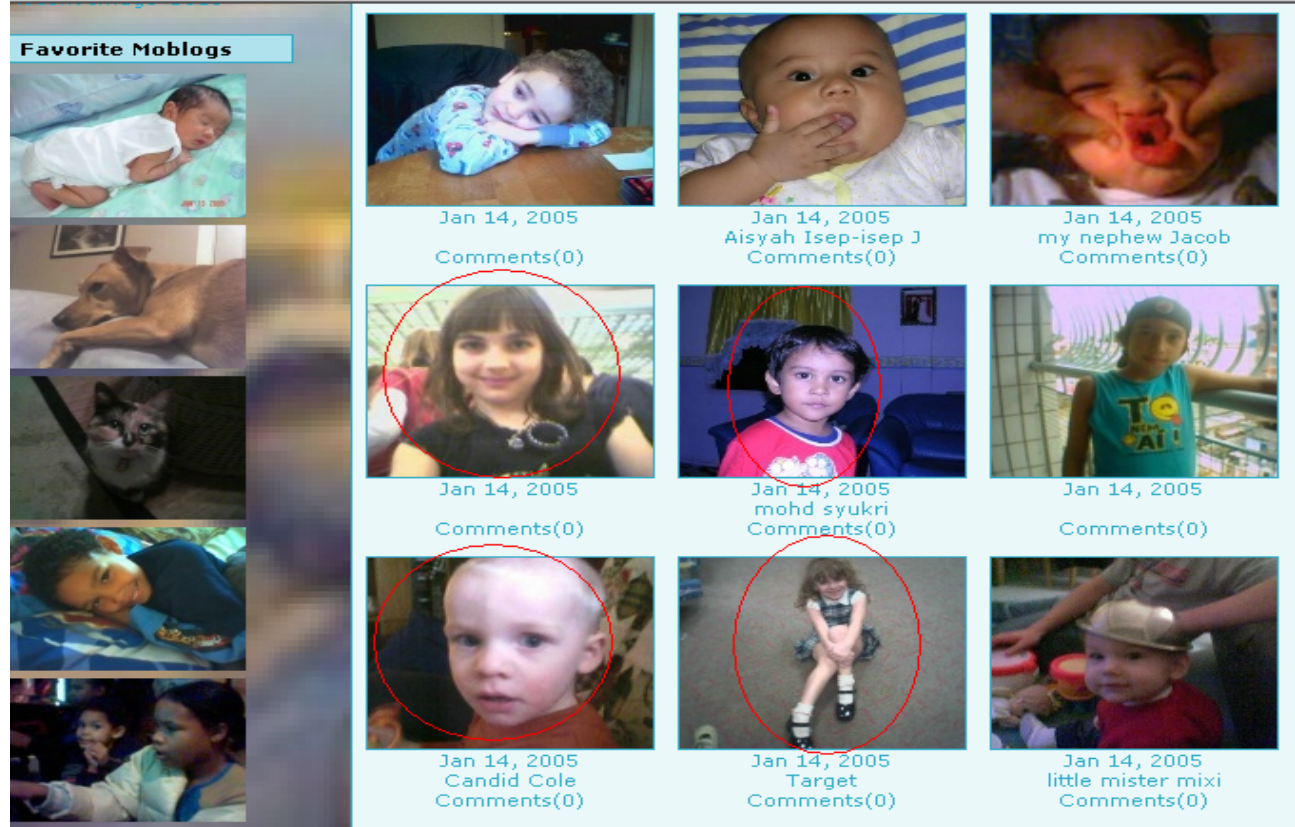


Figure 31: Shows images of children posted to textamerica blogging site.

not logged in | what's yafro? | join

EXPLORE | JOIN YAFRO!

email password

ibs

[yafro Clubs Home](#) > [Directory](#) > [Family & Home](#) > [Family Issues](#) > [Report Stalkers and Perverts Here](#)

Club 'Report Stalkers and Perverts Here'

Club Description: Basically I started this club after I received the following very disgusting comments on my daughter photos from a very sick individual, If you have had similar things happen to you report here and maybe we can find an easy way to report scum like this, Read more.... His yafro user link is here: <http://unknown.yafro.com/> This is what he posted on my photos about my young 5 year old daughter one full email included with headers the others are condensed and can be forwarded to anyone with full headers intact. From : Yafro <yafro@yafro.com> Sent : Sunday, September 12, 2004 2:32 AM To : cusaterry@msn.com Subject : Someone added a comment to one of your Yafro photos | | | Inbox MIME-Version: 1.0 Received: from mail2.yafro.com ([64.124.140.122]) by mc6-f15.hotmail.com with Microsoft SMTPSVC(5.0.2195.6713); Sat, 11 Sep 2004 23:48:19 -0700 Received: from mail.yafro.com (216.200.21.149) by mail2.yafro.com with ESMTP; 11 Sep 2004 23:48:20 -0700 Received: by mail.yafro.com (Postfix, from userid 0)id 06BC38AF1A; Sat, 11 Sep 2004 23:32:01 -0700 (PDT) X-Message-Info: 6sSXyD95QpW44qyuCxTnRaviyJMu0mgu Message-Id: <20040912063201.06BC38AF1A@mail.yafro.com> Return-Path: root@mail.yafro.com X-OriginalArrivalTime: 12 Sep 2004 06:48:19.0656 (UTC) FILETIME=[7D371480:01C49894] New Yafro Comment: [Go to Photo] Your Photo: In response, unknown said: (at 9/11/2004 11:16:04 PM) unknown can I too I have something she can play with Click Here to Reply to unknown's Comment 2.nice shot 3.yummy 4.sexy pose 5.I can see up her shorts 6.damn wish I was that pole Please take my banner and made a copy and paste this info into your profile to spread the word about this sick pedophile. I am forwaring all info the the releavnt authorities. I would kill the bastard if I could find him!

Total Members: 561 **Last Post:** 10 hrs ago **Created:** 299 days ago **Founded By:** [honda2na](#)

[More Club Info]

Subject:	Started By:	Replies:	Views:	Last Change:
Posting without Permission	hislipwincess	13 replies	332 views	10 hrs ago
what the hell is is all about?	sweetbexxie69	0 replies	139 views	3 days ago
Um...check this out.	ThoroughSecurity101	16 replies	562 views	5 days ago
CONVICTED CHILD SEX TOURIST RECEIVES 17-YEAR SENTENCE	plowboys	0 replies	56 views	6 days ago
Check this manner of indictment ICE 	plowboys	0 replies	43 views	6 days ago
* 50 child porn sites * 1,200+ arrests, so far ~:- 	plowboys	0 replies	63 views	6 days ago
yet another paedophile club	punkywunky	25 replies	731 views	8 days ago
* 50 child porn sites * 1,200+ arrests, so far ~:- 	plowboy	2 replies	161 views	8 days ago
Check this manner of indictment ICE 	plowboy	0 replies	82 views	10 days ago
Freaky...	pinktoenails	3 replies	325 views	14 days ago

[More Club Topics]

Posted by: [CTaurus29](#) Posted by: [CTaurus29](#) Posted by: [KRAZY](#) Posted by: [KRAZY](#) Posted by: [WildHotChic](#)

Figure 32: Shows the irate blog of a father who posted pictures of his 5 year old daughter online and received disturbing comments

'Basically I started this club after I received the following very disgusting comments on my daughter photos from a very sick individual, If you have had similar things happen to you report here and maybe we can find an easy way to report scum like this'

The user who allegedly posted the comments has a username 'unknown' made the following comments.

- can I too have something she can play with
- nice shot
- yummy
- sexy pose
- I can see up her shorts
- damn wish I was that pole

At this point in time it is unclear whether or not the individual who posted these comments to the blog site has been identified, and it is important to state that it is speculation on the part of the father that the person who posted comments was a male with a sexual interest in children. However, this case study illustrates the issues around 'risk of harm' that adults need to consider when posting images of children on the Internet. User generated blogs are not subject to the same protections afforded commercial content, and are not covered by the provisions of the Privacy Directive.

Awareness raising targeted at adults around privacy and child safety issues associated with use of such blogs etc. is necessary. Similarly, children and young

people need to be sensitised to risk of harm issues that posting their own content with images and information about themselves without understanding possibilities for access, traceability and syndication is a potentially risky situation. It is imperative to ensure that programmes of education are designed to empower children and young people with a good understanding of issues around making personal information public.

Issues pertaining to consent and content copyright, particularly, in the context of increasing trend for information to be syndicated and accessible via search engines also require further examination.

Furthermore, copyright is an important issue to consider in relation to Content Service Providers. The following 2 examples illustrate copyright issues outlined in the terms and conditions of two blogging services.

Example 1:

For materials you post or otherwise provide to Microsoft related to the MSN Web Sites (a "Submission"), you grant Microsoft permission to (1) use, copy, distribute, transmit, publicly display, publicly perform, reproduce, edit, modify, translate and reformat your Submission, each in connection with the MSN Web Sites, and (2) sublicense these rights, to the maximum extent permitted by applicable law. Microsoft will not pay you for your Submission

Example 2:

The last thing we want to do is to take ownership of your images - they're yours to do with as you wish, and if we want to use them, we'll ask you first. If you don't like the idea of full copyright, might we suggest a creative commons license? Creative commons allows you to protect your images from theft, but in a less restrictive way than a full copyright. For instance, you could allow some to use your images for personal use, whilst protecting your rights for commercial use.

The creative commons license certainly appears to be more user friendly, however, it is unclear at present how enforceable the terms of these licences are in practice. Additionally, there does not appear to be any provisions made in the Terms and Conditions in example 1 or 2 for children and young people below the age of 16 years who are not in a position to enter into a legally binding contract. There is clearly a need for some discussion around children and young people's legal status with respect to agreeing to terms and conditions.

CHAPTER 7. REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENCE



Figure 33: Shows hypothetical continuum B

The concept of harmful content has historically referred to representations of violence and sexually explicit material within the media, and this has been an important focus in Council of Europe and other regulatory-policy instruments. This chapter provides a brief overview of the risk of harm associated with access to violent online content which is proposed to have a negative influence on the psychological, social and moral development of minors.

A variety of vertical regulatory mechanisms have developed for each medium in which violent content is found. In the UK, film violence is regulated and certified according to various age classifications by the BBFC³³. Similar systems exist for computer games (ELSPA³⁴ and the PEGI³⁵ system), and

³³ British Board of Film Classification

³⁴ ELSPA (the Entertainment & Leisure Software Publishers Association) was founded in 1989 to establish a specific and collective identity for the British computer and video games industry

³⁵ The Pan European Games Information (PEGI) age rating system is a new, pan-European age rating system for interactive games. Designed to ensure that minors are not exposed to games that are unsuitable for their particular age group, the system

broadcast television services operate a system of watershed times and content warnings prior to programs which feature frequent or extreme violence.

Violence has always played a role in media entertainment, but this has increased in quantity and also become more graphic, sexual and sadistic. The delivery of interactive and communicative services via fixed-line and mobile networks have increased possibilities for access to representations of violence, as well as communications which incite ethnic or religious discrimination and violence.

Children and young people are potentially exposed to a continuum of violence on the Internet, ranging from sites with cruel humour to disturbing depiction of torture and sadism. They can easily download music containing violent lyrics and access violent images, video clips and online games.

is supported by the major console manufacturers, including PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo, as well as by publishers and developers of interactive games throughout Europe.

In the following section of this chapter a number of sub-categories of violent content and services will be outlined based around the context and motivations of their production, and the delivery channel utilised.

Commercially produced violent content distributed via traditional media channels

This subcategory includes violent content in the traditional media such as films, TV and computer games. This is regulated by vertical regulatory systems which classify violent content according to its age-appropriateness. The role of publishers and producers in self-regulatory systems ensure traceability and accountability for production and distribution of violent content.

Distribution of commercially produced violent content via online delivery channels

This includes the distribution of traditional forms of violent content (e.g., films, TV programs and computer games) via online channels such as commercial and illegal download sites, peer-2-peer networks etc. Content may be purchased per download, through subscription services, or by free downloading through illegal peer-2-peer networks. This category also includes short films, computer games and video clips produced specifically for distribution through online delivery channels.

Distribution of non-commercially produced violent content via online delivery channels

Non-commercially produced violent content includes violent 'gore' sites and other sites which contain graphic pictures of autopsy, murder and accidents. These new forms of violent content can easily be accessed by children and young people. In MNet's 2001 survey, 70 per cent of high school boys said that they had visited sites such as "gorezone.com" and "rotten.com," which feature real pictures of accident scenes, torture and mutilation.

Such sites are viewed as the online equivalent of harmless horror movies. However, the manner in which these sites often combine violence with sexual imagery is disturbing. "Gorezone's" front-page disclaimer describes its images as "sexually oriented and of an erotic nature." It then warns viewers that they also contain scenes of death, mutilation and dismemberment. The disclaimer then normalizes this activity by stating, "my interest in scenes of death, horrifying photos and sexual matters, which is both healthy and normal, is generally shared by adults in my community."

Sites such as these, and content transmitted via P2P and IRC, do not involve commercial transactions for access to content. This prevents the use of payment systems such as credit card to regulate inappropriate access by children and young people. This raises the issue of

whether and how age-appropriate access can be achieved given the difficulties of monitoring children and young peoples' internet use.

Circulation via these networks is also a significant problem in terms of intellectual property crime, and illegal downloading is an effective way to circumvent the vertical age-certification and access regulatory systems which operate for violent content districted via traditional media channels.

Interactive co-produced and user-generated violent content

Interactive co-produced violent content includes content produced by adults who invite children and young people to contribute. For example, the site 'Who Would You Kill.com' allows players to select real-life stars of television shows, and then describe how they would kill them off. The entries frequently include bizarre acts of degradation and sexual violence. Murder is also a staple of the web site newgrounds.com, which features a number of Flash movies showing celebrities being degraded and killed. When MNet surveyed 5,682 Canadian young people in 2001, the newgrounds.com site ranked twelfth in popularity among 11- and 12-year-old boys.

As with the previous category, the lack of commercial transaction required to access this content prevents age-appropriate regulation by credit card.



Regulatory implications

At present age-appropriate access and regulation of access to violent content in both online and offline contexts is covered by traditional vertical regulatory systems at both the member state and European level. The EU level policies outlined in Chapter 3 of this document also have provisions for the protection of minors from violent content and mechanisms for reporting illegal and harmful internet content via hotlines and operation of notification and takedown procedures.

The regulatory implications of the ability to access new forms of violent media and traditional forms in online environments have yet to be critically examined. The potential consequences of ease of access to violent content online are likely to be similar to those associated with exposure via traditional media formats. Systems for

regulating age-appropriate access to such content have been seen as necessary in the online environment. Whilst there is a general consensus that a horizontal regulatory system would be most effective given the cross-media entertainment environment, discussions usually focus on the incorporation of vertical regulatory systems from traditional media to online and interactive material (see for example, documents such as IRIS³⁶, Legal Observations of the European Audiovisual Observatory, Issue 2003-10 “Horizontal Rating of Audiovisual Content in Europe. An Alternative to Multi-level classification?”).

Blurred boundaries between users and producers, content and services etc highlight a number of challenges for regulation of user-generated and distributed violent content which require further consideration at both the member state and European level

Motivation, image and fantasy

Currently there is a lack of research examining the nature of the relationship between violent imagery, fantasy and reality. There is dearth of information about variables which may mediate the consequences of exposure to, or engagement with, violent media content and services. There is a need for a

comprehensive programme of research exploring the risk of harm that ‘gore’ sites may pose to particular groups of children compared with exposure to other forms of violent content. Such research would better equip policy-makers to develop inclusive and comprehensive regulatory policies and educational initiatives for the benefit of educators, parents and young people themselves.

The nature, scale and extent of the burden placed on parents to support, advise, guide and monitor their children and young people as they navigate the Internet. Furthermore, often parents’ efforts are hampered due to lack of awareness of the risks and opportunities associated with children and young people’s use of the Internet.

Parents may not be sufficiently aware of their children’s patterns of internet use, particularly in relation to IRC and peer-to-peer, as these communication technologies typically fall outside of parents regular internet usage patterns. Parents and carers need advice about how to advise children and young people about safe and discriminating use of the Internet, how to limit young children’s access, and how address a multiplicity of safety issues. These include the nature of particular ideologies, what to do if a child encounters something upsetting, reporting mechanisms, and what is acceptable to download and share.

There is some evidence that violent content may play a role in justifying and

36

http://www.obs.coe.int/oea_publ/iris/iris_plus/iplus10_2003.pdf.en

reinforcing appetites for violence and encourage violent behaviour in real life. However, as we have argued elsewhere in this document, exposure to and engagement with violent content is unlikely to have negative psychological and social consequences for those children and young people not predisposed to seek out specific violent content or behave violently. Thus the majority of children and young people are most likely to experience shock, horror and fear as a result of exposure to violent content. However, for those children and young people with a predisposition to seek out violent content, exposure to interactive content and associated forums may serve to legitimise and reinforce the ideology that violence is acceptable, and may increase the risk of a child or young person engaging in violent behaviour in everyday life.

The motivations behind the production and distribution of free violent content also require further research. The structure and social organisation and activities of online forums which produce, distribute and discuss violence may hold the key. Individuals predisposed towards aggression and violence may be motivated to satisfy their predilection, but the variety of motivational and psychological factors involved such as the status and kudos associated with being involved with these forums, requires further theoretical and empirical examination.

Consumers of offensive material

According to Caslon Analytics³⁷, an Australian internet research, analysis and strategies consultancy;

“It appears that appetites for heterodox religious content, 'alternative' political statements and erotica (including content that is publicly stigmatised or illegal) are not restricted to particular geographical, ethnic, income, age, gender or education demographics. Consumption of 'mainstream' erotica online in advanced economies is not restricted to male teens (and is becoming less so as the overall online population normalises). That is consistent with demographics for consumption of free-to-air and pay television broadcasts and print publications. Commercial or other access to non-mainstream erotica similarly doesn't appear to be quarantined within a particular demographic, although some demographics have easier access than others e.g. because they have broadband, or greater experience of interacting online “.

Further research investigating motivations and preference for accessing violent online content, membership of forums, and use of interactive services is required on a pan-European level to understand the level of demand and motivations behind

³⁷<http://www.caslon.com.au/censorshipguide2.htm#consumes>

access of such content and services. This will enable the development of more effective public awareness, media literacy and educational strategies.

The implications of regulating access to such content and services for human rights and freedom of expression also requires further consideration. It is important to engage relevant stakeholders in discussion and to be cognisant of the limits of state and industry regulation of an individual's private life and fantasies, and the boundaries to such intervention

There is also a need to examine the regulatory challenges posed by the production and distribution of user generated content, particularly if it is distributed through P2P networks or IRC. The relationship between the circumvention of DRM³⁸, intellectual property theft and age-appropriate certification when accessing violent

³⁸ Digital Rights Management (DRM)¹ is an umbrella term referring to any of several technical methods used to control or restrict the use of digital media content on electronic devices with such technologies installed. The media most often restricted by DRM techniques include music, visual artwork, and movies. Some digital media content publishers claim DRM technologies are necessary to prevent revenue loss due to illegal duplication of their copyrighted works. Civil libertarians, in contrast, argue that transferring control of the use of media from consumers to a consolidated media industry will lead to loss of existing end-user rights, as well as stifling innovation in software and cultural productions. No current DRM technology includes a mechanism to enable fair use rights per se, though some DRM methods allow acts of copying which may coincidentally align with legal use rights. Arguably, a technology cannot, in principle, know what legal restrictions and rights apply in a specific jurisdiction, usage context, under an external contract, or to an individual author, owner, or publisher. Definition from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_rights_management

content via Peer-2-Peer and IRC is another important issue. As P2P³⁹ and IRC⁴⁰ networks freely make available content where no commercial transaction takes place, this also circumvents prevents age-appropriate access to violent content through credit card and other payment systems.

Awareness raising

There is a need to develop educational strategies for parents, teachers and children about the potential risk of harm associated with violent content and interactive services. Given the lack of evaluation of public awareness and use of traditional vertical content media regulatory systems, it remains to be seen how if these systems can be translated

³⁹ Peer-to-peer network exists on the Internet that allows users to share files on their hard disks, essentially creating global peer-to-peer networks. Mostly for music files, this type of sharing was popularized by the famous Napster service as well as Gnutella (www.gnutella.com), Grokster (www.grokster.com), KaZaA (www.kazaa.com) and others. In 2003, Napster was resurrected into a legitimate service competing with other online music stores such as iTunes (www.itunes.com) and MusicMatch (www.musicmatch.com).

⁴⁰ IRC (Internet Relay Chat) An international computer network of Internet servers, using its own protocol through which individual users can hold real-time online conversations. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is a form of instant communication over the Internet. It is mainly designed for group (many-to-many) communication in discussion forums called channels, but also allows one-to-one communication. IRC was created by Jarkko Oikarinen (nickname "WiZ") in late August 1988 to replace a program called MUT (MultiUser Talk) on a BBS called OuluBox in Finland. Oikarinen found inspiration in Bitnet Relay Chat which operated on the Bitnet network. There are hundreds of IRC channels on numerous subjects that are hosted on IRC servers around the world. After joining a channel, your messages are broadcast to everyone listening to that channel. IRC client programs, such as mIRC, provide a graphical interface for all functions, including logging onto popular servers and obtaining a list of their active channels.

into online environment where traceability of producers and publishers is difficult and parental monitoring is potentially a more complex and process than regulating access to violent media offline.

In Chapter 5 issues surrounding news report delivered to children via online broadcast and print media editions were examined. This raised the issue of whether the concept of 'risk of harm' should include factual representations of violence.

However, there are instances where clear lines are drawn by the traditional media with respect to what they will show during news bulletins released at different times of the day, e.g., declining to show footage of recent beheadings of hostages conducted in Iraq. However, this footage was easily accessible online and given that a proportion of young people are fascinated by gore sites it seems reasonable to suggest that a proportion will have visited sites which shows the beheadings. This type of situation gives rise to many questions about the reach factual news reporting and the limitations in terms of implementing the sorts of regulatory guidelines that govern traditional broadcast media in an online content.

Racist and discriminatory content

It is important to distinguish between representations of violence in online and offline contexts, and the content of online hate sites and offline propaganda intended to incite violence, hatred and ethnic or religious discrimination. This issue will be explored below.

There are a number of notable differences between risk of harm online and related offline activities from racist and discriminatory content compared with the other categories included in the taxonomy. There is little commercially produced content of this nature, whether distributed by traditional or online media channels. Whilst there are some exceptions such as commercial record labels which produce white supremacist music and commercially produced print media, economic profit is secondary to the objective of spreading political and racist ideologies which contribute towards ethnic and religious discrimination and violence.

Content distributed via traditional media channels

Traditional media channels (e.g., print, radio, television, music and computer games) are used for the production and distribution of racist, discriminatory and inciting content which denigrates the characteristics and/or beliefs of religious and ethnic groups within society. Whilst some of these may involve commercial transactions, economic profit is secondary

to the central objective of propagating specific ideologies. Such content is produced and circulated by individuals and established political organisations.

Content distributed via online media channels

Online media channels are particularly well suited to the production and distribution of this type of content. There has been a proliferation of websites, music and game downloads, IRC and newsgroups organised around specific discriminatory and inciting ideologies. These have a political commitment to encourage discrimination against other groups within society on the basis of their ethnicity, religion etc. The vast majority of content within this category is user-generated, whether by individuals or organisation, and the implications of this for regulatory mechanisms will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

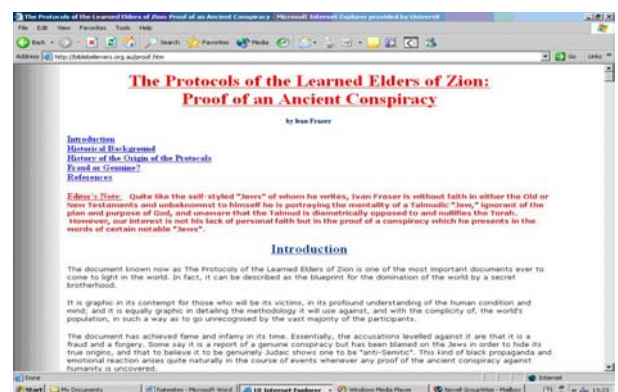


Fig 24: Shows example of an anti-Semitic site



Fig 25: Shows an example of an anti-Semitic site

Case study: Racist game mods



The Title Screen of Ethnic Cleansing

Fig 26: Shows a front page of a game mod named ethnic cleansing

Familiar gaming technologies and formats are often exploited as a medium for covertly communicating racist and discriminatory ideologies which may pose a risk of harm to children and young



Screen Shot of the game's protagonist in KKK garb. Note: He is carrying a noose for lynching.

Fig 27: Shows game mod character

people. The term game mod is derived from the act of modifying a game and creating customised levels, objects, characters, or even unique or stand-alone games from an existing game engine. Many games come with an editor that allows easier modding. Fig 27 illustrates a screen shot of a game mod in which the character is wearing attire typically associated with the Ku Klux Klan.

Risk of harm from racist, discriminatory and inciting content and communications

The primary risks associated with access to this category of content and services are ideological. This involves the reinforcement, justification and legitimisation of specific political, religious or racist ideologies which contribute to discrimination between, and may also incite violence against, minority groups within society.

However, a central issue is the extent to which access to such content is likely to lead to attitudinal and ideological change in individuals. The predisposition argument referred to throughout this document suggests that such effects are unlikely in those without a predisposition toward racist and discriminatory belief systems.

However, the focus of this paper on children and young people who inhabit information saturated online environments make the risk of ideological harm in

attitude formation at a young age of particular concern.

An important aspect of this content category is the presentation of historical and contemporary 'truth' about different ethnic and religious groups within society which often masks its ideological and political intent. This information may be factually incorrect and children and young people may not be aware of the underlying intent or the bias placed on the interpretation of history and religious or ethnic difference given their lack of source evaluation skills.,

This subcategory contains a variety of political ideologies, e.g., neo-Nazi, Nazi, white supremacists, holocaust deniers, anti-Jewish groups, anti afro Caribbean, as well as extreme political and religious fundamentalist ideologies US survivalist and conspiracy groups also fall within this category. This variety creates a number of difficulties in determining extent of risk of harm to beliefs about specific groups, individuals who become involved in groups or individuals who may suffer discrimination and violence.

In addition, there are a number of difficulties in determining appropriate and proportionate responses to such content given the scope for expression of extreme political, ideological and religious beliefs provided by freedom of expression and human rights legislation within Europe.

There has been little academic research on the dynamics and social organisation of

such online groups and the potential risk of harm they pose to participants, including children and young people. Although there are a number of practical and ethical difficulties with conducting such research, a specific focus on these issues is particularly important given the often subtle ideological effects of such content and services.

This subcategory of the risk of harm taxonomy shares certain characteristics with the advertising subcategory in hypothetical continuum A and the general news reporting and other forms of political communication described in an earlier chapter. Issues of information literacy and source criticism discussed earlier are particularly relevant given the nature of this content, and the difficulties with its regulation as outlined below.

Regulatory implications

Discriminatory content of this type and its potential role in the commission of violent crime is regulated by statutory legislation in many European states (e.g., UK, France, Germany). Such content also falls under the regulatory remit of the general provisions of European Audio-Visual policy as represented by the Television Without Frontiers Directive and other associated documents.

The E-Commerce Directive provides that national courts and administrative authorities can require both access and hosting providers to filter or to remove illegal material, including racist and

xenophobic speeches (articles 12.3 and 14.3) using the Notification and Takedown procedures and hotlines implemented for regulating illegal violent and sexual content.

The success of such regulatory mechanisms relies on the ability of the general public, including children and young people, to recognise and report inappropriate content and services. This further demonstrates the key role for media literacy and the development of

source evaluation skills for parents, educators and young people to enable them to recognise and report inappropriate content and communications.

Content and services within this category pose a challenge for the development of effective source evaluation and media literacy skills as political and religious freedoms are more strongly protected by regulatory policy and statutory legislation, and there are additional difficulties in proving that such content plays a role in the incitement of violence.

PORNOGRAPHY

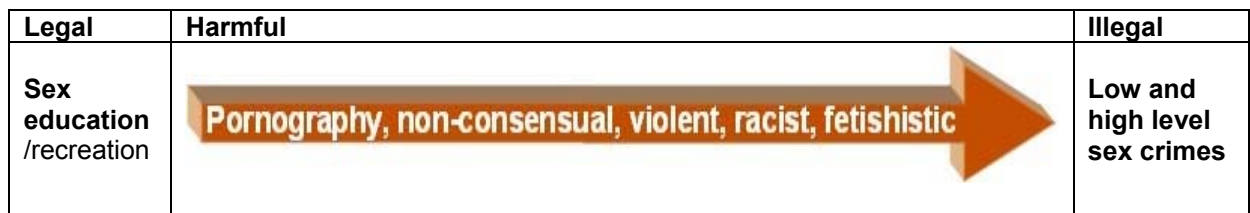


Figure 34: Shows hypothetical continuum D

Figure 35

A number of commentators⁴¹ have noted that the growth in availability of sexually explicit material on the Internet has created an unprecedented opportunity for individuals to have anonymous, cost-free, and unfettered access to an essentially unlimited range of sexually explicit texts, still and moving images, audio materials, and communications.

Men and women, young people and children can acquire sexually explicit content on the Internet with a minimum of effort. The effects of exposure to sexually explicit material on children and young people are unclear. In the following paragraphs, a variety of categories of pornography are outlined and examples are provided of a variety of easily accessible pornography sites which provide completely free access to content without age verification systems..

Concerns over the representation of women within pornography and portrayals of sexual violence have been claimed to

lead to the objectification and degradation of women, desensitisation and sexual violence. It has also been claimed to negatively impact on the general psychological and moral development of children and young people who may be shocked, upset and disgusted by accidental access to pornography.

There are clear distinctions between illegal pornographic content (e.g., child pornography, depictions of rape and sexual violence) and that which is legal but deemed suitable only for adults. However, in practice it is relatively easy to gain access to a host of material in which links may not always be respectful of legal restrictions.

Furthermore, research findings indicate that young people are utilising communication technologies to create, produce and disseminate both static or interactive pornographic content and services. Clearly, it is no longer sufficient to regard pornography simply in terms of the harmful effects of a child or young person being exposed to pornographic content. When we discuss the risk of harm in the context of pornography it is important to consider the scope for

⁴¹ (Cheney, 2000; Elmer-Dewitt, 1995; Freeman-Longo, 2000; Harmon & Boeringer, 1996; Mehta & Plaza, 1998; Rimm, 1995; Wysocki, 1998),

children and young people not only to be exposed to material but also their vulnerability to engage in the creation, production and dissemination of pornography, e.g., webcam girls. The latter set of activities may involve children and young people becoming involved in high risk activities and the perpetration of a crime, i.e., the production of material what could be classed as child pornography.

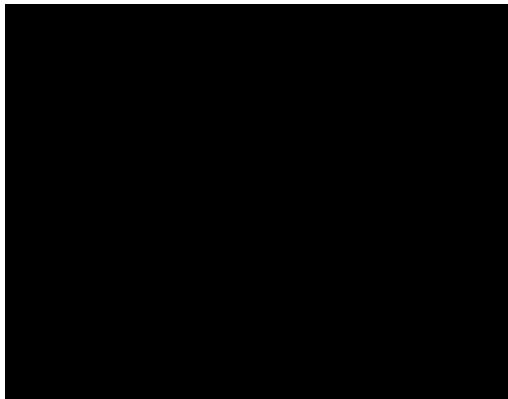


Figure 36: Rectal router site provides access to video and text based accounts of a sexual encounter.

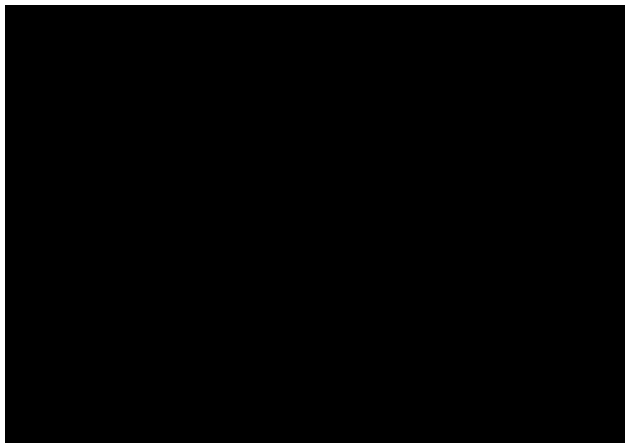


Figure 37: Penisbot Bondage and S&M galleries

Opinions on the age-appropriateness of access to representations of nudity,

sexually explicit material and pornography vary across member states, making achieving a consensus over mechanisms for age-appropriate access more difficult to given the cultural specificities of attitudes towards sexuality and pornography across European states.

Commercially produced sexual content distributed via traditional media channels

There are two categories of commercially produced sexual content distributed via traditional media channels. The first of these is sexual content included in films, TV programs, computer games where sexual content is a part of the overall narrative. The second category is that of commercially produced pornography distributed via magazine, film, DVD. Children and young people's access to both forms of sexual content have been traditionally regulated by the vertical regulatory systems of specific media channels (e.g., the BBFC in the UK).

Distribution of commercially produced sexual content via online delivery channels

Existing regulatory mechanisms for pornography have largely focused on visual representations, rather than those which are textual. The development of interactive services via fixed-line and mobile communications networks have increased the possibilities for production,

circulation and access to pornography in all its constituent genres, as well as the potential for cybersexual encounters between users via chat rooms, instant messaging and webcams.



Figure 38: Shows a live an interactive site

This category includes the distribution of traditional forms of sexual content both in the general media and pornography via online channels such as commercial pay-per view and subscription sites, as well as via illegal download sites, peer-2-peer networks and IRC. Commercially produced pornographic content also includes films, video clips and images produced specifically for distribution through online delivery channels. Interactive services such as web-cams, (see Figure 35 and 36) may also be commercially provided though general subscription services include a variety of different content and interactive services.

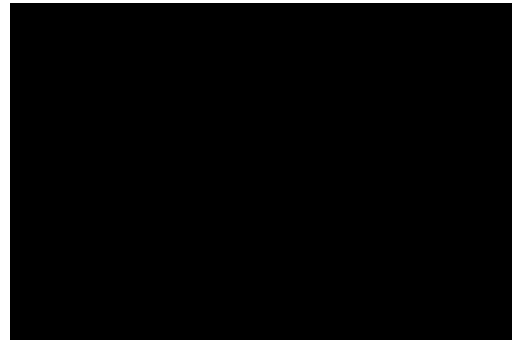


Figure 39: Shows a webcam site

Distribution of non-commercially produced sexual content via online delivery channels

This includes amateur websites, which include free video clips, films, images and interactive services such as webcams and chat where content is freely accessed without a commercial transaction.

Figure 37 shows pictures posted in newsgroups

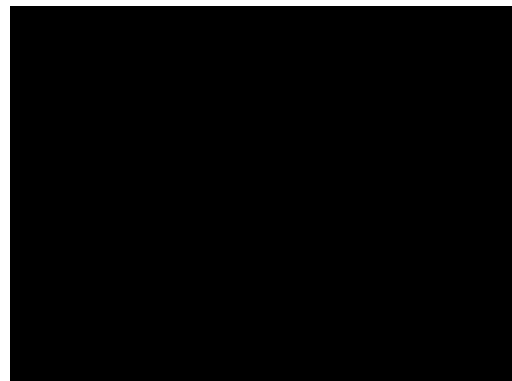


Figure 40: Shows a newsgroup featuring Black amateur porn



Figure 41: Shows a newsgroup which contains images from a webcam session depicting an amateur female teen.

The selections of images shown in Figure 38 are not sexually explicit. However, within the site there are more images of this alleged teen, which are sexually explicit. These images are illustrative example of the nature of young people's relationship with pornography, i.e., apart from being consumers they can interact with people engaged in producing pornography, and become producers and distributors. Material broadcast online becomes a permanent digital record which may circulate online indefinitely. It may also serve an information tool for other teens considering in engaging in similar activities, as well as providing child pornography for other children, young people and adults.

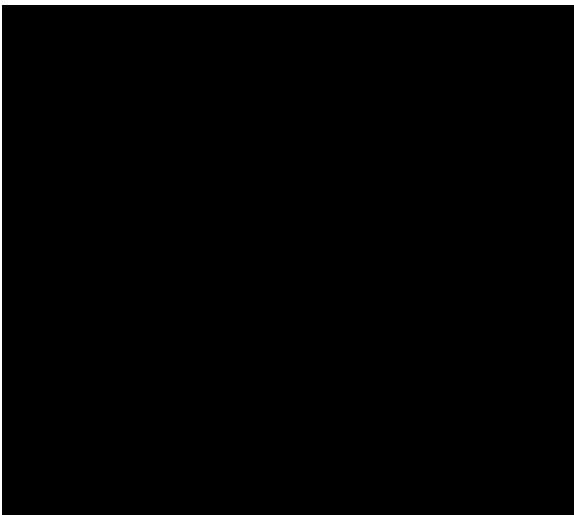


Figure 42: Shows front page to a pornographic site with racist overtones

Genres of sexual content and pornography

Classifications systems have a fairly top level generic approach to classifying pornography as follows:

Pornography / Nudity

Pornography: Includes Web sites containing the depiction of sexually explicit activities and erotic content unsuitable to persons under the age of 18.

Erotic / Sex: Includes Web sites containing erotic photography and erotic material, as can be found on television or obtained free of charge from magazines. Sex toys are also in this category. Sexually explicit activities are not listed here.

Swimwear / Lingerie: Includes Web sites containing nudity, but with no sexual references. Includes bikini, lingerie and nudity.

<http://www.cobion.com/support/techsupport/dbcategories/>

Depictions of sexual violence, rape, sodomy, sadomasochism, bestiality, incest, etc., are easily accessible online. Simply typing in these terms into a search engine will produce a list of links to free material. The following paragraphs detail the sorts of material that are available online, however, it was decided that given the shocking and disturbing nature of the

content the websites included in this chapter that we should extend an opt-in option to readers whereby if readers are interested in viewing the sites please contact the first author ro-connell@uclan.ac.uk.

Sadomasochism

Sado-masochism can be defined as the perversion of deriving pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, from simultaneous sadism and masochism. Figures 41 and 42 relate to sites, which afford free access to images depicting sadomasochism. In Figure 40 there is a link to a free trailer which contains a link to extremely disturbing material. There are no age-verification mechanisms other than a warning page detailing the content contained within many such sites.

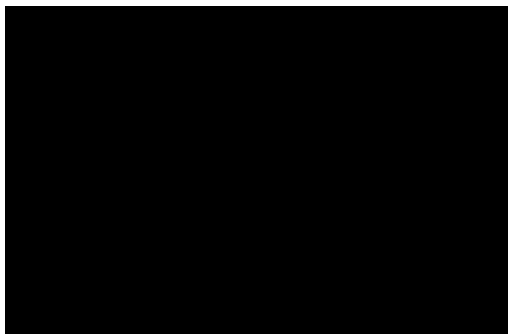


Figure 43: Shows a sadoslaves site

Here at exploited bitches.com, ...we treat bitches the way they deserve – we use them, exploit them, fuck them in every hole we like and shoot our loads right in their scared faces and screaming mouths, and you know, the bitches love it.

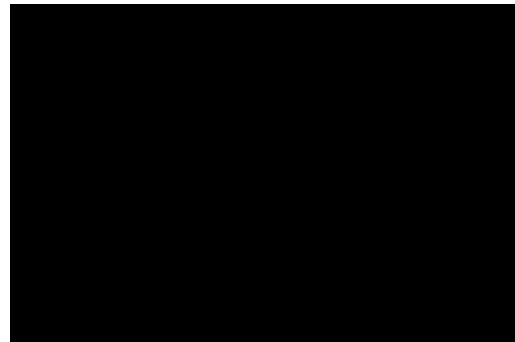


Figure 44: Shows Exploited bitches site

Bestiality

Bestiality refers to the crime of engaging in sexual relations with an animal. Entering the search term 'bestiality into Google's search engine produces a large number of links to free bestiality material. Figure 42, 43 and 44 illustrate the types of material available online.

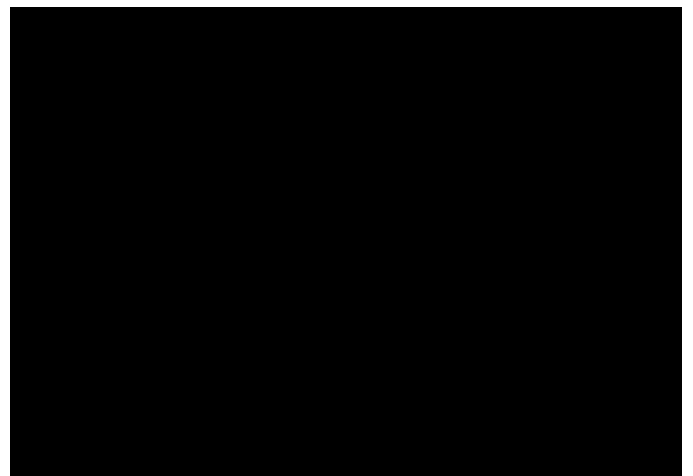


Figure 452: Shows www.beastiality.com

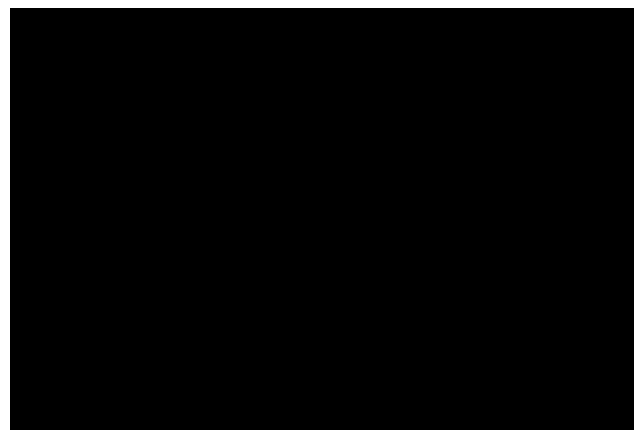


Figure 43: Shows additional links to porn sites popped up once bestiality.com was accessed.

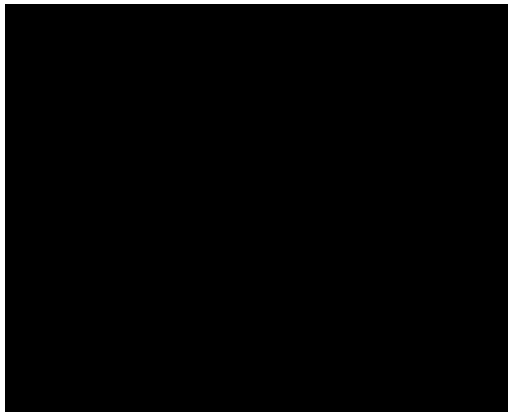


Figure 44: Shows free bestiality sites

Necrophilia

Necrophilia refers to the obsessive fascination with death and corpses or an erotic attraction to or sexual contact with corpses. In Figure 9 it is evident that snuff movies are being advertised, however, the site also claims that none of the links afford access to images of real people.

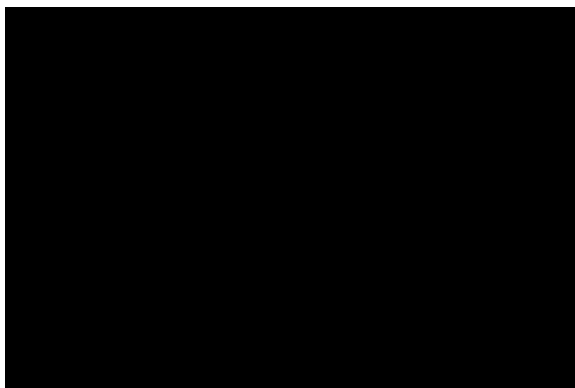


Figure 45: Shows a Snuff top 100 list

The front page of the site entitled stolen souls is visible in Figure 45. The site claims to be a virtual reality of humiliation and pain, unbelievable stories and high quality photo material. There is a

member's area, but there are also links to preview material.

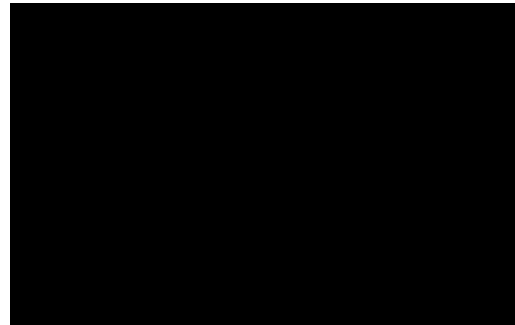


Figure 46: Shows Stolen souls site

The welcome note on the site featured in Figure 46 is as follows:

Welcome to The biggest forced sex fantasy pay sites portal! We place only best from the best sites here sorting by our customers by voting and desire letters. So, if you are really brutal scenes fanatic when this collection is for you!

The site also contains links to incest porn sites, bestiality sites, fetishes, straight, gay, other and rape porn sites.

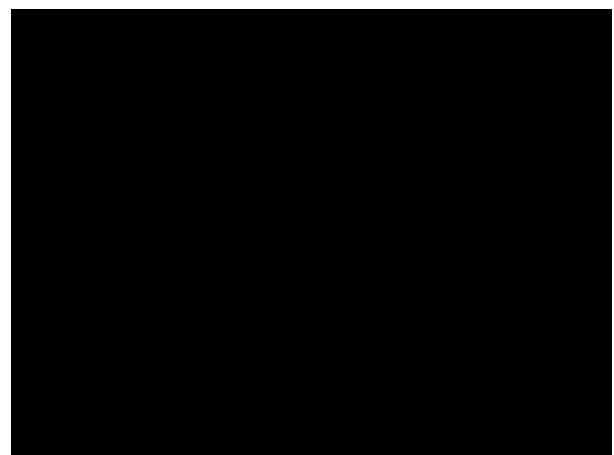


Figure 47: Shows rape site

Definition of Fetishism

Fetishism is a paraphilia in which erotic interest and satisfaction are centred on an inanimate object or a specific, non-genital part of the anatomy. Generally occurring in males, fetishism frequently centres on a garment (e.g., underclothing or high-heeled shoes) or such parts of the body as the foot. In some cases, fetishism becomes severe enough to inspire the fetishist to acquire objects of his desire through theft or assault. Although the causes of fetishism are not clearly known, it is generally not considered a serious disorder, unless it is coupled with other psychological disturbances.

Exploring the parameters of this issue

The ability to access pornography through fixed-line and mobile networks has created new concerns over how to ensure age-appropriate access given the difficulties of monitoring children and young people's internet use and the wide variety of different genres of pornography and interactive services available. These concerns have led to the development of a number of content labelling and filtering systems which can be utilised by the fixed or mobile network operators or parents on their home PC to monitor the online behaviour of children, and prevent access to certain sites based on lists of prohibited words in sites.

Research findings

According to Barak and Fisher (2001) growth in access to sexually explicit material via the internet challenges social

science to conceptualise antecedents and consequences of experience with such content.

One view, based upon relevant theory and research (e.g., Bogaert, 2001; Eysenck, 1978; Malamuth, 1989; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000; Mosher, 1980; Rimm, 1995; Snyder & Ickes, 1985), suggests that antisocial personality characteristics encourages some individuals to seek out deviant sexually explicit materials from among those available on the Internet.

The "goodness of fit" of antisocial personality characteristics with antisocial sexual content will likely lead to a deep level of involvement with deviant antisocial sexual stimuli. Individuals may lose awareness of the constraints of reality regarding enactment of antisocial sexual behaviour (Bogaert, 2001). Therefore, uniquely strong negative effects of antisocial and deviant sexual content on the Internet may be seen among those predisposed to access such material.

At present, there is a lack of research exploring the psychological effects of repeatedly viewing different or specific types, and increasingly deviant forms of pornography. Research findings examining the effects of exposure to pornography on adults suggest that brief exposure to violent forms of pornography can lead to anti-social attitudes and behaviour (Donnerstein, 1980). Research findings suggest that male viewers tend to be more aggressive towards women, less responsive to pain and suffering of rape

victims, and more willing to accept various myths about rape (Donnerstein, 1980; Zillman and Bryant, 1982). The findings of Zillman and Bryant's research also suggested that massive exposure to pornography encourages a desire for increasingly deviant materials which involve violence like sadomasochism and rape.

Preferences for types of pornography

To date studies have focused on exploring inter-group differences and similarities in use of, and response to, different types of pornography. Traditionally, typical studies have involved either incarcerated offenders or university students. For obvious ethical reasons, it is not possible to conduct research on children and young people about exposure to, consumption and creation of pornography. It is unclear whether sexual preference or predispositions to seek particular material are important aspects of the viewing patterns of children and young people. The pathways through which a child or young person becomes involved with pornography may be more complex than that of adults given the ability to access a full array of sexually explicit material, coupled with the altered status of children and young peoples' relationship with pornography. New technologies allow a move beyond simple consumption of pornography to interaction and production of material. The opportunity to engage in conversations of a sexual nature and to view, create, discuss, and disseminate

peer aged pornography raises a number of important regulatory, educational and child safety issues.

Use of pornography as a mechanism lower victims' inhibitions

In addition to the potential for young people to produce pornography, research suggests that some adults with a sexual interest in children use sexual materials to try to desensitise potential victims (Tyler and Stone, 1985). Children may be shown images of child or adult pornography as a means to lower a child's inhibitions and to convince them that sex between an adult and child is 'normal'. This may also aim to convince a child that such interactions are not painful as 'evidenced' by the fact that typically children depicted in child abuse images have smiling or neutral expressions (O'Connell, 2000). According to Silbert and Pines (1984), pornography can be used by an offender in the presence of the victim, prior to the offence in order to arouse themselves sexually, or after an offence as a means to justify their actions. Furthermore, in the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (1986), published excerpts from victims' testimony clearly showing that many of them had reason to believe that pornography played a role in the offenders' pre-offence preparation or was used in the actual offence. In recent cases in the UK involving online grooming, the use of pornography in this way has been documented in a number of cases.

Pornography as justification

In addition, the indirect evidence obtained in the Silbert and Pines (1984) study suggests that in a large proportion of cases sex offender's deviant actions were justified, at least in his mind, by the pornography he consumed.

Caveats

According to Hollins and Howells (1991) *'even in non-offender populations, the pre-existing socio-cultural attitudes of the subject have an important influence on the effects of exposure to pornography'*. Marshall (1988) also found that sex offenders report a greater willingness to procure pornographic material for themselves in adolescence than the non-offender comparison group. This suggests that it is not exposure to pornography *per se* that has an influence upon the incidence of sexual crime, but rather the nature of the person exposed to particular types of content and the existing cultural milieu in which that exposure occurs. Check and Gullion (1989) found that "men who are predisposed to aggression are particularly vulnerable to negative influences from pornography". Marshall and Fernandez, (2000) state that it is possible to:

"infer from the available literature that pornography exposure may influence 'the development of sexual offending in some men'".

Individuals who have experienced childhood development of vulnerability that leads to a variety of problems including "a greater focus on sex, and the need to control events during sex." However, Marshall and Fernandez (2000) caution against ascribing a direct causal link between viewing pornography and other forms of sexual offending. It would appear that viewing pornography may accelerate a process already underway or may further justify an established set of antisocial beliefs. However, as many men who use pornography do not sexually assault others, further research focusing on the context and meaning of pornography for each individual, along with an assessment of other dynamic factors associated with sexual offence behaviours is required.

Regulatory implications

According to Davis⁴² (1996) Exposure to material that contains sexist or violent depictions can promote undesirable attitudes and behaviours. Increased censorship, however, will not be effective in addressing the problems, for three reasons. Firstly, censorship is most often directed toward only the most sexually explicit material, leaving the much more problematic sexist and violent content of R-rated material untouched. Secondly, censorship would not end sexual exploitation or violence. The roots of those

⁴² Davis, C. M. (1996) What Sexual Scientists Know... : About Pornography: a Brochure produced by The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality http://www.sexscience.org/publications/index.php?category_id=440&subcategory_id=336

behaviours are far deeper in the culture. Sexist, sexually explicit material is more a symptom than a cause of female subordination and sexual violence. Finally, restrictions beyond the existing obscenity laws and protection for minors would create numerous other problems in a free, democratic society (Davis, 1996).

The regulation of sexually explicit content falls under the regulatory remit of the general provisions of European Audio-Visual policy, the e-commerce Directive, and the legislation relating to combating illegal and harmful content on the Internet. ISPs are required to filter or remove illegal material, such as child and other illegal forms of violent pornography using the Notification and Takedown procedures and hotlines provided under these policies.

However, as was previously argued in relation to combating racist and discriminatory content and communications, the success of such procedures relies on the recognition and reporting of inappropriate content and services. The key role for media literacy and the development of source evaluation skills for parents, educators and young people discussed in the previous section of the taxonomy has equal relevance to this content category. However, developing educational initiatives for this category are particularly difficult given cultural variations in attitudes towards representations of nudity, sex and pornography across European member states, and the need to expose consumers to this content in order to educate them

about recognition and reporting mechanisms.

There is a lack of research examining the potential psychological long-term effects of repeatedly viewing different or specific types, or increasingly deviant, forms of pornography. This is particularly salient when considering risk of harm to children and young people. Research in this area is particularly difficult due the ethical limitations on involving children in any such research. However, the processes of reception and meaning making which surround exposure to such content are an important consideration for future theoretical and empirical research.

Use of computers and the internet in sex education

A number of researchers and educators have advocated the use of Internet-based educational interventions for sex education purposes (Barak & King, 2000; Barak & Safir, 1997; Cooper, 1998; Cooper et al., 2000; Cooper & Sportolari, 1997; Gotlib & Fagan, 1997; Harry & Snobl, 1998; Khalib, 2000; Lunin, Krizanskaya, Melikhova, Light, & Brandt-Sorheim, 1997; Roffman, Shannon, & Dwyer, 1997). Others (Cooper, Scherer, Boies, & Gordon, 1999; Fisher & Barak, 2000) have noted that due to the current paucity of Internet-based sex education websites, it is actually pornographic websites and online sex shops that provide the bulk of Internet-

based "sex education" at present. There are a number of issues that need to be examined in greater depth.

CHAPTER 8.

PRO ANOREXIA, PRO BULIMIA, SELF INJURY AND SUICIDE FORUMS

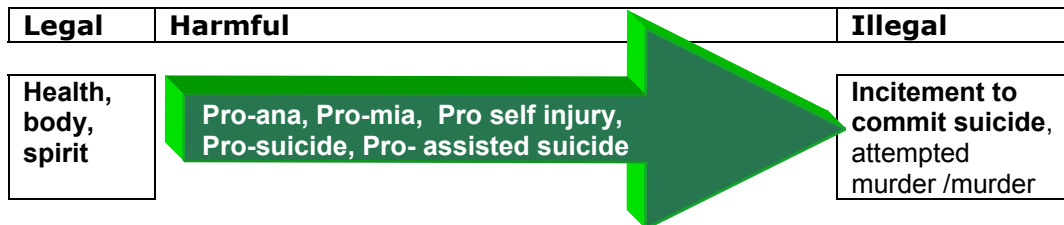


Table30: shows hypothetical continuum C

Pro Anorexia (Pro Ana) and Pro Bulimia (Pro Mia) are online movements utilising websites, chat rooms and message boards that support anorexia and bulimia. Research findings suggest that Pro Anorexia and Bulimia sites are typically created by women and girls suffering from eating disorders that are looking for support (Taylor, 2004). Unlike websites designed to help remove bulimic and anorexic tendencies, Pro Ana and Mia websites are created to help support anorexia, bulimia and negative body image. These websites typically contain online journals, tips and tricks for successful anorexia or bulimia, pictures of thin women, quotations, and chat rooms or message boards where users can communicate.

The media brought Pro Ana and Mia sites to the attention of the general public in 2001. In response to the reaction of the public and healthcare professionals, there was a petition to the ISPs whose servers

hosted these sites to have them removed. In July 2001, Yahoo determined that Pro anorexia websites violated their user agreement and removed the content. It is very interesting to consider this decision in the light of the recent proliferation of first person based accounts in the media about how online communities have helped individuals to overcome, e.g., anorexia or self harming behaviours.

Prevalence of Pro-Ana and Pro-Mia forums

Typing anorexia or bulimia into an Internet search engine will typically provide results which consist of help, information and support for people who are suffering from, or know someone who is suffering from, an eating disorder. Typing in "pro-anorexia", or "pro-ana/pro-mia", results in a very different set of results. Figure 46 shows 6,360,000 hits for pro-ana.



Figure 46: Shows Google results using search term Pro Ana

The scale of this issue is demonstrated by Figure 47 which details the total number of visits to a single online community entitled Pro-Ana-Suicide-Society - 22,838,625.; average daily visits 25,076; and average daily posts, i.e., 1012. These sites seek to reinforce and legitimise eating disordered behaviours and reconstruct them as the fight of a minority to be heard.

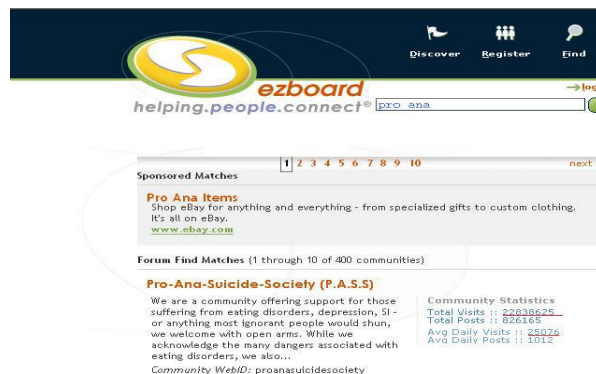


Figure 47: Shows the total number of visits to Pro-Ana-Suicide-Society and the average daily visits.

Figure 48 shows a number of pictures of different famous models, including Jemima Kidd and Kate Moss. These pictures of

models were taken from various Pro Ana sites and web rings, where these sorts of images can be used to illustrate the ideal body, an ideal Ana goddess, or as an image that a particular individual aspires to achieve.

Figure 49 contains examples of images posted by Pro Ana site users so that they can share with others images which detail either their success or failure to attain a specific weight, to get feedback and encouragement from other users, and/or to keep each other informed of each others progress in adhering to the Pro Ana way of life.

The following paragraphs briefly explore recent research examining Pro Ana and Pro Mia forums. The term forum used here denotes webrings, websites, blogs, groups and IRC chat. Pro Ana forums highlight the complexity that arises from the coupling of 'harmful content' with community building and social networking tools. This combination transforms young peoples' relationship with content into an online and interactive set of behaviours. Therefore, young people are not only exposed to specific content categories, but also the inclusive community building aspects of an ideologically based minority group.



Figure 48: Shows pictures of models posted on Pro Ana websites

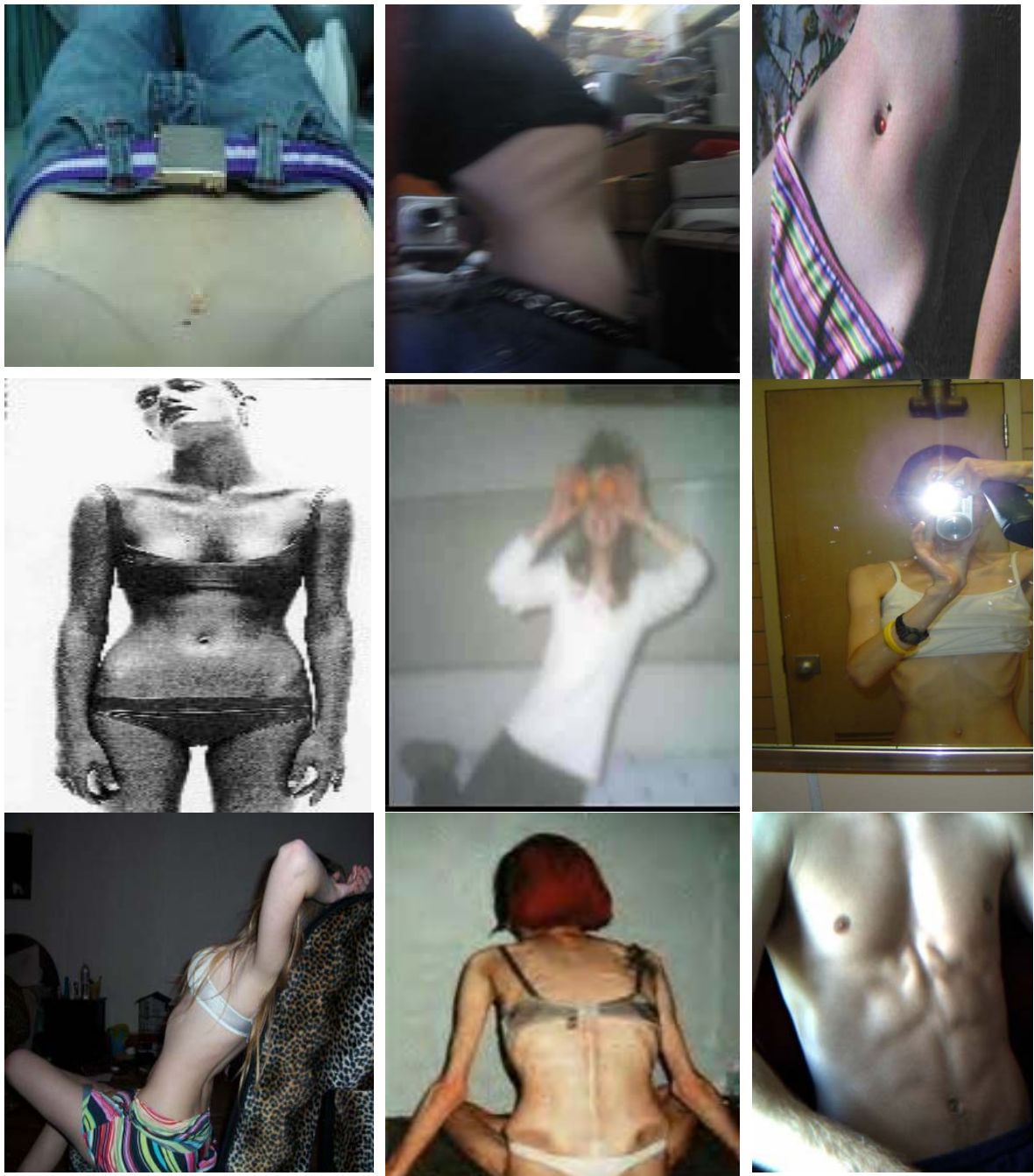


Figure 49: Examples of images shared by users on Pro Ana sites

Ideologically based harm and incitement are the primary risks associated with Pro Ana and Pro Mia websites and communities. These community level activities serve to make routine, reinforce, sanitise and legitimatise young peoples' eating disorders. These may be more relevant in terms of maintaining a particular eating disorder, and thereby pose an increased risk of harm. Such processes may also interfere with treatment programs and recovery motivations.

There are also the associated risks to physical health associated with reinforcement and legitimisation, as well as using information on methods for reducing body weight and maintaining low weight, which have potentially serious health risks and could ultimately end in and death.

Ideological position

Chesley⁴³, Klein and Kreipe, (2003) have examined the seriousness of the perceived risk, from these Pro Ana and Pro Mia websites. The research team examined Pro Ana, pro-recovery, and professional websites associated with anorexia. Within this context they summarized information from 100 Pro Ana websites and found they typically provided:

- (1) instruction for initiating and maintaining anorexia,
- (2) prescribed practices for rapid weight loss,
- (3) competitions for weight loss,
- (4) methods to avoid detection, and
- (5) motivational images and creeds to inspire commitment to weight loss.

The following Thin Commandments can be found on a number of Pro-ana sites which reiterate Chesley⁴⁴, Klein and Kreipe's findings.

Thin Commandments

- If you are not thin you are not attractive.
- Being thin is more important than being healthy.
- You must buy clothes, cut your hair, take laxatives, starve yourself, and do anything to make yourself look thinner.
- Thou shall not eat without feeling guilty.
- Thou shall not eat fattening foods without punishing oneself afterwards.
- Thou shall count calories and restrict intake accordingly.
- What the scale says is the most important thing.

⁴³ Chesley, E. B., Klein, J. D., and Kreipe, R. E. (2003) "Pro or con? Anorexia nervosa and the internet" Div. of Adolescent Medicine, Univ. of Rochester School of Medicine, Rochester, N. Y.

⁴⁴ Chesley, E. B., Klein, J. D., and Kreipe, R. E. (2003, paper to be presented) "Pro or con? Anorexia nervosa and the internet" Div. of Adolescent Medicine, Univ. of Rochester School of Medicine, Rochester, N. Y.

- Losing weight is good/ Gaining weight is bad.
- You can never be too thin.

Being thin and not eating are true signs of will power and success.

According to Chesley⁴⁵, Klein and Kreipe, (2003) the average age of visitors to the 100 selected sites they examined was 16.7 years, and the highest number of counted visits to a site was 94,869. Paediatrician Vincent Iannelli⁴⁶ (2004) suggests that most eating disorders begin in the teen years (76% between age 11-20 and 10% in children less than 10 years of age).

The lingo associated with Pro-ana sites is often explained on particular sites. The following glossary of terms was found on http://www.freewebs.com/slender_state/lingo.htm

Ana- Someone practicing anorexia / Anorexia/
The Goddess of Ana /The spirit of Anorexia /can refer to anorexic voice in head

Anorexic Nation-Believed to be the First Pro-Ana site ever

Betty-someone who has bedside eating disorder/bedside eating disorder/Spirit of Bedside eating disorder/Goddess of bedside eating disorder

⁴⁵ Chesley, E. B., Klein, J. D., and Kreipe, R. E. (2003) "Pro or con? Anorexia nervosa and the internet" Div. of Adolescent Medicine, Univ. of Rochester School of Medicine, Rochester, N. Y.

⁴⁶ <http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/conditions/a/eatingdisorders.htm>

Chloe-Compulsive over eater/ Compulsive Over eating disorder/The Goddess of COE/The Spirit of COE

Eddie- Eating Disorders in general, Includes compulsive over eating, and anorexia, and bulimia

Edna- ED-NOS (Eating Disorder not classified)

Mia-Bumic/Bulimia/The Goddess of Bulimia. The spirit of bulimia/can refer to bulimic voice in head

Rexi/Rexie/Rex/T-Rex/Rexy-anorexic, or anorexia, usually pro, but tends to be a slang and I have found it can be very mainstream

Sissy-Self-injurer/Self-Injury/Self-mutilation/Cutting/Spirit of/Goddess of

Thinspiration- Pictures of models, or emaciated women or men, to inspire starvation and dieting

Triggers- Close to the same as thinspiration, triggers as in like your anorexia "Gun" and what shoot you off, what causes you to not eat.

The following excerpt provides an example of the types of information and insights accessible on an individual's Pro Ana site.

Case study:
I am sick. I know that. But this sickness is different from any other illness. No one with cancer or the flu says, "Hmm, I COULD get better, but, nah, I like cancer/flu too much". I wish I was normal. I wish I could eat like other people. But surrounded by chaos, all I have is this. I can't rely on people, people change, people move, people lie. I can't rely on family, or friends, they're people. I can't rely on my self either, damnit. But I always know that I can rely on my Eddie. I know that she's always there. I can rely on that. Even if they force feed me, I know that inside I could, by myself, not eat.

I write this, because I know someone will stumble onto this site and start to think of Ana and Mia and Eddies, as 'diets'. No, go to Weight Watchers. This isn't a diet. This is life. This is being sick until you die. Slow suicide.

Research findings and anecdotal evidence from clinical psychiatrists suggest that an individuals level of involvement with Pro Ana sites, coupled with factors particular to the individual such as levels of motivation for recovery are important factors in relation to recovery. According to Wilson (2004), lack of motivation for recovery is commonly associated with seeing the eating disorder as beneficial to quality of life. A young person clinging to an eating disorder who genuinely doesn't want to change presents a challenge to healthcare professionals and family. It is difficult, at best, to treat an adolescent or young adult who persists in not sharing goals for recovery.

Serpell and Treasure⁴⁷ (2002) found that people with bulimia were more likely to present cons to being eating disordered than those with anorexia. Some common reasons cited to stay eating disordered included avoiding and managing emotions, getting pleasure out of eating while staying slim, filling time and avoiding boredom.

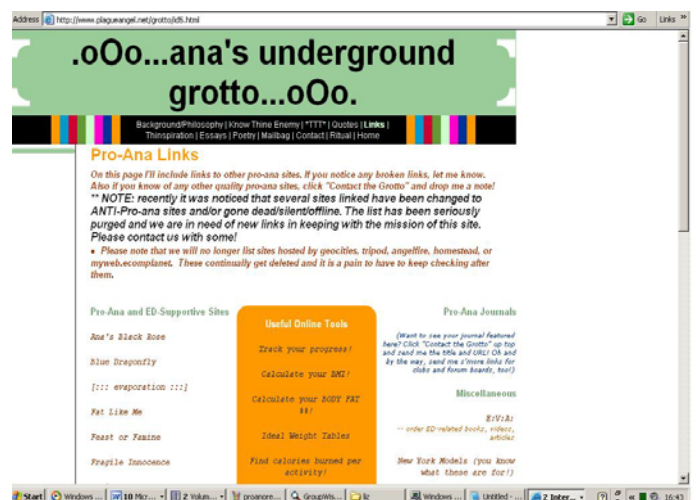
According to Fairburn⁴⁸ (1995) one theme of treatment focused on enhancing

⁴⁷ Serpell, L. and Treasure, J. (2002) "Bulimia nervosa: Friend or Foe? The pros and cons of bulimia nervosa." *The International Journal of Eating Disorders*. 32:2, 164-170.

⁴⁸ Fairburn, C., (1995) *Overcoming Binge Eating*,

motivation for recovery is helping sufferers see more cons and fewer pros to disordered eating. According to Wilson⁴⁹ (2004) another key issue for recovery is having the skills to effect change, even if the desire to change is there. Seeing more pros than cons to eating disorders is a central and consistent theme on Pro Ana and Pro Mia sites, which suggest that these sites may play a role in the maintenance of eating disorders.

Figure 50: Shows a Pro-ana site with links to other Pro-ana sites



Regulatory implications

“Censorship of pro-ana sites is inappropriate and ineffective. Perhaps a true challenge would be to explode the myth that dietary restrictions are the only fair measure of a person’s capacity for self-control. If we continue to equate fat with laziness, and thinness with

⁴⁹ Wilson, B. *Eating Disorders: Motivation to Recover*. Department of Family and Consumer Sciences http://www.harding.edu/FCS/issue_eatingDis.html

strength and morality, even subconsciously, the pro-ana movement cannot be blamed for effectively taking this to its logical conclusion.” Taylor (2002)

Challenging society may be an admirable long-term objective, but the availability of such sites raise a number of important issues for people tasked with helping adolescents to deal with eating disorders.

In Canada one response to the British Medical Councils warning that the media obsession with thin women was one of the main causes of eating disorders reaching a record level, was to limit the appearance of anorexic models on the pages of women's magazines under a voluntary code agreed by editors.

The proposed scheme would involve "monitoring images" and "using models who varied in shape and size". A self-regulatory body made up of editors, stylists, photographers and women who would check the contents of fashion pages, is also likely to be created.

- As was outlined earlier in this chapter certain ICP and ISP's have removed such content, claiming that it contravenes their acceptable use policy. However, an issue which requires further consideration is who should be responsible for deciding to censor such sites, and the limitations of such actions in the context of

human rights and freedom of expression legislation.

- Is there scope within existing regulatory policies providing for hotlines and NTD to cover such sites and content? There are also imitations in monitoring and removal of such sites given the potential use of P2P and IRC for sharing of information and legitimisation of beliefs.
- Are there possibilities for the treatment, counselling and therapeutic interventions for those involved in producing and distributing content within this category as well as those accessing it? Consideration of whether and how this would be managed is required. Could producers and users be traced and engaged? What are the potential conflicts with privacy, human rights and freedom of expression?
- In order to counter the potential ideological risk of harm associated with access to Pro Ana and Pro Mia sites, general educational strategies about eating disorders, and the need to seek multiple information sources, are required for children and young people. This includes educational initiatives which address the existence of Pro Ana and Pro Mia

websites, newsgroups for educators and parents. Such educational strategies should also focus on valuing body image and building critical awareness of the lack of reality associated with the majority of media images of the body.

- Such initiatives would form part of a movement towards cultural change in issues surrounding, eating disorders and body image as embodied by government and advertising media industry moves to monitor the body image and representativeness of models in advertising and the media.

Cyber-suicide and self-harm sites

19 year old Brandon Vedas set up a webcam in his bedroom and filmed himself taking a lethal cocktail of drugs. The depressed 19-year-old fell unconscious and died in bed after onlookers watching the event over the Internet told him: "Eat more." His last legible phrase was: "I told u I was hardcore." A transcript of the event shows him detailing each drug he took, his messages becoming more illegible. While some users tried to help him, others cruelly encouraged him. When Brandon finally stopped moving, the chat room erupted into panic. Brandon's family made the discovery a week later that the world had witnessed his suicide, as Brandon's computer had automatically shut down after his death.

Cyber suicide related forums can encompass a range of online activity, including -information sources about religious, ethical or broader cultural aspects of suicide. In addition, a range of technical resources, including guides about using and obtaining poisons or other tools for *felo-de-se*⁵⁰ their availability, estimated time of death, and degrees of certainty, along with online content that provides psychological guidance, dedicated suicide related chat rooms co-

⁵⁰ *Felo de se*, Latin for "felon of himself," is an archaic legal term meaning suicide. In early English common law, an adult who committed suicide was literally a felon, and the crime was punishable by forfeiture of property to the king and what was considered a shameful burial. A child or mentally incompetent person, however, who killed him- or herself was not considered a *felo de se* and was not punished post-mortem for his or her actions. The term is not commonly used in modern legal practice.

exists online. A number of sites discuss suicide methods, e.g., guns, overdosing, slashing one's wrists, and hanging as the "best methods to commit suicide". Other sites illustrate various methods—lethal doses of poison.



Figure 51 Shows site that contains details stories of Gay teen suicides.

It was noted in the ONS analysis (Children and Adolescents who Try to Harm, Hurt or Kill Themselves, 1999) that one in thirty girls between the ages of 13 and 15 falls into the suicide and self-harming category. Self-harm and suicide occurs across the teenage years, and it should be a cause for grave concern that in the 13- 15 year age group there will be one girl in every 30 who will be seriously at risk. According to Becker and Schmidt⁵¹ (2005) many youth in conflict are reaching out to the Internet for virtual support and guidance. Furthermore, the impact of suicide stories on subsequent completed suicides appears to be greatest among adolescents

⁵¹ When Kids Seek Help On-Line: Internet Chat Rooms and Suicide. Journal article by Katja Becker, Martin H. Schmidt; *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, Vol. 13, 2005

(Schmidtke & Schaller, 2000). It is unclear at this stage what the effects of repeated exposure to user generated online suicide sites might be. Particularly those that encourage user participation and where there are clear structures and social organisation in a persistent, cooperative online suicide or self harm environment.

From one perspective, research studies exploring suicide clusters and media impact suggest support for the existence of suicide contagion, i.e., suicide increases proportionally to the amount, duration, and prominence of media coverage. Imitation effects depend on the model's characteristics and the extent of behaviour reinforcement. The recommendations emerging from this sort of research suggest that mental health care providers should counsel patients about alternatives to surfing the Web at times of crisis. Help may be available by calling crisis lines, clinicians, friends, or family members.

However, it is important to remember that, for example, Chat rooms enable anonymous discussion of a taboo topic at any time and that some people might experience relief from suicidal ideation, having shared their feelings and thoughts with others online.

Furthermore, suicide sites can contain links to help organizations offering e-mail contact to those seeking help, which is a low-threshold, informal way to contact therapists (Becker and Schmidt, 2005). In addition, media counselling and guidelines for editors can help minimize imitative suicides (AACAP, 2001).

However, more extreme suicide chat forums, adopt the position that suicide is a deliberate decision. Typically, members of these forums postulate an anti-psychiatric attitude and can give clear instructions on e.g., suicide methods.

In the media, there has been a focus upon the risk of harm associated with these sites and in particular, the risks that suicidal adolescents might risk losing their doubts and fears about committing suicide as a result of viewing content or interacting with others in a suicide forum. Additional risk factors include peer pressure to commit suicide or to make appointments for joint suicides.

Some critics have argued that information should not be available online, as online access supposedly lacks the safeguards provided by retailers, librarians or other intermediaries' encountered offline. That has been characterised as essentially an argument against ease of access: the same information (accurate or otherwise) is available offline in bookstores, libraries, newspapers and biopics about pop figures.



Figure 52: Shows Amazon site selling books on topics such as suicide methods

Werther effect

In 1974 Phillips coined the expression "Werther effect" to describe the imitation of suicides presented in the media (referring to the 1774 novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by J. W. Goethe, blamed at the time for the many young male suicides like the protagonist Werther). More recently, single case reports about "cyber suicides" have been published (Alao et al., 1999; Baume et al., 1997). Commentators suggest that the Internet may have a more direct influence than the print media on the Werther effect (Baume et al., 1997), but currently, there is insufficient evidence to support such a hypothesis.

Furthermore, some chat rooms celebrate chatters who have committed suicide. The concern here in relation to perceived risk of harm relates to imitational learning which depends on factors of the model, i.e., person who has committed suicide and the reaction of the environment. The virtual community ignores factors such as gender, age, and race, and chat partners can be fantasized as ideal models, thus enhancing imitational learning.

To test the interactive Werther effect hypothesis, more research is essential.

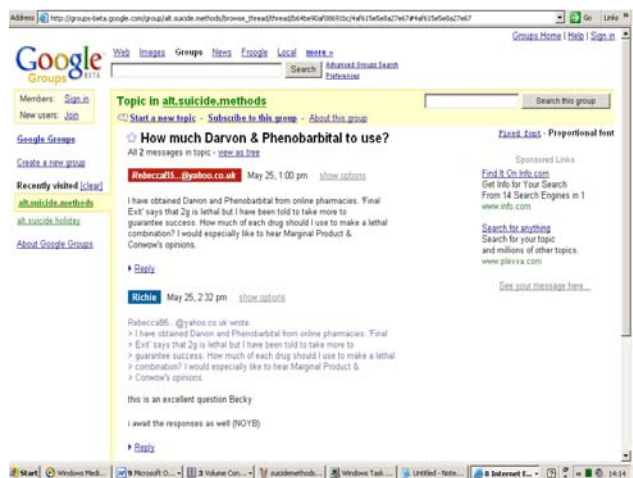


Figure 53: Shows a newsgroup which provides details of the amount of Davron and Phenobarbital to use to commit suicide

There is also a school of thought exemplified by Becker, and Schmidt (2005), which posits that Internet use diminishes other modes of communications and heightens social withdrawal, causing a rise in psychopathological characteristics. However, whilst this hypothesis may have some validity for a proportion of users given the increasing convergence of technologies plus increased access to the Internet via mobile phones this assumption seems tenuous in the context of online landscapes characterised by social networking and participation.

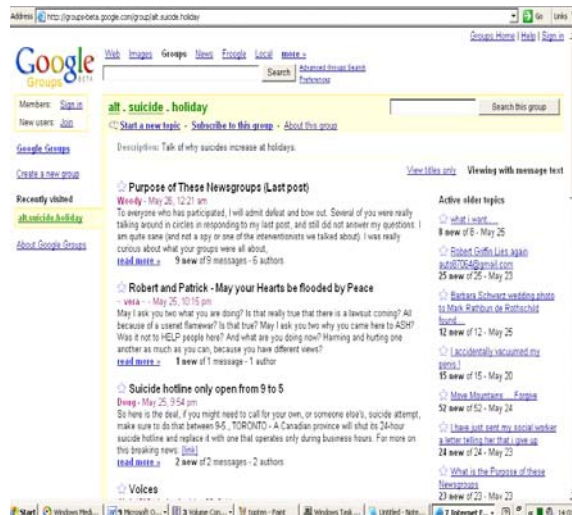


Figure 54: Shows the popular alt.suicide.holiday newsgroup



Figure 55: Shows a site which offers a guide and a discussion on the topic of how to commit suicide.

The World Health Organization estimates that around one million people die from suicide each year (one death every 40 seconds), with a global mortality rate of 16 per 100,000. The WHO claims that suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide over the past 45 years, arguably a reflection of both affluence and of the weakening of taboos against reporting attempted/completed suicide.

Ambivalence, an often-precarious balance between a chosen life and a chosen death, which is considered common to suicidal attitude, may tip in the direction of death in response to suicide chat rooms. Though a cyber suicide or interactive Werther effect is still only speculative, practical implications should be discussed. In the following paragraphs 3 case studies are presented the first two are cited as support for the Werther effect and the third provides a number of fascinating details about a recent incident in the UK involving a 14 boy convincing another adolescent to stab him.

Case study 1

Adekola Yolles, and Armenta, Syracuse (1999)⁵² used two case studies to illustrate the danger of having access to information by means of the Internet. Such information may prove detrimental to vulnerable psychiatric patients.

Mr. A, a 16 Year old African American adolescent, appeared at the emergency room after attempting suicide. He has no psychiatric history but had borderline mental retardation (IQ=80). He had ingested castor oil beans (from the plant *Ricinus communis*). After ingesting two beans, he confessed to his mother, who brought him to the emergency room. His suicidal ideas followed a worsening of his

⁵² Adekola O. Alao, M.D., Jennifer C. Yolles, M.D., And Wendy Armenta, M.D. Syracuse, N.Y. (1999) Cybersuicide: The Internet and Suicide American Journal of Psychiatry 156:1836-1837, 1999

academic performance, which also led to his being subjected to ridicule by his peers. Mr. A's education involved using the computer, and he had regular access to the Internet. He got the idea for suicide from Web sites, although he refused to disclose them. He subsequently made an uneventful recovery.

Case study 2:

Ms. B, a 34 old year woman with borderline personality disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder, had a history of several suicide attempts by wrist laceration and overdosing resulting in multiple hospitalizations. On this occasion, she attempted suicide by drinking several litres of water. She got the idea from the Internet, as a less painful and more convenient method of committing suicide. Ms. B did not divulge the Web site address but acknowledged that information about suicide is readily available on the Internet. She was hospitalized for observation and recovered without complications.

Case study 3

In May 2004 in the UK it emerged that a 14 year old boy had arranged his stabbing via internet. The boy - who is now 15 and can be referred to only as John for legal reasons - persuaded his friend, known as Mark, now 17, to stab him to death in order to pass a fictitious test for the British secret services in a meticulously planned attack one evening last year. John, from Greater Manchester, pleaded guilty at Manchester Crown Court to incitement to murder and perverting the course of

justice. He was given a three-year supervision order, banned from contacting Mark or using the internet without strict adult supervision. Mark, also from Greater Manchester, was given a two-year supervision order for attempted murder. John fooled Mark into believing he was working for the British secret services. Mark was expecting to meet Prime Minister Tony Blair and be given a gun and up to £500,000 in cash. At first, the police thought the attack was committed by an adult robber described in precise details by Mark. But when officers examined CCTV footage they realised the story was implausible. It showed Mark and John had disappeared down the alleyway - alone - for 25 minutes. In July 2003, Mark was charged with attempted murder. But when it emerged that the boys had met through a teenage chat room, detectives examined their computers and discovered several fictional characters all leading back to John. Detective Chief Inspector Julian Ross, of Greater Manchester police, said: "The older boy thought he was talking to five or six different people when he was in fact talking to the younger boy all along."

Statistics and sensationalism

Currently there is a paucity of detailed and rigorous studies exploring the interrelated factors that underpin cyber suicide and online self harm support groups. There have been a handful of academic papers, most - discussed briefly above - drawing on tiny populations and offering little evidence regarding causation.

Detailed figures about use of suicide sites and fora such as the Alt.Suicide.Holiday (ASH) Usenet group are not available. Has access to the net - and to chat rooms or 'exit' sites - resulted in significant increases in the number of attempted and completed suicides?

Rigorous large-scale information about suicide sites is still lacking in most European countries. Clearly, there is a need for programmes of research designed to explore these topics in greater depth.

Regulation

Suicide has traditionally been illegal in many western countries. But with the rise of secularism and doubts about the success of a criminal deterrent, the prohibition of suicide has been lifted in many, for example, the United Kingdom decriminalised suicide in 1961.

In Australia, for example, the government plan to ban websites promoting suicide and is working toward introduce large fines for people who promote suicide on the Internet.<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200503/s1319012.htm> Under new legislation introduced in March 2005, corporations can be fined up to \$500,000 and individuals \$100,000 if they use the Internet to incite or promote suicide methods.

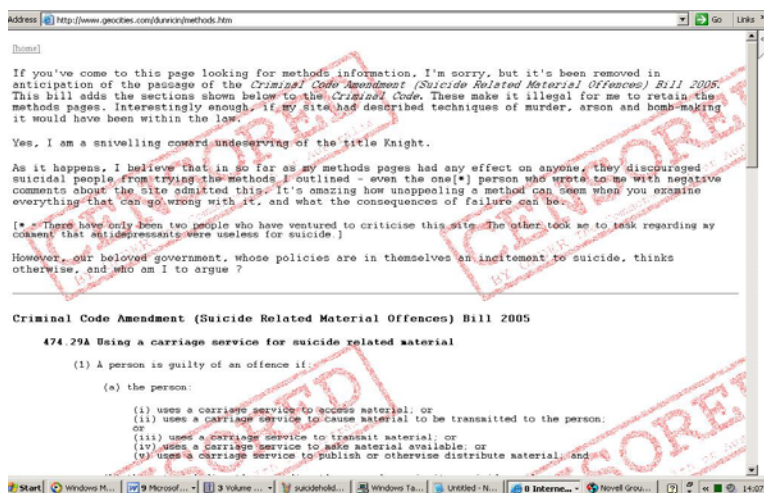
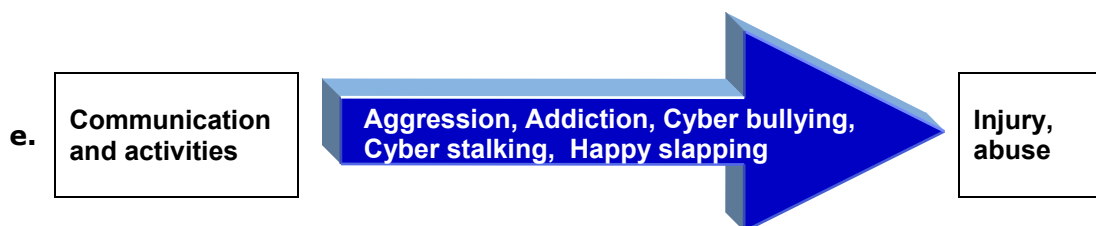


Figure 56: Shows a suicide sites response to the recent changes in legislation in Australia to the Criminal Code Amendment (Suicide Related Material Offences) Bill, which criminalises the publication of information about for example suicide methods.

Constraints on attempted/completed suicide, on its discussion and its 'promotion' or 'facilitation' vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Contemporary legislation about suicide sites/rooms varies considerably, reflecting community perceptions about the responsibilities of the state, emphases on free speech and the impact of particular campaigns that have sought to address concerns about online access to suicide forums. That legislation is necessarily territory-based and accordingly is challenged by the global nature of the net. It is unclear whether any sites/rooms have sought to evade restrictions by moving to a friendlier jurisdiction. Some appear to have relied on a low profile, on the defence that

information online is readily available
offline or that information is offered in the
spirit of scholarship or even entertainment.

CYBERBULLYING, CYBERSTALKING, HAPPY SLAPPING



Online relationships have become part of adolescent culture (Wolak, Mitchell and Finkelhor, 2003). This chapter provides an introduction to a range of abusive behaviours that young people may encounter online, including cyber bullying, cyber stalking, abusive cyber sex and online grooming. A number of these activities are punishable under specific pieces of legislation across Europe. It is important to highlight that children and young people may not only fall victim to these harmful behaviours but they may also be involved in initiating, maintaining or perpetrating crimes against other children, young people, adults and /or organisations.

A number of legal definitions of these particular deviant online behaviours have been developed, for example, UK's Protection From Harassment Act 1997 and most recently within the UK, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Arguably, our understanding of these topics would be increased if they are discussed within the context of 'risk of harm' online and related offline activities. In particular, research designed to explore the cognitive and behavioural repertoires underpinning these specific 'risk of harm' online and

related offline activities would help to shed some light on these issues.

Currently, there is a shortage of programmes of education that defines, explains and provides advice in relation abusive online activities in a way that is accessible both to young people and also to those who are responsible for children and young peoples' well-being, including parents, carers and teachers see-www.websafecrackers.com. It is also vitally important that those in a position to mediate these activities, for example chat room moderators and policy makers interested in addressing abusive online behaviours, have clear insights into not only the nature of abusive online activities, but crucially possible proactive and reactive strategies.

It is proposed, that some discussion needs to take place to explore the steps that can be taken by a young person to minimise their risk of falling victim to and / or of perpetrating these abusive behaviours.

There is evidence from a number of sources that children and young people encounter and engage in abusive online behaviours. The Cyberspace Research Unit (CRU) (O'Connell, et. al. 2002) in a study entitled 'Young people's use of chat

rooms: implications for policy strategies and programmes of education' found that 20% of 1369 children aged 9-16 years of age reported that they had been harassed in a chat room and slightly less, 14%, admitted they had themselves harassed another chat user. This study was replicated late in 2002 using a sample of children aged 8-11 years of age, and the findings were consistent, i.e., of 1331 children, 21% reported having been harassed and 14% of respondents reported they had themselves harassed another chat user. Similarly, the findings of a repeat study conducted again in late 2003, again with an 8-11 year old sample involving 330 children, found that 18% had experienced harassment, and 18%, of respondents reported they had themselves harassed another chat user.

Finkelhor et al's (2000) study identified a higher proportion of young people reporting having experienced harassment, i.e. 50% of 10-17 year olds (n=1501). Finkelhor et al's findings indicate that respondents reported that 63% of the harassers alleged to be juveniles. These findings support the view that abusive behaviours are a relatively common feature of online interactions. Programmes of research into teen-to-teen interactions in teen chat rooms (O'Connell, & Bishop, in preparation) indicate that flaming⁵³ and

⁵³ Flaming is the performance of posting messages that are deliberately hostile and insulting in the social context of a discussion board (usually on the Internet). Such messages are called flames, and are often posted in response to flamebait.

Although face to face flaming is as old as time itself, flaming on the Internet started in the Usenet hierarchies. A flame may have elements of a

pretence of aggressive interactions are common features of online conversations. According to the UK's Crown Prosecution Service, a number of offences that can be characterised as 'cyber bullying' and 'cyber stalking' can be effectively prosecuted under the Protection From Harassment Act 1997. The Crown Prosecution Service's definition of cyber stalking is as follows:

'Cyber stalking generally takes the form of threatening behaviour or unwanted advances directed at another using the Internet and other forms of online communications. Cyber stalkers can target their victims through chat rooms, message boards, discussion forums, and e-mail. Cyber stalking can be carried out in a variety of ways such as: threatening or obscene e-mail; spamming (in which a

normal message, but is distinguished by its intent. A flame is never intended to be constructive, to further clarify a discussion, or to persuade other people. The motive for flaming is never dialectic, but rather social or psychological. Flamers are attempting to assert their authority, or establish a position of superiority. Occasionally, flammers merely wish to upset and offend other members of the forum, in which case they are trolls.

Similarly, a normal, non-flame message may have elements of a flame – it may be hostile, for example – but it is not a flame if it is seriously intended to advance the discussion.

Flame wars

A flame war is a series of flaming messages in an electronic discussion group or message board system such as usenet, mailing lists or forums. There are a number of characteristics of electronic communication which have been cited as being conducive to flame wars. Electronic communications do not easily transmit facial expressions or voice intonations which may serve to moderate the tone of a message. Also, there is typically a lag time between the time a message is transmitted and the time a reply is read. These two characteristics can cause a "positive feedback loop" in which the emotional intensity of an electronic exchange increases to extremely high levels.

stalker sends a victim a multitude of junk e-mail); live chat harassment or flaming (online verbal abuse); leaving improper messages on message boards or in guest books; sending electronic viruses; sending unsolicited e-mail; and electronic identity theft amongst others.

<http://www.cps.gov.uk/Home/LegalGuidance/5/5-E.pdf>

To date there has not been an in-depth study conducted into children and young people's experiences of cyber stalking. However Bocij et al (2004) administered a questionnaire on cyber stalking to 169 Internet users aged between 18 and 40 years. From the responses Bocij identified important differences between online stalking and offline stalking, namely, that online stalking takes place over a shorter period of time and that cyber stalking victims are less likely to know the identity of their harasser (42% did not know their harasser in Bocij study).

Although the nature of cyber stalking is often restricted to online contact, the level of distress experienced by the victims in the Bocij study was high – one quarter of victims claimed to have experienced the highest stress level they could have chosen to express how they felt. Furthermore, while there are similarities in the types of harassment online and offline victims suffer, the potential impact, for example, harming the victim's reputation, seems to be more extreme on the Internet as it has a worldwide audience. Interestingly, the findings of Bocij's study suggested that respondents with a greater

knowledge and experience of communication technologies were less likely to feel distressed. This competency bias suggests that perhaps with a better understanding of the nature of abusive online behaviours resulting in important frames of reference, Internet users will be likely to reduce their experience of stress, should they be unfortunate enough to experience stalking, and this finding may extend to other forms of abusive online behaviours.

Abusive Cybersex

Research findings also indicate that children experience conversations of a sexual nature online. Although, the exact nature of these conversations is not known, i.e. what proportion constitutes teen-to-teen cyber flirting, the varying degrees of cyber sex, or possibly how sexually abusive conversations are. The CRU (2002) found that 53% of chat users aged 8-11 years reported having had conversations of a sexual nature online. Finkelhor et al (2002) found that out of the children who responded positively when asked if they had on-line conversations with people they didn't know in person, 7% of these said that they had engaged in conversations of a sexual nature, i.e. that they had "talked about sex" with them. Of this 7%, 2% reported that they were aware that they were talking to an adult, and another 2% said that the adult was aware they were talking to a child. (Finkelhor, et al. 2000). 6% of 9-16 year old children in the CRU study in 2002 reported that online conversations of a sexual nature were unpleasant or offensive.

The UK Sexual Offences Act 2003, introduced a new offence of causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity (s.10 of the 2003 Act), carrying sentences of up to 14 years for non-contact abuse, which may include activities such as, for example, persuading children to take their clothes off, causing the child to touch themselves sexually, sending indecent images of themselves etc. Two separate offences expand the legal remit to include situations where the behaviour leads to the child viewing sexual activity; engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child (s.11) and causing a child to watch a sexual act (s.12). Both carry the maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. In an online context it is conceivable that non-contact related offences might involve, for example, activities whereby an adult encourages a child or a young person to send pictures of themselves either naked or engaged in specific sex acts, or perhaps an individual may send pornographic images to a child. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 ensures that this behaviour is covered by domestic law.

Research conducted by the CRU in 2002 with two samples of children and young people (n=1331, 8-11 years 1369 and 9-16 years) revealed a striking consistency despite the disparity in terms of age ranges between the samples. Both samples found that 19% use chat regularly and that 10% of chatters in both samples actually reported attending face-to-face meetings. The proportion of children reporting using chat regularly decreased in

a different sample of younger children (n=330 8-11 year olds) in 2003, which found that only 12% (n=39) of children reported using chat. However, of those that use chat in the 2003 sample, a higher proportion than the previous year reported attending a face-to-face meeting, i.e. 26% (n=10) of children.

The CRU has found consistently across samples (330, 8-11 year olds in 2003, 1331, 8-11 year olds in 2002 and 1369, 9-16 year olds in 2002) that the majority of children that report attending face-to-face meetings with people they have only ever previously met online also report positive experiences of these meetings. However, two children from the sample of 8-11 year olds in 2002 and two from the sample of 9-16 year olds in 2002, who had attended a face-to-face meeting, reported that they had experienced verbal abuse during the course of the meeting. One child from the sample of 9-16 year olds in 2002 reported experiencing physical abuse, but to what extent was not ascertained.

These findings serve to demonstrate that although children can be exploited on the Internet and groomed to meet people with ill-intent in the real world, the majority of children surveyed in the last two years report positive experiences of face-to-face meetings. In addition, typically children and young people report meeting up with chatters who are the same ages as themselves +/- 2 years. However, the majority of children reported going unaccompanied to face-to-face meetings and also typically, these children and young people had low levels of knowledge

of the relevant chat safety guidelines, for example, always meet in a public place, and always bring an adult to a face-to-face meeting.

Section 15 of the UK Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it an offence for an adult who has established contact with a child on at least two occasions to meet, or travel with the intention of meeting a child, with intent to commit a sexual offence against that child. The offence is punishable by up to ten years imprisonment. The previous contact can occur through, for example, meetings, telephone conversations or communications on the Internet, and it is designed to tackle behaviour whereby the adult gains the child's trust and confidence so that he can arrange to meet the child for the purpose of committing a sexual offence.

Crucially, the intended sexual offence against the child does not have to take place because the legislation allows for the offender to be arrested when he sets off to meet the child. Alternatively, the offence could be used where an adult discovers the behaviour and takes over the contact, leading the offender to believe that he is going to meet a child instead of an adult. Here, careful use of the Criminal Attempts Act 1981 would ensure that the offence is still committed.

Notably, the course of conduct prior to the meeting that triggers the offence may have an explicitly sexual content, such as the adult entering into conversations with the child about the sexual acts he wants to

engage her in when they meet, or sending images of adult pornography, in other words abusive cyber sex interactions. However, the legal system recognises that the prior meetings or communication need not have an explicitly sexual content, although when the meeting is arranged or occurs, it must be possible to demonstrate that the offender has the relevant intention to commit a sexual act against the child.

According to Carr (2004) there have been 27 cases of grooming reported in the media in the last two or three years in which children or young people have met face-to-face with an adult with whom their first point of contact had been in a chat room. These cases came to the attention of the media largely because they involved serious sexual assaults. The principle author has extensive experience of researching paedophile activity on the Internet and in particular grooming practices. A research paper titled 'A typology of cyber sexploitation and online grooming practices' (O'Connell, 2003) followed on from extensive research exploring both cyber sexploitation and grooming practices employed by adults and adolescents with a sexual interest in children when operating in chat rooms intended for either children or teenagers. The research findings indicated that the behaviours of adults with a sexual interest in children engaged in grooming children and young people in teen chat rooms can be categorised according to the various stages of abusive behaviours, including abusive cyber sex and grooming. (See www.uclan.ac.uk/cru for this research paper). There is a need to conduct

research on the levels of distress experienced by victims particularly in relation to various possible outcomes of this sort of scenario.

According to Baus (2004) cyber bullying ranging from insults and porn to hi-tech offences, such as hacking into victim's accounts, is on the rise. Research findings indicate that online aggressors often have poor parent-child relationships, victimization, delinquency, depressive symptoms and failing at school correlated with increased likelihood of harassing others (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004). More specifically, youths with poor emotional bonds with parents or guardians were more than twice as likely to commit cyber bullying. Low caregiver monitoring was also related to a 54% increase of online harassment compared to frequent monitoring. These findings suggest that parents and guardians have a significant role to play in minimising the incidence and frequency of cyber bullying. Victimization experience may also increase the levels of engagement in cyber bullying behaviours; 6% of online harassers versus 1% of non-harassers reported physical or sexual victimisation by an adult in the previous year. More than half of internet harassers reported being the target of traditional bullying; and 20% of harassers versus 4% of non-harassers report being the target of Internet harassment themselves (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004). Clearly, real world awareness of youth problems as well as online safety is essential to children and young people's cyber wellness.

Programmes of education designed to teach children about Internet safety are to date, largely generic in both their nature and scope. Guidelines dispensed to children often address issues at a superficial level despite the fact that there are in actuality, a multiplicity of situations which they may encounter online, and that these in turn cannot be dealt with through the use of homogenous 'rules' that do not pay heed to specific contexts.

However, as knowledge of the complexities, nature and scope of abusive online behaviours increase it is important to ensure that Internet safety advice and programmes of education are updated regularly and that the information is disseminated widely. In this way it will be possible to ensure that key target audiences are continually educated regarding requisite critical reasoning and the optimal proactive and reactive strategies.

Happy Slapping and Phone Chicken

The following images illustrate quite clearly why the concept of harmful content requires expansion and re-conceptualisation as 'risk of harm'. The following examples, illustrate how communication technologies, can be used by children and young people, to record, publish and disseminate images of violent, dangerous and potentially fatal behaviours. Figures 58, 59 and 60 illustrate the type of scenario that typifies a happy slapping incident. Notice the two girls to the right to the picture with their camera phones, ready to record what takes place in Figure 59 where the girls' accomplice punches the unsuspecting male.



Figure 57: A happy slapping incident.



Figure 58: Shows second shot of happy slapping incident

Figure 60 shows an internet video clip shows a boy jumping clear of an oncoming train. The train would have had no chance of stopping in time



Figure 59 Phone Chicken

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1646367,00.html>

User generated content depicting activities such as happy slapping and phone chicken are disseminated to online communities. There are a number of key of social processes that reinforce individual's engagement in these sorts of activities and these warrant further investigation.

In conclusion

This document has outlined the 'risk of harm' theoretical framework - an ecological model of children and young people's engagement with the variety of communicative, entertainment and social networking technologies which comprise the emerging European cross-media environment. The paper has attempted to outline the multifaceted factors that underpin children and young people's exposure to, engagement with, and the reported consequences of, risk of harm online and related offline activities. It also places a central emphasis on the experiences and motivations of the user (in this case children and young people).

The initial formulation of the risk of harm taxonomy provided in this document demonstrates the need for a wide-ranging program of theoretical, empirical and policy-based research. .

The aim of the taxonomy is to elaborate the conceptual framework underpinning the range of 'risk of harm from online and related offline activities' a child or young person may encounter. An important rationale for this taxonomy is to develop a framework which is sufficiently robust to incorporate the expanding literature of risky online activities. Thus, this taxonomy is intended to serve the dual purpose of reference guide and framework for further development. **It is hoped that the 'risk of harm' construct will serve as a key foundation of the developing horizontal and harmonised policies and mechanisms for the regulation of European cross-media content and services.**

In order to develop effective educational and regulatory mechanisms for the protection of vulnerable users from risk of harm associated with various online and offline behaviours and activities, it is first necessary to develop a detailed understanding of the various contributory factors and interpersonal dynamics. This will enable the identification of a number of general risk profiles for different groups of children and adolescents engaged in a variety of online activities. Other aspects of the proposed model highlight the need to incorporate, and develop a deeper understanding of, the following key factors:

- Motivations
- Experiences
- Emotional and psychological components
- Individual differences
- Interactivity of services
- Community and social organisation
- Processes of reinforcement, justification and incitement
- Ideological components
- Context
- Cultural specificities

Understanding the experiences and motivations of children and young people which are associated with the risk of harm activities outlined in this document is essential.

'Risk of harm' from online and related offline activities pose a number of challenges in terms of adequately defining the parameters of when, where, in what circumstances, and with which age group, cultural background, context, and interpretative abilities, a particular activity can be deemed to pose a 'risk of harm'. There is a need for dialogue at Member State and European level to define these parameters, whilst being cognisant of the global nature of the Internet.

There is a need to move away from a passive conceptualisation of the child or young person as a viewer of harmful content to an active conceptualisation of involvement, authorship and content creation as demonstrated by increasing production and circulation of user-generated content. As such we are suggesting a move away from traditional regulation of harmful media content on an age-related basis to empowerment of children, young people, educators and parents to be effective monitors of their own and others online behaviours and activities.

Regulation of static media content has developed through vertical systems focused on specific media channels. However the blurred boundaries between content and contact, content and services, and users and producers, pose a number of challenges for the straightforward translation of these regulatory systems in online environments. Regulation of content alone is not sufficient to afford acceptable levels of protection of those potentially at risk from exposure to harmful online content and services. Given such circumstances only a focus on educating children and young people, parents and educators can provide adequate protection, particularly where they are an active participant in services and/or producer of content. The difficulties of tracing authorship in online content and communications negate the ability of traditional vertical regulatory systems to provide adequate protection due to the lack of systems of licensing, publishing and associated forms of regulation that characterise traditional print, televisual and film content.

There are a number of unanswered questions relating to who is best placed to judge what constitutes 'risk of harm', and where should classificatory and regulatory responsibility lie? Should it be left to content and service providers to determine their own standards for content rating, given the commercial imperative which drives their development of content and services – are their systems of rating effective? In the UK for example, the mobile operator's code of conduct and new regulatory body for mobile entertainment operates on and over 18s, not as a means of distinguishing between minors and adults. A critical examination of the development and management of self-regulatory mechanisms in the context of the developing cross-media environment in Europe is required in the context of the protection of human dignity, freedom of expression and human rights. A variety of important issues have been raised throughout this document. These include:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of key actors in relation to the various aspects of 'risk of harm' online and related offline activities?
- Is there a charter, document, or set of agreed codes of practice which map the nature and extent of the key stakeholders' roles and responsibilities with respect to risk of harm issues?
- What level of advice is currently available to parents, teachers, children and young people in relation to each of the subcategories mentioned in the 'Risk of Harm' table?
- Is advice available to parents about the recommended age at which children and young people should have their own blogs or mblogs, and the extent to which content upload should be supervised?
- What sort of accompanying advice is provided by Service and Content Providers for parents and children about the creation, distribution and access to user generated content?
- What types of content and communications are children and young people being advised are acceptable to post, distribute or access online?
- What actions are children and young people being advised to take when they come across content and communications which may put them at increased 'risk of harm'?
- What sorts of support mechanisms are available at a State or regional level where parents, teachers, children and young people can seek advice and support on issues like racist material, pro-anorexia communities, and cyber bullying?
- What, if any, protocols exist for handling complaints, and what types of escalation procedures currently exist to enable activities that pose a risk of harm to a child or young person to be brought to the attention of the appropriate persons, e.g., parents, support line, moderator or law enforcement authorities?
- To what degree are various industries, i.e., traditional, fixed and mobile content and service providers collaborating with a view to tackling these issues?
- Are the key stakeholders engaged in examining and developing appropriate codes of practice, technical solutions, support mechanisms, and programmes of education to address risk of harm online and related offline activities?
- What, if any, programmes of research have been undertaken at member state level to gain insights into the nature, scope, and extent of 'risk of harm' activities?
- What sorts of self-regulatory and co-regulatory mechanisms have been adopted to address these issues and how is the efficacy of these systems evaluated?

Please forward your feedback to ro-connell@uclan.ac.uk

Bibliography

- Alfonso, V. C., Allison, D. B., & Dunn, G. M. (1992). The Relationship Between Sexual Fantasy and Satisfaction: A Multidimensional Analysis of Gender Differences. *Journal of Human Sexuality*, **5**, 19-37.
- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2001). Effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and prosocial behavior: A meta-analytic review of the scientific literature. *Psychological Science*, **12**, 353-359.
- Anderson, C. A., & Dill, K. E. (2000). Video games and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the laboratory and in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **78**, 772-790.
- Anderson, C. A., & Ford, C. M. (1986). Affect of the game player: Short-term effects of highly and mildly aggressive video games. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **12**, 390-402.
- Anderson, C. A., & Morrow, M. (1995). Competitive aggression without interaction: Effects of competitive versus cooperative instructions on aggressive behavior in video games. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **21**, 1020-1030.
- Anderson, C.A., & Dill, K.E. (2000) "Video games and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the laboratory and in life", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **78**, 772–790.
- Anderson, C.A., Carnagey, N.L., Flanagan, M., Benjamin, A.J., Eubanks, J., & Valentine, J.C. (2004). "Violent video games: Specific effects of violent content on aggressive thoughts and behavior", In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 36. New York: Elsevier.
- Apfelbaum, B. (1984). Professional sex films versus sexual reality. In R. Segraves & E. Haeberle (Eds.), *Emerging dimensions of sexology: selected papers from the Sixth World Congress* (pp. 331 - 336). New York: Praeger.

- Ballard, M. E., & Lineberger, R. (1999). Video game violence and confederate gender: Effects on reward and punishment given by college males. *Sex Roles*, *41*, 541-558.
- Ballard, M.E., Granger, C., & Green, S. (2003). Affiliation, flirting, and fun: mock aggressive behavior in college students. *The Psychological Record*. **53** 33-47
- Bandura, A. (1973) *Aggression: A social learning theory analysis*. EnglewoodCliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1986) *Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1991). "Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action". In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Handbook of moral behaviour and development: Theory, research and applications* (Vol. 1, pp. 71-129). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Bandura, A. (1994) "Social cognitive theory of mass communication", In J. Bryant& D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 61–90). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bandura, A. (1999) "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities" *In Personality and Social Psychological Review*, [Special issue on Evil and Violence], **3**, 193-209
- Baron, L., & Strauss, M. (1988). Legitimate violence and rape: A test of the cultural spill over theory, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* vol **528**, 79-110.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Heatherton, T. F. (1996). Self-regulation failure: An overview. *Psychological Inquiry*, **7**, 1-15.
- Baumeister, R.F., Heatherton, T.F., & Tice, D.M. (1994). *Losing Control: How and why people fail at self-regulation*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Becker, D. (2002). *When games stop being fun*. URL Retrieved May 4, 2005 from <http://news.com.com/2100-1040-881673.html>
- Berkowitz, A. D. (1998): "How We Can Prevent Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault." *Educator's Guide to Controlling Sexual Harassment* **6**, no. 1 1-4.

- Berkowitz, L. (1983). Aversively stimulated aggression. *American Psychologist*, **38**, 1135-1144.
- Bernstein, E.M., & Putman, S.W. (1986). Development, reliability, and validity of a dissociation scale. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, **174**, 727-735.
- Best, J., & Luckenbill, D. F. (1994). *Organising Deviance (2nd edition)*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Bogaert, A.F., (2001). Personality, individual differences, and preferences for the sexual media. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. **30**, (1):29-53
- Bond, S. B., & Mosher, D. L. (1986). Guided imagery of rape: Fantasy, reality, and the willing victim myth. *Journal of Sex Research*, **22**, 162-183.
- Brown, J. D., Dykers, C. R., Steele, J. R., & White, A. B. (1994). Teenage room culture: Where media and identities intersect. *Communication Research*, **21**, 813-827.
- Bushman, B.J. (1995) "Moderating role of trait aggressiveness in the effects of violent media on aggression", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **69**, 950–960.
- Butterfield, J., Parker, P., & Honigmann, D. (1982). *What is Dungeons and Dragons?* Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Calvert, S. L., & Tan, S. (1994). Impact of virtual reality on young adults' physiological arousal and aggressive thoughts. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, **15**, 125-139.
- Campagna, A. F. (1985). Fantasy and sexual arousal in college men: Normative and functional aspects. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, **5**, 3-20.
- Cerulo, K.A. (1997). Identity construction: new issues, new directions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **23**, 385-409
- Check, J.V.P. & Gullion, T.H. (1989). Reported proclivity for coercive sex following repeated exposure to sexually violent pornography, non-violent pornography and erotica. In Zillmann, D. and Bryant, J. (Eds) *Pornography: Research advances and policy considerations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum

- Cheng, S., Strough, J., & Swenson, L.M. (2001). Friendship, gender and preadolescents' representations of peer collaboration. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 47, 475-499.
- Constantine, L. T. (1982). *Children and sex: New findings, new perspectives*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Cooper, A., & Sportolari, L. (1997). Romance in Cyberspace: Understanding online attraction. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*, 22, 7-14.
- Cooper, J., & Mackie, D. (1986). Video games and aggression in children. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 16, 726-744.
- Court, J. H. (1984). Sex and violence: A ripple effect. In N. Malamuth & E. Donnerstein (Eds.), *Pornography and sexual aggression* (pp. 143-172). New York: Academic Press.
- Cumberbatch, G., Maguire, A., & Woods, S. (1993). Children and video games: An exploratory study. Communications Research, Aston University, Birmingham, U.K.
- Curtis, P., & Nichols, D. (1993). *MUDs Grow UP: Social Virtual Reality in the Real World*. In Third International Conference on Cyberspace, Austin, Texas. Retrieved June 18, 2005 from http://www.oise.on.ca/%7Ej Nolan/muds/about_muds/mudsgrowup.
- Curtis, P., (1993). LambdaMOO Programmer's Manual. Retrieved June 18, 2005 from http://www.bvu.edu/ctown/Progman/ProgrammersManual_toc.html
- Davis, K. E., & Braucht, G. N. (1973). Exposure to pornography, character, and sexual deviance: A retrospective survey. *Journal of Social Issues*, 29, 183-196.
- Dibbell, J. (1993). A rape in cyberspace. *The Village Voice*. December 21. pp. 36 - 42.
- Dietz, P. E., Harry, B., & Hazelwood, R. R. (1986). Detective magazines: Pornography for the sexual sadist? *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 31 (1), 197 - 211.
- Dietz, P., & Evans, B. (1982). Pornographic imagery and prevalence of paraphilia. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 139, 1493-1495.

- Dill, K. & Dill, J. (1998). Video game violence: A review of the empirical literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, **3**, 407-428.
- Donnerstein, E. (1980). Pornography and violence against women: Experimental studies. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, **347**, 277 - 288.
- Donnerstein, E. (1983). Erotica and human aggression. In R. G. Geen & E. I. Donnerstein (Eds.), *Aggression: Theoretical and empirical reviews. Vol. 2. Issues in research* (pp. 127 - 154). New York:
- Donnerstein, E. (1984). Pornography: Its effect on violence against women. In N. M. Malamuth & E. Donnerstein (Eds.), *Pornography and sexual aggression* (pp. 5381). New York: Academic Press.
- Donnerstein, E., & Linz, D. (1986). The question of pornography. *Psychology Today*, pp. 56 - 59
- Douse, N.A. & McManus, I.C. (1993). The personality of fantasy game players. *British Journal of Psychology*, **84** (4), 505-509.
- Draper, J. V., Kaber, D. B., and Usher, J. M. (1998). Telepresence. *Human Factors*, **40** (3), 354-375.
- Durkin, K. (1995)._Computer Games, Their Effects on Young People: A Review. Office of Film & Literature Classification. Sydney, Australia Retrieved May 22, 2005 from http://wiki.media-culture.org.au/index.php/Computer_Games_-_Effects_on_Children
- Fedora, O., Reddon, JR, Morrison, JW, Fedora, SK, Pascoe, H., & Yeudall, L.T. (1992). Sadism and other paraphilias in normal controls and sex offenders. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, **21**, 1-15
- Fernandez-Collado, C., & Greenberg, B. S., with Korzenny, F., & Atkin, C. K. (1978). Sexual intimacy and drug use in TV series. *Journal of Communication*, **28** (3), 30 - 37
- Feshbach, S., & Malamuth, N. (1978). Sex and aggression: Proving the link. *Psychology Today*, **12**(6), 111-122.

- Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959) Cognitive consequences of forced compliance, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, **58**, 203-211
- Finkelhor, D., Mitchell, K.J., & Wolak, J. (2000). *Online victimization: A report on the nation's youth*. Report prepared for the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Retrieved June 22, 2005 from <http://www.ncmec.com/>
- Fisher, W. A., & Barak, A. (2001). Internet pornography: A social psychological perspective on Internet sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, **38**, 312-323.
- Fisher, W. A., & Byrne, D. (1978). Sex differences in response to erotica? Love versus lust. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **36**, 119-125.
- Fisher, W. A., Miller, C. T., Byrne, D., & White, L. A. (1980). Talking dirty: Responses to communicating a sexual message as a function of situational and personality factors. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, **1**, 115-126.
- Fowles, J. (1999). *The Case for Television Violence*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Signorielli, N., & Morgan, M. (1986). *Television's mean world: Violence profile No. 14-15*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg School of Communications.
- Goldstein, J. (1995). Aggressive toy play. In A. D. Pellegrini (Ed.). *The Future of Play Theory*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Goldstein, J. (1998). Immortal Kombat: The attractions of video games with violent themes. In J. Goldstein (Ed.), *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Graybill, D., Strawniak, M., Hunter, T., & O'Leary, M. (1987). Effects of playing vs. observing violent vs. non-violent video games on children's aggression. *Psychology: A Quarterly Journal of Human Behavior*, **24**, 1-8.

- Green, R. (1985). *Exposure to explicit sexual materials and sexual assault: A review of behavioral and social science research*. Testimony presented to the hearing of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, Houston.
- Griffiths, M.D. (1997). Psychology of computer use: XLIII. Some comments on "addictive use of the Internet". *Psychological Reports*, **80**, 81-82.
- Griffiths, M.D. (1998) Internet addiction: does it really exist? In J. Gackenbach (Ed.), *Psychology and the Internet: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal implications* (pp. 61-75). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Grodal, T. (2000). Video games and the pleasures of control. In D. Zillmann & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media Entertainment*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Growing support found for ban on sex violence in movies, magazines*. (1986). The Gallup Poll. Princeton, NJ.
- Gunter, B. (1983) "Do aggressive people prefer violent television?", *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, **36**, 166–168.
- Gunter, B. (1998). *The Effects of Video Games on Children: The Myth Unmasked*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Gygax, G., (1979). "Advanced D&D, Dungeon Masters Guide". In Douse, N.A. & McManus, I.C. (1993). *The Personality of Fantasy Game Players*. *British Journal of Psychology*, **84** (4), 505
- Habermas, J. (1991). The public sphere. In C. Mukerji and M. Schudson (Eds.), *Rethinking popular culture*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Habermas, J., (1991). Comments on John Searle: Meaning, Communication and Representation In: E. Lepore, R. Van Gulick (Eds.), *John Searle and his Critics*. Blackwell, Cambridge MA, pp. 17-31.
- Healy, D. (1997). *Cyberspace and Place: The Internet as middle landscape on the electronic frontier in internet culture*. Porter, D. (Ed). London: Routledge, (pp. 55-68)

- Hollin, C.R., & Howells, C. (1991). *Clinical Approaches to Sex Offenders and their Victims*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Howitt, D., & Cumberbatch, G. (1990). *Pornography: Impacts and Influences. A review of available research evidence on the effects of pornography*. London: Commissioned by the British Home Office Research and Planning Unit.
- Hsu, B., Kling, A., Kessler, C., Knapke, K., Diefenbach, P., & Elias, J. (1994). Gender Differences in Sexual fantasy and behavior in a College Population: A Ten Year Replication. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, **20**(2), pp. 103-118
- Huesmann, L.R., Moise-Titus, J., Podolski, C.L., & Eron, L. (2003) "Longitudinal relations between children's exposure to TV violence and their aggressive and violent behavior in young adulthood: 1977–1992", *Developmental Psychology*, **39**, 201–221.
- Huston, A. C., Wartella, E., & Donnerstein, E. (1998). *Measuring the effects of sexual content in the media: A report to the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Infante, D. A., & Rancer, A. S. (1996). Argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness: A review of recent theory and research. *Communication Yearbook*, **19**, 319-351.
- Infante, D. A., Myers, S. A., & Buerkel, R. A. (1994). Argument and verbal aggression in constructive and destructive family and organizational disagreements. *Western Journal of Communication*, **58**, 73-84.
- Inkeles, A. (1961). National character and modern political systems. In F. Hsu (Ed.), *Psychological anthropology* (pp. 172-208). Homewood, IL: Dorsey.
- Kafka, M. P. & Prentky, R. A. (1994). Preliminary observations of DSM III-R Axis I co-morbidity in men with paraphilias and paraphilia-related disorders. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, **55**, 481-487.
- Katz, J. E. & Aspden, P. (1997). A nation of strangers? *Communications of the ACM*, **40** (12), 81–86.
- Katzman, N. (1972). Television soap operas: What's been going on anyway? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 200-212.

- Keenan, J.M., & Baillet, S.D. (1980). Self-referent processing in perceptions of verbal and visual commercial information. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *1*(1), 83-102
- Kendzierski, D.A. (1980). Self-referent processing in perceptions of verbal and visual commercial information. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *1*(1), 83-102
- Kennedy, D. (1994). Sex on the Internet. *Welcomat*. Vol. XXIV, 16. pp 16 - 17.
- Kiesler, S., Siegel, J., & McGuire, T. W. (1984). Social psychological aspects of computer-mediated communication. *American Psychologist*, *39*(10), 1123-1134.
- Kiewitz, C. & Weaver, J. B. (2001) "Trait aggressiveness, media violence and perceptions of interpersonal conflict", *Personality and Individual Differences*, 31, 821-835.
- King, A. (1996). Researching Internet communities: Proposed ethical guidelines for the reporting of results. *The Information Society*, *12*, 119-127.
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.
- Kirschenbaum, D.S. (1987). Self-regulatory failure: A review with clinical implications. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *7*, 77-104.
- Kirsh, S. J. (1998). Seeing the world through Mortal Kombat-colored glasses: Violent video games and the development of a short-term hostile attribution bias. *Childhood*, *5*, 177-184.
- Knight, B.A. (2000). Watch me! Webcams and the public exposure of private lives. *Art*, *59* (4), 21 -34
- Kramer, R.M. (1998). Paranoid Cognition in Social Systems: Thinking and Acting in the Shadow of Doubt. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *2*(4), 251-275
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Kuiper, N.A., & Rogers, T.B., Debevec, K., & Romeo, J. B. (1992). Self-referent processing in perceptions of verbal and visual commercial information. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *1*(1), 83-102.

- Kutchinsky, B. (1973). The effect of easy availability of pornography on the incidence of sex crimes: The Danish experience. *Journal of Social Issues*, **29**, 163-181.
- Lamm, H. & Myers, D.G. (1978). Group-induced polarisation of attitudes and behaviour. In Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Lang, R. A., Black, R. R., & Checkley, K. L. (1988). Aggression and erotic attraction toward children in incestuous and paedophilic men. *Annals of Sex Research*, **1**, 417-441.
- Lang, R.A., & Frenzel, R.R. (1988). How sex offenders lure children. *Annals of Sex Research*, **1**, 303-317.
- McCulloch, M., Snowden, P., Wood, P., & Mills, H. (1983): Sadistic fantasy, sadistic behavior and offendings. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **143**, 20-29.
- Media Awareness Network (2000). *Canada's children in a wired world: The parents' view*. Retrieved May 31, 2005 from <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/pics/sf/finalreporteng.pdf>
- Moody, E. (2001) Internet use and its relationship to loneliness. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, **4**, 393-401.
- O'Connell, R. (2000). *The structure and social organisation of paedophile activity in cyberspace: Implications for investigative strategies*. Retrieved May 21, 2005 from <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/facs/science/gcrf/crime1.htm>
- O'Connell, R. (2001). *'How I use the Internet' questionnaire (HIUTI)*. (Available on request from author)
- O'Connell, R. (2001). Paedophiles networking on the Internet. In C. Arnaldo, (Ed) *Child Abuse on the Internet*. UNESCO publishing: Berghahn Books.
- O'Connell, R., Barrow, C., & Sange, S. (2002). *Young Peoples Use of Chat Rooms: Implications for Policy Strategies and Programs of Education*. Retrieved June 22, 2005 from <http://www.fkbko.net/papers.htm>

- O'Reilly, M. (1996). Internet addiction: a new disorder enters the medical lexicon. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, **154**, 188-189.
- Parks, M. R., & Roberts, L. D. (1998). Making MOOsic: The development of personal relationships on line and a comparison to their offline counterparts. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, **15** (4), 517-537.
- Patrizio, A. (2002). *Did game play role in suicide?* Wired News. Retrieved 22 May 2005 from <http://www.wired.com/news/games/0,2101,51490,00.html>
- Pelletier, L. A., & Herold, E. S. (1988). The relationship of age, sex guilt and sexual experience with female sexual fantasies. *The Journal of Sex Research*, **24**, 250-256.
- Penkoff, D. W. (1994). *Smile When You Say That: Graphic Accents as Gender Markers in Computer-Mediated Communication*. Purdue University. Posted to Listserv: Virtpsy, Dec 9.
- Peris, R. (2002). Online chat rooms: Virtual spaces of interaction for socially oriented people. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, **5**, 43-51.
- Rancer, A. S., Kosberg, R. L., & Silvestri, V. N. (1992). The relationship between self-esteem and aggressive communication predispositions. *Communication Research Reports*, **9**, 23-32.
- Resnick, M. (1994). *Turtles, termites, and traffic jams: Explorations in massively parallel microworlds*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Resnick, M., & Bruckman, A. (1993). *Virtual Professional Community: Results from the MediaMOO Project*. Paper submitted to the Third International Conference on Cyberspace. Austin, Texas.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Rimm, M. (1995). Marketing Pornography on the Information Superhighway. *Georgetown Law Journal*, **83**, 1849-1934.

- Ringley, J, In Knight, B.A. (2000). Watch me! Webcams and the public exposure of private lives. *Art*, **59** (4), 21 -34
- Rogers, T. B., Kuiper, N. A., & Kirker, W. S. (1977). Self-reference and the encoding of personal information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **35**, 677-88.
- Roush, W. (1993). *The virtual STS centre on MediaMOO: Issues and challenges as non-technical users enter social virtual spaces.* (WEROUSH@ Athena.mit.edu).
- Rychlak, J. F. (1976). The multiple meanings of "dialectic." In: J. F. Rychlak (Ed.), *Dialectic: Humanistic Rationale for Behavior and Development.* Basel: S. Karger.
- Schopler, J. H., & Galinsky, M. J. (1993). Support groups as open systems: A model for practice and research. *Health & Social Work*, Vol. 18, 195-207.
- Schrodt, P., & Wheelless, L.R. (2001). Aggressive communication and informational reception apprehension: the influence of listening anxiety and intellectual inflexibility on trait argumentativeness and verbal aggressiveness. *Communication Quarterly*, **49**, 456 -465
- Schutte, N.S., Malouff, J.M., Post-Gorden, J.C., & Rodasta, A.L. (1988). Effects of playing videogames on children's aggressive and other behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **18** (5), 454-460.
- Segal, S. P., Silverman, C., & Temkin, T. (1993). Empowerment and self-help agency practice for people with mental disabilities. *Social Work*, **38**, 705-712.
- Silbert, M. H., & Pines, A. M. (1984). Pornography and sexual abuse of women. *Sex Roles*, **10**, 857-868.
- Slade, J. W. (1984). Violence in the hard-core pornographic film. *Journal of Communication*, **34**, 148-163.
- Smith, D. D. (1976). The social content of pornography. *Journal of Communication*, **26** (1), 16-24.

- Soley, L., & Kurzbard, G. (1986). Sex in advertising: A comparison of 1964 and 1984 magazine advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*, **15**(3), 46-55.
- Steele, J. R., & Brown, J. D. (1995). Adolescent room culture: Studying media in the context of everyday life. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, **24**, 551-576.
- Steele, J.R. (1999). Teenage Sexuality and Media Practice: Factoring in the Influences of Family, Friends, and School. *The Journal of Sex Research*, **36**, (4) 331-342
- The National School Boards Foundation, (2000). "Research and Guidelines for Children's Use of the Internet." Retrieved 2 July 2005 from <http://www.nsb.org/safe-smart/full-report.htm>
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen*. New York: Simon and Schuster
- Turkle, S. (1996). Virtuality and its discontents: Searching for community in cyberspace. *The American Prospect*, **24**, 50-57
- Van Schie, E. G. M., & Wiegman, O. (1997). Children and video games: Leisure activities, aggression, social integration, and school performance. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, **27**, 1175-1194.
- Vizard, E., Wynick, S., Hawkes, C., Woods, J., & Jenkins, J. (1996). Juvenile sexual offenders: assessment issues. *British Journal of Psychiatry* **168**: 259-262.
- Walker, M.B. (1989). Some problems with the concept of "Gambling Addiction": should theories of addiction be generalized to include excessive gambling. *Journal of Gambling Behavior*, **5**, 179-200.
- Wallach, M. A., Kogan, N., & Bem, D. J. (1962). Group influence on individual risk taking. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, **65**, 75-86.
- Wallach, M.A., Kogan, N. & Bem, D.J (1964). "Diffusion of Responsibility and level of Risk-Taking in Groups," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* **68**, 263-7

- Walther, J. B. (1996). Group and interpersonal effects in international computer-mediated collaboration. *Human Communication Research, 23*, 324-369.
- Walther, J. B., & Burgoon, J. K. (1992). Relational communication in computer-mediated interaction. *Human Communication Research, 19*, 50-88.
- Walther, J.A. (1996). Computer mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hypersonal interaction. *Communication Research, 23* (1), 3-43
- Ward, T., Hudson, S.M., Johnston, L., & Marshall, W.L. (1997). Cognitive distortions in sexual offenders: An integrative review. *Clinical Psychology Review, 17*, 1-29.
- Young, K. (1996). Psychology of computer use: XL. Addictive use of the internet: a case that breaks the stereotype. *Psychological Reports, 79*, 899-902.
- Young, K. (1997). *Internet Addiction: the emergence of a new clinical disorder*. Retrieved May 22, 2005 from <http://www.pitt.edu/~ksy/apa.html>.
- Young, K. (1998). *Caught in the net: How to recognize the signs of Internet addiction – and a winning strategy for recovery*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Zillmann, D. (1984). *Connections between sex and aggression*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Zillmann, D. (1998). The psychology of the attraction of violent entertainment. In J. Goldstein (Ed.), *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (1982). Pornography, sexual callousness and the trivialization of rape. *Journal of Communications, 32*, 10-21.
- Zuckerman, M. (1971). Physiological measures of sexual arousal in the human. *Psychological Bulletin, 25*, 297-327.
- Zuckerman, M. (1974). The sensation seeking motive. In B. A. Maher (Ed.) *Progress in experimental personality research: Vol. 7*. (pp. 79-148) New York: Academic Press.

