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Adults' Sexual Interest in Children and Adolescents Online: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

We employed a quasi-experimental design, with researchers impersonating children and adolescents in online chat rooms. One was directed towards homosexual men, while the others were unspecified in this aspect. We investigated whether male chat room visitors would initiate a sexual conversation with children and adolescents, and whether they would suggest any means of continuing the communication after knowing the portrayed age (which we varied). The results from 257 discussions indicated that sexual interest rose as the impersonated age increased. A face-to-face meeting was suggested more often to impersonated persons above the legal age of consent (16 and 18 year olds), than to persons below the legal age of consent (10 – 14 year-olds). In 25.7% of the discussions with supposed 10 and 12 year olds (age suggestive of pedophilic sexual interest among adults), the contacts wanted to continue a sexual conversation after the portrayed age was revealed. This descriptive, quasi-experimental study shows that there is a large interest to engage in sexual conversations with children and adolescents among visitors of the three chat rooms included. However, the amount and quality of the sexual interest varied as a function of the age of the impersonated children and adolescents, and as a function of chat room.

Keywords: Chat rooms, Adolescents online, Pedophilia, Sexual interest, Sexual solicitation, Grooming, Children.

Introduction

In previous studies it has been reported that online sexual or romantic relationships between adults and adolescents are often initiated in chat rooms (Briggs, Simon, & Simonsen, 2011; Malesky, 2007; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2005, Quayle & Taylor, 2001, Webster et al., 2012). However, little is known about what happens between the adolescent and the adult during the initial online meeting in a chat room, and whether and how the adults suggest continuing the communication. The terms "online solicitation", "online sexual solicitation", and "unwanted online sexual solicitation" has been used by researchers when describing the process of an adult befriending a child or an adolescent for sexual purposes (Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010; Seto, 2013; Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2007). The definitions of these behaviors vary across research groups and the terminology is not always clearly defined. Some researchers use the term "online grooming" to define the manipulative aspect that is often present in online sexual solicitation, for example the adult making the adolescent feel special, and by

As for the process of online sexual solicitation, it has been found to often be a lengthy one, sometimes stretching over months before the romantic or sexual intention of the adult is revealed (Webster et al., 2012). However, some adults called "hypersexualized groomers" in the European Online Grooming Project (Webster et al., 2012) introduced a sexual topic already during the first online meeting with the adolescent. For the sake of simplicity, the persons discussed within the present study (impersonating children and adolescents) were called "contacts". As mentioned, online sexual solicitation is often a long process. Through the online communication the adult commonly attempts to normalize the intentions of a sexual outcome through psychological manipulation (Marcum, 2007) and persuasion techniques (Shannon, 2008). The sexual outcome motivating the adult's behavior may be online only (e.g., engaging in cybersex), offline sexual contact, or both (Briggs, Simon, & Simonsen, 2011). Briggs, Simon, and Simonsen (2011) separated their sample of convicted chat room sexual offenders on the basis of whether they were "contact driven" (i.e. motivated by sexual contact offline) or "fantasy driven" (i.e. motivated by online sexual contact only).

1.1 Prevalence of Online Sexual Solicitation and Previous Research Methods

In the EU Kids Online study (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011), with a sample of more than 25,000 children and adolescents between the ages of 9 and 16 years from 25 European countries, 23% of the respondents reported having visited chat rooms during the past month. Older adolescents reported having visited chat rooms more often than younger children and adolescents. Of the participating children aged 9 to 12, 14% reported visiting chat rooms compared with 32% of the 13 to 16-year-olds (Livingstone et al., 2011). Social interaction activities reported by the younger participants compared with older adolescents, more often involved playing games and communicating through avatars. Research results indicate that the prevalence of online sexual solicitation of children and adolescents has decreased in the USA. According to the results from a study with 1500 adolescents in the US (Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2007), 19% of the participants reported that they had been victims of online sexual solicitation in 2000, compared to 9% in 2010 (Jones, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2012). The researchers concluded that the reduced frequency could be due to targeted prevention efforts. However, the researchers proposed that the cases of so-called aggressive solicitations, which always involve offline contact, had not decreased (Jones, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2012). An increase in law enforcement activity and informative media coverage was also suggested to have deterred casual solicitors, whilst not affecting determined, compulsive sexual solicitors to the same extent.

Studies concerning online sexual solicitation of adolescents have mainly focused on surveys (Beebe, Asche, Harrison, & Quinlan, 2004; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2001), police reports (Shannon, 2008)

or by interviewing law enforcement agents (Wolak et al., 2004; Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2010). Some of the data originate from proactive investigations conducted by police officers posing as minors online (Mitchell et al., 2010). While the methods employed by these types of studies are valuable, they have limitations (e.g. unrecorded data when analyzing police reports or self-report bias in survey studies). Although many scholars have reached the conclusion that many cases of sexual solicitation of adolescents take place in chat rooms (Wolak et al., 2004; Malesky, 2007), experimental research is still lacking.

1.2 Adult Males' Sexual Age Preferences

Previous studies have also reported that up to 99% of adults that have sexually solicited adolescents online, have been males (Wolak et al., 2008; Briggs, Simon, & Simonsen 2011). Another characteristic found is that online groomers more often report hebephilic (i.e. interest in pubertal persons) than pedophilic (i.e. interest in pre-pubertal persons) sexual interest (Seto, Wood, Babchishin, & Flynn, 2012). For the purpose of the present study, a brief review on theories on adult men's sexual age preferences from other than an online solicitation perspective is needed. It has been reported that irrespective of their own age heterosexual men generally show a naturally distributed age preference for females, with a peak around their late teens to their late twenties, with a gradual decline towards both younger and older females (e.g. Antfolk, Salo, Alanko, Corander, Sandnabba, & Santtila, in preparation; Kenrick & Keefe, 1992; Kenrick, Keefe, Bryan, Barr, & Brown, 1995; Quinsey & Lalumière, 1995). However, deviations in sexual age preferences and interests, as well as the generalized similarities, have been found throughout history and cross culturally (Rind & Yuill, 2012).

Homosexual men have been found to show similar age preferences as heterosexual men, with the minimum preferred age of partners being slightly younger than for heterosexual men (Kenrick et al., 1995). This distribution of age preferences predicts that the prevalence of hebephilic sexual interest (i.e. interest in pubertal children and adolescents) is higher than pedophilic sexual interest (i.e. interest in pre-pubertal The true base rate of hebephilic and pedophilic sexual interest in the adult population is not known. However, in a population based study (Santtila et al., submitted) it was found that out of 1310 adult men, 3.3% reported having had sexual fantasies of below 16-yearolds, and 0.2% of children below age 12 during the previous year. Amongst researchers it is assumed that less than 5% of men harbor pedophilic sexual interest, since this percentage represents adult participants in different studies that reported ever having had sexual fantasies about prepubescent children (Briere & Runtz 1989; for a review see Seto, 2007). The studies did not include all the criteria for the diagnosis pedophilia, such as the persistence of the fantasies. Therefore the actual percentage of pedophilic sexual interest in the

population would be expected to be lower.

1.3 Characteristics of Targets of Online Sexual Solicitation

Baumgartner, Valkenburg and Peter (2010) conducted a large online population based survey in the Netherlands on unwanted sexual solicitation with adolescents of the ages 12 to 17 years and adults of 18 to 88 years. The researchers found that most reports on having been a victim were made by females aged 14 to 29. This finding has previously been supported by a number of other studies, which indicate that the victims are most often females of age 13 or older (Wolak et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001; Seto 2007). However, adolescents younger than 13 have also been victims of online sexual solicitation (Mitchell et al., 2001; Wolak et al., 2004). Of the children and adolescents that reported having been solicited online, 23.1% were aged 10 – 13. Although younger children are less often solicited, they report being upset or afraid because of the experience in a higher degree than older adolescents (Mitchell et al., 2001).

It has been reported that 25% of the victims of online sexual solicitation of adolescents are male. Male adolescent who are either gay or uncertain regarding their sexual orientation are reportedly at higher risk of being solicited than their heterosexually oriented peers (Wolak et al., 2004). This might be because homosexually oriented male adolescents may visit sexually related online forums more often than their heterosexual peers, and are therefore subjected to adults with a sexual innuendo.

1.4 Legal Aspects of Online Sexual Solicitation

An extrinsic factor that may affect the behavior of adults is the legal age of consent. The Swedish penal code states that the legal age of consent is 15 (SFS, code and according to the Finnish penal code, the legal age of consent is set at 16 (RL, code 1998:563). There is a law against grooming adolescents under the legal age of consent in both countries. In Sweden it was criminalized in 2009 (SFS, code 2009:343), and in Finland in 2011 (RL, 2011:540). Should there be a deterring effect of legal reprimands, the legal age of consent should appear as a cut off, where the proportion of expressed sexual interest in persons below the legal age of consent would be markedly lower than sexual interest expressed towards adolescents above the legal age of consent (Ward, Stafford, & Gray, 2006). If the legal age of consent would have a deterring effect on adults' expression of sexual interest, another expected effect would be that an offline meeting would be suggested much more often to adolescents above the legal age of consent compared with suggestions to younger adolescents.

1.5 The Present Study

In the present research, we studied how adult male chat room visitors (contacts), reacted to children and adolescents in three chat rooms, one Swedish and two Finnish. With this quasi-experimental study we explored if the contacts initiated a sexual topic in conversations with children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 18, by analyzing the contacts' behavior with the supposed child or adolescent. In the present study, researchers impersonated as children and adolescents of different ages, taking into account three major age cut offs. Firstly, age groups above the legal age of sexual consent (16 in Finland and 15 in Sweden), secondly, below the legal age of consent but above the age of 12, and ages 12 years or less (sexual interest in children below 12 is commonly accepted as indicative of a pedophilic sexual interest). Using this approach, it was possible to circumvent some of the limitations of the methods used in previous studies. The method of impersonating as children and adolescents in chat rooms was chosen on the basis of results from previous studies that have listed chat rooms as a common venue for adults that wish to form a sexual relationship with adolescents.

1.6 Aims and Hypotheses

We wanted to explore the effect of the age of the impersonated children and adolescents, and the effect of two different types of chat rooms (i.e. whether sexual conversations, nicknames and material was allowed, and whether the chat room was directed according to a sexuality orientation or not) on the degree and type of sexual interest expressed. Based on previous research on online sexual solicitation, adult men's sexual age preferences, and the assumption of the deterring effect of the legislations, we expected that:

1) The older the impersonated child, the more contacts would express sexual interest.
2) The older the impersonated child, the more contacts would suggest meeting offline.
3) The younger the impersonated child, the more contacts would end the conversation due to the stated age of the impersonated child.

Pertaining to the first hypothesis two separate predictions was made. First, based on the normal distribution of males' sexual age preferences; we predicted that more contacts would express a sexual interest in older impersonated adolescents. Second, based on the assumption of a deterring effect of a criminalization of online sexual solicitation, we expected that the sexual interest expressed by the contacts would be markedly higher for adolescents over the legal age of consent than children and adolescents below the legal age of consent. The second hypothesis was also based on the assumption of the deterring effect of the legal reprimands if convicted for online sexual solicitation, which we expected to result in more suggestions to meet offline to adolescents over the legal age compared to children and

adolescents below the legal age of consent. The third hypothesis was based on the low occurrence of pedophilic sexual interest in the population, we therefore assumed that a majority of contacts would express a lack of sexual interest in 10 and 12year olds and wanted to investigate how they would convey this.

2. Method

A pilot study was conducted in 2006 using roughly the same method of conduct, and resulted in 244 discussions between researchers; impersonating adolescents aged 13, 14, and 15 years, with adult male chat room visitors. The predicted variables in the present study (see Table 1) were derived from the discussions in the pilot study. In the pilot study, the chat room visitors suggested different means by which they wanted to keep in touch with the supposed adolescents, which were then developed into the predicted variables in the study at hand. The research plan was approved at a Departmental Ethics Review Seminar at Abo Akademi University.

2.1 Design and Variables

The predictor variables were characteristics of the impersonated child or adolescent: Age (10, 12, 14, 16 or 18 years), and kind of chat room (i.e. clearly sexual, oriented towards males with a homosexual orientation and two others, analyzed together, that were non-specified according to orientation and without sexual material or content in the general discussions). The different age conditions were allocated in a random order to the different chat rooms; while the portrayed gender was fixed according to chat room (the impersonated person always portrayed themselves as female in the chat rooms that were not explicitly intended for homosexual males, and always as males in the chat room intended for homosexual males).

The responses of the contacts (predicted variables in all subsequent statistical analyses) were coded in accordance to whether the contacts expressed a sexual interest in the impersonated child or adolescent or not. The responses of the contacts were categorized into 10 categories of behaviors or statements. Responses that represented a sexual interest in the impersonated person were the means by which the contact wanted to continue the communication with the impersonated person after having received knowledge of the age of the impersonated person and having expressed a sexual interest. The contact could suggest multiple means by which they wanted to continue the communication. The reactions or statements that represented an absence of sexual interest were the different ways by which the contacts ended the discussion and why they ended it. These statements or behaviors were mutually exclusive. For

all predicted variables which involved suggestions of future communication the same requirement had to be fulfilled: The contact had to imply or spell out that he wished to communicate about sexual matters or that he was sexually interested in the impersonated child or adolescent, after having received knowledge of the portrayed age. If no such implication was present, one of the variables suggesting an absence of sexual interest was used in the coding, depending on which alternative was the most suitable for the case in question. The researchers never initiated a sexual topic during the conversations. The variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.Predicted Variables Used to Identify Behavioral Characteristics of Contacts

Chatting	Suggested to continue the conversation in the chat room or meet in the chat room on another occasion
Webcam	Suggested to use a webcam
IM	Suggested using an instant messaging service
F2F	Suggested to meet offline
Telephone	Asked for the phone number of the impersonated person or suggested talking over the phone
Picture	Asked for a picture of the impersonated person
Stopped After Age	Ended the conversation after the portrayed age was revealed
Told Off	Told off the impersonated person for being too young to visit the chat room
Stopped Sexual Tone	Continued the conversation after the portrayed age was revealed but not on a sexual topic
No Sexual Tone	There was no sexual tone during the conversation

2.2 Procedure

The researchers followed a pre-agreed conduct during all the discussions in the chat rooms, allowing for minor variation in order to ensure flow of conversation. For an account of the procedure in the chat rooms, see Table 2. The discussions between the contacts and the impersonated child or adolescent took place in 2008.

Table 2. Researcher Conduct in the Chat Rooms (in Chronological Order)

1. The researcher chose a nickname from the list of typical names (20 per chat room) depending on country and gender of the impersonated person, and added the word "young".
2. Logged in to the chat room.
3. Wrote an open invitation in the general chat, seeking company (1 – 5 times) until the first contact responded, and invited the impersonated person to chat privately.
4. Asked what the contact was looking for in the chat room.
5. Asked where the contact lived, and claimed to be from the same city or nearby.
6. Asked the age of the contact, or made a remark on the age if the contacts age was provided in his nickname.
7. Revealed the portrayed age (i.e. 10, 12, 14, 16 or 18-years old).
8. Registered the contacts behavior after he had received knowledge of the portrayed age.
9. Gave an excuse for having to leave the chat room, e.g. "dinner time", or "mum came home".
10. Registered the contact's reply.

The impersonated person ended the discussion either by logging off or, by blocking the contact so that he was unable to communicate with the impersonated person privately. If the researcher continued chatting in the same chat room, they wrote a new open invite in the general chat room discussion. The discussions were then copied and saved as documents.

2.3 Subjects

The reported mean age of the contacts (N = 257, chat room visitors with whom the impersonated persons discussed) was 31 years (SD = 9), the youngest being 15 years old, and the oldest 60. All contacts alleged to be males. In the homosexually oriented chat room, the researchers had a conversation with 87 individuals that were on average 33 (SD = 12) years old (see Table 3 for details on the chat rooms). In the two other chat rooms that were not sexually explicit or directed towards persons with a specific sexual orientation, the researchers had a conversation with 170 individuals, where the reported age of the contacts was on average 30 years old (SD = 7.5). Of all contacts, 11.1% (n = 29) refused to report their age when asked. Altogether, 10 of the contacts were younger than 18.

.4 The Chat Rooms

All three chat rooms were so called monitored chat rooms (Subrahmanyam, Smahel, & Greenfield, 2006), implying the presence of one or more administrators who followed the threads in the general discussion, whose purpose it is to moderate the content of the general discussion. The chat rooms did not require a fee or a registration in addition to choosing a nickname. Of all chat rooms in Sweden and Finland that were free and did not require registration, these three chat rooms were the most actively visited at the time of data collection. Swedish was spoken in the Swedish chat room and Finnish in the two Finnish chat rooms. The most notable differences between the chat rooms are listed in Table 3.

Table 3.Chat Room Characteristics

The chat rooms	Finnish1	Finnish2	Swedish
Maximum number of visitors at a time	350	50	30
Directed towards males with a homosexual orientation	1	0	0
Sexual nicknames forbidden	0	1	1
Pornographic material displayed	1	0	0
Links to pornographic material	1	0	0
Private simultaneous conversations possible	1	1	0

Note. 1 = Yes, 0 = No.

2.5 Statistical Analyses

SPSS 18.0 was used to conduct all statistical analyses (SPSS Inc., 2009). A Generalized Estimating Equations regression was conducted in order to take into account the effect of a possible dependency of the different researchers on the outcomes of the discussions held with the contacts. The inter rater reliability of the coding was examined by having two research assistants' rate 20 randomly selected discussions. The measure of agreement (Cohen's κ) had a median value of .69, with the values for the different predicted variables all being significant with the exception of that for the variable Picture. Three variables, (Telephone, No sexual tone, and No sexual tone after age) occurred so infrequently that calculation of the κ values was impossible.

3. Results

The results will be presented in the order of the hypotheses.

3.1 The Effect of the Portrayed Age

As predicted, sexual interest in the impersonated persons had a significant positive association with increasing the age of the impersonated child/adolescent. The contacts wanted to engage in sexual communication with impersonated 10 year olds in 21.6% of the cases, with 12-year-olds in 29.8% of the cases, with 14 year olds in 45.5%, with 16year-olds in 73.5%, and with impersonated 18 year olds in 91.1% of the cases. The proportions of different communication means suggested to the impersonated persons in the two kinds of chat rooms visited can be seen in Table 3. We conducted contrast estimations to measure if the proportion of suggestions made by the contacts differed as a function of the age of the impersonated person. By comparing the proportions of suggestions to the impersonated persons of an older age, with suggestions made to impersonated persons of the immediately younger age, we analyzed the effect of the portrayed age (e.g. comparing the proportion of IM suggestions to impersonated persons of 18 years with those made to impersonated 16-year-olds). The asterisks in Table 4 illustrate when the proportions of the suggestions to the older impersonated persons differed from those made to the younger impersonated persons. Further, we conducted a rank order correlation analysis to check the direction of the correlations between the portrayed age of the impersonated person and the different behaviors' that the contacts engaged in. As can be seen in Table 5, not all of the different means by which the contacts' wanted to continue the sexual conversation, was as clearly positively correlated with increasing the age of the impersonated person.

Table 4. Proportions of Behaviors the Contacts engaged In With The Impersonated Person of All Ages and Both Genders

	Impersonated Males					Impersonated Females				
	Age of the Impersonated Person									
	10	12	14	16	18	10	12	14	16	18
	Sexually Suggestive Behaviors									
Chatting	.37	.36	.36	.72**	.85*	.13	.22	.46**	.62+	.82**
Webcam	.00	.00	.18	.00	.00	.00	.00	.27+	.06+	.03
IM	.05	.12	.23*	.22	.08***	.05	.19	.27	.32	.35
F2F	.05	.12	.18	.44+	.69***	.03	.00	.05+	.09*	.32***
Telephone	.00	.00	.05	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03***	.03
Picture	.11	.12***	.14	.17	.00	.00	.06***	.11	.09	.06
	Non-Sexually Suggestive Behaviors									
Stopped After Age	.37	.52***	.36	.11*	.00+	.44	.50	.43	.27+	.03***
Told Off	.21	.04**	.00	.00+	.00+	.23	.08*	.05	.00	.00
Stopped Sexual Tone	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00	.00
No Sexual Tone	.05	.00	.00	.00	.00	.10	.17	.00*	.03***	.08***

Table 5. Correlations between the Proportions of the Contacts' Behaviors and Suggestions and the Age of the Impersonated Persons of Both Genders

	Age of impersonated males	Age of impersonated females
	Spearman's rank *x*	
Chatting	.39**	.51**
Webcam	.03	.12
IM	.09	.23**
F2F	.45**	.33**
Telephone	.02	.12
Picture	- .03	.09
Stopped After Age	-.36**	-.28**
Told Off	-.18	-.29**
Stopped Sexual Tone	a.	-.11
No Sexual Tone	-16	-.10

3.2 Proportions of Suggestions made to Impersonated 16 – 18-Year-Olds in Comparison to Suggestions made to Impersonated 10 – 14-Year-Olds

We analyzed if the proportion of sexual interest in impersonated persons above the **legal age of consent (**16 and 18-year-olds) was larger than the proportion of interest shown in persons below the legal age of consent. The results indicated this to be true only when the contacts suggested continuing the sexual conversation by chatting in the homosexually oriented chat room. Suggestions to communicate via telephone and meeting F2F were more often suggested in the non-sexually oriented chat rooms to impersonated females over the legal age of consent, than to younger ones. The different suggestions made to impersonated males in the homosexually oriented chat rooms are presented in Table 4 and in

Figure 1, and the suggestions made to impersonated females in the non-sexually oriented chat rooms are presented in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Figure 1

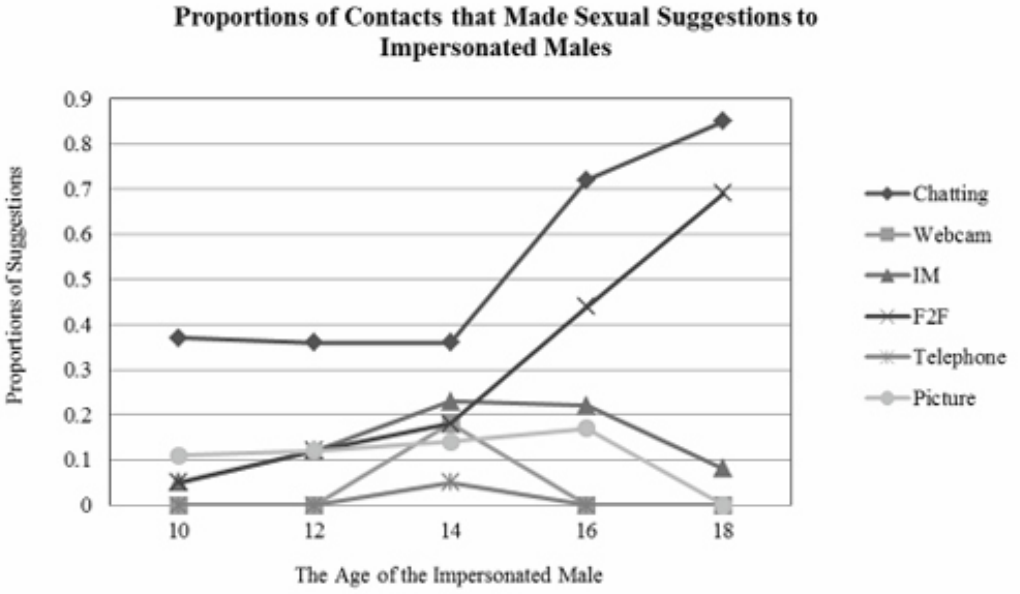

Figure 1. The different lines stand for the proportion of contacts that made suggestions implying sexual interest to impersonated persons of the different portrayed ages.

Figure 2

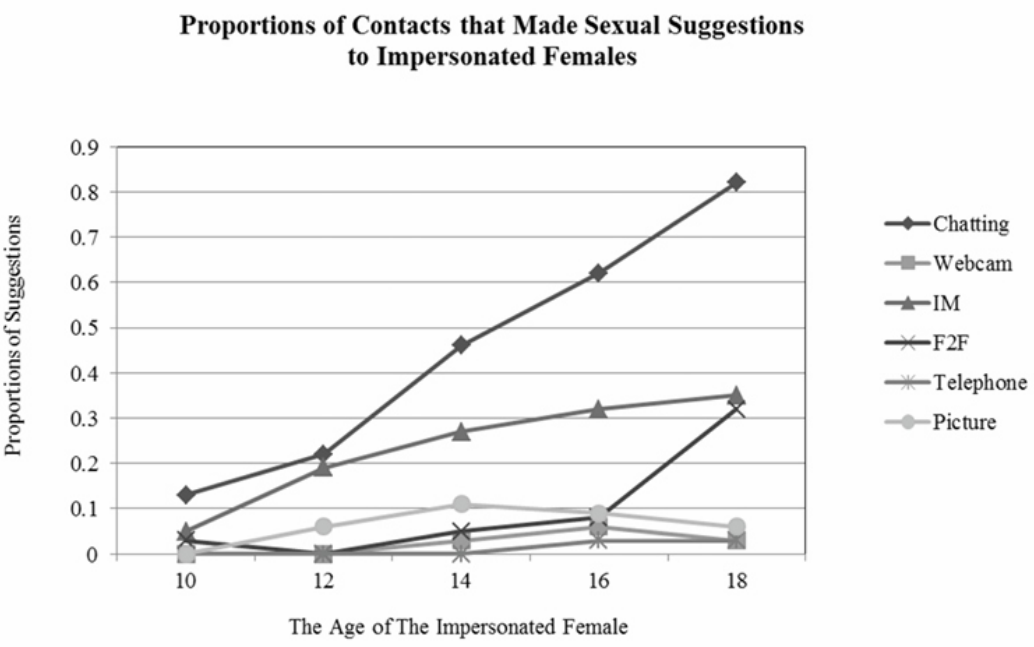

Figure 2. The different lines stand for the proportions of contacts that made suggestions implying sexual interest to impersonated persons of the different portrayed ages.

Figure 2

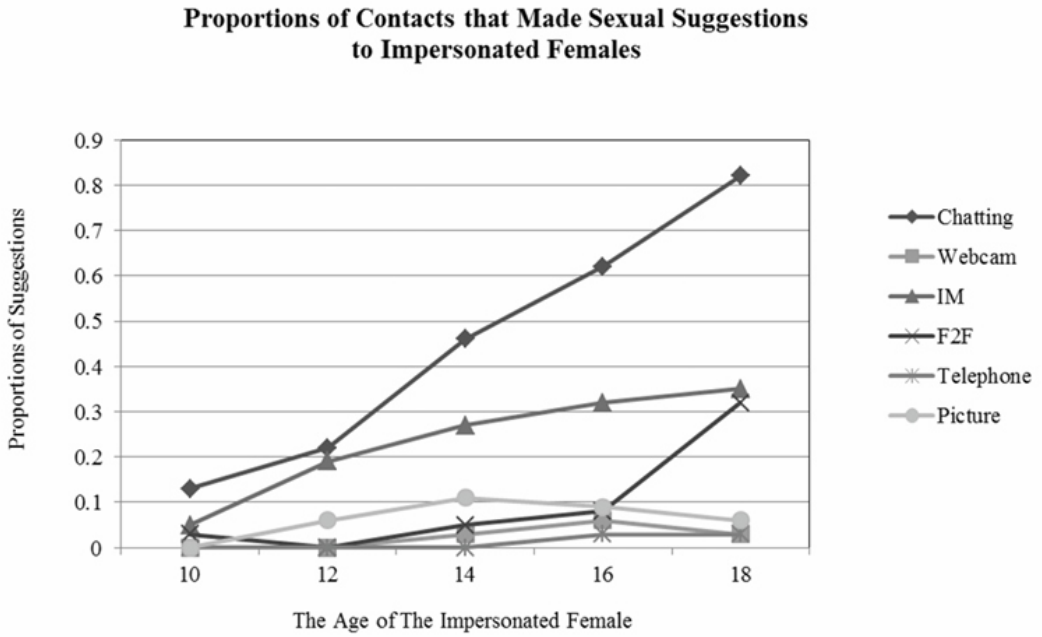

Figure 2. The different lines stand for the proportions of contacts that made suggestions implying sexual interest to impersonated persons of the different portrayed ages.

Figure 4

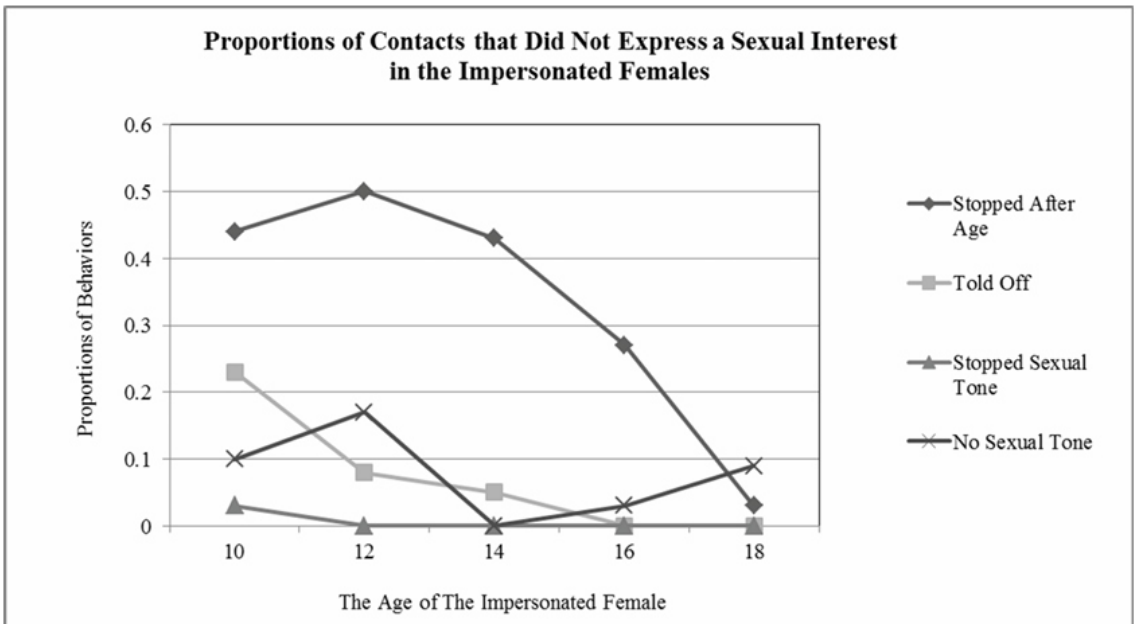

Figure 4. The different lines stand for the behavior by which the contact stated an absence of sexual interest in the impersonated female.

3.3 The Effect of Age on Suggesting to Meet Offline

F2F (a meeting offline) was suggested more often to impersonated persons in both homosexually oriented chat room and the non-sexually oriented chat rooms when the age portrayed was 16 or 18 years (Table 4), compared with suggestions to impersonated 10 – 14-year-olds. We analyzed whether the larger proportions of suggested F2F meetings to older impersonated persons would correlate with a reduced number of suggestions of the other means of communication, as indicated in Table 4. When we analyzed which of the suggestions for further communication correlated with suggested F2F meetings, we found significant relationships amongst contacts that discussed with impersonated male persons aged 10 to 14 on chatting, Pearson's $r = .40$, $p < .01$. When the contacts discussed with 16 to 18-year old impersonated males, suggesting IM correlated negatively with F2F suggestions, Pearson's $r = -.48$, $p < .01$, as did asking for a picture $r = -.36$, $p < .05$. The suggestions made by contacts for chatting that discussed with impersonated females of the age 10 to 14 correlated positively with F2F suggestions, Pearson's $r = .27$, $p < .01$. Suggesting chatting correlated positively with F2F suggestions also when the contacts discussed with impersonated females aged 16 to 18, Pearson's $r = .32$, $p < .01$.

3.4 The Effect of Age on Ending the Conversation

We expected that a majority of the contacts would end the discussion in the chat rooms with impersonated 10 and 12-year-olds, and that the reason would be the portrayed age. In 46.5% of the cases where the researchers impersonated 10 and 12-year-olds the contacts behavior was best described and coded as the variable "Stopped after age", while 26% of the contacts expressed a wish to continue a sexual conversation using one or more means of communication mentioned in Table 3 with impersonated 10 and 12-year-olds. Presented in Figure 3 and Figure 4 are the proportions of different behaviors by which the contact demonstrated that they were not sexually interested in the impersonated person. The proportion of contacts who took an active stance against the impersonated children in both kinds of chat rooms by telling them off (Told off), was higher when the age of the impersonated child was 10 years, compared with discussions in which the researchers impersonated 12-year-olds. The contacts ended the discussion in the chat room (Stopped after age) after the age of the impersonated child was revealed most often in discussions with impersonated 12-year-olds (Table 3; Figures 3 and 4).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The researchers impersonated children and adolescents of different ages in three online chat rooms (one explicitly sexual, which was directed towards homosexual males and two chat rooms with no explicit

target audience and no explicit sexual theme). We measured the proportions of male chat rooms visitors (contacts) that expressed sexual interest in impersonated children and adolescents of different ages. We were also interested in by which means the contacts suggested to continue the conversation, or at what point in the conversation they ended the discussion with the impersonated person, and why.

Our first hypothesis stated that the degree of sexual interest expressed towards the impersonated children and adolescents would increase as a function of the impersonated person's age. According to the results, the proportion of contacts that expressed a sexual interest was larger, the older the portrayed age of the female (i.e. conversations in then either non-sexual nor sexually oriented chat rooms), partly confirming the first fold of our first hypothesis (the same was true for impersonated males, however a slightly larger proportion of contacts expressed a sexual interest in 10- compared with 12-year-olds, although this was not significant). However, the sexual interest expressed towards 10 and 12-year-olds was surprisingly large, since 21.6% of the contacts that chatted with impersonated 10-year-olds expressed a wish to continue the sexual conversation, and 29.8% that chatted with impersonated 12-year-olds expressed the same wish (not taking the effect of the different chat rooms into account). These prevalence rates are significantly greater than the reported prevalence of pedophilic sexual interest in the population (which is thought to be below 5%, Seto 2007). Therefore, a likely explanation would be that a large proportion of these contacts were not sexually interested in the impersonated persons of 10 and 12 years of age. To expand upon this, many visitors of these kinds of forums may treat information given by others (e.g. age), as irrelevant since the controllability of the truthfulness is practically non-existent. Therefore, one could argue that the characteristics of the other person in these forums are of much less importance than they would be in real-life situations. The percentages of contacts that suggested meeting impersonated 10 and 12 year olds offline were significantly lower, which could imply that online sexual contact is regarded as something entirely different from offline sexual contact.

With the second fold of the first hypothesis, we wanted to examine whether contacts would be noticeably affected by legal deterrence, and therefore not engage in sexual conversations or suggest any means of continuing a sexual communication with impersonated persons under the legal age of consent. The results show that a larger proportion of the contacts made a suggestion to continue the sexual conversation in the chat room (Chatting) to impersonated males above the legal age of consent. A larger proportion of the contacts suggested using a telephone, and to meet F2F to impersonated females over the legal age of consent than to younger females. However, we only found partial support for this hypothesis as the contacts did not express an increased interest in all means of communication to older adolescents. No significant effects on the proportion of suggestions to use webcam, communicate via telephone or requests for a picture were found. Since we did not find support for a deterring effect of the

legal age of consent on several variables, we concluded that the hypothesis based on the assumption of age preferences being normally distributed in the population provided a better explanation for the results from the study at hand.

A larger proportion of the contacts suggested meeting F2F to impersonated persons (of both genders) above the legal age of consent. We wanted to explore if the larger proportion of suggested F2F meetings could explain why other suggested means were not present in more cases with impersonated 16 and 18 year olds, compared to cases with 10 – 14 year olds. The increase in suggestions to meet F2F to impersonated persons above the legal age of consent correlated negatively with other suggestions only when the impersonated persons were male on IM and picture, suggesting a possible trade off for these variables (Table 5). Since the homosexually oriented chat room seemed to be used as a setting facilitating sexual encounters both online and in real-life, one could interpret the results as indicative of a preference for a real-life sexual encounter over online encounters, when possible. Since the impersonated person always portrayed to live in the vicinity of the contact, this would be a likely scenario.

In 46.5% of the cases when the contacts discussed with impersonated 10 and 12 year olds, the contacts ended the discussion after the portrayed age was revealed. Our third hypothesis was therefore supported, since it stated that more contacts would end the discussion with 10 and 12 year olds. Additionally, in 22% of the cases (not taking the gender of the impersonated person into account) when the contacts conversed with an impersonated 10 year old, the contact told off the impersonated person for being too young to visit the chat room. This could be seen as a sign that not only the chat room administrators, but the visitors as well try to impose safety recommendations and regulations in the chat rooms.

Carroll (2005) studied online social forums, and found that explicit sexual content was always present in homosexually oriented chat rooms (directed towards males) and that flirting often occurred in the general discussions in chat rooms directed towards both genders. The results from the present study showed that a large proportion of contacts most likely entered the chat rooms for a sexual purpose. The contacts that conversed with impersonated 18-year-olds introduced a sexual topic in 91.1% of the conversations, which illustrates that the climate in the chat rooms was highly sexual. The sexual motivation could provide an explanation for the large sexual interest expressed towards impersonated 10 to 14 year olds (32.3%), as arousal has been shown to decrease sexual restrictiveness in men (Ariely & Loewenstein, 2006). Due to the climate in the chat rooms, it is possible that at least some of the contacts were sexually aroused while logged in.

Previous studies have reported that adolescents who are sexually solicited online are most often females,

of 13 years or older (Baumgartner et al., 2010; Wolak et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). That previous studies have not reported many cases of younger adolescents and children as being typical victims of online sexual solicitation might be due to either chat room visitors not harboring sexual interests in children less than 13 years, or restraining from expressing such interest to a larger degree. Other explanations could lay in the fact that children compared with adolescents visit chat rooms less often (Livingstone et al., 2011), or that children do not report experiences of online sexual solicitation as often as adolescents. The method of the present study allowed us to control for the availability of children and adolescents of all the portrayed ages. The results show that there was a proportion of chat room visitors that expressed a sexual interest in children younger than 13 years, but supported earlier study results that older adolescents are at higher risk of being solicited online (Mitchell et al., 2001).

5. Limitations: Methodological and Ethical Considerations

Firstly, the information on the contacts was based on self-reports, which could not be verified. This affects the interpretation of the results since ever having portrayed to be of the opposite gender in a chat room was reported 28% of the male participants and by 18% of the females in a study by Whitty (2002). Approximately 60% of the participants had lied about their age (Whitty, 2002). In addition, we were unable to control whether or not, the contacts were serious in their suggestions to continue the conversation with the impersonated child or adolescent. However, given the anonymous setting, and that the participants were not aware that the conversations were used for the purposes of a study; it could also be argued that the incentives to lie would be lower than in a conventional study setting. No published data on the prevalence of adolescents of the impersonated ages in the chat rooms visited were available, and it is highly likely that especially 10 and 12 year olds are not frequent visitors in these chat rooms. In a European project, 14% of boys and girls aged 9 – 12 had visited a chat room during the last month. Amongst 13 to 16 year-olds, 35% of male adolescents had visited a chat room during the last month and 28% of the female adolescents (Livingstone et al., 2011).

Secondly, the contacts were treated as independent of each other in the statistical analysis, though there were a few contacts that the researchers may have discussed with on two occasions. It is possible that frequent visitors used several nicknames in the chat rooms. Also, we chose to investigate males' online sexual interest and behaviors, based on previous studies that have reported that up to 99% of adults who have solicited adolescents online, have been males (Wolak et al., 2004). We directed our attention towards males always impersonating females in the non-sexually oriented chat rooms and males in the homosexually oriented chat room (directed towards males). Furthermore, the method used in the present study was such that chat room visitors, who were seeking young persons in the chat rooms, were more

likely to initiate a discussion with the impersonated person since the nickname involved the word "young". Therefore the results from the present study should be treated with the quasi-experimental research design in mind.

An ethical concern that needs to be raised in the context of the study is that while we were aware of giving potential misinformation about the presence of children and adolescence in the chat rooms, we deemed that the value of the results from the present study would be higher than the possible harm. The deceptive nature of the present study was discussed, and the authors agreed that the level of deception would not greatly exceed that of what is expected in standard chat room discussions (Whitty, 2002). These issues were raised and approved at a Departmental Ethics Review Seminar prior to the commencement of the study. Also, it should be noted, that we had no means of (nor any interest in) gaining any information that could lead to a positive identification of those engaging in conversation, thus ensuring absolute anonymity in the study.

A last important consideration to keep in mind is a probable confounder that has been addressed by researchers in previous studies (Briggs et al., 2011: Fulda 2002; Mitchell et al., 2005), which is that of the identity of the solicited. For example, Mitchell et al. (2005) noted that the offenders convicted for having solicited adolescents online differed on several individual and situational factors depending on whether they had solicited an actual adolescent, or if they solicited an undercover law enforcement agent posing as an adolescent online in so called "Internet sting" operations. The offenders that had solicited a law enforcement agent posing as an adolescent had shorter length of communication, had more seldom committed prior offences, both sexual and nonsexual, and were more likely to be employed full-time than the offenders with actual adolescent victims. Although trained in conduct and language, the law enforcement agents, and the researchers in the present study possibly evoked somewhat different responses than actual adolescents would. One of the possible reasons for the differences probably stem from the kind of chat room utilized in the investigations. The offenders that were arrested through proactive investigations had more often conversed with their target through sexually explicit chat rooms, compared with actual adolescent solicitors that more often used nonsexually oriented chat rooms intended for teenagers. Although part of the present study was conducted in two chat rooms that were not explicitly sexual or sexually oriented, a large proportion of the contacts initiated a sexual topic in these chat rooms.

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Frames of Fraud: A Qualitative Analysis of the Structure and Process of Victimization on the Internet

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A B S T R A C T

In this paper, the structures and processes of Internet fraud are analyzed. By applying Goffman's (1974) concept of frame analysis, we show that fraud is a type of fabrication, a strategic interaction in which one party (the deceiver) uses information that allows a different interpretation of the situation as compared to the perspective of the deceived party. The process of becoming a victim of cyber fraud has three stages, which are structurally equivalent to what anthropologists' call rites of passage. In the first stage, the future victim is isolated from ordinary social experience and the level of precaution decreases. Within the second stage, some illusory grounds of social interaction are maintained by the offender in interacting with the victim until transactions are accomplished. In the third phase, the victim learns of his or her status as the deceived party and the illusion to which they have fallen victim becomes clear. Managing failure and realignment with intersubjectively shared social reality is necessary. With reference to the experiences taking place in these phases, we refer to them as getting hooked on, staying attuned and cooling out.

Keywords: Frames, Fraud, Goffman's Analysis, Internet, Victimization.

Introduction

This paper is a piece of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) under the conditions of contemporary electronic communication media and from the victims' perspective. Goffman's concept of frame analysis (1974) allows an adequate understanding and explanation of the structures and processes that are involved in fraud in general and in cyber fraud in particular. Goffman's work is used in a large range of research fields, but its methodological focus is the discovery of everyday life interaction processes as a world sui generis (Rawls, 1987). In the context of cyber crime, frame analysis is used, for e.g., in order to analyze the rhetorical strategies of email scammers (Freiermuth, 2011). Paraphrasing an aphoristic formula of Goffman's sociology, this paper is not about men and their technologies, but rather about technologies and their men (Goffman, 1967, p. 1).

Goffman took up Bateson's (1972) concept of frames in order to respond to a core question of the sciences of the social and historical world: How do we constitute social reality? Why do we believe in a taken for granted reality, the reality of things or other human beings? Under the conditions of modernity, the problem of reality cannot be conceptualized as something objectively given without its relation to an

observer who "constructs" it (and a social scientist, who reconstructs this construction in second order observation [Schutz, 1967]). Following James (1890) and Schutz (1967), Goffman does not ask what reality is. Rather, he asks the following: Under which circumstances do we consider things real? (Goffman, 1974, p. 2). James' (1980) point of departure was the fact that the world is not given as an undifferentiated entity. It is differentiated into sectors or sub-worlds: the world of dreams, myths, science, art or even madness. Each world has its own style of existence, which expresses its specific character of reality. Dreams are real in a different way than science or social action, but without doubt, dreams are real for a dreamer under specific circumstances and in the dream's style of existence.

Schutz (1962) further elaborated on the ideas of James (1890) and spoke about different provinces of meaning, which are separated from each other. The structure of meaning is different in each of these realms and we experience this difference by a kind of shock when we move from one province to the other. Much of the beliefs of everyday life are lost when we move into the realm of science, where the laws of logical inference strictly organize the structure of meaning (coherence, consistence and consequence of a system of propositions). Goffman (1974) was not fully satisfied with Schutz's solution of the problem of reality. The framework of everyday life and of wide-awake practical realities, as argued by Goffman (1974), did not fully bring out the implications of the constitution of reality. As a consequence, there was no way to determine or describe precisely enough the number of worlds, subworlds and provinces of meaning and the transition between different worlds by the experience of a shock. Schutz's analysis was "merely to take a shot in the dark" (Goffman 1974, p. 26). However, it was enough to work out a far-reaching conceptual scheme.

In order to eliminate these problems, Goffman introduced the idea of frames. Frames consist of the principles and rules of organization of the world in question. Roughly speaking, frames are not styles of existence– they are styles of observation. When two people play chess, for example, they observe the game with two different frames of reference: a physical frame, which enables the players to move the figures on the chess board through space and time, and a social frame of the game, which determines the rules and the possible and favorable moves of the figures. Frames, then, determine which "strip of reality" is observed and what this strip of reality means. Two types of frames can be distinguished: primary and secondary frames. Primary frames determine the most basic, apriori interpretations of the world and thereby constitute reality as such. They cannot be reduced to other, more fundamental frames. In Wittgenstein's (1953) philosophy of language, the primary level of framing is the mother tongue as the most fundamental language from which all other languages are derived. Schutz (1967) argues that the life world is the final and primary system of orientation of human action. According to a useful distinction of human experience in modern society, primary frames can be natural or social. Natural

frames refer to blind and causally determined cosmic processes; social frames refer to voluntarily organized human actions, which include plans and intentions. The chess game mentioned above serves as a paradigm.

Frames draw a line between what is inside and what is outside, thereby constituting "strips" of reality. Shared reality is constituted if a number of individuals interpret a strip of reality by using the same frame of reference. Based on the idea that frames can be shared – which is a condition of social action based on the phenomenon of intersubjectivity – two types of transformations of frames are possible. In the first type, all participants share the transformation of a given frame. Goffman (1974) calls these transformations key. The metaphor is taken from the notation system of occidental music. It allows a distinction between a real fight and a played fight or between a quarrel and a theatre play. Keys are open to all sorts of transformations and variations, which is a condition for the incredible richness and complexity of human experience. In the second type, only one party has control over the transformation process, while the other party defines the situation differently. This reframing process is called fabrication.

Theatre or magic tricks are a type of fabrication enabling a socially accepted and harmless form of deception. Suffering with King Lear and forgetting the borders between play and reality does not impinge on our ability to have control over the border line between theatre and reality. However, there is another type of fabrication, which can be characterized by the exclusion of a person or a group from the constitution of the frame, a fact, which allows strategic interaction of a malign kind: "A second class of fabrications, the exploitive kind, is now to be considered: one party containing others in a construction that is clearly inimical to their private interests, here defining 'private interests' as the community might" (Goffman, 1974, p. 103).

All forms of fraud belong to this second type of fabrication and the problem for the fraudster is how to move a victim into a mood in which he or she voluntarily engages in such an exploitive kind of interaction. We want to argue that it is often the "private interests" of individuals, which cause them to become a victim of cyber fraud. Interests are those parts of a system of interaction which organize motivational processes on a social and not just an individual base. They might be private, but they are not merely subjective. They are always part of a social structure. Interests are socially framed needs institutionalized in specific situations and under specific conditions.

Becoming a victim of fraud is an active process and this "achievement" is probably an important reason for feelings of guilt and shame after the fraudulent action has been

discovered. This does not mean that the victim is guilty or fully responsible for his misery. It means that he or she must engage in a line of action that allows him or her to participate in a deceiving interaction without much encouragement from the side of the deceiver, at least not in the first moment. Cyber fraud has more in common with angling than with robbing. You throw out your angle and wait until a victim is on the hook and it often depends on which lure (anticipated private interests) you use whether you will catch a suitable victim. Often the deceiver must activate some socially shared private interests in order to heat-on the willingness of the victim to participate in fraudulent dealings.

Getting hooked on, as we call this process, has two functions in the context of a of fraud: First, it must trigger the wants of the victim to achieve a desired good or service, for example, a strong want to have the most recent iPhone or a cute pet or being the winner of an incredible amount of money; however, it can also involve avoiding something undesired, a charge, a high fee or even a legal sanction. Second, such getting hooked on must reduce the victim's levels of risk awareness and caution of engaging in interaction with strangers (interaction with strangers based on solidarity and reciprocity of perspectives of action orientation is a precondition of modern society). By getting hooked on, victims are isolated from socially shared frames of interpretation and thereby are detached from a realistic interpretation of the situation. This type of mechanism is widely used in legal frames of action as well. It must not be invented by criminal intention. Magicians use these techniques of slightly shifting our system of relevance and our expectations away from the scene in order to conduct a trick in a moment of lowered awareness.

Once the victim is isolated and willing to engage in a fraudulent interaction, interest in the desired goods must be maintained. The victim must be kept attuned to the style of interpretation, which is controlled by the offender. In this phase, offender and victim share a world detached from the realm of ordinary experience and the trusted ways of everyday life. It is a state of liminality, which sometimes allows for an increase of the gain for the offender by further demands. Another bill, taxes, a vaccination, for example, have to be paid in order to receive the cute pet (imagine it is waiting for you at the Hungarian border). Yet, there is a point at which the victim will detect and dissolve the fabric of invented stories and hit the sober grounds of ordinary ways of thinking and acting. For a more or less long period of time, a kind of self-deception or denial of what is really happening helps us to stay attuned, but when the deception is implausible in some of its fundamental assumptions, it can no longer be maintained. For some time, victims try to repair their disappointed expectations. They might wait for another week; the seller of the pet could be on holiday. Individuals with high trust in the normality and openness of the social world defend beliefs for as long as possible. They do not want to be disillusioned. This moment of awakening can be a kind of a shock, as described by Schutz (1967), which is sometimes accompanied by a crisis of

trust in reality. Sometimes this shock causes feelings of shame ("how could I have been so foolish", "it is so obvious that this offer was completely ridiculous", etc.). There are various ways to work through this experience of reintegrating it with the "normality" of everyday life. We can call this phase the cooling-out phase. Getting hooked on, staying attuned and cooling out are phases of a tripartite structure.

We can reconstruct the experience of shock as outlined by Schutz (1974) by the process of transgressing a threshold, theorized by a concept of rites of passage. transgression can be understood as a transformation at the end of which a person receives the social status of the victim. The process is organized by a three-staged sequence corresponding to three types of rites: rites of separation, liminal rites (marginality) and postliminal rites (incorporation). The structure and duration of each stage or phase is variable. Van Gennep (1960) found rites for each of these stages in ethnographic material. Giving birth and thereby becoming a mother was organized by a rite of incorporation. Initiation, the phase between the status of adolescents and becoming a full male member of the group, was framed by a liminal rite. Saying farewell to childhood was a rite of separation. Van Gennep (1960) developed a sequence model or schéma in order to elaborate on the basic procedure that can be found in each of these rites of passage. It encompasses all three stages in various degrees. This scheme can be found on the individual level as in our analysis of becoming a victim, but also on the collective level, where, for example, a whole society is transformed from dictatorship to democracy, like Germany after 1945 (Gerhardt, 2006).

The type of process we are interested in here differs in one important aspect: it does not only transform the person, it also transforms the schema of experiencing the world, which is reframed by a fabrication. Additionally, the third phase (incorporation) is not a reintegration of a new person, but the reintegration of the organization of experiences, which otherwise would become out of touch with the common grounds of social reality.

The rite of passage, then, produces a little counter-world, which appears as common-sense reality. Victims have to modulate their schemes of interpretation by using the assumptions offered by the offender as preconditions of their belief system. They go through a marginal phase, which is like common-sense reality, until the belief system is destroyed, making realignment with social reality necessary. Experiences of shame, guilt or anger mark the new status of having been transformed into a victim.

The Present Study

In order to transpose Goffman's analysis of the social organization of experience to contemporary society and its widespread computer technology, we conducted qualitative interviews with 30 victims of cyber fraud in Austria, generated in the course of a study on cyber crime in Austria (Burgard, & Stoßier, 2012). The process of victimization, in a can be described as a process of the (deceptive) constitution of experience and for understanding this problem we will develop an adequate conceptual scheme. Our argument has two steps: (1) we will outline a conceptual scheme of understanding structures and processes of victimization in cyber fraud. In order to understand the structural side of becoming a victim, we refer to Goffman's concept of frame analysis. With the purpose of understand the processional side; we will refer to the concept of rites of passage. (2) we will apply this scheme to qualitative data. These two steps will help us to answer the research questions: How is a system of fraudulent interaction constituted and how is it integrated within an individual's everyday life?

Data and Methods

The sample was organized in terms of gender (16 female, 14 male), age (from 29 years to 73) and residence at the time of the interview (cf. table 1). The goal of the interviews was to better understand how members of contemporary Austrian society became victims of Internet crime, how fraud occurred and how the victim reacted after the incident. Furthermore, the interviewed individuals were asked how they felt after the offence and their approach towards the Internet has changed. Firstly, we wanted to know what kind of fraud had been experienced (cf. table 2).

Some respondents were repeatedly victimized. Hence, the number of victims is higher than the total amount of participants. Eleven of the 30 respondents indicated that the fraud occurred on eBay. Looking at these facts, it can be presumed that such crime is prevalent in most people's everyday life. We will interpret some of the facts described in the interviews in terms of our conceptual scheme, thereby looking at the structure and process of the interaction system. Specifically, how persons become involved in a fraudulent interaction, how they became attuned to it and how they found a way out and back to reality will be assessed. Interview material was sorted by differentiating between types of fraud, arguing that the same process is at work in all cases.

Table 1. Sample

IV.no	Age	Sex	Postal code
7483/1	53	female	4894
7483/2	52	female	5282
7483/3	31	female	5452
4593/1	73	male	4331
4596/2	29	female	4563
4596/3	49	male	3335
4596/4	58	male	4151
4596/5	36	male	4020
6084/1	39	female	1210
6084/2	37	male	1110
6084/3	30	female	1110
6084/4	57	female	1210
6084/5	37	female	1160
6084/6	51	female	1100
6084/7	50	female	1100
6084/8	43	male	1170
6084/9	36	female	1150
6084/10	41	female	1230
6084/11	72	male	1020
6084/12	34	male	1190
8004/1	46	male	3261
8004/2	63	male	3204
7339/1	no reply	male	2000
4226/1	53	female	9210
4226/2	49	female	9500
4047/1	54	male	8020
4047/2	33	female	8141
4047/3	55	female	8511
4047/4	53	male	8111
4047/5	46	male	8401

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Table 2. Forms of offenses

Forms of offenses	Number of victims
Wrong or damaged product or products were not delivered even though the victim paid	12
Hidden-fee download	7
Seller on the Internet and never received money from the customer	3
Job offers which appeared fraudulent afterwards (e.g. snowball system)	3
Gains/inheritance for which an advance payment is necessary	2
Lotteries	2
Hidden-fee games	1
Account hacking	1
Anonymous	1
Total	**32**

Results and Discussion

1. Getting hooked on

In the first phase of getting hooked on, future victims decrease their levels of risk perception and increase their motivation to satisfy their private interests as the following example shows:

A motorcycle was announced, used, he indicated payment in advance. My husband wanted to pay the full amount at once, but we have sent a down payment of 1000 Euros (4047/3).

This mechanism triggers a want for a desired good or service either by its value as an object or by its cheap price. Hiding important information from the situation or downsizing its importance helps to increase the fraudster's chance of success, as he or she may speculate that it drops beneath the threshold of the victim's awareness: The way it happened – they say it is for free – I downloaded a route planner, five pages of terms and conditions of business, no one reads that. And then I got an invoice for 53 Euros (4047/1).

The effect of this process, then, is that the victim interprets a given "strip of reality" differently than the offender. In our interviews, fraud most often occurred in the context of shopping on the Internet. Products were wrong, damaged or otherwise incomplete, or they were not delivered even though they were paid for. The respondents, for example, wanted a new mobile phone, or they wanted a rare book for

studying, a motorcycle was offered or even a kitchen for which a deposit was demanded.

Another version is offering access to exotic events, like tickets to an opera in Venice. I went to Venice and wanted to visit the opera there. There was a homepage which offered tickets for a performance at a certain date. It was half a year in advance and I paid by credit card. The cards should have been sent to me (6084/5).

In all these cases, future victims find various goods on the Internet for which they are actively searching or which they find by occasion and urgently desire. One respondent expresses this point quite clearly:

I absolutely wanted to have a new mobile phone. I focused my search requests. […] In a shop I would have had to pay 500 Euro; I paid 300 Euro (6084/2).

Hidden fee downloads were also mentioned quite often. Getting hooked on is unspectacular. The victims we interviewed occasionally found a free open source program on the Internet (4596/3), needed to download various freeware in order to open specific types of files, downloaded music for which payment was demanded (4596/4), needed route-planner software which was thought to be cost-free, or found material for their professional interest (lyrics – 6084/6):

My husband is musician. He found a website and there was a link. He found these lyrics. Even a colleague said that he can download for free there. There was no sign indicating that you have to pay for or become a member (6084/6).

One of the respondents was on holiday in Italy and gives an example of how need is created in a specific situation:

There is so much email traffic. Everyone sends emails and attachments. You need a program in order to be able to open attachments. You can open one attachment, but not the other. There are some programs to open [these files] on the Internet. And such a program – a friend sends me various information about topographical descriptions [of geographical areas] – I cannot open. So I start looking for a program on the Internet (4596/1).

Complementary to fraud in the context of shopping and buying is fraud in the context of selling a good or service on the Internet. Getting hooked on focuses on the "impression management" (Goffman, 1958) of the customer, who has to appear as an honest person, able to pay for what he is ordering. Fraudulent

customers use the same techniques as fraudsters, who send phishing mails. They use, for example, counterfeit emails. Logos of PayPal or eBay contribute to a "reality effect." A victim who wanted to sell his car used these elements as indicators for further engaging in a trustful relationship:

It was in spring 2011, in May. It came from London. We had announced a car on a market platform. He [the potential buyer] contacted us by SMS and used really good counterfeit emails, adding the logos of eBay and PayPal as the online payment system. It looked very secure, but unfortunately, this was not the case. He has never paid (4047/4).

A specific form of getting hooked on by invoking desires or wants for a specific good or service can occur during the process of looking for a job. Persons in urgent need of a job or individuals, who are looking for part-time occupation that can be done from home, are at risk:

On a platform, I found a job offering: 'international company is looking for a messenger.' With my handicap I needed a part-time job. It was a good offer. You take the packages and send them to the address, to the country that is indicated. You get a fixed price and a provision (6084/1).

A "trick" of the job offer is that it is associated with the obligation to buy documents necessary for understanding and doing the job (this information could have been found in the small print, but the customer did not think of this – hence, a legal way of constructing fabrications):

It was a home-work offer; I understood that you write service emails for different companies. I am good at writing, so it would have been interesting. I read that the instruction documents are for free, you just have to become a customer and to order an e-book for 40 Euro or the big package for 90 Euro (4226/1)

The last type of getting hooked on process to be discussed here is being confronted with an unexpected event associated with incredible fortune. Such events can be of the purely contingent type such as winning the lottery, or they can be a more sophisticated type, in which "reality effects" are produced because the victim can identify parts of the fraudulent construction with his or her own life circumstances.

I was contacted by an e-mail from Germany, by the Class Lottery [Klassenlotterie] that I won the lottery and that I shall forward my phone number. Class Lottery appears to be serious. I was phoned by a lady. She immediately congratulated me for my fortune – I do not remember how much it was – and she said,

she does already have the dates of my banking account (6084/3).

Getting hooked on is not induced by a desired good, but by the event, which fits one's own background expectations either by matched events and circumstances or by unexpected and contingent events (fitting into every life course). In one case (8004/4), the reality effect was produced because elements of the fraud frame matched some biographical elements of the victim. A respondent of this study was confronted with an email by a foreign lawyer, who contacted him stating that his brother had died and some legal issues had to be clarified concerning inheritance. In fact, the victim had a brother, who lived in this foreign country, but he had not had contact with him for decades. So, there was some plausibility to believe the story. We could call this mechanism make-believe mechanism:

I received an e-mail. I have no contact to my relatives. I had a brother in Spain who had died and he [a lawyer] wrote that I am the beneficiary of an insurance. It was done on a serious basis, all with certification (8004/1).

If such stories are told on a level that is specific and general enough, any person could potentially find some moments in their own life that fit the description. In a non-criminal context, this technique is used for casting horoscopes, but also psychology students studying the various forms of neurosis are familiar with these experiences.

2. Staying attuned

Once the process of getting hooked on has taken place, a person is detached from interaction processes based on rationality and reciprocity. The victim drifts into a situation of "strategic interaction", where the person that controls the situation has another definition of what is going on than the victim. Getting hooked on is the mechanism which decreases an individual's levels of risk perception and awareness of signs of possible danger. Strategic interaction, however, is not a taken for granted state of the process; it must be maintained either by decreasing feelings of distrust or by increasing the level of trust in the honesty and sincerity of the fraudster. We call this process, in which the fraudster tries to keep the awareness structure stable within the situation, staying-attuned. The fraudster must prevent or transform signs, which put the frame of fraud under scrutiny.

In the context of Internet shopping, doubts occur when goods are not delivered in due time. Victims start requesting reasons for the delay via phone calls or emails. They try several times. Initially, when they are unable to make contact, they might think that the time in which they called was perhaps inconvenient or

the seller might be on holiday.

Victims often say things like, "After some days I made an inquiry and was told that the seller had a delay and will need more time" (4596/2).

Another supportive fact is that victims are "naive" even amidst the deception and believe they have everything under control. Maybe they do have everything under control, but because of excessive getting hooked on, they lose control at a decisive moment. The case of ordering a mobile phone, which the victim ardently desired, is instructive:

"He said that he lives in a Western part of Austria. I did not suspect anything. Then I was so naive and thought that I would pay on delivery. In this case, I am allowed to inspect the product and I not obliged to give the money to the postman. But I gave him the money first, thinking that I can do whatever I want with the package afterwards. He doesn't wait, does he? I didn't take a long time for me to discover that something was wrong here. The package was sent from the Eastern part of Austria. And I absolutely wanted the device. I thought that everything would be alright. I gave 300 Euro to the postman. I opened it and discovered a used rear car light (6084/2).

Hidden-fee downloads often work with a combination of stress-making - potentially decreasing the victims' abilities to interpret the situation adequately - and a lack of service (unreachable by phone or e-mail). The problem with this frame is that during the getting hooked on phase, victims have agreed via contract, or at least are under the impression that they have. Sometimes they are not sure whether they have signed a contract at all. It might even be that the supposition of having signed a contract is not true. Panic and feelings of being urged to do something in order to avoid conflict with lawyers or collection agencies causes the victim to stay attuned to the situation:

Then I received a letter from a lawyer, against whom, in the meantime, some claims have been brought in. In my panic, I tried to get someone on the phone. A time limit was set. I never reached someone, neither by phone nor by fax. The day before the limit was over, I reached someone. I was in panic, she was unfriendly and unfortunately I was insolvent. I couldn't afford a lawsuit. So I paid (4596/3).

Winning the lottery or gaining an inheritance, the existence of which was unknown before, is a highly improbable occasion. Levels of distrust will be high. When the victim was heated on by "reality effects", like the duped heir, who really had a brother living abroad with whom he had no contact, the victim must be convinced by further indicators of reality in order for trust to be secured. The victim started

researching on the Internet and there seemed to be no reason to doubt what was announced in the lawyer's letter:

First, I used Google in order find out if the lawyer, who contacted me, existed. Everything was fine. Then I sent him more than 1000 Euro for further processing. And that's all. I never heard from him again (8004/1).

Such forms of fraud are more likely to succeed when technology, like the Internet, is used. Sending mass-mails to a huge number of receivers allows for the general defining of a situation. The story behind the make-believe mechanism is general, yet also specific enough in order to be integrated with the victim's life course.

3. Cooling out

When individuals are detached from ordinary social life by processes of getting hooked on (separation) and staying attuned (liminality), a way back is needed in which the victim can once more integrate with the taken for granted social order; otherwise, they will be caught in a liminal situation, which does not allow for engagement in interaction processes based on trust and reciprocity of action orientation. Thus, victims must engage in processes of cooling out (Goffman, 1952) or reintegration with social reality. This process in different forms was found in all conducted interviews.

In the context of shopping on the Internet, fraud victims, as a first step, tried to "repair" the damage. Participant 6084/2, who ordered a new mobile phone and received an old rear-light instead, immediately phoned the post office, but there was no chance of reversing the contract. Attempts to phone the seller were also made, but there was no way to achieve contact.

I phoned the post office immediately. They said they cannot do anything. I could not get the seller on the phone. I thought by myself, ok, never mind, everyone makes mistakes. I give him some time. I had his e-mail address and all that. I looked him up on the internet (6084/2).

The homepage of the fraudulent seller was even found and effort was made to urge the fraudulent seller to return the money: posting on his homepage, writing emails and threatening to go to the police. Although the police did not help and put some blame on the buyer's incautious behavior, it was still important to report the offence. The incident is reframed by an administrative procedure. Thereby it is no longer an experience that is a part of everyday life. Whether the money will be returned is not the most

important element of this process; instead, it is crucial to isolate the deviant interaction process from ordinary life. Reporting fraud to the police when shopping on the Internet (but also in other contexts of cyber fraud) was not a common behavior amongst the respondents. Only six of 30 respondents went to the police. There are various reasons for refraining from reporting. Sometimes victims thought that the damage was not high enough and it was not worth the effort. Sometimes they did not even know that the police are competent in these cases. Other victims believed or even knew that offenders operated from abroad and thought that the Austrian police had no opportunity to prosecute the incident. Other reasons included being ashamed, a lack of knowledge of such an offense being classified as a criminal case or the victim had a bad experience with the police in the past.

The most important coolingout strategy is rationalization and drawing a line between past experiences and present knowledge ("I should have known better", "I have learned from this experience", "now I am wiser and more careful", etc.). More "aggressive" forms of reaction are avoiding the service, sending complaints and protests to the service and being more careful in selecting the service. As an alternative, in order to better secure the line between honest and fraudulent interaction, victims actively collect information and develop better adapted schemes of relevance (reading the general terms). The case of downloading Open Source software, and being kept attuned by inducing stress (4596/3), which we have discussed above, is also interesting in this respect. Two cooling out mechanisms are used: reframing past action as stupidity and active informing:

So I paid. Afterwards I thought it was stupid. Then I informed myself at the Chamber of Labour. The company was well known there for taking cash for nothing (4596/3).

One effect of collecting information is that victims obtain a kind of superior knowledge about the fraudster, which is another way of drawing a line between the present and the past situation. Informing relatives and friends is another strategy to integrate one's own situation with social reality. The community is included in the process of separating the fraudster from the present situation. He is condemned collectively, allowing for the constitution of common grounds of interaction on the side of the victim.

Victims who are ashamed experience a specific situation of coolingout and can neither report the incident to the police or other agencies of social control, nor to their friends. They must cope with their status of victimization themselves and under conditions of secrecy. The case in which the victim was seduced by a story of inheritance from his brother, who lives in Spain (8004/1), turned into self-anger and was expressed by selfcomplaints. The victim attributed the situation to his own personality structure

(a form of psychologizing the status of being a victim): "I was angry with myself, as I am always fast with self-accusation. You inform yourself, you try to be careful. I didn't tell anyone about it because I was too ashamed."

The last strategy of coolingout to be mentioned is to pass the buck to the next, which is form of eliminating an event; reverting it by transforming the status of victim into the status of offender. This is, in the cases studied by this research, a built in coolingout mechanism within the offence. Job offers that appear to be a snowball system of selling the buck to the next victim are of this kind. At times, victims try to follow this procedure. In one case, in which a job offer of writing emails from home appeared to be a sales job (of e-books), the victim tried to avoid financial damage by passing the buck:

Of course I didn't get the money back. No one ordered a book. I tried it by announcing the e-books on a free website. But the site was closed because it appeared to be unserious. Within a week it was closed. The job offer can still be found in the Internet. Just yesterday, it came along (7483/1).

Conclusion

In order to "seduce" a person to engage in fraudulent strategic interaction, a process unfolds that is a functional equivalent of rites of passage. This process is structured by three phases. In a first phase, the victim is detached from taken for granted social reality. Awareness is restructured by a desired good or service; risk perception is decreased, whereas focus on an urgent want is increased. The fraudster must try to make relevant information necessary for interpreting the situation adequately invisible or put it at marginal locations of the perceptual space. Once a victim is separated from integrated social action, he or she must be kept attuned to the new situation without giving to much weight to doubt. The victim finds in a situation of liminality, at the borders of society, in which a fabricated story (definition of the situation) is taken for truth. If, finally, the victim learns that he or she was duped and the status of being a victim becomes an undeniable fact, he or she must find ways back into socially shared reality by entering into a third phase of coolingout and reintegration with social reality. Coolingout appears in several forms, one of which is reporting incidents to the police, but this is by far not the only solution to the problem. Often victims do not have any hope to get their money back because offenders are abroad. Sometimes they do not even know that the police are competent or that the police could help in such cases; sometimes they feel ashamed by being duped and keep their experiences secret.

One important aspect of cyber crime is that some active engagement is needed on the side of the victim. It is not passive, like the victim of a robbery, who was at the wrong place at the wrong time. A

predisposition in terms of wants and desires, time pressure or similar circumstances are needed in which processes of getting hooked on and staying attuned can take place. This aspect of activity is probably one major source of shame ("How could I have been so stupid?", "Why me, I am always so cautious?"). Victims even feel guilty, as they contributed to the success of the offence. Concerning these facts, awareness campaigns might be useful, allowing victims to understand that this active part is not their "fault", but part of a malign action, which can be attributed to the offender.

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Cyber Stalking and Cyber Harassment Legislation in the United States: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing concern among legal scholars and criminologists, our understanding of cyber stalking and cyber harassment legislation in the United States remains limited. Using a qualitative approach, this research explored cyber stalking and cyber harassment legislation across the 50 states and identified themes present in the statutes. The primary themes that were identified using coaxial coding included intent, anonymity, communicating a message of alarm/distress/fear, prior contact with the criminal justice system, jurisdiction, and reference to minors. This may be the first step in developing clear definitions of the important phenomena of cyber stalking and cyber harassment. A more nuanced understanding of current legislation in the United States may help social scientists move forward and further explore the nature and extent of these important crimes.

Keywords: Cyber stalking, Cyber harassment, Legislation, Jurisdiction, United States.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, technology has surged into businesses, communities, and the lives of individuals, altering the way that people communicate, study, work, and interact (Baer, 2010). People in various parts of the world can communicate in real time on a variety of devices such as cell phones, tablets, or computers. A photo, video, text message, or email may be viewed by a single individual, shared with another or "go viral" and spread to hundreds of thousands of users in a matter of minutes. Technology is continuously improving, which in turn influences the way that people interact by promoting global communication and allowing individuals to connect with others readily. However, the Internet and related technology have also become new mediums for misconduct, in that communications via the Internet can be used to threaten, harass, intimidate, and cause harm to others (Recupero, 2008).

Most of the extant work on cyber stalking and cyber harassment in the U.S. has been conducted by legal scholars and published in law reviews (see for e.g., Goodno, 2007; Fukuchi, 2011). A few social scientists have begun to explore this important issue, focusing on topics such as how many college students are affected by cyber harassment/cyber stalking and what demographic characteristics are associated with an increased risk of victimization (Reyns, Henson, & Fisher, 2011), and how the experience of cyber stalking differs from the experiences of traditional forms of stalking behavior

(Sheridan & Grant, 2007). Despite these efforts, our understanding of cyber harassment and cyber stalking remains limited. Moreover, there is no clear definition of what constitutes "cyber harassment" or "cyber stalking" in the United States (Baer, 2010; Fukuchi, 2011; Goodno, 2007).

The goal of the current study was to analyze the cyber harassment (henceforth, CH) and cyber stalking (henceforth, CS) statutes across the 50 states.3 We compiled 103 statutes, coded them for qualitative themes, and then synthesized the themes in an attempt to identify what constitutes CS and CH in current legislation around the U.S. Two similar studies have been conducted by legal scholars, who have collected and analyzed statutes prohibiting CH (Fukuchi, 2011) and CS (Goodno, 2007), respectively. In both cases, the studies focused on the practical, legal implications of CH/CS legislation. In contrast, our study takes a broader approach to analyzing these laws so that they can be more meaningfully understood by criminologists. We hope that this helps future researchers to better identify trends in CS and CH, analyze predictors, and theorize about these emerging crimes.

The current state of understanding CS and CH

CS and CH have become prevalent problems that warrant the attention of criminologists and criminal justice scholars. Although no national estimates of the and pervasiveness of these crimes exist, studies of various cities and campuses are cause for concern. In a discussion of the extent of CS, the Department of Justice (1999) reported that approximately 20% of stalking cases in Los Angeles and 40% of the stalking New York utilized the Internet as the mediums for these criminal acts. According to a recent study, approximately 40% of college students have been victims of CS at some point in their lives (Reyns et al., 2012). Based on these estimates, and considering the increased use and ubiquity of technological devices, it is clear that CS and CH require attention from the criminal justice system.

In addressing these problems, legislators have generally taken one of two approaches (Fukuchi, 2011). In some states, legislators opted to amend or modify extant statutes prohibiting harassment or stalking, by adding language specifying that contact initiated using the Internet or other digital device would also constitute harassment or stalking. Statutes utilizing this first approach, therefore, do not have statutes specifically titled CH or CS, though acts constituting CH or CS are prohibited. The second approach, selected by some states, was to add new legislation explicitly defining and prohibiting CH or CS. In these states, there are separate statutes defining traditional, in person forms of harassment/stalking and CH/CS. Due to the nature of CS and CH the perpetrator may 3 Most legislation that has been added to state codes was designed to address CS or CH among adults. Cyber bullying, which is also an important concern, typically involves children or teens and, except for extreme cases, is handled through school

policies and disciplinary proceedings. The research reported here focuses on state-level legislation and thus focuses only on CS and CH or may not be physically present; rather, the Internet is the method of delivery of the crime. Because of the recent addition of CH/CS laws and the varying approaches states have taken to address these crimes, there is currently no consensus on a universal definition of either CH or CS (Fukuchi, 2011; Goodno, 2007). Researchers have attempted to define these phenomena in various ways.

Cyber Harassment (CH)

CH typically involves engaging in an act or behavior that torments, annoys, terrorizes, offends, or threatens an individual via email, instant messages, or other means with the intention of harming that person. Among the most infamous cases of CH is the case of Missouri 13-year old Megan Meier, who committed suicide after being harassed internet. Megan met an individual who she believed was a male peer on MySpace, but individual who Megan was actually corresponding with was the mother of a teenage girl living in Meier's neighborhood. This 49-year old mother, Lori Drew, wrote hateful messages to the teen including this message on the day that Meier killed herself: "the world would be a better place without you" (Steinhauer, 2008).

Harassing communications encompass all of the events of traditional harassment, but extends the crime into the use of electronic devices to communicate messages that cause a person to feel personally targeted for harm. For example, creating a Facebook account in someone else's name and using that profile to insult people would be a form of Sending inappropriate text messages (e.g., of a disturbing or sexual nature) or creating a website that features photo-shopped images of an unknowing individual in sexual acts are additional examples of CH. If it was part of a pattern or series of such behavior, nearly any act of CH would constitute CS.

Cyber Stalking (CS)

In its most basic definition, CS entails "the repeated pursuit of an individual using electronic or Internet-capable devices" (Reyns et al., 2012, p. 1). Repeated pursuits include any unwanted electronic communications, and may be threatening, coercive, or intimidating. Ultimately, stalking is a crime that creates a sense of fear, terror, intimidation, stress or anxiety in the victim. Because of the repetitive nature of CS, the victim may lose a sense of control over his/her own life, never knowing when the stalker may appear or contact the victim again. The fact that the stalker can access the victim at any time from any distance undermines the victim's sense of security and can lead to a constant experience of fear for the

victim. In July of 2013, New York prosecutors secured an arrest warrant against a New Zealand woman named Jessica Parker who had been cyber stalking a writer named Melissa Anellin for approximately 5 years. One email written in 2009 stated, "You will have much to fear from me in the coming months. This is not over until someone is on the floor bleeding their life away," (Annese, 2013). Despite the distance, the internet allowed Parker to stalk, threaten, and terrify Anellin on a regular basis, promoting a sense of fear and undermining a sense of control in the victim.

Cases like that of Meier and Anellin demonstrate the serious harm that can be administered through forms of cyber communication. And although the mode of delivery is new, the underlying essence of the crimes of stalking and harassment remain visible in these types of cases. Legislation protected individuals from harassment and stalking before the introduction of the Internet into to society, but states have since added to or amended their legislation to protect citizens from cyber victimization of the same nature.

Current state of legislation

In perhaps the most comprehensive study of CS legislation, Goodno (2007) compiled and analyzed the statutes used to address CS across the 50 states. She identified five important differences between traditional forms of stalking and CS: (1) a message communicated online can be sent to anyone with internet access, is present immediately, and cannot be taken back or deleted; (2) the stalker may be anywhere in the world; (3) the stalker can stay anonymous with ease because of the lack of physical contact involved in this crime; (4) the stalker may easily impersonate another person to communicate with the victim; and (5) the stalker may use third party individuals to contact or communicate with the victim. Goodno (2007) concludes that these differences make CS a unique crime warranting unique laws. Thus, her analysis suggests that it is more beneficial for states to create new legislation rather than modify previously existing stalking and harassment statutes because of the emphasis on physical presence in original stalking and harassment statutes.

Recently, Fukuchi (2011) analyzed the legislation covering CH, though she included both CS and cyber bullying under this umbrella term as well. Her primary argument was that the current state of legislation makes it very difficult to prove a case of CH beyond a reasonable doubt. She proposed the use of "burden shifting devices" as a tool to help hold perpetrators accountable for CH. One such burden shifting device would include allowing certain inferences to be made when the offender engages in specific behavior. For example, Fukuchi (2011) discusses that in several states if an offender continues to contact a victim after the victim has asked the offender to cease contact, an intent to harass may be presumed. Although

she recognizes the constitutional challenges of this approach, she makes a cogent argument for the usefulness of incorporating these burden shifting devices in to CH legislation.

The Present Research

We benefit from the base laid by Goodno (2007) and Fukuchi (2011); however, our study is more exploratory than the work of these legal scholars. Specifically, we updated and expanded upon their work in three ways. First, Goodno (2007) focused exclusively on CS and Fukuchi (2011) focused primarily on CH. In this study, we consider both CS and CH statutes. Second, some laws have been modified or amended since the prior studies were published, and we examine the most recent version of these statutes. Third, both Goodno (2007) and Fukuchi (2011) focused on the legal elements of proving/prosecuting a case of CS/CH. We look at the statutes from a broader context, focusing descriptively on the content of the laws. This provides a more nuanced account of how states define and prohibit CS and CH.

Methods

To compile a comprehensive list of CH/CS statutes in the U.S., we referenced various sources. As shown in Table 1, the majority of the statutes were either studied by Goodno (2007), Fukuchi (2011), or both. In addition to these published sources, we also referenced lists on three websites4 to ensure the most up to date information. During the course of compiling these statutes from the state penal codes, we also found a few additional statutes listed in the Table of Contents of the state's penal codes that were relevant to this analysis. After compiling a list of all statutes, we eliminated redundancies, any statutes specifically focused on cyber bullying, and any statutes that did not include a cyber component (e.g., stalking statutes that prohibited physical personal contact and did not include electronic communication as a type of personal contact). Our complete analytic sample of statutes (n = 103) is shown in Table 1.

After locating and acquiring the text of the statutes listed in Table 1, the first author read and inductively coded each of the statutes. Codes were used to identify and track themes that emerged across states. As the first author read through and identified these themes, he used an open-coding scheme to develop a list of codes. After reading through all of the statutes once, the list of codes was saturated and complete. The first author then read through all of the statutes a second time to ensure that all codes that were present for each state had been identified and recorded. The second author then read and coded all of the statutes, adding codes as necessary. This technique, known as investigator triangulation, was used for validation purposes (Merriam, 2009). The two authors met to discuss discrepancies, which were resolved by mutual agreement of whether a theme was present. The method used here allowed us to make

quantitative statements about qualitative data by analyzing the prevalence of certain themes across the 50 states.

Results and Discussion

Forty-nine of the 50 states have statutes specifically addressing CH or CS or both. The one exception, Nebraska, has a traditional stalking and harassment statute (28-311.02) that makes no specific reference to electronic or digital communication. There is a broad reference to "telephoning, contacting, or otherwise communicating with," (28-311.02) but this statute is not recognized as a cyber crime statute in any of the sources that were referenced when compiling the sample of CS and CH legislation utilized here. Thus the analyses presented here focus on the remaining 49 states and exclude Nebraska. Six primary themes emerged from this analysis and will be discussed in turn: 1. Intent, 2. Anonymity, 3. Alarm/Distress/Fear, 4. Prior Contact, 5. Jurisdiction, and 6. Age Reference.5 Within four of these themes (Intent, Anonymity, Alarm/Distress/Fear, Prior Contact), sub-themes were also identified. The presence of each theme and sub-theme by state is shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Cyber stalking and cyber harassment statutes by state

State	Relevant Statute(s)	State	Relevant Statute(s)
Alabama	***13A-11-8***	Montana	***45-5-220, 45-8-213***
Alaska	***11.41.270, 11.61.120***	Nebraska	N/A
Arizona	***13-2921***	Nevada	***200.575***
Arkansas	***5-41-108***	New Hampshire	**644:4, *633:3a***
California	**422**, 528.5, ***646.9***, 653.2, ***653m***, Civil code: 1708.7	New Jersey	***2C:12-10***, *2C:33-4*
Colorado	***18-9-111***, 18-3-602	New Mexico	*30-3A-3*
Connecticut	***53a-182b, 53a-183***	New York	***240.30***
Delaware	***11-1311***	North Carolina	**14-196, *14-196.3***, *14-277.3A*
Florida	***784.048*, 817.568**	North Dakota	***12.1-17-07***
Georgia	***16-5-90***, *16-5-91*	Ohio	***2903.211, 2917.21***
Hawaii	***711-1106***, *711-1106.4*, ***711-1106.5***	Oklahoma	***21-820-1173***, *21-850-1172, 21-1953*
Idaho	***18-7906***	Oregon	163.730, ***163.732, 166.065***
Illinois	***720 ILCS 5/12-7.5, 720 ILCS 135/1-2***, 720 ILCS 135/1-3, 720 ILCS 135/2	Pennsylvania	***18-2709*, 18-2709.1**
Indiana	***35-45-2-2***, *35-45-10-1*, 35-45-10-2, *35-45-10-5*	Rhode Island	***11-52-4.2***, 11-52-4.3
Iowa	***708.7***	South Carolina	***16-3-1700***, 16-17-430, 16-3-1710, 16-3-1720, 16-3-1730
Kansas	***21-3438***, 21-6206	South Dakota	**49-31-31, *22-19A-1***
Kentucky	*525.080*	Tennessee	12.1-17-07, ***39-17-315, 39-17-308***
Louisiana	***14:40.2, 14:40.3***	Texas	33.07, ***42.07***
Maine	***17-A 210A***	Utah	***76-5-106.5***, *76-9-201*
Maryland	**3-805**	Vermont	***13-1027, 13-1061***, 13-1062, 13-1063, 13-1027
Massachusetts	***265-43, 265-43A***	Virginia	***18.2-60, 18.2-152.7:1***
Michigan	***750.411h, 750.411i*, 750.411s**	Washington	***9.61.260, 9A.46.020***
Minnesota	***609.749***, 609.795	West Virginia	***61-3C-14a***
Mississippi	***97-45-15***, 97-45-17, **97-29-45**	Wisconsin	***947.0125***, *947.013*
Missouri	**565.090, *565.225***	Wyoming	***6-2-506***

4

Table 2. Presence of each code in the CS and CH statutes of each state

State	Intent	Repeat Behavior	Told to Stop	Provoke	Extort	Anonymous	Third Party	Permit Use of a Device	Alarm/Fear/ Distress	Threat	Family Member	Language/ Gestures	Prior Contact	Protective Order	Jurisdiction	Age/Minors	Themes Present in State
Alabama	X					X			X	X		X					**5**
Alaska	X	X		X		X			X	X		X					**7**
Arizona	X					X			X								**3**
Arkansas	X								X	X		X					**4**
California	X	X	X				X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**11**
Colorado	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**12**
Connecticut	X								X	X		X	X		X		**6**
Delaware	X	X		X		X		X	X			X					**7**
Florida	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	X		X	**9**
Georgia	X	X							X	X	X		X	X	X		**8**
Hawaii	X	X	X	X					X	X		X	X				**8**
Idaho	X	X	X						X	X	X						**6**
Illinois	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	**12**
Indiana	X								X	X		X	X	X			**6**
Iowa	X								X	X			X				**4**
Kansas	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			**10**
Kentucky	X					X			X	X							**4**
Louisiana	X	X						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**11**
Maine	X	X			X				X	X	X		X				**7**
Maryland	X								X								**2**
Massachusetts	X	X							X	X				X			**5**
Michigan	X	X	X						X	X	X		X	X	X	X	**10**
Minnesota	X	X					X		X	X					X		**6**
Mississippi	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**12**
Missouri	X	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	**10**
Montana	X	X	X		X				X	X		X	X	X			**9**
Nebraska																	**0**
Nevada	X	X							X	X	X		X				**6**
New Hampshire	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**13**
New Jersey	X	X				X			X	X		X	X	X	X		**9**
New Mexico	X	X					X		X	X			X				**6**
New York	X					X			X	X			X				**5**
North Carolina	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		**11**
North Dakota	X					X			X	X		X			X		**6**
Ohio	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	**12**
Oklahoma	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**13**
Oregon	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**13**
Pennsylvania	X	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**10**
Rhode Island	X	X							X	X	X		X	X			**7**
South Carolina	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X			**10**
South Dakota	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X					**9**
Tennessee	X	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**11**
Texas	X		X					X	X	X		X					**6**
Utah	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	**13**
Vermont	X	X				X			X	X		X	X		X	X	**9**
Virginia	X								X	X	X	X			X		**6**
Washington	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		**11**
West Virginia	X	X	X			X		X	X	X		X	X		X		**10**
Wisconsin	X	X				X		X	X	X		X					**7**
Wyoming	X	X				X			X	X	X	X		X			**8**
Theme Frequency	**49**	**36**	**13**	**8**	**6**	**22**	**13**	**14**	**49**	**46**	**26**	**34**	**32**	**26**	**21**	**10**	

1. Intent

In order to prove someone guilty of a crime (with the exception of strict liability crimes) the state must show evidence of both actus reus and mens rea. Actus reus, "guilty act," is evident in the criminal behavior (in this case CH or CS). Mens rea, "guilty mind," to the mal intent of the individual who committed the act. This mal intent, because of its necessity in the U.S. criminal justice system, was the only theme present in each state's CS and CH statutes (n = 49; 100% of the sample). Statutes containing the words "intent" or "purpose" or which described a behavior as occurring "willfully" or "knowingly" were coded as demonstrating Intent. For example, the Massachusetts statute concerns an individual who "willfully and maliciously engages in a knowing pattern of conduct…" (43A). The individual must have understood that what they were doing was wrong (mens rea) and engaged in the behavior (actus reus) anyway. However, a close reading of the statutes revealed that four sub-themes related to intent were also mentioned in the legislation of multiple states: Repeat Behavior, Told to Stop, Provoke, and Extort.

The sub-theme Repeat Behavior refers to performing an act multiple times. For example, as stated in the Idaho statute, "repeated acts of nonconsensual contact" (18-7906) indicate an intentional series of behavior. This repetition is understood as "evidencing a continuity of purpose" (646.9), according to the California statutes. One text or email may indicate a moment of poor judgment or a message sent to the wrong number, but a series of communication over a period of time suggests that the perpetrator is intentionally contacting a victim and each additional message received may increase the victim's perception that the act will be continued. According to this analysis, most states (n = 36; 73%) make reference to Repeat Behavior in their CH/CS legislation. Repeat Behavior is especially troubling when an individual has been asked to cease communication with the target of the stalking or harassment and refuses to do so.

A state that contains the sub-theme Told to Stop refers to a victim expressing verbally or through other means (e.g., email, text message) his/her wish for the perpetrator to discontinue contact. This behavior can be very disturbing to a victim. For example, as stated in the Michigan statute, "'Unconsented contact' means any contact with another individual that is initiated or continued without that individual's consent or in disregard of that individual's expressed desire that the contact be avoided or discontinued" (750.411h). When someone is asked to discontinue threatening behavior and the offender continues to perform the act without regard for the victim it removes the victim's sense of control and promotes fear. According to this analysis, 27% of the states (n = 13) make reference to Told to Stop in their CH/CS legislation. Communication is labeled as harassing in 16% of the states (n = 8) if it is intended to

Provoke the victim into inappropriate, dangerous, or criminal behavior. As described in the Alaska statute, an offender is prohibited from, "insult[ing], taunt[ing], or challeng[ing] another person in a manner likely to provoke an immediate violent response" (11.61.120). If an offender can manipulate or provoke a victim into a physical confrontation or retaliatory act the offender is then in a position of power over the victim, as the original victim has now committed a crime against the original perpetrator. This type of behavior is also characteristic of one goal of stalking behavior: to predict and control the victim's behavior.

In 6 additional states (12%), CH or CS statutes expressly prohibit Extortion of the potential victim. Extortion refers to an offender threatening or harassing someone for the purpose of financial or personal gain. In Oklahoma it is illegal, "to defraud, deceive,extort…for the purpose of controlling or obtaining money, property, services or other things of value" (21-1953). An offender cannot use fear and intimidation – typical tools of harassment – to extort money from a victim. The increased anonymity of the internet makes Extortion and other sub-themes of Intent increasingly relevant and difficult to police in CH/CS compared to in-person harassment and stalking.

2. Anonymity

The fact that an individual can purchase a temporary cell phone which does not require a registered name or can create social networking accounts using pseudonyms is a serious concern for legislators, law enforcement, and prosecutors when attempting to deter and respond to CH/CS. It makes the perpetrator more difficult to identify and track, and can also exacerbate the fear and apprehension felt by the victim, who may not know who is harassing/stalking him/her. Likely motivated by these concerns, 45% of the states (n = 22) make reference to Anonymity in their CH/CS statutes. Many of these states acknowledge that it constitutes harassment of the victim if a perpetrator "Anonymously or otherwise…" (Arizona 13-2921) engages in the prohibited behaviors. New Hampshire specifies that it constitutes harassment to engage in prohibited acts "without disclosing his or her identity" (644: 4). The use of the internet to target someone for harassment may be especially disturbing when done anonymously because it is unclear who the victim can and cannot trust, or where the stalker may be lurking. In addition, when a stalker shields his/her identity it makes it more difficult for law enforcement to investigate, and for prosecutors to prosecute the crime.

Another method of hiding one's identity is to enlist the help of a Third Party person to deliver a message to the victim on behalf of the harasser or stalker. Oregon's describe various ways in which using a Third Party can constitute harassment. For example, "Communicating with the other person through a third

party… Communicating with a third person who has some relationship to the other person with the intent of affecting the third person's relationship with the other person… Delivering directly or through a third person any object…" The offender may be using an innocent Third Party who does not realize that the message they are delivering is inappropriate or prohibited, but by employing this person the offender can attempt to circumvent a protective order or maintain Anonymity. According to this analysis, 27% of the states (n = 13) make reference to Third Party acts.

There are also situations in which a Third Party may be a knowing participant in the harassment, and in these cases the Third Party may be held criminally responsible along with the primary perpetrator. When an individual allows their phone, tablet, laptop, or other device to be used for the commission of CH/CS, they are abetting the crime; a theme that we call Permit Use of a Device. As stated in the West Virginia statutes, "it is unlawful for any person to knowingly permit a computer, mobile phone or personal digital assistant or other electronic communication device under his or her control to be used for any purpose prohibited by this section" (61-3C-14a). Fourteen states (29%) define those who Permit Use of a Device as perpetrators in the CH/CS. By providing the means of the CH/CS communication, the individual who is permitting use of his/her device is serving as an accomplice to a crime.

Communicating anonymously or through another person or another person's device is related to the prior theme of Intent because the desire to remain unidentified may indicate that the perpetrator knows that what he/she is doing is wrong and does not want to be caught and potentially face criminal charges. However, the theme of Anonymity also relates to the next primary theme to be discussed because it promotes a sense of fear and anxiety in the victim.

3. Alarm/Distress/Fear

The very nature of stalking or harassing an individual is that the victim experiences Alarm/Distress/Fear as a result of the stalking behavior. Coupled with the perpetrators mal Intent, the presence of an action that produces Alarm/Distress/Fear in a victim is evidence of harassment or stalking in most states. When these acts are communicated on an electronic device, they constitute CH or CS. All 49 of the states (100%) with CH/CS legislation in place make reference to Alarm/Distress/Fear. What may cause one person to suffer emotional distress or experience fear may differ from what causes another to share those emotions. Thus, the law uses a "reasonable person standard" to determine whether a crime has been committed. This standard broadens the definition of Alarm/Distress/Fear beyond the individual victim and his/her experiences, instead testing whether an average ("reasonable") person would have also experienced the emotions of Alarm/Distress/Fear. If a reasonable person would experience

Alarm/Distress/Fear as a result of the perpetrator's actions, those actions constitute CH/CS. Indiana's statutes define stalking as an act that would "cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimated, or threatened and actually causes the victim to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, or threatened " (IC 35-45-10-1) and harassment as "contact that would cause a reasonable to suffer emotional distress and that actually causes the victim to suffer emotional distress" (IC 3545-10-2). It is not enough for just the victim to experience the Alarm/Distress/Fear, nor is it enough for a reasonable person to experience Alarm/Distress/Fear. Rather, an individual must experience Alarm/Distress/Fear and a reasonable person must agree that this was a justified reaction. There are three sub-themes related to Alarm/Distress/Fear: Threat, Family Member, and Language/Gestures.

The clearest example of Alarm/Distress/Fear, and simplest act to prove that meets the reasonable person standard, is a direct Threat. For this reason, most states (n = 46; 94%) make explicit reference to Threat in their statutes, in addition to Alarm/Distress/Fear. In Utah, CH is described as an activity or series of activities that, "annoy, alarm, intimidate, offend, abuse, threaten, harass, frighten, or disrupt the electronic communications of another" (76-9-201). Colorado references when a perpetrator, "threaten(s) bodily injury or property damage" (18-9-111). However, this statute is clarified as follows, "The threat need not be directly expressed if the totality of the conduct would cause a reasonable person such fear" (18-3-602). That is, a perpetrator does not have to explicitly state that he/she intends to harm the victim if the message being sent by the perpetrator's harassing/stalking behavior demonstrates an intent to harm the victim.

It is important to note that the communication of a Threat or, more broadly, Alarm/Distress/Fear, does not necessarily have to be addressed towards the individual who is being stalked or harassed. A perpetrator who focuses on the victim's children, parents, siblings, or significant others is still guilty of CH/CS in many states (n = 26; 52%). The theme Family Member is defined in the Mississippi statutes to include, "a member of the victim's family, or another individual living in the same household as the victim" (97-4515). California offers a broader definition: "spouse, parent, child, any person related by consanguinity or affinity within the second degree, or any person who regularly resides, or, within the six months preceding any portion of the pattern of conduct, regularly resided, in the plaintiff's household" (1708-1725). Thus, the communication causing an individual to feel Alarm/Distress/Fear may or may not include a threat and can be aimed at a variety of individuals to constitute CH/CS. These messages can also be communicated in various ways.

Statutes in 36 states (73%) acknowledge that a message can be communicated in multiple forms by explicitly making reference to Language or Gestures as modes of communication. For example, the

Virginia statutes prohibit, "any person, with the intent to coerce, intimidate, or harass any person," from using "a computer or computer network to communicate obscene, vulgar, profane, lewd, lascivious, or indecent language, or make any suggestion or proposal of an obscene nature, or threaten any illegal or immoral act" (18.2-152.7: 1). Alabama's statutes prohibit communication that, "Directs abusive or obscene language or makes an obscene gesture towards another person" (13A11-8). Gestures, which may be displayed online, via a webcam, or sent through a photo or video message to a cell phone, may include displaying the middle finger, unwelcome sexually provocative images, or making threatening signs such as slitting one's throat or pulling a trigger. Intimidating and harassing Language or Gestures can offend an individual and cause him/her to experience Alarm/Distress/Fear.

4. Prior Contact with the Criminal Justice System

It is typical in the criminal justice system that individuals who have a prior criminal record face more severe charges or penalties than those without a criminal history. When an individual has been warned or punished through prior contact with the criminal justice system (or in the case of a protective order has been expressly prohibited from contacting an individual) it should deter future criminal behavior. If the offender is not deterred and continues to engage in CH/CS, the criminal justice system typically requires a more severe sanction to ensure that the offender desists from future crime either through deterrence or incapacitation. In 32 states (65%) the CH/CS statutes make reference to an individual's Prior Contact with the criminal justice system. More than half of states (n = 26; 53%) reference a specific form of Prior Contact: violation of a Protective Order. If, "at the time of the harassment an injunction or restraining order was in effect prohibiting the harassment," (South Carolina statute 16-3-1710) the corresponding criminal charge or sentence imposed on the perpetrator will be increased.

5. Jurisdiction

Perhaps the most complicated aspect of defining CH/CS is the difficulty in determining the appropriate Jurisdiction in which legal action should be pursued. The essence of CS and CH allows the perpetrator to be nearly anywhere in the world when he/she sends the CH/CS communications to the victim. To ensure that the perpetrator can be held accountable for his/her behavior, in many states the typical jurisdictional lines recognized by the criminal justice system are expanded when considering CS and CH. A sizable minority of states (n = 21; 43%) explicitly address this concern by defining the Jurisdiction. For example, as stated in the Minnesota statutes "the accused may be prosecuted in any county in which one of the acts was committed for all acts… at the place where any call is made or received or, in the case of wireless or electronic communication or any communication made through any available technologies, where the

actor or victim resides" (609.749). Without this explicit acknowledgment, a CH or CS case may go unpunished for the practical reason that it is not clear who is legally in charge of investigating and prosecuting the act. Allowing charges to be filed in the jurisdiction in which the harassing communication either originated or was received is an important step in responding to the unique elements of these crimes.

6. Age Reference

The final theme that emerged from this analysis was a specific reference to Age. In 10 states (20%), the degree of the crime and/or penalty was increased when the victim of the CH or CS was a child. In Missouri, harassment jumps from a misdemeanor to a felony when it is, "committed by a person twenty-one years of age or older against a person seventeen years of age or younger" (565.090). In Tennessee, stalking becomes a felony if, "the victim of the offense was less than eighteen years of age at any time during the person's conduct, and the person is five or more years older than the victim" (3917-315). It is common for minors to receive extra protections under the law, and for adults who victimize children to face more severe charges and punishments than those who victimize their peers. Thus, the inclusion of this theme in some states' CH/CS is not surprising.

Discussion

Each state is responsible for its own laws and protections.6 Traditionally, legislation has protected individuals from harassment and stalking. Since the proliferation of technology into communities and individual's lives, CS and CH have resulted in new legislation. Despite a great deal of variation across states, there are also many sources of overlap. In this analysis, we identified a total of 6 themes and 10 sub-themes that emerged as patterns in state legislation. The most common (and legally critical) theme was Intent. However, the Intent to commit a crime can be evidenced in various ways, including: a pattern of Repeat Behavior, maintaining contact after being Told to Stop, or attempting to Provoke or Extort a victim. Anonymity is another common theme in CH/CS legislation and can be aided by enlisting the help of an unknowing Third Party or finding an individual who will Permit Use of a Device.

All crimes, by their nature, are harmful to someone. But the primary characteristic of CS and CH is that it promotes Alarm/Distress/Fear. These emotions may be the result of a Threat, concern for a Family Member, or receipt of distributing communication in the form of Language/Gestures. The final three themes, Prior Contact, Jurisdiction, And Reference to Minors, are typically mentioned in criminal codes. However, the definition of jurisdiction was broadened in many states' CS and CH statutes to better serve

victims by holding their perpetrators accountable.

1. Most comprehensive legislation

New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah each have 13 of the 16 themes/sub themes represented in their CH/CS legislation, presenting a four-way tie for the state with the most comprehensive CH/CS legislation. However, when the content of the laws is considered, there are important differences between these four states. Both New Hampshire and Oklahoma specify that a message communicated with Anonymity constitutes cyber crime, whereas Oregon and Utah make no specific reference to Anonymity. This is an important element when dealing with CH/CS, in which identities are so easily hidden or impersonated. However, Oregon has, in our view, the most comprehensive discussion of how a Third Party may be used by a perpetrator of CS and CH. New Hampshire does not state that third party individuals will be held accountable if they Permit Use Of A Device, allowing the offender to communicate with the victim.

There is no single state that has legislation that protects citizens by incorporating all of the themes/sub-themes into the legislation. However, the four states mentioned above seem to be closest to providing a comprehensive definition of CH/CS in their legislation. On the other hand, two states seem to be lagging behind the others in development of comprehensive legislation protecting its citizens from CH/CS.

2. Least comprehensive legislation

The state of Nebraska at this time has no legislation in place prohibiting CH/CS. As noted earlier, the traditional stalking statute in place in Nebraska may be broadly applied to prohibit CH/CS, but is not recognized by legal scholars (Fukuchi, 2011; Goodno, 2007) as doing so. Arizona does have a CH statute in place, but the usefulness of this statute may be limited by its vagueness. Only three of the 16 themes and sub-themes identified here were present in Arizona: Intent, Anonymity, and Alarm/Distress/Fear. Given that mens rea (here conceptualized as INTENT) and actus reus (the behavior causing Alarm/Distress/Fear) are both required elements of a crime, Arizona's statute has only one additional theme, Anonymity. Because of its brevity (fewer than 100 words), this statute could exclude many activities that would be recognized as CH/CS in other states, thereby leaving citizens unprotected.

Conclusion

When used properly, new technologies, social networking sites, and electronic devices are beneficial

tools. However, in the hands of a potential criminal, these tools can be used to exploit and cause harm. This research suggests that some states have recognized the impact of technology on social interaction throughout the U.S. and made efforts to update legislation to protect its citizens. Other states still have substantial gaps in the creation and implementation of legislation that fills the cracks created by the incorporation of the Internet into everyday life. There are obvious hardships associated with investigating and prosecuting CS and CH. There is also a need for well-written legislation that details the protections and penalties for CS and CH in the U.S.

A lack of adequate legal protections may unintentionally help an offender to trap a victim in a state of terror, to cause a victim to feel defenseless, and to cause a victim to be threatened or in danger, while at the same time empowering the offender. Lack of proper protection may also lead citizens to retaliate through vigilante justice. It is clear that CS and CH laws have developed substantially in recent years, but there is still room for improvement. Given the severity of these crimes and the potential for CH/CS to escalate into damaging or even fatal situations, this research suggests that CS and CH legislation across the 50 states is in need of a review that incorporates protection from the harm that technology can have when used by a perpetrator unconstrained by physical boundaries.

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Individual Differences of Internet Child Pornography Users: Peculiar Findings in a Community-Based Study

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ABSTRACT

The current study explored the personality and cognitive characteristics of self-reported consumers and non-consumers of Internet child pornography. Respondents were solicited to complete an anonymous online survey from countries where it is illegal to possess, distribute, and produce Internet child pornography; 257 respondents (94%) were classified as non-consumers, and 16 respondents (6%) were classified as Internet child pornography consumers. Results suggested child pornography consumers are more agreeable and less likely to make moral decisions based on social values compared to non-consumers. By exploring the trait "agreeableness," the author believes that individuals who reported child pornography use were more trusting and compliant compared to those individuals who did not. The author further discusses this finding and how the Institutional Review Board protocol restrictions may have impacted the inferential validity of the findings.

Keywords: Child pornography, Individual differences, Personality, Institutional review board, Internet-based research.

Introduction

Technological advances, such as the Internet and peer-to-peer networks, continue to make it easier and perceivably safer for consumers to access the illicit materials. For instance, the United Kingdom's Internet Watch Foundation's Hotline (IWF, 2012) processed 39,211 reports of child sex abuse content online; 25% (9,702) of the reported cases were confirmed. 9,550 websites contained child pornography hosted on 1,591 domains worldwide and traced to 38 countries. 54% or 5,155 of these websites were hosted by North America. Finally, the number of child sex abuse images showing children under the age of 10 has increased from 74% in 2011 to 81% in 2012, respectively (IWF, 2012).

From a socio-cultural perspective, there is a detrimental separation between the social (norms, legislation) and environmental (computer availability) constraints of computer criminal behavior, which is a direct result of the globalization of technology. Despite national and international attempts at regulating child pornography (high social constraint), the low environmental constraint is a result of the ease of accessibility and availability of computers and the Internet. According to Bandura's Theory of

Reciprocal Determinism, an individual's personality traits become important in predicting human behavior when environmental constraints are low (Bandura, 1986; 1994). The globalization of technology will continue to make it easier for individuals to engage in criminal behaviors involving computers, such as Internet child pornography. Still, even with the globalization of technology, only some individuals engage in Internet child pornography. Therefore, it is important to understand the personality and psychological characteristics related to Internet child pornography use.

Few research studies have specifically assessed the role individual differences play in the consumption of sexually explicit materials depicting children or adolescents. In a study conducted by Bogaert (1993), 160 male undergraduate students responded to personality measures then indicated their preference for various descriptions of sexual (violent sex, child sex) and nonsexual media themes in order to assess whether personality differences predicted their preference for certain types of pornography. Results suggested the individual differences that best discriminated the preference for child sex films from the other film categories were prior exposure to sexual media, aggression, and dominance (Bogaert, 1993). Although this study did not analyze Internet pornography specifically, it suggested individuals with a prior history of exposure to sexual media and higher levels of aggression and dominance are more likely to prefer child sex pornography themes (Bogaert, 1993).

Using a different population sample, Webb, Craissati, and Keen (2007) assessed the differences in personality profiles on the Millon Clinical Multi-axial Inventory-III (MCMI-III) for 90 men convicted of Internet child pornography offenses and 120 men convicted of child molestation. Results indicated there were no significant differences on the MCMI-III personality profiles between the two groups (Webb et al., 2007). Similar findings resulted when Reijnen, Bulten, and Nijman (2009) compared the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2) personality profiles of 22 Internet child
y offenders with 47 other sexual delinquents and 65 nonsexual delinquents who were all receiving treatment from an outpatient forensic psychiatric Reijnen et al. (2009) reported the Internet child pornography offenders scored significantly lower on the hypomania scale compared to the nonsexual delinquents. The authors concluded lower scores of hypomania suggested the Internet child pornography offenders were less impulsive, thrill seeking, and extraverted when compared to the nonsexual delinquents (Reijnen et al., 2009).

One study in particular analyzed the personality characteristics of self-reported Internet child pornography consumers via an online survey where 277 respondents were classified as non-consumers of Internet child pornography, and 30 were classified as Internet child pornography users (Seigfried et al., 2008). Statistical analyses suggested the self-reported consumers of Internet child pornography were

more likely to be manipulative, dishonest, and their decisions were not governed by personal, internal values and moral beliefs. A follow-up study compared the female respondents in the Seigfried et al. (2008) study to determine if personality characteristics differed between the female users (n = 10, 6.2%) and female non-users (n = 152, 93.8%) of Internet child pornography (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2010). The results indicated the female consumers of child pornography had lower scores on neuroticism, and higher scores on hedonistic moral choice when compared to female non-consumers of Internet child pornography (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2010). Overall, the authors concluded the female consumers of Internet child pornography were more likely to make moral decisions based on hedonistic principles and expressed lower levels of guilt and anxiety compared to the non-consumers of child pornography (Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2010).

Research has shown a relationship between individual differences and preferences in sexual media. The current study had two specific aims. First, the author explored the personality differences between self-reported consumers and non-consumers of Internet child pornography. This aim was achieved by using an Internet sample of respondents via an online web survey rather than offenders from the clinical or forensic population. Second, the study examined whether the consumers of Internet child pornography exhibited different personality characteristics and traits from the non-consumers by using several personality and psychological surveys, such the Five Factor Model Rating Form, which have been previously validated in the area of general and computer deviance. The non-manipulated independent variable or predictor variable for this study was self consumption of Internet child pornography (i.e., viewing, downloading, or exchanging pornographic materials featuring individuals under the age of 18 years). The dependent variables for this study were the scores on various questionnaires assessing personality (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and cognitive (i.e., moral decision-making) characteristics. Based on the modest amount of research assessing the personality characteristics of child pornography users, the author expects to find personality and cognitive differences between selfreported consumers and non-consumers of Internet child pornography.

Method

Participants

Respondents were voluntarily recruited via the Internet by publicizing or advertising the study using various online resources, including chat rooms, bulletin boards, discussion forums, and social media websites. This sampling methodology met the current needs of this study, which desired to: 1) sample

respondents from the "general population of Internet users" and 2) increase the respondents' confidence in self-disclosure of sensitive topics. In order to participate in the study, the respondents had to indicate on the demographics questionnaire they were at least 18 years of age or older and were currently permanent residents of either the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, or Canada. The participants were not provided with an incentive by the author. The participants were required to provide consent, and they were able to quit the survey at any time.

Materials

The respondents' Internet child pornography behavior was measured using the Online Pornography Survey (OPS; Seigfried, 2007; Seigfried et al., 2008; Seigfried-Spellar & Rogers, 2010). The OPS included 54 questions, which assessed the respondents' pornography behaviors including intentional searching, accessing, downloading, and exchanging of sexually explicit Internet images featuring adults, animals, and children. The following is an example question from the OPS: "When was the most recent time that you knowingly searched for a pornographic website featuring only individuals 18 years of age and older?" The respondents' choices for this item were: never, within the past month, within the past year, 1 to 4 years ago, and 5 or more years ago. Finally, the word "child" never appears in the OPS, but instead the survey uses the phrase "under the age of 18 years" when referring to child pornography. The phrase "under the age of 18 years" compared to "child" is less inhibiting for the respondents when admitting to criminally sanctioned behaviors and this phrase is the most prevalent definition in national and international law (see Seigfried, 2007).

Based on item responses, a dichotomous variable (CP Use) was created with the respondents being classified as either non-child pornography users (0) or child pornography users (1). Respondents had to self-report engaging in at least one of the following behaviors involving or featuring individuals under the age of 18 years in order to be classified as a child pornography user: knowingly searching, knowingly accessing, knowingly downloading, and/or knowingly exchanging. Those respondents who did not report any of the online behaviors listed above were labeled as non-users of Internet child pornography: 0 = none.

Individual differences were measured by employing several questionnaires or surveys. First, the Five-Factor Model Rating Form (FFMRF) measured the following individual differences: Neuroticism (emotional instability), Extraversion (positive affect), Openness to Experience (unconventionality), Agreeableness (vs. antagonism), and Conscientiousness (constraint; Widiger, 2004; Widiger & Lowe, 2007). The FFMRF displays 30 polar opposites on a likert scale of 1 (extremely low) to 5 (extremely

high). For example, the extraversion item, excitement-seeking, was measured with "reckless and daring" at one end of the spectrum and "cautious, monotonous, and dull" on the polar end. In this study, the Cronbach's alphas for the FFMRF were relatively acceptable to good: Neuroticism = .72, Extraversion = .76, Openness to Experience = .72, Agreeableness = .60, and Conscientiousness = .81.

The cognitive disposition of the individual was assessed using the Moral Decision Making Scale (MDKS), which focuses on the respondents' "moral compass," meaning whether or not decisions are based on Hedonistic, Internal, or Social Values (Rogers, Smoak, & Liu, 2006). The MDKS included 15 items, which were scaled from 1 (not important in my decisions) to 8 (very important in my decisions) for statements such as, "if my choice would please people around me." Cronbach's alphas for the Moral DecisionMaking subscales were acceptable: Social Values ($\alpha = .65$), Internal Values ($\alpha = .71$), and Hedonistic Values ($\alpha = .69$).

Design and Procedure

The study was conducted electronically using an Internet-based survey, and at no time were the respondents asked for any identifying information (e.g., name). Conducting research via the Internet has increased due to the accessibility of respondents and the perceived anonymity and increased willingness to self-disclose socially unacceptable or controversial behaviors or attitudes (Birnbaum, 2000). The survey was publicized or advertised using free online resources including chat rooms, bulletin boards, discussion forums, and social media websites. Once the respondents accessed the website, the home page explained the study while acting as a consent form to which the respondents had to agree or decline to participate. If the prospective respondents agreed, they had to click on the "I Agree" button in order to participate. Next, the respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires, which would take approximately 20 minutes to complete in total. Finally, the participants were taken to the survey's "Debriefing" page, and the respondents had to decide whether to submit (opt-in) or withdraw their responses (optout) from the final dataset.

Statistical Analyses

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a zero-order correlation was conducted to identify any personality or cognitive characteristics (e.g., extraversion) significantly associated with child pornography use, thereby reducing the number of variables included in the predictive model. In an attempt to minimize chance associations, findings from the zero-order correlation were further validated by a one-way analysis of variance. The final analysis involved a backward stepwise (Wald) logistic

regression (LR) to identify the best predictive model for child pornography use. Logistic regressions are appropriate for exploratory analyses, for they are more robust with fewer violations of assumptions, such as small and unequal sample sizes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Two-tailed statistical significance was set at the alpha level of 0.10 prior to any analyses due to the exploratory nature of the study (Warner, 2007).

Results

1. Descriptives

The final number of respondents for statistical analysis was 277 (N = 277). Of the 277 respondents, four respondents were labeled as "missing" since they selected "Decline to respond" to all of the survey's child pornography items. Based on this incomplete data, the four respondents could not be classified as non-users or users of child pornography; therefore, they were excluded from any of the descriptive or inferential statistics. Of the remaining 273 respondents, 257 respondents (94%) were classified as non-child pornography consumers and 16 respondents (6%) were classified as Internet child pornography consumers.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the self-reported child pornography users were male (n = 12, 75%) and between 18 to 35 years of age (n = 12, 75%). In addition, the majority self-reported a Caucasian/White identity (n = 15, 94%) and were current residents of the United States (n = 13, 81%). 69% (n = 11) of the child pornography users were single, and 44% (n = 7) indicated they had completed either a Master's degree or PhD. Finally, a similar proportion of the child pornography users self-reported some form of religious preference (n = 7, 44%) compared to non-religious preference (n = 9, 56%). It should be noted that the religious category "other" was created by collapsing several religious preferences which were self-reported by the respondents but resulted in a small cell count (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism).

Of the demographic variables, sex was significantly associated with child pornography use (Two-Tailed Fisher's Exact Test, p = 034), suggesting male respondents were more likely to self-report engaging in Internet child pornography use compared to female respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1. ***Demographic Information for CP Users and Non-Users***

Variable		Child Pornography		
		Consumer (n = 16)	Non-Consumer (n = 257)	Total (N = 273)
Sex*	Male	12 (75.0)	130 (50.6)	142 (52.0)
	Female	3 (18.8)	125 (48.6)	128 (46.9)
	Decline	1 (6.2)	2 (0.8)	3 (1.1)
Age (yrs)	18-25	5 (31.3)	58 (22.6)	63 (23.1)
	26-35	7 (43.8)	139 (54.1)	146 (53.5)
	36-45	1 (6.3)	25 (9.7)	26 (9.5)
	46-55	0 (0.0)	16 (6.2)	16 (5.9)
	56 or older	3 (18.8)	19 (7.4)	22 (8.1)
Permanent Residency	US	13 (81.3)	215 (83.7)	228 (83.5)
	UK	2 (12.5)	18 (7.0)	20 (7.3)
	Canada	1 (6.3)	15 (5.8)	16 (5.9)
	Australia	0 (0.0)	9 (3.5)	9 (3.3)
Ethnicity	Caucasian/White	15 (93.8)	229 (89.1)	244 (89.4)
	Asian	0 (0.0)	8 (3.1)	8 (2.9)
	Multiracial	1 (6.3)	7 (2.7)	8 (2.9)
	Black	0 (0.0)	5 (1.9)	5 (1.8)
	Other	0 (0.0)	4 (1.6)	4 (1.4)
	Decline	0 (0.0)	4 (1.6)	4 (1.5)
Religion	Christian	4 (25.0)	104 (40.5)	108 (39.6)
	No Religion, Secular	5 (31.3)	61 (23.7)	66 (24.2)
	Atheist	2 (12.5)	39 (15.2)	41 (15.0)
	Agnostic	2 (12.5)	35 (13.6)	37 (13.5)
	Other	3 (18.7)	11 (4.3)	14 (5.1)
	Decline	0 (0.0)	7 (2.7)	7 (2.6)
Marital Status	Single	11 (68.80)	129 (50.2)	140 (51.3)
	Married	5 (31.3)	101 (39.3)	106 (38.8)
	CL or CU	0 (0.0)	9 (3.5)	9 (3.3)
	S or D	0 (0.0)	16 (6.2)	16 (5.9)
	Decline	0 (0.0)	2 (.80)	2 (0.7)
Highest Degree of Completed Education	< 12 yrs of H.S.	0 (0.0)	5 (1.9)	5 (1.8)
	H.S. or 2nd Ed	3 (18.8)	45 (17.5)	48 (17.6)
	Assoc. or Bach.	6 (37.5)	92 (35.8)	98 (35.9)
	Masters or Ph.D.	7 (43.7)	111 (43.2)	118 (43.2)
	Decline	0 (0.0)	4 (1.6)	4 (1.5)

2. Hypothesis Testing

As shown in Table 2, there was a statistically significant relationship between child pornography use and two individual differences variables: Agreeableness, rpb (273) = 0.14 with p = .02, and Social Values, rpb (272) = -0.12 with p = .056, respectively. The zeroorder correlation suggested child pornography use is positively related to Agreeableness and negatively related to Social Values.

Table 2. Zero-Order Correlation for CP Use and Individual Differences

	CP User	Sex	Neurot	Extra	Open	Agree	Consc	HV	SV	IV
CP User	1	-0.13**	0.02	0.03	0.09	0.14**	0.01	-0.03	-0.12*	-0.09
Sex		1	-0.05	0.21***	-0.07	0.16***	0.19***	0.09	0.20***	0.18***
Neurot			1	-0.23***	0.16***	0.03***	-0.29***	0.13***	-0.02	0.17***
Extra				1	0.19***	0.21***	0.23***	-0.16**	0.06***	0.10
Open					1	0.12**	-0.13*	-0.13*	-0.36***	0.05
Agree						1	0.12*	-0.02	0.23***	0.17***
Consc							1	-0.06	0.09	0.08
HV								1	0.45***	0.39***
SV									1	0.46***
IV										1

As shown in Table 3, significant group differences existed for the self-reported child pornography users and non-users regarding their scores on Agreeableness, F(1, 271) = 5.40 with p = .02, and Social Values, F(1, 270) = 3.70 with p = .056. Overall, the analysis of variance validated the relationship between child pornography use and the variables Agreeableness and Social Values suggested by the zero-order correlation.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for CP Use by Individual Differences

	Child Pornography	
Individual Differences	Consumer	Non-Consumer
FFMRF		
Neuroticism	2.60 (0.94)	2.56 (0.65)
Extraversion	3.50 (0.73)	3.41 (0.64)
Openness	3.74 (0.80)	3.50 (0.61)
Agreeableness**	3.80 (0.56)	3.50 (0.49)
Conscientiousness	3.78 (0.63)	3.75 (0.65)
MDKS		
Hedonism	4.98 (1.40)	5.11 (0.92)
Internal	5.37 (1.56)	5.68 (0.79)
Social*	3.70 (1.44)	4.26 (1.10)

To identify the best predictive model for child pornography use, the personality and cognitive variables (Agreeableness, Social Value) identified by the zero-order correlation and further validated by the ANOVA were included in a backward stepwise (Wald) logistic regression. As shown in Table 4, the best predictive model of child pornography use included Agreeableness (W = 6.51, p = .01) and Social Values

(W = 5.02, p = .03), meaning individuals who scored high on agreeableness and low on social values were 3.7 times and .6 times (respectively) more likely to be consumers of Internet child pornography.

Table 4. Exploratory Backward (Wald) Logistic Regression for CP Use (N = 272)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*Exp (B)*
Step 1			
Agree	1.31	0.51	3.71**
SV	-0.50	0.22	0.61*

The Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test was non-significant, X2(8) = 12.58 with p = .13, indicating the final model fit the data. In addition, collinearity diagnostics were conducted in order to test for multicollinearity; Variance inflation factor (VIF) values indicated no cause for concern (Agreeableness, VIF = 1.05; Social Values, VIF = 1.05) and the condition index was less than 30. Overall, the authors' expectation of significant individual differences between child pornography users and non-users was supported; Internet child pornography users were more likely to score high on agreeableness and low on social values compared to non-users of Internet child pornography. 3.

Exploratory Analyses

Exploratory analyses were conducted in order to better understand the relationship suggested by the results between Agreeableness and child pornography use. Since the Cronbach's alpha was low (α = 0.60) for the Agreeableness trait, a principle axis factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the Five-Factor Model Rating Form (FFMRF). The FFMRF Agreeableness scale was comprised of six items, each individually measuring six agreeableness traits: Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness. According to the factor analysis, the six items did not load onto a single dimension. Instead, Compliance, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness loaded onto a single factor, while the item Altruism loaded onto the Extraversion factor, and the items measuring Trust and Straightforwardness solely created two separate factors (i.e., did not load onto any big five factor or with any other big five item).

Next, a zero-order correlation between child pornography use and the six original agreeableness items was conducted. Based on the factor analysis, the author created a "New Agreeableness" variable by averaging the respondents' scores on the three items (Compliance, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness)

that loaded together (W. Graziano, personal communication, May 23, 2011). As shown in Table 5, the original agreeableness items with the strongest correlation with child pornography use which was statistically significant was Trust vs. Suspicion, (273) = 0.12 with p = .045 and Compliance vs. Opposition, rpb (272) = 0.117 with p = .054. In addition, Altruism vs. Selfishness and the New Agreeableness variable were marginally related to child pornography use, rpb (273) = 0.10 with p = .10 and rpb (270) = .0107 with p = .08, respectively. However, Straightforwardness, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness were not significantly related to child pornography use (see Table 5). The majority of identities for sale included a social security number (n=112, 98%) and a date of birth (n=109, 96%). Many of the listings advertised biographical information, with past address information (n=73, 64%) available more frequently than current address information (n=35, 31%), likely due to the age of the identity information. A few sellers offered scans of a passport (n=2, 2%) and driver's license (n=8, 7%) associated with the identities, however the validity of the pictures provided could not be verified. The distribution of products offering each element are shown in Table 3.

Table 5. Zero-Order Correlation for CP Use and Agreeableness Items

	CP User	Trust	SF	Altruism	Compliance	Modesty	TM	New Agree
CP User	1	0.12**	0.02	0.10*	0.12*	0.07	0.05	0.11*
Trust		1	0.20***	0.18***	0.30***	0.11*	0.22	0.29***
SF			1	0.28***	0.12**	-0.01	0.13**	0.12**
Altruism				1	0.26***	0.07	0.34***	0.31***
Compliance					1	0.19***	0.36***	0.71***
Modesty						1	0.25***	0.67***
TM							1	0.76***
New Agree								1

Taken together, these results suggested the six items intending to measure Agreeableness did not form a single, coherent latent variable. Instead, the relationship between child pornography use and Agreeableness was driven by weak correlations with items that measured the lack of suspicion (Trust) and lack of aggressive opposition (Compliance).

Discussion

In the current study, significant differences emerged between the self-reported consumers and non-consumers of Internet child pornography. The results suggested the best predictive model for child pornography use included low scores on social values and high scores on Agreeableness. Social values refer to the way an individual makes moral decisions when considering informal social controls (e.g., societal norms) and formal social controls (e.g., laws). According to these results, child pornography users are less likely to make moral decisions based on social values compared to non-consumers of

Internet child pornography. In other words, child pornography users do not consider whether their behaviors are socially or legally "right or wrong." Future research should assess the relationship between social values and cyberspace. In other words, child pornography users are less likely to make moral decisions based on social values because of the perceived anonymity of the Internet (social values in cyberspace) or they are engaging in other of deviant behavior, such as substance abuse (social values in physical space; see Jaishankar, 2008).

The predictive model also included the trait Agreeableness, which suggested that the child pornography users were more agreeable than the non-users of child pornography. This initial relationship between Agreeableness and child pornography use was unexpected based on the field's current understanding of the trait, Agreeableness. People who score high on the agreeableness trait are often described as "kind, warm, and considerate" (c.f., Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997; Graziano & Tobin, 2009). In addition, agreeable individuals are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors, such as helping, and are more motivated to maintain positive interpersonal relationships (Graziano & Tobin, 2009). On the other hand, individuals who score low on agreeableness are often described as high antagonists, for they are at a higher risk of engaging in antisocial interpersonal and externalizing behaviors, such as overt aggression and substance abuse (c.f., Miller, Lynam, & Jones, 2008). Using the Internet to engage in illegal activity, an external behavior, suggests child pornography users or individuals who self-report engaging in more child pornography behaviors score low on agreeableness (high on antagonism).

Many theoretical and alternative explanations were considered prior to conducting the exploratory analyses involving the factor analysis of the FFMRF scale. First, a review of the literature suggests a relationship between agreeableness and socially desirable responding. Socially desirable responding is the tendency to respond in a way that puts the individual in a more positive light (see Paulhus, 2002). Thus, individuals high on agreeableness are more likely to be influenced by socially desirable responding due to their desire to be liked and viewed positively by others. For example, Pauls and Stemmler (2003) suggest individuals who score high on impression-management (i.e., a socially desirable response style where respondents knowingly enhance positive self-ratings) are more likely to score high on agreeableness.

One explanation for the relationship between child pornography use and high agreeableness is the respondents' were being influenced by socially desirable and were responding so to enhance their ratings on pro-social behaviors. However, Graziano and Tobin (2002) conducted three studies to explore the relationship between agreeableness and self-favoring biases. The authors concluded, "impression management is a heterogeneous set of processes, and, as such, is unlikely to offer a single, systematic,

plausible alternative account for more reliable Agreeableness effects" (Graziano & Tobin, 2002, p. 721). The study provided empirical evidence through laboratory manipulations that individuals higher on agreeableness are not influenced by social compliance.

Finally, the theoretical explanation that the child pornography users in this study were concerned with how they would be perceived based on their responses to the survey does not seem to make intuitive sense. Assuming their responses to the survey are honest, impression management would be better achieved by denying their engagement in child pornography behaviors rather than inflating their scores on the agreeableness trait. In addition, the literature has consistently shown that individuals who engage in antisocial behaviors are more likely to report higher levels of antagonism or low levels of agreeableness. Finally, research suggests Internet-based research designs decrease the respondent's level of socially desirable responding (see Joinson, 1999; Chang & Krosnick, 2009) while self-disclosure of sensitive topics is increased due to the Internet's perceived anonymity (see Birnbaum, 2000; Gosling et al., 2004). At this time, the positive relationship found in this study between child pornography use and agreeableness does not appear to be an artifact of socially desirable responding.

The best explanation for the relationship between child pornography use and was revealed by the factor analysis of the FFMRF rather than the previous theories reviewed from the current literature. Overall, the author concludes that the agreeableness trait was influenced by weak correlations to specific items, rather than an actual latent variable. Based on the given information, the respondents who self-reported using Internet child pornography were more likely to be trusting and compliant compared to those individuals who did not self-report child pornography use in this study. In other words, the self-reported child pornography users in this sample were more trusting (less suspicious) and compliant (less oppositional) whereas the respondents who did not selfreport child pornography use were more suspicious (less trusting) and oppositional (less compliant).

The relationship between self-reporting child pornography use and higher agreeableness item ratings for trust and compliance compared to the non-child pornography users may be further explained by the design changes imposed by the IRB for this study. In the previous study conducted by Seigfried et al. (2008), the university's IRB did not require a debriefing form or withdraw of data option after the study was completed. However, in the current study, the university's IRB determined deception was used, and as a result, the IRB required the author to include a debriefing form stating that the purpose of the current study was to "determine if certain personality characteristics were associated with people's interests toward pornographic images of individuals under the age of 18 years." In addition, the author was required to provide websites and contact information for Internet and Computer Addiction services,

specifically for cybersex and online pornography addiction. Finally, after completing the study, the respondents had to provide consent to use their data after completion (i.e., opt to withdraw data from study) by clicking either "keep your responses to the survey" or "remove your responses from the data file."

When comparing the current study to the Seigfried et al. (2008) study, the only differences were the inclusion of a debriefing form and the option to withdraw responses. Since the previous study did not find a relationship between agreeableness and child pornography use, and the current study identified child pornography users who were more trusting and compliant, it is possible this finding is an artifact of the research study design. The respondents who self-reported the use of child pornography had to trust that this study was truly an anonymous and confidential study conducted at a major university. In addition, the item "Compliance" describes people who are "docile and cooperative." It is possible the child pornography users in the current study were more "docile and cooperative" than the non-child pornography users or those individuals who did not report engaging in child pornography. By considering the factor analysis of the Agreeableness scale for the FFMRF as well as the inclusion of a debriefing form, it is possible the respondents in the current sample were a small subset of the child pornography population – a subset who was more trusting of the research design therefore willing to submit their data.

Finally, the findings of this study did validate the expectations of Bandura's Theory of Reciprocal Determinism in that personality and cognitive characteristics appear to drive a person's behavior when environmental constraints are weak despite high social constraints (c.f., Bandura, 1994). The author specifically sampled respondents who were permanent residents of either the US, UK, Canada, and Australia due to their similar laws prohibiting the possession, distribution, and production of Internet child pornography. In addition, the study was conducted via the Internet (i.e., instead of face-to-face interview, postal mail survey) to suggest each respondent had the opportunity to engage in online deviant behavior. Overall, this research design assessed whether, in weak environmental and high social constraints, individual differences were predictive of child pornography use.

Conclusion

Previous research studies are interested in understanding the child pornography user, but few have investigated whether searching, viewing, downloading, and exchanging child pornography may be predicted by an individual's personality and cognitive characteristics. Validating the Seigfried et al. (2008) findings, the current study identified personality and cognitive differences between child

pornography consumers and non-consumers. Although this finding was most likely influenced by the methodology restrictions set by the IRB, it confirms that psychological studies' involving sensitive populations is possible using Internet-based research designs. Internet-based research will continue to increase in popularity due to its advantages over more traditional forms of methodology, such as the accessibility of target populations with narrow interests. With regards to pornography research, the Internet may be the best place to analyze both the users and behaviors due to the perceived anonymity and cloak of safety offered by the Internet. However, the final conclusions will only be as good as the original design and methodology, so if researchers are restricted from assessing response rates or attrition bias, the true validity and reliability of the findings may never be known. This type of research will continue to be a socially sensitive topic, but it is only with the support of the institution that objective research may be scientifically pursued.

Limitations

Although this study sampled from the "general population of Internet users," there is no claim that the findings are representative of the population of Internet users at large. There may be individual differences between those individuals who chose to complete and submit their data compared to those individuals who chose not to participate, who dropped-out during, or chose to withdraw their data after completion of the study. Due to the IRB's restrictions, the findings are most likely representative of those individuals who trusted the confidentiality and anonymity of the research design.

Despite the limited external validity, the current study improved the inferences drawn from the results by limiting a possible confound identified in the Seigfried et al. (2008) sample. Unlike the Seigfried et al. (2008) study, the current sampling methodology targeted Internet users who were permanent residents of countries where child pornography possession, distribution, and production were criminally sanctioned. Therefore, the self-reported Internet child pornography users in the current study were knowingly engaging in illegal child pornography behaviors. Again, the self-reported child pornography users in this study may not be representative of consumers from the general population of Internet users, but a possible confound, legality of child pornography use, was eliminated in the current study (i.e., child pornography use is legal in some countries; see International Centre for Missing, 2010).

Although the IRB impacted the generalizability of the current study, it identified an avenue for future Internet-based research designs. Future studies, especially on socially sensitive topics, should manipulate whether respondents complete a survey with and without the option to withdraw at the end of the study as well as the inclusion of a debriefing form. This research design would strengthen the

the validity of the findings by identifying the level of influence IRB restrictions may have on the researcher's ability to determine response styles, mechanisms of missingness, and the validity of the conclusions drawn from the results.

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