

Institution: Middlesex
Unit of Assessment: UoA22
Title of case study: Children, Pornography and Sexual Exploitation
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research on the impact of exposure to pornographic and sexualised material online and offline and the links to sexual exploitation, addresses major issues in contemporary society and raises awareness and improves policy and practice responses. The research has led to several impacts including: 1) improving policing and child protection practices through training with the Metropolitan Police and Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) on online grooming of children; 2) informing public debate on pornography, healthy relationships and sex education through extensive public engagement; and 3) impact on governmental policies regarding child protection and internet service provision. The key beneficiaries are vulnerable children and agencies working to protect them from sexual exploitation and exposure to pornography.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research includes a) Davidson and Martellozzo's work on sexual exploitation of children, and b) Horvath's work on the use of pornography by children. Martellozzo, arrived at Middlesex in 2009 (from Kingston University) where she worked with Davidson (also at Middlesex since July) in the Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies.</p> <p>Sexual Exploitation of Children</p> <p>Martellozzo with Davidson (Principal Investigator) conducted an evaluation of an internet safety programme (Think U Know - TUK) run by CEOP which is delivered annually across UK schools. The research was part of a larger project funded by the National Audit Office (NAO). The research included a qualitative element which consisted of 21 focus groups with 84 young people (49 girls and 35 boys) in schools throughout the UK who have received the TUK programme; and a survey of 1,718 young people across the UK aged 11-16 years. In total over 1,800 young people participated in the research. The study also included 11 face-to-face and telephone interviews with TUK trainers. The research findings identified a number of failings in the TUK programme but also identified some important trends in risk-taking behaviour among children (1,2):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A high proportion of children reported having engaged in high risk behaviour online 2) One in five young people have received a 'threatening' experience online 3) Girls appear to be at higher risk than boys because they use social aspects of the Internet more, notably instant messaging and social networking sites 4) Boys are twice as likely to do nothing in reaction to a 'threatening' experience 5) There is no evidence that TUK training and the TUK website reduce young people's likelihood to share personal information with or interact with strangers. <p>Building on this work, Martellozzo's further research considered complex, multi-faceted, relationships between online grooming behaviours, risk assessment, police practices, children's vulnerabilities and reporting for the Metropolitan Police Paedophile and High Technology Crime Units. The first project, <i>Understanding Children's Online Activities: Developing Research and Enhancing Police Practice</i> (2011), aimed to explore how young children from different age groups and cultural backgrounds behave online. It was found that there are constraints to policing in the context of online environments and that the way the internet is used varies with age. The great majority of young people have a mobile phone with a camera with internet access, enabling them to take and upload photographs almost immediately. An estimated 94% of children belong to a social network site (SNS), particularly Facebook. The great majority claimed that they know all the people they have added to their SNS. However, when this issue was probed, it was found that there is still a significant proportion who add people they have never met before.</p> <p>The follow up study, <i>Understanding Sex Offenders' Online Activities: Developing Research and Training for Covert Internet Investigators</i> (3), aimed at enhancing police practices to counter the growing threat of online predation of children and increasing child safety and security in the digital world. Training was developed on the basis of a number of key results, including that offenders are not necessarily denying their offence but rather seek to excuse or minimise the impact the abuse</p>

might have had on the victim. Those denying their offence and involvement with the online offences may claim that their online behaviour was pure fantasy. For some online offenders collecting and distributing images is a passion and the children depicted in the images were, for them, not vulnerable victims but tradable objects.

Use of Pornography by Children

Horvath's ongoing series of studies on 'Lads Mags' - lifestyle magazines aimed at young men that feature young women in sexualized depictions – focusing on their implications for men's attitudes towards women, sexual aggression and the mainstreaming of dangerous sexism (started at the University of Surrey and continued at Middlesex from 2010) have been conducted in collaboration with Maddy Coy (London Metropolitan University), Peter Hegarty (University of Surrey) and Monica Romero Sanchez (University of Granada, Spain) and led to numerous conference presentations and publications (4,5). As a result of this track record, in 2012 a consortium led by Middlesex University (Horvath and Adler) with the University of Bedfordshire (Lian Alys), Canterbury Christ Church University (Kristina Massey) and University of Kent (Afroditi Pina) was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) as part of its national Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups (CSEGG) to conduct a rapid evidence assessment on the effects that access and exposure to pornography has on children and young people. The resulting report, *Basically... Porn is Everywhere* (6), found that:

- 1) Children and young people's exposure and access to pornography occurs both on and offline but in recent years the most common method of access is via internet enabled technology
- 2) Exposure and access to pornography increases with age
- 3) Accidental exposure to pornography is more prevalent than deliberate access
- 4) There are gender differences in exposure and access to pornography, with boys more likely to be exposed to and deliberately access, seek or use pornography than girls.

3. References to the research

All references have been published in highly ranked journals or are reports from competitively obtained funding and been reviewed by the commissioning/funding organisation.

1. Davidson, J., Lorenz, M., Grove-Hills, J. & Martellozzo, E. (2010). *Evaluation of CEOP ThinkUknow internet safety programme & exploration of young people's internet safety knowledge: Final report*. Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies and Kingston University. Available at <http://www.cats-rp.org.uk/pdf%20files/Internet%20safety%20report%204-2010.pdf>
2. Davidson, J. & Martellozzo, E. (2012). Exploring young people's use of social networking sites and digital media in the internet safety context: a comparison of the UK and Bahrain. *Journal of Information, Communication and Media*. It draws upon the original research conducted by the Authors in the UK (CEOP & NAO) and the Kingdom of Bahrain (State of the Nation Review of Internet Safety, 2010).
3. Martellozzo, E. (2011). Sex Offenders' Use of the Internet. In J. Davidson & P. Gottschalk (Eds) *Internet Child Abuse: Current Research & Practice*. Routledge.
4. Coy, M. & Horvath, M.A.H. (2011). 'Lads mags', young men's attitudes towards women and acceptance of myths about sexual aggression. *Feminism & Psychology*, 21(1), 144-150. DOI: 10.1177/0959353509359145.
5. Horvath, M.A.H., Hegarty, P., Tyler, S. & Mansfield, S. (2012). "Lights On at the End of the Party": Are Lads' Mags Mainstreaming Dangerous Sexism? *British Journal of Psychology*. 103(4), 454-471. DOI: 10.1111/j.2044-8295.2011.02086.x.
6. Horvath, M.A.H., Alys, L., Massey, K., Pina, A., Scally, M. & Adler, J. R (2013). "*Basically... porn is everywhere*" - A Rapid Evidence Assessment on the Effects that Access and Exposure to Pornography has on Children and Young People. Office for the Children's Commissioner. Available from http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_667.

4. Details of the impact

Improving Policing and Child Protection Practices

The research has impacted on CEOP, as well as police in undercover operations, and has had an impact through expert training regarding child protection practices with respect to online grooming.

Martellozzo's research with Davidson has had a significant impact on the structure, content and delivery of the Think U Know Internet Safety Programme. Most of the recommendations have been implemented and influenced the thinking and development of their programme and enhanced peer involvement in development. The findings have been used as a base line indicator in the CEOP 2010/11 performance indicators (5.1), the National Audit Office memorandum 'Staying Safe Online' (2010) (5.2) and child internet strategy developed by the Kingdom of Bahrain (5.3).

Martellozzo's investigation of how children from different cultural backgrounds behave online has influenced the work of undercover officers when they develop profiles of children from different backgrounds and pose as vulnerable children online, as reported in the Guardian and on Channel 4 (<http://tinyurl.com/c4myz88> and <http://www.channel4.com/news/eu-improve-moderation-or-we-will-shut-you-down>). This research and engagement with undercover police officers led directly to the arrest of suspects who had interacted online with undercover police posing as online children. 'Her research became an increasingly integral part of the development of law, procedure and investigative practices in the Paedophile Unit. The development of on-line investigative practices are now at the cutting edge of such covert work worldwide' (5.4). A specific partnership in 2011/12 with the Child Abuse Command's occupational psychologist also produced a formal training programme for online covert investigators in both tactics and support for their wellbeing. 'Overall, the relationship was a model of mutually beneficial collaboration between front line and strategic policing priorities and academia' (5.4)

Informing public debate on pornography, healthy relationships and sex education Horvath's research on 'lads mags' has been used as key evidence in the successful 'Lose the Lads Mags' campaign [<http://www.losetheladsmags.org.uk/>] and was picked up in the USA where it was trended on *Jezebel*, one of the biggest women's interest blogs. An article based on the research was the most read one of 2011 and was shared over 97,000 times (<http://jezebel.com/5866602/can-you-tell-the-difference-between-a-mens-magazine-and-a-rapist>). A subsequent story appeared on ABC news (<http://tinyurl.com/89kxups>). Horvath et al's, research for the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC), *Porn is Everywhere*, has informed practice and influenced policy on children's exposure to and uses of pornography, as evidenced by the statements made by the Children's Commissioner (<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/Schools/health-and-education/departments/psychology/fps/testimonials.aspx>). The work provided, for the first time, incontrovertible evidence that viewing pornography affects the behaviour of young people (5.5).

The report was published at an opportune time: it captured the public interest following high profile child abuse cases and public anxiety about the online safety of children (*Bringing up Britain: Parenting and Pornography*, 3 April 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/qeh6akr>). It received widespread media coverage and was cited in a number of parliamentary debates and discussions. It has also been cited by a range of statutory, including CEOP (5.6), and non-statutory organisations, politicians, and NGOs as evidence for changes in sex education and internet service provision (<http://www.brook.org.uk/index.php/what-s-new/latest-news?view=article&id=126>).

The report generated numerous supportive statements by organisations such as the *Sexual Education Forum*, which welcomed the call to boost sex education; *Netmums* which called the report a 'wake-up call' <http://tinyurl.com/phwhatm>; and *End Violence Against Women Coalition* (5.7) and *Rape Crisis*. They argued that the report provided evidence for schools to teach pupils about sexual consent and how to deal with pornographic imagery, which were reported on the BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22643072>).

Other beneficiaries include providers and users of social media. Facebook requested a meeting

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with Horvath and the OCC to explore what changes they could make to their policies and procedures; the independent co-regulator for the editorial content of UK video on demand services (the Authority for Television on Demand) requested a meeting with Horvath and the OCC to garner advice about how the findings could influence and support their work. Playwrights with the Royal Court Theatre invited the team to participate in a playwrights' workshop. From Fact to Fiction, a programme that publicises a key news story of the week in a dramatised response to it, set the play 'Into the Woods' entirely around an incident in which a young person inadvertently viewed his father's hardcore pornography. Several premises within the play were directly drawn from the team's findings ().

The report received extensive national and international media coverage and was the basis of an edition of BBC Radio 4 programmes *Call You and Yours*, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01sm70r>) and *Analysis* (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b02ykg3m>). This media coverage led to widespread secondary reach including an array of petitions and campaigns. For example the Daily Telegraph's Wonder Women campaign for better relationship and sex education mirrors almost exactly what we recommended in the report.

Impact on Government Policy

Porn is everywhere also had a significant impact on government policy. The Government moved quickly to address many of its recommendations (http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/press_release/content_511), including making it harder to access online pornography and revisiting the Personal, Social and Health Education teaching curriculum (5.6). The report generated questions and speeches in the House of Commons and the House of Lords (Baroness Howe of Idlicote; Diana Johnson, MP) and the report's key recommendations regarding search engines were picked up by the Prime Minister David Cameron (22 July 2013) who insisted that internet service providers tighten protections on search engines (<http://tinyurl.com/loggqds>). Cameron's statements were further developed by MP Claire Perry – the Prime Minister's Adviser on Preventing the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood - who cited directly from the report in an article in the Telegraph (5.8) and set out the government's commitment to work with internet providers to deliver a national online safety campaign and to close existing regulatory loopholes (<http://tinyurl.com/o46qjgp>).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre - Business Plan 2010-11.
http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/CEOP_Business_Plan_2010-2011_FINAL.pdf
2. NAO Memorandum: Staying Safe Online
<http://www.nao.org.uk/report/nao-memorandum-staying-safe-online/>
3. Kingdom of Bahrain State of the Nation Review of Internet Safety 2010, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain,
http://www.tra.org.bh/en/pdf/SafeSurf_TRA_Report.pdf
4. Head of Child Abuse Command, Metropolitan Police
5. Deputy Children's Commissioner, The Office of the Children's Commissioner
6. Head of Education, CEOP
7. Holly Dustin, Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition, Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA. Tel: 020 7 033 1559. Email: Holly.Dustin@evaw.org.uk
8. The Telegraph <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/sex/10277458/Sex-education-Claire-Perry-MP-Its-time-toteach-children-the-difference-between-porn-and-healthy-relationships.html>)