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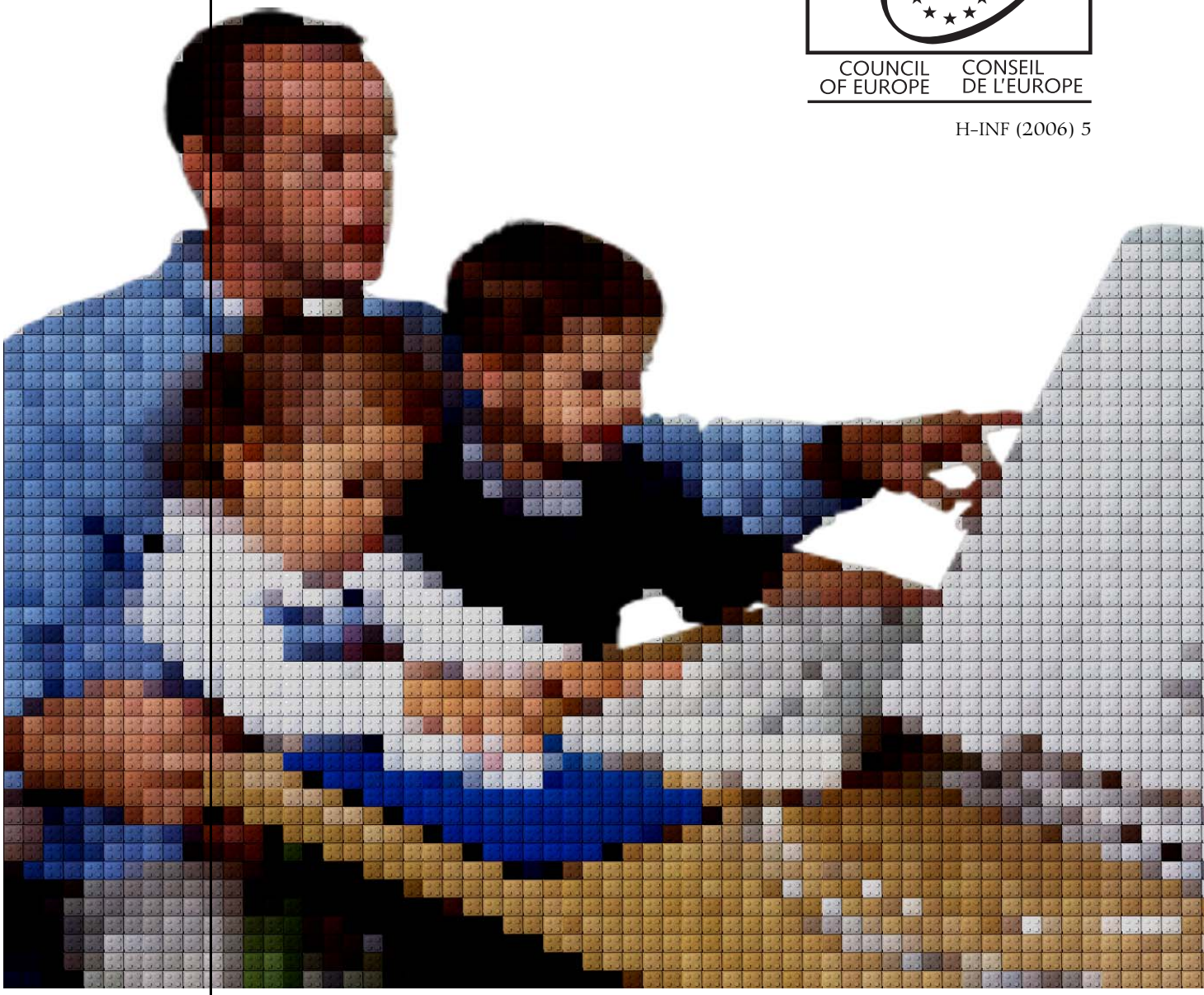

Young people, well-being and risk on-line

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Rachel O'Connell and Jo Bryce

Media Division
Directorate General of Human Rights
Council of Europe
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Young people, well-being and risk on-line, Dr Rachel O'Connell and Dr Jo Bryce, abridged version

Media Division
Directorate General of Human Rights
Council of Europe
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Preface

The Council of Europe gives particular importance to the protection of children and young people from online and related offline services, content and behaviours which may carry a risk of harm.[1]

In this context, as part of its evolving work in the field of Human Rights in the Information Society, the Council of Europe commissioned this study to "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".[2]

The information reported in this document is based on one year of preliminary research designed to explore a range of online activities that may pose a risk of harm to children and young people's well-being. The traditional subject areas of harmful content are explored, including violence and pornography, albeit often in new configurations. This book extends the scope of study to include, for example, online bullying, abuses of human rights, and pro-eating disordered sites in the context of interactive online and related offline environments. The information contained herein is a summary of that research and the presentation of both the conceptual framework of a taxonomy based risk identification and the risk of harm construct.

The publishers requested a document which would be useful for the general readers and one which would provide readers with an up-to-date account of the activities children and young people can engage in both in online and related offline environments. If you are interested in reading journal articles, which further detail the theoretical basis of this research, please contact the authors, ro-connell@uclan.ac.uk or jbryce@uclan.ac.uk.

The study aims to contribute to the continuing debate concerning the protection and promotion of Human Rights in the Information Society, and the authors wish to stress their commitment to this objective. The protection and promotion of fundamental human rights, freedom of expression and human dignity is central to this study and the reader should bear this in mind throughout their reading of it.

This abridged version of the study has been prepared to promote the accessibility and discussion of its findings in Council of Europe member states.

It is important to note that both the abridged and full versions of this study contain the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Council of Europe.

1. "The Council of Europe shall also continue its work on children in the information society, in particular as regards developing their media literacy skills and ensuring their protection against harmful content." (Chapter II, sub-heading 5, para. 3 of Council of Europe Warsaw Summit Action Plan).
2. Point 4, first indent, of the Terms of Reference of the Council of Europe Group of Specialists on Human Rights in the Information Society (MC-S-IS).

Authors' 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 United Kingdom 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.org 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 United Kingdom'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[3]

In elaborating the meaning of harmful content to promote coherence in the protection of children and young people in the Information Society, it has become clear that an examination of harmful content alone does not sufficiently address the nature, scope, scale or extent of the risk of harm that may be associated with children and young people's use of the Internet and new communication services.

Summary of findings and recommendations

1. *Taxonomy based risk identification*

The creation of a standard language and conceptual framework for examining risk of harm from online and related offline behaviours is required in order to enable discussion, refinement, and dissemination of knowledge about protecting children and young people online. To best understand the potential degrees of risk of harm *vis-à-vis* potentially harmful content and behaviours, we have developed a taxonomy-based risk identification methodology[4] which categorises activities in five areas which may pose risk harm to the physical, psychological and social well-being of children and young people;

- Commerce and information
- Social networking
- Sexual health
- Sharing perspectives
- Mind, body, spirit

4. The activities associated with each of the five categories included in the taxonomy range from those which have a positive effect on children and young peoples' well being (e.g., networking with other children and young people, exchanging information, publishing online), through those which pose a "risk of harm" and may have potentially negative outcomes for children and young people but are not illegal, to those which are legally proscribed and illegal, i.e., involved in the commission of criminal offences or prohibited by legislative or regulatory measures. Mapping the taxonomy in this manner allows the identification of degrees of risk of harm to different groups of children and young people and development of potential prevention, intervention and educational strategies. The taxonomy is not intended to be overly rigid or prescriptive, but is sufficiently robust to incorporate the expanding literature of risky online activities. Its continuing development is intended to serve the dual purpose of reference guide and classificatory framework.

Recommendation: Further elaboration of the taxonomy based approach

Overall, there is a need to further elaborate this taxonomy-based approach through empirical and policy-based research in order to develop strategies for harm reduction and education, and the promotion of well-being. Such strategies will be essential to ensure that children are uniformly and comprehensively educated about the opportunities and risks associated with the Internet and new communication services.

2. *Utility of Risk of Harm Construct*

Whilst there is a substantial amount of research which suggests that harmful content can have negative effects on vulnerable children and young people, academic debates continue regarding the uniformity of such effects and the psychological, social and environmental factors which influence vulnerability. Despite this, there is general agreement that exposure to certain types of content at an early age may have negative consequences for the psychological and social development of children. Identifying the multiple and interacting factors which lead to such outcomes requires a systematic program of empirical and theoretical research.

This document argues that the concept of "harmful content" is too

3. We view this report as a "living document" and intend to revise it based on comments, corrections, and suggestions. Please send comments to ro-connell@uclan.ac.uk, jbryce@uclan.ac.uk.

limited to denote the range of content, activities and behaviours which may pose a risk of harm to children and young people in online environments. The authors propose that the concept "Risk of Harm from Online and Related Offline Activities" (RHOOA) more accurately encapsulates children and young peoples' opportunities to harness the capabilities of interactive technologies as creators, producers and disseminators of both content and communications. The potential risks include harm to the physical, psychological and social well-being of children and young people resulting from engagement with pornography, misinformation, violent and/or racist material, and solicitation by adults to engage in abusive cybersex or meet offline and face-to-face. The concept also recognises the ability of children and young people to be active initiators of, and participants in, deviant or criminal online activities such as cyberbullying, cyberstalking, creation and dissemination of pornography.

The construct "risk of harm" is not prescriptive. It is conceptualised as a fluid construct, recognising that there are varying degrees of risk of harm associated with specific behaviours which are dependent on a range of multifaceted factors. For example, the behavioural patterns of children and young people using the Internet may potentially carry a considerable risk of harm when they seek information about self-harm and become participants in online forums, within which self-injurious behaviours are legitimised, sanitised and normalised. As a result of these online interactions, a vulnerable young person may be at an increased risk of harm to their psychological and physical well being. However, other users may derive positive benefits from engagement with similar online communities as communicating with others may have a cathartic effect by providing support and an opportunity to discuss problematic emotions, cognitions or behaviours. "Risk of harm" fora may, therefore, also be considered as providing opportunities for engaging participants in tailored educational and professional support designed to promote their well-being and protect human rights. This demonstrates the complexity of the construct "risk of harm" and its variability according to a range of psychological, social and environmental factors within and across the specific categories outlined in the taxonomy. The authors stress that they are not suggesting that censorship is an appropriate response to online fora that may pose a risk of harm to vulnerable children and young people. Rather, that identifying the risk of harm associated with online activities allows the development of educational initiatives, which protect the well-being and human rights of children and young through the provision of necessary skills for safe and responsible use of the Internet. Such an approach will also protect the fundamental human right to freedom of expression by providing alternative protective strategies that negate the need for censorship of online content and services. In addition, the risk of harm activities described in this document are not necessarily claimed to be harmful to adults, and should not be made illegal as they are legitimate in societies which promote and protect freedom of expression.

Recommendations: More programmes of education, informed by research, for children, young people and adults in various capacities

The core recommendations of this document focus on the empowerment of end users through the provision of programmes of education and supplementary support in the form of help lines and awareness raising initiatives. It important to educate children and young people through schools and for this to happen effectively, Internet safety needs to be a mandatory part of the school curriculum. In addition, appropriate training needs to be provided for teachers. Further discussion of the education of parents is required to ensure open lines of communication between parents and children. It is through these means that the authors feel that it will be possible to devise and implement strategies designed to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people.

3. Map emerging and changing patterns of socialisation occurring online

The categories of risk of harm activities discussed in this document often relate to problematic and complex behaviours. Concerns about the harmful effects and negative influences on children and young people's well-being with respect to media consumption has a long history, including literature, television, films and computer games. These concerns, and the body of theoretical and empirical academic literature which has addressed them, have largely conceptualised the child as a passive recipient of media content. This has been accompanied by an underlying notion of protection from harmful content in media content regulatory policies. However, one of the central themes of this document is the increasingly active role of children and young people as producers, publishers and disseminators of textual and visual content through their digital social spaces, i.e., blogs, websites, online communities and mobile networks. They create personal diaries online to exchange details of their private thoughts and aspirations in publicly accessible spaces, where others have the opportunity to post comments. Such changes have occurred at a time when television viewing is continuing to decline among Internet users, raising questions about the societal impact of the shift in the amount of time previously spent in the passive activity of watching TV, being transferred to interactive online activities online.

Children and young people have embraced online social networking and expect interactive services and social spaces to be offered as routine. They can no longer be regarded as simply using the Internet as an aid to completing their homework, as

increasingly they are socialised and growing up online. This raises a plethora of issues relating to the commercial, cultural, educational and regulatory implications of this significant shift in end users' relationship with media. It is crucially important to explore the complexities associated with protecting and promoting freedom of expression and privacy, whilst minimising the risk of harm to children and young peoples' well being.

Recommendation: Responsive and adaptive programmes of education

Programmes of education need to be developed which address the processes, activities and outcomes associated with the development, maintenance and sharing of both educational and recreational digital social spaces. The design and delivery of responsive and adaptive education requires regular curriculum updates across member states. This should focus on the many positive benefits of networking with others online, and also the potential risks including for example, bullying, identity theft, harassment or stalking. For example, existing programmes of education around bullying need to be adapted to take into account children and young peoples' creation and use of digital social spaces online, and attendant responsibilities and proactive measures that can be taken to limit bullying through self-moderation of comments, etc.

It is important to recognise that children and young people may also pose a risk of harm to other users, as well as themselves. This necessitates the design of educational and awareness raising initiatives which develop children and young peoples' understanding of their human rights, roles and responsibilities, and to strengthen their corresponding behavioural repertoires.

4. *Engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue and education*

The capabilities of communication technologies continue to alter the nature and shape of interpersonal relationships online. For example, traditionally, for personal safety reasons, Internet safety educational programmes advise children and young people not to divulge personal or location specific information online. However, Social Networking Service Providers increasingly use the information children and young people supply in their Profiles, e.g., real-world location specific information, details of favourite music and films, to hyperlink them to users of all ages who claim to share similar interests. The risks associated with this are amply demonstrated in a number of recent cases involving a popular social networking tool MySpace, involving solicitation of minors by adults with a sexual interest in children[5] and the murder of a woman who attended a date with a man she met on MySpace.[6]

Recommendations: Create a central co-ordinating multi-stakeholder body

Multi-stakeholder approach

The need for dialogue between a range of stakeholders, including representatives from child welfare organisations, educationalists, digital rights groups and the involved industries has been recognised in different countries across Europe for some time. Currently, there is a great deal of work being conducted at a national level across Europe, e.g., the United Kingdom Home Office Internet Task Force, which employs a multi-stakeholder approach to discuss a range of Internet and child safety related issues. This has resulted in the production of a number of useful documents[7] that would have relevance and utility for other member states as a starting point for multi-stakeholder dialogue specific to their own social, political and cultural dynamics. At present, the multi-stakeholder approach appears to be operating at a national rather than a European or global level, with very little apparent centralised co-ordination or exchange of information between different groups.

Recommendation: Create a central co-ordinating body

The Council of Europe is the organisation best placed to set up central co-ordinating organisation. This could be an observatory tasked with collating best practice produced at regional and national levels, and exploring the possibilities of arriving at minimum European standards, whilst being sensitive to differing cultural specificities and engaging in dialogue with non-European countries.

Review structures and processes

There is scope to evaluate the efficacy of existing multi-stakeholder dialogue and to improve the efficiency of these processes in member states where this is already taking place, and opportunities to exchange best practice with member states where such dialogue has yet to develop or is in its initial stages. It would be also useful to conduct such a review with a view to identifying how existing groups would cooperate effectively with the central co-ordinating body.

Become more responsive and adaptive

At present multi-stakeholder dialogue is generally reactive when a problem has been identified which requires recommendations. New

5. Is MySpace Safe? http://www.themonitor.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/GlobalTemplates/Details.cfm&StoryID=11680&Section=Local
6. Perils of online dating prompt safety effort: http://today.reuters.co.uk/News/NewsArticle.aspx?type=InternetNews&storyID=2006-03-21T131858Z_01_N16246871_RTRIDST_0_OUKIN-UK-DATING.XML
7. Good Practice Models and Guidance for the Internet Industry on: Chat Services, Instant Messaging and Web Based Services, Good Practice Guidance for the Moderation of Interactive Services for Children, Good Practice Guidance for Search Service providers and Advice to Talk to the Public on How to Search Safely and Guidance for Using Real Life Examples Involving Children or Young People.

problems arise when new services are made available or the capabilities of communication technologies are enhanced. Individuals and companies can set up new services online, which are targeted largely at the youth market. These companies may not be involved in the multi-stakeholder dialogue occurring in a particular member state and their business often spans a number of different countries.

Currently, there is no requirement for these companies to educate or sensitise staff to a range of established online child safety issues. Typically, the risks associated with new services targeted at children and young people online revisit concerns about children and young people divulging personal information, increased vulnerability to abusive or exploitative communications, and making or accessing inappropriate content available online albeit in slightly more complex configurations. It is possible to devise good practice as evidenced by multi-stakeholder approaches in different member states. A review of the viability and feasibility of devising minimum standards from the wealth of best practice that already exists, aimed at minimising known and understood risks and anticipating those which may arise in the future is required. This is something that could be co-ordinated by, for example, the Council of Europe or form a key objective in the establishment of an European Observatory organisation.

In an effort to facilitate a more responsive and adaptive approach to emerging issues, the central body could also commission research into children and young peoples' use of communication technologies to ensure that their recommendations and standards are informed by rigorous empirical research sensitive to evolving patterns of use of communication technologies and their role within the everyday lives and experiences of children and young people.

Educate and sensitise

To become more proactive in limiting the repeated occurrence of risks, it is important to provide education on children and young peoples' human rights, well being and online safety requirements to product developers so that they are sensitive to the issues and strive to operate in an open and transparent manner when designing products for the youth market. Child protection and digital rights should be at the forefront of their agenda before deployment of new capabilities across different platforms which may directly influence children and young peoples' well being and personal safety.

Devise minimum standards

The central body would be tasked with exploring the possibility of achieving agreement on a number of European or global minimum standards governing, for example, sign up procedures for existing or new Internet services. These might recommend that Service Providers meet specific requirements to ensure that users are made fully aware of the positive aspects of use of the service, but also the potential risks to children and young peoples' personal safety and well being. This should be supplemented by the provision by Service Providers of educational materials about how best to minimise those risks for both parents and children.

Discussions around minimum standards might also focus on safe management of online communities, for example, ensuring that when young people sign up to use social networking tools the default Access setting is set to "Private", and that hyperlinks to other users of the Service on the basis of information included in "Profiles" are disabled. Young people can be exposed to relevant educational resources before settings can be altered.

The development, deployment and adherence to minimum standards would enhance the transparency and accountability of Service Providers in particular and industries in general with regard to the provision of services targeted at the youth market.

Invite participation in multi-stakeholder dialogue

The central body would also be tasked with ensuring that new service providers are provided with relevant child safety education and information, and are invited to engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue. Ensuring that new service Providers are involved early in their development cycle for new products and services would afford the central body the opportunity to initiate early responses to well understood risks and to ensure that the appropriate minimum standards are put in place, as well as ensuring the provision of educational material developed with a view to minimising risk of harm.

Chapter summaries

Harmful Content or Risk of Harm?

Reference is made to *inter alia*: theories of mass communication, and the blurred boundaries and emergent online behaviours.

In summary, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief sketch of what is possible online, and how different social networking products interconnect, in order 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 chapter is to illustrate the changing contexts 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 in which they can engage. The focus of this chapter is specifically on user-generated content, which typically has not been a prominent aspect of previous discussions about "harmful content".

Traditional Conceptualisations Of Harmful Content And Consequences Of Exposure

Reference is made to: what constitutes harm; the proposed effects of exposure to harmful content; and potential aversive emotional, social and psychological consequences.

In summary, this chapter examines the proposed emotional, attitudinal, behavioural and ideological consequences of 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). It concludes that the reliability and validity of theoretical and methodological approaches to research, the interpretation of results and their implications for individual and social well-being are inconclusive and continue to be strongly debated within the academic media effects literature. A number of government commissions in the United Kingdom, USA and Europe have reviewed evidence in these areas and reached varying conclusions as to the validity of the 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.

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. This suggests the 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.

Risk Of Harm Theoretical Framework: Mapping A New Approach

Reference is made to *inter alia*: regulatory policies, mechanisms and technological solutions; freedom of speech and human rights in online environments; audiovisual policy and media content regulation.

In 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 policies 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 is challenged by 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 European cross-media entertainment environment. 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.

Socio-Political Landscape And The Democratisation Of Information

Reference is made to *inter alia*: information literacy and source criticism; cognitive developmental issues; changing pedagogies; regulatory implications.

In summary, the risk of harm from online and related offline activities was 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 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 young peoples' online activities, particularly those 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 demonstrated by the examples included in this chapter. There are also a number of challenges associated with protecting human rights, 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.

Taxonomy Of Risk Of Harm

Reference is made to *inter alia* well-being online; categories of risk of harm activities.

In summary, the diversification of content types, services and delivery channels which potentially afford children and young people increased possibilities for access to, and engagement with, risk of harm from online and related offline activities are outlined in the taxonomy (appended). 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 to their psychological and physical well-being. Importantly, many of these activities currently occur in the absence of parental knowledge. The issue of stakeholder responsibility for informing parents about alterations in the nature, scope and extent of risk of harm from online and related offline activities that their children may encounter in a constantly evolving communications technology environment requires further consideration. Specific attention is required to the processes by which parents can address these issues with their children in the absence of requisite educational information and strategies.

Psychological, Social And Contextual Influences

Reference is made to *inter alia*: the psychological, social and context factors which influence children and young peoples' extent of involvement in risk of harm activities; the levels of interest and motivation; community building and the interactional dynamics of online communities; disclosure and disinhibition; hyperpersonal interactions.

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

Commerce and Information

Reference is made to *inter alia*: emerging trends – the Semantic web, and social book marking and syndication; syndication; online identity and misuse of personal information; misuse of user generated content: personal and non-personal information; identity theft; consent and privacy issues in relation to user generated content; handling and interpreting information; file sharing and intellectual property crime.

In summary, this chapter examined the risk of harm to children and young people associated with "Commerce and information". These include exposure to misinformation, misuse of personal information, "buzzploitation", spam, privacy and intellectual property right violations, and targeted online advertising. The chapter also considered the possibilities for spam to expose children and young people to risks associated with inappropriate advertising, pornographic or violent content, malicious code or phishing. Exposure to such content and services may infringe children and young people's human rights and privacy, the Data Protection Act, advertising standards and intellectual property legislation. To mitigate the risk of harm in this category requires improved education of children and parents about protection of privacy in online environments, critical evaluation skills, as well as enforcement of relevant standards and legislation.

Social Networking

Reference is made to *inter alia*: social networking; traditional networking; blogging; centralised social networking sites; picture and video sharing; dynamic/mixed media social networking; cyber-bullying; picture and video focused abuse; cyber-stalking; "chicken", stunts and "happy slapping"; online gambling and addiction.

This chapter examined the risk of harm associated with social networking and online relationships, some of which extend to offline contexts. It considered the growth and variety of social networking tools available to children and young people, and the possible risk of harm associated with social network engineering. In addition, this chapter discussed the possibilities of risk of harm from exposure to violent and sexually explicit material in new configurations, as well as a number of additional risks associated with unwanted and abusive communications such as cyberbullying and cyberstalking, happy slapping, and computer gaming. The need for greater education of children, young people, parents and educators concerning the safe use of these technologies as they develop and become widely used, as well as mechanisms for protecting privacy and personal information, was outlined. Such approaches required the effective enforcement of current regulatory legalisation relating to privacy, human rights and child safety and the development of minimum standards for the industry.

Sexual Health

Reference is made to *inter alia*: commercially produced sexual content distributed via tradi-

tional media channels; distribution of commercially and non-commercially produced sexual content via online delivery channels: genres of sexual content and pornography.

In summary, this chapter explored the risk of harm associated with the provision, generation, sharing and dissemination of online information relating to "Sexual Health". The risk of harm to the dignity and well-being of children and young people associated with exposure to the various types of legal and illegal adult pornography in online environments have been the traditional focus of media content regulation. These were examined in addition to new pornographic content and services such as amateur sites and teenage user-generated sexually explicit content. The risks associated with the commission of low and high level sexual crimes such as the exposure of children and young people to child pornography, online grooming and abusive cyber-sex was also examined. Developments in United Kingdom legislation which criminalise online grooming, abusive cyber-sex and non-contact sexual abuse offences under the Sexual Offences Act (2003) were also examined. The key role for media literacy and the development of source evaluation skills for parents, educators and young people has obvious 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.

Sharing Perspectives

Reference is made to *inter alia*: violent content; commercially and non-commercially produced violent content distributed via traditional media channels; interactive co-produced and user-generated violent content; racist, xenophobic and discriminatory content

In summary, this chapter examined the risk of harm to children and young people associated with "Sharing Perspectives", a key ingredient of online activities. It examined the individuals and groups that operate online to propagate their potentially harmful ideological perspectives on race, religion and violence. These involve representations of ethnic or religious groups that encourage discrimination, hatred and racial violence, and are proscribed in European Member States human rights legislation. In addition, the risk of harm associated with exposure to online representations of fictional or factual graphic violence and torture, or "gore sites" on the development of cognitive and behavioural scripts associated with the performance of aggressive behaviour in children and young people were also examined. The ideological, attitudinal and behavioural effects of exposure to violent, racist or discriminatory content and services on predisposed individuals may place children and young people at risk of ideological harm, as well as subsequent violent and discriminatory behaviours including low and high level racially motivated or violent crimes. Mitigation of the risk of harm in this category requires improved education of children and parents about the availability of such content and services in online environments, and the development of critical evaluation skills. There is also a need to consider the ability of current regulatory policies, notification and takedown procedures, etc., to adequately restrict access to such content, and the potential conflicts between this objective and freedom of expression and religious tolerance as key human rights.

Mind, Body, Spirit

Reference is made to *inter alia*: pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia; cyber-suicide and self-harm sites.

In summary, this chapter examined the risk of harm to children and young people associated with "Mind Body Spirit" or the online provision, generation, sharing and dissemination of information and services about certain aspects of mental and physical health. It considered the risk of harm to children and young people associated with engaging with communities which contain information promoting and legitimising suicide (pro-suicide), anorexia (pro-ana), bulimia (pro-mia) and self-harm (pro-SI). The reinforcement and legitimisation that occurs within such communities may potentially lead to the maintenance of eating disorders, suicide, self-harm and starvation. Potential mechanisms for mitigating the risk of harm associated with this category include the need to educate children, young people and parents about the issues surrounding body image and eating disorders, and the need to encourage healthcare professionals to become involved in communicating with members of such communities to attempt to involve them in therapeutic interventions. The chapter also considered the regulatory and human rights issues associated with such online forums, and the ability of current regulatory instruments to address whether access to such sites could or should be restricted and controlled by notification and takedown procedures.

Appendix 2: Key Issues for Stakeholder Consideration

A variety of important issues have been raised throughout this document, and highlight a number of questions which need to be addressed by all key stakeholders.

These include:

- What level of advice is currently available to parents, teachers, children and young people in relation to each of the subcategories discussed in depth in the book?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- To what degree are various industries, i.e., traditional, fixed and mobile content and service providers collaborating with a view to tackling these issues?
- 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?
- 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?

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