Child Sexual Grooming: An exploratory study into the grooming of sexually exploited boys

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**Gantt Chart**  Academic chart depicting the time line of the study project, and how time will be divided for each task conducted.

**Coding Table**  An example of the coding carried out for the transcript analysis.
## Glossary of Acronyms and Nomenclature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEOP</td>
<td>Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMD</td>
<td>Confirm, Deny, Modify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COD</td>
<td>Core Investigative Doctrine (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Child Sexual Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE</td>
<td>Child Sexual Exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSG</td>
<td>Child Sexual Grooming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUROPOL</td>
<td>European Police Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPOL</td>
<td>International Police Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Police Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKCCIS</td>
<td>UK Council for Child internet Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Vulnerable Person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

STATEMENT 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc Criminal Investigation.

STATEMENT 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.
Abstract

**Purpose:** This exploratory study aimed to explore how professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders’ gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men in the UK. The purpose was to consolidate professional knowledge for a better understanding of the grooming process of boys and young men, and how it might differ from the grooming of girls. Moreover, the research also aimed to enquire whether the grooming process of boys differed based on a victim’s perceived sexual orientation/identity.

**Design:** This study is of an exploratory qualitative nature using semi structured interviews. Three professionals working within different capacities with child sexual exploitation of boys and young men in the UK were interviewed.

**Findings:** Using thematic analysis, four themes emerged from the data: Identification of victims; Individualization of grooming; The role of manipulation in sexual grooming; and the sociological aspects of CSE victimization. The analysis revealed that a child victim’s vulnerability or life ‘gap’ is a key characteristic of effective CSE grooming. Moreover, it was found that even though there are universal aspects to grooming, the process requires a certain level of tailoring to be effective. Another finding derived from the analysis suggest that the connection developed through grooming is extremely strong and can be detrimental for a victim’s existing relationships. Finally, support for the presence of an additional mental strain for males who has been victimized sexually was identified.

**Value:** The knowledge derived from this analysis will aid criminal justice professionals in developing a better understanding of the sexual grooming and exploitation of boys and young men. Further, this analysis will create a basis for future research, aiding investigators in conducting more effective investigations and help prevent future CSE offences.
Acknowledgements

I would first like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr Henriette Bergstrøm for her guidance and support throughout the challenging, yet enjoyable, journey over the past 12 months. Also, special thanks to the staff that I have encountered my time at the University of Derby, specifically Angie Neville and Dr David Hicks.

I would also like to thank my previous educator, and friend, Shannon Walding at Griffith University in Australia, for her input and direction along the way.

I would like to thank the various participants of my study and the NWG Network for their cooperation and appreciated contribution. Without their valuable time and effort this research would not have been completed.

Some final thanks go to my friends and family who has supported and encouraged me over the last year.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Child sexual exploitation, defined as the sexual abuse of a minor, including the manufacturing and distribution of images depicting such abuse, remains an international problem (EUROPOL, 2017). Recent studies have estimated that somewhere between 10% and 20% of European children have been sexually exploited at some point during their childhood (European Commission, 2017). Sexual grooming and manipulation is an essential part of child sexual exploitation (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018). In recent years there has been a growing academic interest in child sexual grooming, increasing the availability of empirical knowledge of the grooming process itself, as well as the sexual exploitation of children (Daigneault, Vézina-Gagnon, Bourgeois, Esposito & Hébert, 2017; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Beech and Collins, 2013). Research into the sexual grooming of children that distinguishes between male and female victims has so far been scarce. It can be argued that existing research has failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the possibly unique aspects to the grooming of boys and young men. As official statistics have yet to acknowledge the increased occurrence of CSE of boys and young men, majority of the existing literature has been based on data sampled of female CSE victims, questioning the applicability of these findings to the grooming of boys and young men. It thereby develops an incomplete picture of the grooming process of boys and young men, which should be prioritised in order to establish whether there are differences.

The aim of this study was to explore how professionals working with preventing and investigating child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders’ gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men. The purpose of this exploratory study is to consolidate professional knowledge to gain an understanding of the grooming process of boys and young men, and how it might differ from the grooming of girls. Moreover, the research aims to identify how the grooming process may differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation or their state of sexual confusion.
The following chapter (Chapter 2) consists of a wide-ranging literature review incorporating existing research deemed relevant for a better understanding of the grooming process of boys and young men. Chapter 3 presents the methodology utilized in this research project, including information about the population, sampling strategy, data collection instrument and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 discusses the thematic analysis of the coded interview transcripts and the results in relation to existing literature. This section is structured based on the development of themes emerging from the thematic analysis conducted. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion, reviewing the key findings from the results, how these relate to the research questions and provide suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0. Introduction

Child sexual exploitation and sexual grooming is a complex social problem that in recent years has gained increased professional and public interest (Daigneault et al., 2017; Olsen, Daggs, Ellevold, & Rogers, 2007; Whittle et al., 2013). When sexual abuse of minors is perpetrated outside of a familial situation, it is commonly referred to as child sexual exploitation (CSE). Furthermore, sexual grooming can be described briefly as the method by which a perpetrator manipulates a child into committing sexual acts and has been found to be utilized by over 50% of all child sexual offenders (Canter, Hughes & Kirby, 1998; McAlinden, 2006; van Dam, 2006). According to Ost (2004) and Gallespie (2002), it is almost impossible for law enforcement or the public to detect sexual grooming occurring before the abuse has commenced, and most of the grooming appears innocent in nature and typical for adult-child interactions (Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2006). As this study aims to aid in the likelihood of detecting grooming of boys and young men, it is important to better understand how this grooming process transpires. This chapter will, based on the existing literature, provide a basic understanding of the different approaches to grooming, and the characteristics associated with this type of sexual manipulation and abuse. First, a brief introduction to the topic of child sexual exploitation will be provided, followed by a more comprehensive review of the existing literature on child sexual grooming. This section is divided into two parts, offline grooming and online grooming, before the criticisms of the literature will be summarised in a concluding fashion.

2.1. Child Sexual Exploitation

Throughout governmental and academic literature there is a variety in definitions explaining child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation (CSE). In an effort to generate a collectively recognized definition, EUROPOL (2017), the European Union international law enforcement agency, defines CSE as any sexual abuse of a person under the age of 18, including the manufacturing and distribution of images depicting such abuse. While this definition integrates imperative features such as child
pornography, a criticism lies in its simplicity, as this definition of CSE focuses primarily on the concept of abuse, a term that may or may not be applicable to sexual exploitation. The definition, however, fails to incorporate important aspects of sexual exploitation, such as the concept of true consent, the deception and manipulation characterizing the offence characteristics and the prominent role the offender has in the dynamics of the relationship. A plausible contributing factor to EUROPOL’s simplistic choice of definition, may be the inconsistency in the age of sexual consent across European countries (Graupner, 2000). Daigneault et al. (2017), in contrast, chose to apply a definition of ‘sexual abuse’ to their study, rather than restricting it to CSE. Their definition states that sexual abuse is any gesture of a sexual nature, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without consent from the person, or, in some cases, particularly that of children, through emotional manipulation or blackmail, a definition adopted by the Ministry of Health and Social Services. This definition holds greater applicability to CSE due to its incorporation of emotional manipulation and blackmail, important aspects to CSE, that to the author’s knowledge have yet to be incorporated in academic definitions of CSA or CSE. Similarly, the Department of Education's (2018) formally acknowledged definition states that:

‘...an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology’.

This definition does incorporate most of the central aspects of CSE, and is the definition favoured by the author for the purpose of this study. Additionally, it is important to highlight that CSE encompasses all non-familial sexual abuse of children, including sex trafficking, sex tourism, child molestation, child pornography, online grooming for the purpose of contact offences, and online grooming for strictly online communication, and that familial abuse comes under the term ‘child sexual abuse’ (Miccio-Fonseca, 2017; Richard & Reid, 2015).
According to the European Commission (2017) between 10% and 20% of European children have at some stage during their childhood been sexually assaulted. Berelowitz, Firmin, Edwards, and Gulyurtlu (2012) found that during 2010, 2,409 children were victims of CSE in the UK. Further, their report claims that during the same time period, as many as 16,500 children exhibited signs of sexual victimization. However, it is worth noting that these statistics are drawn from official statistics, which means that only cases that have come to the attention of official agencies have been counted. It is expected that the ‘dark figures’, the unreported cases, of child victimization of sexual exploitation do exceed the officially reported statistics (Pereda, Guilera, Forns & Gomez-Benito, 2009; Reeves, Soutar, Green & Crowther, 2018). According to Whittle et al. (2013), the online sexual abuse of male children is heavily underreported due to issues such as fear of labelling and masculinity stigma, topics too complex to address in this paper (see Lowe & Rogers, 2017; Parrat & Pina, 2017; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sleath & Bull, 2017). A more recent report by the National Crime Agency (2017) indicated that 1278 children under the age of 18 were found to be potential victims of child trafficking during 2016. Out of these children, 360 (28%) were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In conclusion, the prevalence of CSE throughout Europe, including the United Kingdom, is disconcerting. Vulnerable young people are targeted, often online, and groomed via different social media, as well as face-to-face, to become victims of sexual abuse (Reeves et al., 2018). Further, this review will look into this process of grooming, and seek to explore the different aspects of this process.

2.2. Child Sexual Grooming

The initial phase of CSE is the grooming process. According to the NSPCC (2018a), grooming is currently defined as:

“When someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and
young people don’t understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse (NCPCC, 2018a)."

In a condensed fashion, Olsen et al. (2007) defined grooming as a process of social deviance, where the desired outcome is the sexual abuse of the minor being groomed. It has been noted by recent research that there has yet to be developed a validated model of sexual grooming (Winters & Jeglic, 2017; Winters, Kaylor, Jeglic, 2017). As highlighted by Mooney and Ost (2013), it is almost impossible to identify exactly when the sexual grooming process commences and when it ends. The authors further identify the development of trust as a core stage in the grooming process, which they labelled “deceptive trust development” (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 69). The grooming process according to Olsen et al. (2007) and O’Connell (2003) relies on the offender’s ability to gain the trust of minors in order to sexually exploit them. O’Connell (2003), further supported by Williams, Elliott and Beech (2013), labels this important process ‘relationship forming’, and defines it as the stage at which offenders form the illusion that they are a victim’s best friend.

To get a more comprehensive understanding of the process, Winters and Jeglic (2017) collected information from different acknowledged academic sources and identified the most common stages of grooming. The first stage of the grooming process is the selection of a victim, a process that can be based on attractiveness, on the availability of the victim or most commonly on the perceived vulnerabilities of the victim (Lanning, 2013; McAlinden, 2006; Olson, Daggs, Ellevold & Rogers, 2007; Williams et al., 2013). With vulnerabilities, the literature often refers to children from families with alcohol or drug problems, mental health issues, marital problems, domestic violence or signs of neglect (Olsen et al., 2007; Winters & Jeglic, 2017). According to Finkelhor (1994) and Olsen et al. (2007), children can also present with mental vulnerabilities, such as eating disorders, low self-esteem and self-confidence, or neediness. The second stage of the process is gaining access to the victim, often done by isolating them socially from people around them (Winters & Jeglic, 2017). According to Mooney and Ost (2013), this stage is where initial contact occurs, and manipulation to build trust begins. The following stage is labelled ‘trust development’ by Winters and Jeglic (2017), where the perpetrator befriends the victim, and addresses the child’s identified vulnerabilities to
create dependency and obtain control over the victim. The final stage commences once the perpetrator has gained the trust of the victim and comprises the desensitization of physical contact and the gradual increase of sexualized behaviour (Leclerc, Proulx & Beauregard, 2009; McAlinden, 2006; Winters & Jeglic, 2017). For example, the perpetrator might initiate games that involve sexual touching, to then progress to sexually charged games and intercourse (Lanning, 2013; McAlinden, 2006; Olsen et al., 2007). This process is applicable to both male and female victims and outlines the most common process of sexual grooming of children.

Research suggests that girls are more likely to become sexually victimized than boys (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod & Hambly, 2009; McGee, Garavam, Barra, Bryne & Conroy, 2002; Pereda, Guilera, Forns & Gomez-Benito, 2009). However, in 2012, Livingstone and Palmer analysed cases ($n=166$) of children groomed online and found that male victims who are questioning their sexuality or who identify as homosexual may be more vulnerable to grooming and victimization ($Q_3$). It is worth noting that their research was assembled for the purpose of a seminar in cooperation with the UK Council for Child internet Safety (UKCCIS) and not for academic scrutiny, and lacks reliability due to the weak academic sources backing their arguments (Bryman, 2016). Livingstone and Palmer’s (2012) findings are however consistent with earlier research by Wolok, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2004) and Wolak et al. (2008), and is therefore considered reliable for the purpose of this study. Whittle et al. (2013), Suseg, Grødem, Valset and Mossige (2008), Wolak, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2004) and Wolak, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2009) all agree that sexual confusion and insecurity in male youth are being exploited by CSE offenders ($Q_3$). In the Swedish study by Suseg et al. (2008) it was found that “self-reported homosexuality or bisexuality is, for both boys and girls, the single strongest risk factor in determining if a young person is approached sexually online” (p. 137). However, their study was primarily focused on the online solicitation of children by the use of mobile devices in Sweden, and due to cultural and socio-economic differences between the two countries, their findings might therefore not be directly applicable to the UK (Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2010). Along with the vulnerability of being inexperienced and questioning their sexuality, Reeves et al. (2018, p. 121) developed a table based on their literature review, listing the most prevalent vulnerabilities associated with CSE:
A combination of these vulnerabilities, or just a single one, could increase the likelihood for that child to be open for grooming. Groomers are sophisticated in their process and often adopt techniques associated with attachment (providing a safe haven for children while they employ flattery, acceptance and nurture the victims). Children, according to von Behr, Reding, Edwards and Gribbon (2013) and Beckett (2013), are often drawn towards groomers because of a need for affection or attachment. However, it is noteworthy that von Behr et al. (2013) focused primarily on grooming in regards to radicalisation, and only briefly studied grooming for sexual exploitation as an comparison.

### 2.2.1. Offline Grooming

Some offenders choose to groom their victims offline, or in other words in-person, and have never committed CSE online. Examples of offline grooming offences include where professionals misuse their position and their access to children for the objective of sexual grooming, or where foster families, neighbours or family friends take advantage of their access to children through social contacts (Bebbington, et al. 2011; Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner & Hamby, 2005; Miller, 2013; Olsen et al., 2007; Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan & Beech, 2002). As mentioned previously, Olsen et al. (2007) identified the development of trust as a main stage of offline grooming, which was labelled “deceptive trust development” (p. 69) (Q2). One of the key steps in offline grooming is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerabilities to CSE grooming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent bereavement or loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social isolation or social difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness or insecure accommodation status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a physical or learning disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in care (residential care or interrupted care history)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the exclusion and isolation of victims, the process where the offender ensures that the victims keep their relationship a secret by engaging in threats, controlling behaviour, offering incentives \((Q_4)\) or by expressing their love for one another \((Berson, 2003; O'Connell, 2003; Sullivan, 2008)\) \((Q_2)\). Berson \((2003)\) and Sullivan \((2008)\) called this process a self-preservation tactic. The current study intends to further explore the importance of the victim's sexuality to the process of grooming \((Q_3)\) and enquire about the use of incentives to control male grooming victims \((Q_4)\).

Another step associated with self-preservation is compliance testing \((Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017)\). This stage is where the offender, by using reverse psychology and switching interactive roles, tests the extent to which the victim is willing to engage in sexual activities \((Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017; O'Connell, 2003)\). Other steps of the offline grooming process, according to Black, Wollis, Woodworth and Handcock \((2015)\) and O'Connell \((2003)\), include identifying family members’ work schedules, discussing plans for travelling, querying about the victim’s sexuality and using flattery to gain favour. However, as Black et al.'s \((2015)\) study completely disregarded the grooming by female offenders, their findings may likely not be applicable to the CSE and grooming by female offenders, limiting their generalizability \((Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2015; Matthews & Ross, 2014)\). Gannon, Rose and Ward \((2008)\) did however compared face-to-face sexual grooming and offending methods of male and female offenders and found that there are identifiable differences between the two, a difference which according to Black, Wollis, Woodworth and Hancock \((2015)\) might also be applicable to computer-mediated grooming.

Furthermore, DeHart, Dwyer, Seto, Moran, Letourneau & Schwarz-Watts \((2017)\) and Winters and Jeglic \((2017)\) claim that some of the aforementioned steps of the offline grooming process correlates with that of online grooming. Briggs, Simon and Simonsen \((2011)\) argue that most online offenders are different from offline offenders, as online offenders can be divided into two types: one where offenders seek to meet victims in-person for sexual purposes; another one where offenders wish to engage in cybersex \((e.g.\) masturbating while online, exchanging pornographic images or engaging in sexualized chatting) with victims rather than meet in-person. It has also been suggested by Dehart et al. \((2017)\) that online offenders may possess more self-
control and psychological factors preventing them from offending offline, such as mental health diagnoses (75% of the sample).

2.2.2. Online Grooming

With online activities increasing rapidly with the evolution of technology (e.g. data roaming, mobile application using geolocation features), it has changed the way people socialise and thereby opened possibilities, more anonymous, way of interacting (al-Khateeb & Epiphaniou, 2016; Berson, 2003; Gillespie, 2002; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010). According to Ybarra, Leaf and Diener-West (2004), 97% of US young people between the age of 12 and 18 use the internet regularly. The increased use of internet has generated a virtual platform for CSE, creating more opportunities for sexual perpetrators (McManus, Almond, Cubbon, Boulton & Mears, 2016). Mithcell, Jones, Finkelhor and Wolak (2014), found that 1 in 11 youth had been victims of unwanted online sexual solicitation. The National Child Exploitation Threat Assessment of the United States Department of Justice (2010) further supported their finding, stating a 230% increase in documented complains of online solicitation of youth from 2004 to 2008. Cooper (2002) argued that the internet has a triple A effect on CSE offenders because of its ability to ease access, anonymity and affordability to the grooming process. In regards to easy access to victims online, research by Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Olafsson (2011) and Whittle et al. (2013) suggests that engaging in risky behaviour online increases the risk for victimization, as unrestricted access to the internet (i.e. mobile devices with data roaming features), combined with a lack of parental online supervision may enable groomers to have easier access to victims ($Q_5$).

Additionally, Renold, Creighton, Atkinson and Carr (2003) claimed, based on their findings, that internet allows perpetrators to engage with other likeminded individuals. One concern with such anonymous interactions is the misuse of this technology by people who aim to form relationships with children to facilitate future sexual victimization, a process known as online grooming. Lorenzo-Dus and Izura (2017) define online grooming as the process by which an adult abuses the trust gained from
a minor in order to exploit him or her sexually, specifically by the use of cyber-
technology, often on social media or in online games (Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017) ($Q_2$).

Furthermore, Black et al. (2015) suggest that the anonymity of the internet allows for a
more rapid grooming process through the faster development of intimate relationships
online than through face-to-face interactions. The easy access to victims, and the lower
risk of interference from parents or other adults online is another beneficial
characteristic for offenders (Black et al., 2015). In fact, contrary to what Berson (2003)
and Sullivan (2008) argued in regards to offline grooming, Black et al. (2015) and
Wolak and Finkelhor (2013) found that online offenders did not, to the same extent,
employ self-preservation tactics to ensure the secrecy of their offender-victim
interactions, seemingly fully relying on the anonymity of the internet ($Q_2$).

Studies on online victimisation vary in their discussion of the victim characteristics of
gender in online grooming offences. The majority have found that girls are far more
likely to be targeted by groomers than boys (Brå, 2007; Helweg-Larsen, Mitchell,
Finkelhor & Wolak, 2007; Schütt & Larsen, 2011; Suseg et al., 2008; Wolak, Finkelhor,
Mitchell & Ybarra, 2008). However, Whittle et al. (2013) argues that regardless of
whether female victims are more likely to be targeted online, males spend more time
online, consequently increasing the likelihood and opportunity of being targeted
(Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Olafsson, 2011) ($Q_5$). This is noteworthy when
according to Whittle et al. (2013), girls (66%) have been targeted online at almost
double the rate of boys (34%), suggesting that even though boys are more likely to be
online, girls are still targeted at a higher rate. These findings are consistent with that of
Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor and Wolak (2011), who found that 82% of internet initiated
CSE involves female victims. Their study did however focus solely on the commercial
exploitation of children, and their sample ($n=569$) did only include cases characterized
by a commercial aim, which may possibly exclude cases involving boys and young
men, as female victims are found to be more common in commercial exploitation
(Mitchell et al., 2011; Whittle et al., 2013). Nevertheless, Mitchell et al.’s (2011) findings
are also consistent with that of Livingstone and Palmer (2012), who found that the most
common child victim of online CSE was girls between the age of 13 and 14. Existing
literature of quantitative nature often suggests that girls are more likely to become
victims of CSE, however, these findings are based on reported offences, and as previously established, boys and young men are less likely to report their victimization due to challenging societal stereotyping and masculinity norms.

A study by Maleskey (2007) analysed questionnaire responses from 31 imprisoned child sex offenders aiming to identify what offenders look for in targets online. Findings by Maleskey (2007), further supported by Quayle, Jonsson and Löf’s (2014) more recent study, suggests that minors talking about sex online, appearing needy or submissive, or using sexualized usernames, are all important variables in groomer’s identification and decision-making process. Amongst Quayle et al.’s (2014) sample, chat rooms and instant messaging (IM) were found to be the preferred online platforms to connect with minors (Q3). Due to the qualitative nature and the small sample size (n= 14) of Quayle et al.’s (2014) study, it is important to recognize that their findings may not be generalizable to other populations, especially considering their sample consisted of participants from two different European countries, consisting of populations with culturally different backgrounds (Howitt, 2010; Matthews & Ross, 2014). Moreover, the authors further claimed that offenders rotated their use of different platforms, until they eventually convinced the target to continue their communication over text messages (SMS) (Briggs et al., 2011; Webster, Davidson, Bifulco, Gottschalk, Caretti, Pham et al., 2012; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2009) (Q2). In summary, perpetrators use online platforms like chat rooms and IM to access victims, for then to continue the communication over SMS.

Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones and Wolak (2010), found that the online communication between groomers and their targets often involved a variety of channels, such as chat rooms, instant messaging, text messaging and video calls (Q2; Q5). Further, the author found that the different platforms utilised by groomers are not only used for communication with targets, but as a source of information about the target, their location and their daily routines through online photos, likes, comments and events. However, Mitchell et al.’s (2010) sample consists only of reported offences resulting in arrests. As cases resulting in arrests may not be representative of all cases of internet related victimization, their findings may not be generalizable to every type of online victimization (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008; Howitt, 2015). However, these
findings are derived directly from offenders committing such offences and should hold significant reliability and unique information necessary to understand how offenders operate.

Further on Mitchell et al.’s (2010) findings, it is also plausible to assume that some offenders primarily communicate with their target to gain information about their whereabouts, in order to continue the grooming process offline (Q₂). As suggested by Lorenzo-Dus and Izura (2017), the sexual gratification of the offenders begins with the initiation of the grooming process. Regardless of whether the exploitation of the victim is continued offline, online grooming is regarded as child sexual exploitation, and is according to Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2003), classed as a specific offence separate to contact offences.

To exploring the process that follows the establishment of an initial contact between perpetrator and victim, Black et al. (2015) analysed the language used by groomers in 44 transcribed dialogues from convicted online offenders and discovered five different types of linguistic approaches utilized to manipulate victims online. However, even though some aspects might be similar, it is worth stating that these findings are derived from male offenders only and not applicable to the grooming by female offenders. These five linguistic approaches were: “flattery, inquiring about the target's parents’ schedule, asking the target whether he/she was an undercover police officer or probing about whether the chat log was a sting, remarking the relationship was inappropriate to gauge the target's reaction, mentioning the dangers of communicating with others on the Internet, expressing love and trust, trying to find out about the target's past sexual experience, and assessing the possibility of travel to meet the target” (Black et al., 2015, pp. 148-149) (Q₂).

Another study into the linguistics behind grooming led to the development of a model of online grooming discourse by Lorenzo-Dus, Izura and Pérez-Tattam (2016). This model consists of 3 main categories of grooming: Access, Approach and Entrapment (Q₂; Q₅). The entrapment stage is a complicated phase, further divided into subcategories consisting of deceptive trust development, sexual gratification, isolation and compliance testing. These two aforementioned linguistic discourse analyses,
Black et al. (2015) and Lorenzo-Duz et al. (2016), are unique in that the authors explore the very process by which groomers communicate with their victims, rather than the risk factors for victimisation or the platforms utilised in the process. The current study seeks to adopt this vision by exploring the relationship dynamics created between male victims and offenders during the grooming process (Q1; Q2).

An interesting finding by Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell and Ybarra (2008) questions the importance of deception in the grooming process. The authors found that the majority of online-initiated sexual offences involve adult men who seduce underage teenagers online for the purpose of sexual encounters, and that most of these victims were aware the offenders were adults looking for sexual activity (Q1; Q2). Keeping in mind that the most common victims of CSE are adolescent children (Black et al., 2015; Katz, 2013; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2004), Wolak et al.’s (2008) findings could suggest that preventive tactics like internet safety education have minimal effect, and that targets decide to proceed fully aware of the risks (Ainsaar & Lööf, 2010; Baumgartner, Valkenburg and Peter, 2010; CEOP, 2008; Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod & Hamby, 2009; Quayle, Jonsson & Lööf, 2014; Soo & Bodanovskaya, 2012; Whittle et al, 2013). As previously mentioned, boys are found to be more likely to engage in risky behaviour, increasing the likelihood of the above-mentioned scenario, and it would therefore be valuable to further explore the use and prevalence of deception in the grooming process of boys (Q1; Q2).

The various discourse analyses of grooming discussed are valuable to the current study, as they present a framework against which the data collected can be assessed and compared. It is the practical techniques or means used by offenders to achieve their goal that this study is primarily interested in (Q2). However, the motivation for, and the value of, the grooming methods chosen by offenders are highly relevant to understanding the reasoning behind each existing method (Q1). Even though academic sources suggest the process of online and offline grooming to be similar, it has been concluded that these strategies differ in the time each stage is initiated, and that offenders are aware that different tactics need to be implemented for each of these platforms (Lorenzo-Dun & Izura, 2017) (Q2). For example, Black et al. (2015) found that offenders implement the risk assessment (self-preservation) stage of the grooming
process as early as in the initial contact with the target, in contrast to face-to-face grooming where this stage is one of the last to be introduced ($Q_2$). As research supports a difference between online and offline grooming, it is plausible that there are also differences between genders in victims ($Q_1$). The current study wishes to look at the grooming methods utilised towards boys and young men, to explore whether this is plausible.

### 2.3. Criticism of the literature

The majority of the existing literature on grooming has failed to differentiate the grooming process based on to the gender of victims, and thereby omitted data that could hold valuable information about the grooming process. Upon analysing the current literature, the author identified weaknesses in several areas. First, in regards to the prevalence rates of CSE and CSE grooming, research (e.g. Berelowitz et al., 2012) has failed to provide generalizable and indicative statistics on the seriousness of CSE. Further, a commonality for the studies discussed in this chapter has been the inadequate definition of their key concepts, as this variation in definitions makes cross-comparison difficult (Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2010). In fact, academic research has failed to utilize a universal definition of CSE and should consider a definition that incorporates the grooming process as a part of the abuse, as it has recently been introduced in UK legislation (Sexual Offences Act, 2003).

Moreover, findings by Livingstone and Palmer (2012) were found to hold low empirical standard due to the non-empirical literature supporting their argument. Those of the studies that did support their arguments appropriately did however disregard important aspects of Livingstone and Palmer’s (2012) argument, a limitation that is understandable as no research can incorporate every aspect of their topic. For example, Von Behr et al. (2013) studied the manipulation of grooming as a concept (including non-sexual grooming), barely exploring the topic of child sexual grooming. Further, it was not uncommon that the literature presented with a total disregard for grooming committed by female offenders (e.g. Black et al., 2015). Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2011) focused solely on the commercial exploitation of children, and their findings cannot be accurately applied to all CSE.
Some studies presented contradictions in regards to self-preservation tactics of offenders, specifically regarding online vs. offline grooming comparisons (e.g. Berson, 2003; Sullivan, 2008; Black et al., 2015; Wolak & Finkelhor, 2013). There were also some discrepancies identified regarding the likelihood of online victimization based on victims’ gender (e.g. Brå, 2007; Helweg-Larsen et al., 2011; Suseg et al., 2008). Furthermore, with the extensive literature discussed on the topic of sexual confusion and CSE (Suseg et al., 2008; Whittle et al., 2012; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2004; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2009) none of these studies explored the process in which this sexual confusion or insecurity is being exploited. The current study intends to enquire about the role sexual identity has in the grooming process, and how it is exploited (Q3).

Some studies were highly affected by the cultural and sociological limitations of their sample, opening for the possibility that their findings may not be applicable in other cultural and societal settings elsewhere, such as when Swedish findings may not be applicable in UK societies (e.g. Brå, 2007; Suseg et al., 2008). Another academic area identified as lacking, was the insight into the social progression within conversation between victim and offender, studies focusing on the linguistic aspects of grooming, and how the conversations unfolded (Black et al., 2015). This aspect of grooming will be included in the current research, by looking some of the processes groomers use when interacting with boys and young men (Q2).

To add to, and address the gaps identified above, the current research focused on the following research questions:

**Q1.** How do professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men? (Research Question 1 – Q1)

**Q2.** How does the grooming of boys and young men unfold? (Research question 2 – Q2)
Q₃. How might the grooming process differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation/identity? (Research question 3 – Q₃)

Q₄. How are incentives utilized in the grooming of boys and young men? (Research question 4 – Q₄)

Q₅. How do perpetrators gain access to boys and young men? (Research question 5 – Q₅)
Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0. Introduction

This chapter consists of several sections providing a detailed account of the methodology utilized to best explore the research questions highlighted in Chapter 1. An exploratory approach was chosen due to the limited existing knowledge, the sensitive nature of the topic and the impractical nature of access and ethical considerations for working with either offenders or victims of CSE. The aim of this dissertation was to expand on the limited existing literature on the grooming of boys and young men. This exploratory study can be defined in terms of epistemology, based on the claim that knowledge is gained through social constructs such as shared knowledge and experience (Rowlands, 2005). This research therefore seeks to ascertain information and knowledge from experienced professionals in the field of CSE. This research does not, due to its interpretivist stance, measure any pre-defined variables or test any hypotheses (Rowlands, 2005). The interpretivist framework will be utilized to build a knowledge base and possibly theory on the CSE and sexual grooming of boys and young men. The researcher was guided by the idea that sexual grooming of boys and young men may best be understood by accumulating the subjective perspective of relevant professionals, namely police investigators, charity workers and health professionals working for the national organization NWG Network. These professionals provided information about how boys and young men are groomed for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

3.1 Research Design

The research design was guided by the epistemological and ontological stance presented above. The research used a qualitative cross-sectional, non-experimental, research design to explore professional knowledge on the grooming process used towards boys and young men. Due to the limited available knowledge on the topic, this study adopted Kvale’s (1996) ‘miner metaphor’ for the data collection method, where the analogy describes the knowledge you wish to collect as buried metal, and the interviewer as the miner who dig up the valuable metal (information). According to
Kvale (1996), “the interviewer digs nuggets of data or meanings out of the subjects experiences, unpolluted by any leading questions” (p.3). It is the collection of commonly inaccessible first-hand information directly form people working in the relevant fields that makes qualitative interviewing valuable for this particular research. This method provides the opportunity to ascertain information, through interviewing, that is not otherwise accumulated from professionals, to further build on their knowledge and experience (Bryman, 2016; Howitt, 2010).

An interpretivist epistemological approach to a thematic analysis was implemented, with an inductive qualitative stance. Such exploratory research design is often used to ascertain valuable information about a topic and is particularly useful for the current research as little empirical research has been conducted on the topic previously, and thereby restricts the availability of information to derived from other sources than those in direct interaction with male victims of CSE (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Howitt, 2010; Kvale, 2008). The cross-sectional research method is one of the most common designs within the social sciences as it is time and cost efficient in regards to sampling (Alasuutari et al., 2008; Adler & Clark, 2015; Bryman 2016). Professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation prevention and victimization support, were asked open-ended questions in the form of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are most commonly used when researchers are interested in people’s experience and understanding as well as why they experience and understand the research topic in that way, mostly due to it being a flexible and adaptable data collection method. Because of the limited amount of academic literature on this research topic, semi-structured interviews were utilised to enable professionals to talk about their expertise and knowledge in their own way in order to maximize the data collected. This is important as their understanding may aid the understanding of sexual grooming of boys, and maximizing the data collected will provide a more detailed and comprehensive understanding from each participant. Upon completion of the data collection stage, a thematic analysis within each interview topic was conducted to explore the professionals’ understanding of the grooming of sexually exploited boys. The current project has been carried out within 12 months as a part of a Master program at the University of Derby (see Table 1).
3.2. Sample

The targeted population consisted of professionals within organisations working with male victims of child sexual exploitation in the UK. The sample consisted of 1 female participant and 2 male participants, with an additional male participant dropping out. The age range of the participants varied from 37 to 59, with a varied professional experience ranging from 5 years to 40 years within different aspects of CSE. The primary sample were professionals from the NWG Network, that had experience of knowledge from working with male victims of CSE (Innovation House, Derby DE21 7BF). Due to the low number of participants, participants’ characteristics and professional background will be kept confidential to ensure the anonymity of participation.

3.3. Sampling Strategy and Data Collection

This study implemented a purposive sampling strategy where CSE professionals \( (n=4) \), primarily supplied by the NWG Network, were questioned regarding their professional knowledge and experience of the CSE grooming process. Purposive
sampling describes the process whereby the researcher decides who is best suited for participation based on the accessibility of participant information relevant to the study (Alasuutari et al., 2008; Adler & Clark, 2015; Bryman, 2016). In this process, selected organisations were contacted and asked whether any of their employees would want to participate in an in-depth interview. It is noted that with the non-random sampling method utilized, external validity may be questioned (Adler & Clark, 2015; Bryman, 2016). However, the findings provide a valuable insight into professionals’ understanding of male victimization of CSE in the UK. If the purposive sampling of the NWG Network’s population proved insufficient, a snowball sampling method was ready to be employed through the contacts within the NWG Network. As a contingency approach, a list of other organisations had been prepared.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author at the NWG Network site in Derbyshire (See 3.1. Population). The author had no prior experience conducting interviews, which may have somewhat affected the interviewing process. With the safety of the researcher ensured by the use of a secure interview location, the NWG Network site was familiar to the participant prior to the interview. As a rapport building phase, the interviewer met with the participants prior to the commencement of the interviewing process, encouraging a more relaxed environment (Collins, Doherty-Sneddun & Doherty, 2014; Hershkowitz, 2011; Howitt, 2010; Vallano & Compo, 2015).

3.3.1. Data Collection Instrument

Participants were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview consisting of 20 questions (See Appendix D). The open-ended interview questions were developed from the critical analysis of the current available literature presented in Chapter 2, identifying areas in which the literature failed to identify gender specific crime characteristics of the CSE grooming process. The interview framework was constructed in a manner enabling the interviewee to provide background information about the participant’s professional experience within the field of CSE and the sexual grooming of boys. This phase had two purposes, to further the rapport building by allowing the participant to introduce their careers, and to assess the credibility and experience the participant had in regards to the topic. Further, the interview covered the general topic of CSE grooming, before moving to more specific questions around
the grooming process of boys and young men. The framework was categorized into themes, completing one topic before moving on to the next one. The interviewing framework ended with questions enquiring the personal opinion of participants on sociological issues related to the topic, such as ‘what would you change to prevent CSE?”, to ensure the interviewee was left with less complex questions finalizing the interviewing process. To further ensure that the data collection instrument was effective and ethically appropriate, a set of pilot interviews was conducted prior to the time of data collection.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

This study proceeded in accordance with the Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (University of Derby, 2011) and the Data Protection Act 1998, and was granted ethical approval. No ethical considerations that were not covered in the ethical approval stage arose as part of the project. Please see Appendix A for the full ethical approval and associated forms.

The final report will be offered to all participants through the NWG Network, where all participants can obtain a copy without revealing their participation to peers or others outside of the organization.

3.5. Transcription of Interviewing Data

To familiarize himself with the data, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews personally. The transcription was carried out on a word by word basis without any unnecessary persons present, using headphones and the word processing software Microsoft Word (Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000; MacLean, Mayer & Estable, 2004). As the analysis focused on the thematic analysis of professional knowledge and experience, the transcripts contained only that which was spoken, and disregarded pauses and visual observations, as little importance was attributed these observations due to the professional conditions of the interview, contrary to that of for example victim interviews. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher assigned each participant with an identification code, and this code is the only identifiable character featured on the transcripts and on the recordings (Alasuutari et al., 2008; Bryman, 2016; Easton et al., 2000). The transcribed interview reports were stored on an encrypted hard-drive, in
accordance with the UDCC to ensure confidentiality (University of Derby, 2017). The interview transcripts were de-identified to the extent that a lay person will not be able to positively connect the completed responses to an individual participant. The transcripts will be destroyed upon dissertation submission, as well as at any point where a participant wishes to withdraw from the study. The researcher may retain the aggregated/anonymised data indefinitely for further research.

3.6. Strategy for data analysis

The analytical framework utilised was thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is, according to Braun and Clarke (2014), “a method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data” (p. 1) and offers an accessible and flexible method for understaking qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis is a method rather than a methodology, meaning it is not restricted to a particular epistemological perspective (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) believe this makes thematic analysis more flexible, a feature aiding the exploratory stance of the research design. The researcher transcribed the interviews himself, to ensure consistency of transcription and maintenance of confidentiality. The current research adopted Braun and Clark’s (2006) framework, as it offered a clear and practical framework for analysis and will be discussed further in the following paragraph.

This framework, as with the current research, utilized open coding to examine, conceptualise and compare data from the transcribed interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Kvale, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This is an interpretive process of data analysis used to obtain new ways of understanding the data, aiming to advance beyond subjectivity and bias (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). It is simply a way of identifying and prioritising the meanings of useful data on a micro level, by applying one or more keywords to segments or statements within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Kvale, 2007). The first step of the coding process was done manually, line-by-line by the use of highlighting and notes, before the qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to aid the coding and analysis process. NVivo is a software package used in research to analyse and organise non-numerical data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The coding using NVivo was also done on a line-by-line basis, using nodes and thematically categorizing the nodes into child nodes. After this process was completed,
the codes were categorized in themes identified during the coding process. An example of the initial coding process and the identification of themes can be found in Table 7 below. These themes where then further analysed in relation to the existing literature presented in the literature review (Chapter 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Nodes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most prevalent offences in CSE</td>
<td>Definition: Statements on the prevalence of CSE offences and the underreporting of male victimization</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Sociological difficulties of being sexually exploited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark figures and underreporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers for boys to disclose abuse</td>
<td>Definition: Statements that reflects the difficulty of disclosure from a victim’s perspective.</td>
<td>Disclosure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociological explanations for dark figures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of labelling (as victim, as gay)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental online supervision Gaming</td>
<td>Definition: Statements hypothesizing the prevention of future victimization and further stigma for victims.</td>
<td>Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create awareness (media, social attitudes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.7. Reliability and validity

A high level of reliability for the analysis was ensured by securing good quality recordings of the interviews, to ensure a clear and precise transcription (Bryman, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2014; Kvale, 2007). Two separate devices were utilized to ensure the usefulness of the recording. Further, transcription and coding has been carried out by the researcher, to ensure the highest possible validity of the transcribed data. The coding was first done manually, before it was carried out by the use of NVivo, for the purpose of comparison as a reliability check. Furthermore, triangulation was used to attempt to provide a complete picture of the grooming process of boys.

Throughout this chapter, the methodological approaches used for the study has been reflected on to ensure the most effective and appropriate methodology has been utilized.
Chapter 4

Analysis and Findings

4.0. Introduction

This chapter aims to present and discuss the findings of the analysis in regards to the existing literature. The thematic analysis was conducted in several steps. The preliminary analysis consisted of generating a word cloud by using the NVivo software (see Appendix B), to get an overview of the possible nodes and themes that could arise from the analysis. For information about the analysis process and an example of the initial coding, see Table 7 in 3.2.5 Strategy for data analysis.

To reiterate, the research questions are:

\[ Q_1. \] How do professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men? (\( Q_1 \))

\[ Q_2. \] How does the grooming of boys and young men unfold? (\( Q_2 \))

\[ Q_3. \] How might the grooming process differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation/identity? (\( Q_3 \))

\[ Q_4. \] How are incentives utilized in the grooming of boys and young men? (\( Q_4 \))

\[ Q_5. \] How do perpetrators gain access to boys and young men? (\( Q_5 \))

The following four themes arose from the thematic analysis: identification of victims; individualization of grooming; the role of manipulation in sexual grooming; and the sociological aspects of CSE victimization. The proceeding pages will introduce each theme and discuss the findings in regards to the existing literature.
4.1 Identification of victims

This theme captures the participants’ knowledge and opinions on how perpetrators identify and target victims. This part encompasses the areas of initial contact with victims, victim characteristics and the vulnerabilities found in victims of grooming, as these different factors all affect perpetrators’ identification of victims.

A shared perception through various participants’ accounts suggested that the most common age for CSE victimization was early adolescence (around 14 years of age). Comparatively, for online grooming, the common perception suggested that victims are getting younger every year. One participant suggested that the most prevalent age for online grooming victims today was between 11-12 years. The literature, however, has found victims of online CSE grooming to be between the ages of 13 and 17 years (Wolak et al., 2010). It can be hypothesised that the changes in online grooming victim’s ages is related to the increased availability of technology to younger and younger children in today’s society, a progression that most likely will continue (al-Khateeb & Epiphaniou, 2016). It is unknown, however, whether this explanation is valid in victimization conducted offline. Overall, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2011) has found CSE victims coming to the attention of authorities are most often young people between the ages of 14 and 15. As it is known that male victims of CSE are under-represented in official statistics due to difficulties in identifying CSE in boys and young men, this age range may not be accurate for male victims (CEOP, 2011; NCPCC, 2018b).

A common thread through the narratives of participants was their explicit reference to a child’s vulnerabilities for becoming a CSE victim. It was agreed upon that “everyone with a vulnerability could become a CSE victim, regardless of socioeconomic demographics and educational level”, and that such characteristics should not be used for predicting victimization. Nevertheless, all three participants agreed that a child being in care could increase the number of vulnerabilities available to exploit, a statement embracing several of the items listed on Reeves et al.’s (2018) list of vulnerabilities (see table 2: Vulnerabilities to CSE grooming in Section 2.2.). One participant argued that “there could be a link between children in care and attachment issues”, suggesting that being in care in itself is not an issue, but the psychological
issues related to being in a situation that would leave a child in protective care could be. An argument derived from the process suggested that children in care are probably displaying more marked or visible vulnerabilities than other children and are therefore more easily identified by perpetrators. This leaves them overrepresented amongst CSE victims. This is a plausible explanation when taking into consideration that multiple items on Reeves et al.’s (2018) list could be associated with life situations that could result in child protective care. However, it was specified that this does not leave children in care more susceptible to grooming, but more visible to perpetrators through the services these children access (in public) and often through the status of, or lack of, material belongings.

It was also found that male CSE victims who participants had encountered were predominantly white, a finding in accordance with NSPCC (2018), who reported that CSE victims are predominantly white UK nationals (61%). One participant added that:

“…not being a UK national is simply another vulnerability, in that being for example an asylum-seeking child opens for more vulnerabilities related to their situation, such as language barriers and a lack of understanding for British law.”

Another participant stressed that they receive regular reports of sexual exploitation committed during refugee’s migration to the UK. This is particularly interesting as the situation of a refugee is somewhat comparable with Reeves et al.’s (2018) findings, which suggested that economic vulnerability, homelessness and lack of a stable home environment is highly associated with CSE. This notion is supported by Moynihan, Mitchell, Pitcher, Havaei, Ferguson and Saewy (2018), who found that poverty, unstable home environment and homelessness were all vulnerabilities highly associated with CSE victimization.

Furthermore, participants predicted that most male CSE victims presented with a vulnerability. According to one of the participants, vulnerability is defined by a ‘gap’ in a victim’s life that needs to be filled.

“If you are vulnerable, and there is a gap in your life that you need to be filled. You need love, you need attention, you need something to feed that gap that you have in your life.”
This explanation is consistent with various existing literature (Lanning, 2013; Winters et al., 2017), including that of Reeves et al. (2018), who as previously stated, developed a list of areas with which this ‘gap’ is most commonly associated (see Table 2). Furthermore, participants argued that for a typical vulnerable person who is susceptible to being exploited, it all comes down to whichever situation they first encounter:

“It is what comes first in that victim’s life. It might be the county-lines guy dealing drugs, or it might be the radicalisation, or it can be CSE, it is that vulnerability that makes them susceptible to becoming a victim”.

Consequently, the demographics of the victims may fluctuate dramatically, but the vulnerabilities may be the same (Whittle et al., 2013). Therefore, CSE victim demographics are arguably not such an important aspect to comprehend for understanding the CSE grooming process, as it is claimed that the physical or socio-economic demographics of the victim does not itself result in increased likelihood of being groomed (Reeves et al., 2018; Whittle et al., 2013). However, socio-economic demographics might still increase the likelihood of victims presenting with such vulnerability gaps (Reeves et al., 2018; Whittle et al., 2013). A common example by participants stated that quite often boys and young men being groomed are from affluent families, a statement inconsistent with media representation (Dobson, 2018; Kitzinger, 2004; Poulet, 2018):

“Socially and economically, they were subject to less indicators of deprivation than female victims. Quite often the boys and young men were from more affluent families, certainly better or perceived to be better neighbourhoods.”

This notion would further support the argued ‘gap’ or vulnerability being the essential characteristic of CSE grooming, suggesting that the gap might simply be different for boys and young men growing up in affluent families, where parents may be absent, and children therefore seek affirmation elsewhere (Winters & Jeglic, 2017). Further, contradicting perceived public perception, participants argue that CSE victims are often well-educated, with access to money and modern technology, leaving these victims...
independent and high functioning. These statements somewhat contradict the vulnerabilities listed by Reeves et al. (2018), questioning whether Reeves et al.’s (2018) findings are generalizable to boys and young men. However, the participants’ statements regarding victims’ socio economic status are further supported by Wolak, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2004) and Bjørnseth and Szabo (2018), thereby gaining credibility.

According to Brennan and Hammond (2017), further supported by Broughton (2009) and Davidson, Grove-Hills, Bifulco, Gottschalk, Caretti, Pham and Webster (2011), the use of online services to facilitate CSE has increased in recent years. In the interviewing process, all participants reported that the most common way for perpetrators to target boys and young men was online (Q6). Further, dating apps such as Grindr, Gaydar and Fitlads were named to be the most common platform exploited for grooming purposes. This finding is somewhat consistent, yet different from, that of the existing literature, as studies such as Malesky (2007) and Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell and Ybarra (2008), found internet chat rooms to be the most prevalent method, internet chat rooms being somewhat different than dating apps. However, it is worth noting that the time period these studies (Malesky, 2007; Wolak et al., 2008) conducted their studies, mobile application apps were not yet invented, and chat rooms had the role these apps have today. A highlighted issue with these apps, was that there is no control beyond the confirmation of terms and conditions, that assures users are over 18 years old. The participant expressed:

“*We have created a system of protection for children by requiring them to be 18 to sign up. This requirement creates the situation where younger people pretend to be 18, thereby providing the perpetrator with a somewhat valid defence, while preventing law enforcement from identifying these relationships as inappropriate.*”

The participant further argued that if we allowed boys and young men to sign up to dating apps with their actual age, law enforcement could more easily deal with perpetrators engaging with underaged children, and thereby better protect them.
4.2 Individualization of grooming

This theme encapsulates the participants’ professional opinion on how the grooming process is individualized and tailored for efficiency. It discusses the concepts of tailored grooming, the use of incentives in the grooming process and a brief discussion of the gender differences in grooming.

A commonality through the various narratives of participants was their understanding of grooming, as the grooming process was described in close accordance with Olsen et al.‘s (2007) definition utilized in Chapter 2, comprising similar concepts such as the identification of vulnerabilities, the manipulation, relationship building and victim isolation. Moreover, the current research identified similar descriptions of grooming to that of O’Connell (2003) and Williams et al. (2013), who stated that the grooming process is a deceptive form of relationship building, creating an illusion of a mutually beneficial relationship (Q1).

It was clear that the participants had no preconceived opinion on the average duration of the grooming process, and that the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim can be developed in hours as well as years. DeHart et al. (2017) conducted an analysis into chat logs, email threads and social media posts, and found the median duration of the grooming process to be approximately four days. Their research also revealed that the median time before initiating a meeting was only 50 minutes, and that engaging and encouraging physical sexual activity was initiated approximately an hour into the conversation (DeHart et al., 2017). Their study did however find the time between initial contact and the perpetrator exchanging sexual images or discussing a meeting to be less than 10 minutes, indicating a rapid manipulation of the child victim. Moreover, a participant stated that one of the core characteristics of grooming is the total manipulation of a victim’s mind:

“It is that total manipulation of that victim’s mind to make them believe that what they are doing is consent, and it is not. It is constrained consent, not true consent. The aim of grooming is to manipulate that young person into such a state that what they actually believe is that what they are doing is consensual.”
All participants agreed that there are universal aspects to grooming, and that online grooming does not differ much from any other type, stating that internet and technology simply was another instrument to aid the process \((Q_2)\). This argument is consistent with Wolak and Finkelhor (2013) and Black, Wollis, Woodworth and Hancock (2015), who argued that while online offenders use similar methods to offline groomers, the timing and order of the process may differ. This notion receives further backing by the universal increase in the use of technology, with day-to-day socialization occurring online (al-Khateeb & Epiphanio, 2016; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). The main aspect differentiating online from offline grooming is the intended utilization of cyber-technology to gain access to victims, often through social media and games (Lorenzo-Dus & Izuna, 2017).

When asked whether the age and maturity of the victim had any effect on the grooming process, one participant argued that the grooming process has to be developmentally connected \((Q_1)\):

“The grooming process itself has to be developmentally connected. Somebody grooming an 8-year-old will engage with the world of an 8-year-old”

Young children naturally have a trusting attitude towards adults (Ewing, Caulfield, Read & Rhodes, 2015; Rotenberg, 1995). Participants argued a younger child would hold a higher regard for an adult, not questioning the person’s authority, while a perpetrator would be required to develop a peer relationship with a teenager, arguably requiring more advanced manipulation. This notion has to the author’s knowledge yet to be addressed in empirical literature but builds on an interesting aspect of the individualization of grooming techniques. Moreover, another participant argued that it is more the circumstances around the victim that is important than the maturity, such as the level of their supervision.

“Whilst parental control makes it more difficult to groom a younger child, this is arguably not as influential when grooming teenagers.”

The final participant concluded that there are increased vulnerabilities in young children, but equally other vulnerabilities in older children. Perpetrators identify a need or vulnerability in their victim, and exploit that need regardless of age and maturity,
said the final participant. However, it was also stated that the process in which the perpetrator chose to do so depends on the developmental connection required to entice their victim.

In contrast to the lack of information in empirical literature regarding gender differentiation in the grooming process, all participants agreed that there were subtle differences in the way in which girls and boys were groomed. They did however state that the overarching principles of grooming are similar (Q₂). One participant argued that there are some real commonalities in regards to the identification of vulnerabilities, the development of a relationship, and the isolation from family and friends. However, the final part of the process where the perpetrator implements what can be referred to as the ‘hook’, the incentive keeping the victim enticed, is possibly different for boys than for girls. Arguably, this part of the process has to be individualized, even within gender groups.

Individualizing the grooming process by tailoring the techniques to each individual victim was argued by participants to make the process increasingly responsive (Q₁; Q₂). Existing literature supports this finding (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Dehart et al., 2017; Katz, 2013), with researchers such as Winters and Jeglic (2017) arguing that perpetrators strategically manipulate victims and their families, to avoid revealing their deviant intentions. One participant argued that there most likely is a universal aspect to grooming, but that vulnerabilities in the victims are identified and consequently exploited, which makes it tailored:

“A victim feels more connected with someone who takes a personal interest in them.”

According to McAlinden (2006) and Winters and Jeglic (2017), perpetrators befriends the victim by learning about their interests, using incentives and gifts, sharing secrets and offering them help. One example of such method given by participants was that of victims suffering from eating disorders. In this case, perpetrators would go to websites designated to support children with eating disorders, in order to take on a mentoring role for the purpose of building trust that could later be exploited, similar to the exploitation of sexual insecurities addressed below (Section 4.3.1). One participant
highlighted that perpetrators are ‘sinister and calculated’ in the research they do, so that when the victim may attempt to remove themselves from the situation, the perpetrator can then use personalized and credible threats (Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017). Related, in response to how the grooming process for boys differs from girls, the current findings suggest that boys are more likely to become involved in blackmail situations where threats are made than girls. This was further supported in research by Hammond, Ioannou and Fewster (2016), Lowe and Rogers (2017) and Parratt and Pina (2017), which all agreed that boys are more vulnerable to sexual blackmail situations due to the social stigma and stereotyping of boy’s masculinity. As pointed out by a participant, photos of a boy in a sexually compromised position will possibly affect boys to a greater extent than girls, due to the fear of homophobic attitudes, getting bullied or being ostracised (Hammond et al., 2016; Javaid, 2015; Weiss, 2010). The participant further argued that:

“There is something about men and their need to feel like they are in charge of their own sexuality, so if a perpetrator can undermine this by the use of sexually compromised photos or threats, it can be devastating and dangerous”

In conclusion, it is clear from the analysis that the awareness of social stigma and stereotyping is being exploited by perpetrators for the purpose of grooming.

An overall perception of the existing literature suggests that boys are more likely to be targeted and sexually groomed online than girls, due to boys generally being more active online (Dehart et al., 2017; Winters et al., 2017). Whittle et al. (2013) argues that males spend more time online and should, theoretically, therefore be more likely to be victimized and groomed online. Similarly, a participant stated there is a higher presence of boys being groomed through online technology than girls, specifically through online gaming (Q3). However, consistent with Whittle et al.’s (2013) findings, Mitchell et al. (2011) found that statistically, 82% of the online perpetrated grooming victims are in fact female. In regards to the relationship model of grooming, the participants agreed that the grooming process of boys might be quite similar to that of girls.
To be able to prevent sexual grooming, it is essential to understand why the grooming techniques are effective. The participants argued that the main cause for grooming technique’s success is the identification and exploitation of vulnerabilities. One participant stated that:

“Whether we like it or not, a perpetrator is meeting a need for that child being groomed”.

Here, we talk about possible attachment issues, a bereavement or loss in a child’s life, where the perpetrator will identify an emotional need not being met, in order to provide this need (Winters & Jeglic, 2017). The participant argued that even where the relationship between perpetrator and victim turns sour, an emotional need is being met for that victim. Words associated with grooming arising from the analysis included control, blackmail, threats, shame, isolation and love. One common aspect amongst male victims in regards to blackmail, threats and shame, is that of trying to keep their abuse hidden in fear of being perceived gay or being outed, getting ostracised or being perceived as weak/a victim (contradicting masculinity norms) (Lowe & Rogers, 2017; Parratt & Pina, 2017). This also relates to the isolation aspect of grooming. According to the participants, an essential aspect of grooming is to isolate the victim from peers and family, to ensure that the victim is reliant on the perpetrator, and possibly prevent them from disclosing. According to Winters and Jeglic (2018), these attempts to isolate victims are often carried out during activities such as hikes and outings, where other adults are excluded (Hargreaves-Cormany, Patterson, Muirhead & The F.B.I, 2016; Katz, 2013; Lorenzo-Dus & Izuna, 2017).

Along with the individualisation and the isolation of the grooming process, comes the use of appropriate and effective incentives to aid the manipulation. According to one of the participants the most common incentive in CSE grooming is attention, followed by material gifts ($Q_4$). Material gifts could include alcohol, clothes, drugs, sports equipment, scholarships, cars, computer games and other technology (Moynihan et al., 2018). Another participant argues that it is not important what the incentive is, as long as it is something the victim wants or needs. One of the most common incentives according to the analysis is giving the victim a sense of adulthood. Allowing the victim to participate in adult activities gives them a sense of ‘grownupness’. While this theme
looked at how groomers individualize their techniques to be effective, the following theme specifically looks at the manipulation in sexual grooming.

4.3 The role of manipulation in sexual grooming

This theme covers the role that manipulation, trust and deception has in the grooming process, discusses the bonding between perpetrator and victim, the power and control aspect of that bonding and how a victim’s sexual confusion is exploited by the use of manipulative techniques.

A consensus was identified amongst all participants that the process of grooming, as a whole, was based on deception, either by the use of a false identity, or regarding their intentions ($Q_1$; $Q_2$). However, one participant highlights that:

“In many cases online, the victim is aware of what they are doing, and are in fact online to acquire a sexual partner, but that here the deception from the perpetrators point of view is in regards to the relationship dynamics between the two, rather than around the purpose.”

This is further supported by Wolak et al. (2004) and Winters et al. (2017), who found the majority of grooming victims were aware of the perpetrators age when communicating online. In fact, Malesky (2007) found that only 5% - 33 % of online CSE offenders posed as children online. Another participant describes what is possibly found to be a typical way of gaining trust online, where perpetrators form several aliases to be able to create an online presence where the perpetrator uses these aliases to interact with the same victim. This creates a fake community, ultimately developing trust between one of these aliases and the victim, thereby creating a bond ($Q_2$).

The bond created is according to the participants stronger than people realize ($Q_2$). According to one participant, it can be very easily developed, and has commonalities with trauma bonding. One participant describes the grooming bond as

“…a version of Stockholm syndrome or brainwashing”
All participants agree that the bond created between perpetrator and victim does not vanish, but affects and sometimes controls the life of the victim long after the abuse is over. To create a strong bond through the grooming process, the perpetrator exploits the victim’s vulnerabilities to the fullest, and one of the most vulnerable situations boys and young men face during their teenage years is that of sexual confusion.

In accordance with extensive literature, including Livingstone and Palmer’s (2012) findings, participants agreed that sexual confusion and insecurities increased the vulnerability to grooming (Suseg et al., 2008; Whittle et al., 2012; Wolok et al., 2004; 2009) (Q3). One of the participants highlighted that sexual confusion and insecurity makes these victims vulnerable due to the lack of a safe space to explore, learn and accept their sexuality, and not because of their sexual orientation, a view supported by other participants. It was found that the core component of this exploitation was taking advantage of the moment of sexual inexperience in teenagers, in order to engage them in a way perpetrator wants them engaged. It was emphasised by all participants that a boy or a young man struggling with his sexuality would be least likely to discuss these issues with parents or friends in fear of becoming ostracised and bullied and would therefore turn to the online world (Parratt & Pina, 2017). Two participants described the new-found notion of if being safe exploring sexuality online, places exploited by perpetrators who takes on mentoring roles, displaying a wish to help the victims through exploration and guidance. Perpetrators either speak from personal experience, having gone through the same situation previously, or from researched experience, where they educate themselves to better be able to groom struggling victims.

It became clear from the findings that child sexual grooming has an identifiable category pertaining to the “mentor groomer”, a perpetrator that takes on a mentoring role. Participants argue that in the case of boys and young men exploring their sexuality, victim’s doubt, lack of understanding and lack of safe space to explore their sexuality is exploited by the perpetrators (Q3). One participant stated that:

“…the grooming process of sexually confused boys is probably more supportive and empathically charged, so to show their understanding of the situation.”
In this role, it is thereby arguably easier for perpetrators to trigger a conflation in their victims, confusing sexual abuse with sexual experimentation (Winters et al., 2017). The grooming process utilized towards boys and young men who does not demonstrate the characteristic of sexual curiosity is according to the findings much more based on ‘a laddie culture,’ less supportive and empathically charged, and thereby more stereotypically masculine in nature. Examples of this would be the introduction of girls to the conversation, exposure to pornography, drugs and alcohol, and offer of sex with females. In other words, it was argued that victims sharing their sexual confusion/curiosity with perpetrators gives the perpetrator leverage and enables blackmail situations leading to further sexual exploitation.

Another category of CSE perpetrators are arguably those that abuse their professional position (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Darling, Hackett & Jomie, 2018; Mountjoy, Rhind, Tiivas, & Leglise, 2015; Rhind, Neels & Van Den Eede, 2016). Participants stated that professionals set themselves up in a place of trust, where families as well as victims are being groomed. Professionals utilize their position as gatekeepers to whatever the victim desire, in order to use this position as leverage against the victim (Q2). One participant highlighted that sport or gymnastic coaches often require physical contact as a part of training, enabling a naturally intimate relationship with children. This statement is supported by relevant literature, with Bjørnseth and Szabo (2018) stating that most intimate physical contact is accepted from coaches, as this is a somewhat grey area. As further stated by Bjørnseth and Szabo (2018), sport is seen as a part of culture, and often results in acceptance of behaviour that is commonly unacceptable, as a coach is able to touch children and hold the trust of their parents as a part of their professional position.

Additionally, participants argued that contact grooming by professionals differ from online grooming in the increased role ‘power and control’ has in the process, and the possibly quicker development from the initial grooming stage to the time of abuse. It was also highlighted that this type of grooming is more of a systematic process, and the perpetrator often grooms and exploits more than one victim simultaneously. When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of this type of grooming, participants present incompatible arguments. One participant argued that it is easier to get caught
when offline grooming than online, as it is challenging for police to access resources to gather evidence. Another participant argued that contact grooming does not pose as great a risk, as contact grooming relies heavily on victim disclosure, while online grooming leaves digital footprints to be traced by law enforcement. In summary, the analysis produced varying results comparing online and offline grooming efficiency.

4.4. The sociological aspects of CSE victimization

This theme encompasses participants’ opinions on the role societal attitudes have on male disclosure of abuse, the issue of underreporting, and the proactive protection of potential CSE victims.

It is clear from the literature presented in Chapter 2, that child sexual exploitation of boys and young men is both a social taboo, as well as a heavily underreported crime. This perception is consistent with the current analysis, with participants agreeing that male victimization of CSE is massively underreported in official statistics and underrepresented in empirical literature, but that they all, as professionals, are aware male victims of CSE exist. One of the participants stated that:

“…coming across victims who have disclosed their victimization is rare but …coming across males who you believe has been victimized is fairly common.”

This is a view consistent with the statistics provided by Berelowitz et al. (2012), suggesting that almost 17 000 UK children exhibited signs of sexual victimization back in 2012. Moreover, similar to the European Commission’s (2017) statement suggesting between 10% and 20% of European children are sexually victimized, another participant stated that they (the participant’s workplace) received reports of CSE involving boys and young men on a weekly basis. Further, Bjørnseth and Szabo (2018) claimed the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse worldwide to be at 8% for boys and young men. Numbers more applicable to sexual grooming was presented by The Youth Internet Safety Survey (2005) revealing that one in seven youths were engaged in sexual solicitation during their childhood. Comparing these statistics to Winters and Jeglic’s (2017) estimate of 5% of child sexual offenders being apprehended, it provides
an incomprehensible picture of the current perceived success rate for preventing CSE of boys and young men.

Discussing why victims do not disclose their abuse, the analysis reveals issues surrounding masculinity, sexuality and shame as plausible explanations. Victims feel that they have allowed the abuse to occur, basing their perception on societal masculinity norms portraying males as strong and independent. Another aspect preventing victims from disclosing is the effeminacy of being anally abused, and the fear of being perceived as homosexual. This perception is usually reinforced by perpetrators telling victims that ‘because they had an erection, they must have enjoyed it’. It was also found that boys and young men abused by female offender’s struggle with disclosure due to the public perception that boys are becoming men first when they have had sex, and that having sex with an older woman is an achievement, not abuse. One participant stated that:

“it is more complicated for boys than it is for girls, to be sexually victimized, due to the psychological restrictions of masculinity.”

Additionally, another participant argued that mastery is very important for boys, being in control, a perspective incompatible with being a victim. According to participants, the psychological and sociological restrictions present in society prevent sexually victimized males from disclosing their abuse. One participant highlighted the importance of acknowledging that a boy’s mind works differently than girl’s. Therefore, the investigative process as well as the help provided will need to be tailored accordingly, as sexual victimization guidelines are primarily constructed around female victims. Additionally, the isolation developed around the victim during the grooming process may also prevent victims from disclosing.

Discussing parental online supervision, participants agreed that total supervision is unachievable and unpractical. One participant suggested that parental understanding is imperative to combat online grooming. Participants agreed that parents taking an interest and being open to assist, will have a greater effect on child online safety than restrictions. Overall, all participants suggested creating a safe environment where
children can explore the internet, but are able to ask parents for help, will have a greater impact than parental online supervision.

4.5. Summary and Conclusion

From the thematic analysis, four related themes were identified: Identification of victims; individualization of grooming; the role of manipulation in sexual grooming and the sociological aspects of CSE victimization. Within the first theme (4.1), it was found that vulnerabilities or gaps in a child’s life were often associated with victimization, that such gaps were exploited for the purpose of manipulative grooming. Such vulnerabilities ranged from attachment issues to unstable home environment. From the second theme (4.2) it was argued there is a universal aspect to grooming, but that each grooming process require a certain level of tailoring to be effective. It was also found that the duration of the grooming process varied, and that exchange of sexualized images was often associated as being a part of the process. Furthermore, the tailoring of the grooming process was found to include the developmental connection of tactics used, and the establishment of a personal connection by showing a special interest in victim’s interests aided this process. It was highlighted that a groomer is meeting a need or filling a gap for their victims. On the role of manipulation in the third theme (4.3.), professionals saw the results of grooming as a version of brainwashing, where common sense and previous long-lasting relationships were disregarded. The exploitation of sexual inexperience and the secrecy of sexual orientation are also encompassed within this theme and is explained to be one of the most common vulnerabilities exploited. The analysis further identified a category of offenders consisting of perpetrators who exploit mentoring roles for sexual gain and was found to arguably be especially common with victims displaying sexual confusion. This grooming tactic was found to be more supportive and empathetically charged than others. The final theme (4.4.) addressed sociological issues of male sexual victimization and the contested ‘extra’ strain sexual victimization has on male victims. It was found that male victims often refrained from disclosing victimization until adulthood, and that social stigma and masculinity issues were exploited by perpetrators to keep victims from disclosing, as masculinity norms are present in today’s society.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.0. Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore the grooming process utilized by perpetrators to gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men, whilst aiming to answer the following research questions:

Q₁. How do professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men? (Research Question 1 – Q₁)

Q₂. How does the grooming of boys and young men unfold? (Research question 2 – Q₂)

Q₃. How might the grooming process differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation/identity? (Research question 3 – Q₃)

Q₄. How are incentives utilized in the grooming of boys and young men? (Research question 4 – Q₄)

Q₅. How do perpetrators gain access to boys and young men? (Research question 5 – Q₅)

This chapter will first provide the central research findings, before discussing these findings in regards to the current research questions. Secondly, some methodological limitations will be addressed, before suggestions for future research will be provided.

5.1. Review

The current research found strong support for O’Connell (2003) and Williams et al.’s (2013) explanation of grooming, stating that the process is a deceptive form of relationship building. In particular, the analysis found that vulnerabilities or gaps in children’s lives were associated with CSE victimization and grooming, and that children
with such gaps were more easily manipulated, as perpetrators exploited these vulnerabilities to gain access to, and sexually exploit these children. The analysis revealed that victims lack of understanding and safe space to explore their sexuality is being exploited by groomers, often in a way that provides the child with support and an opportunity to explore their sexuality. Further, it was derived that the method of grooming arguably did have some universal aspects to it, but that individual tailoring was required for efficiency and success. Such tailoring involved paying particular attention to a child’s personal interests and their family situations. This also meant that the grooming method had to be developmentally connected to the victim’s mental and physical level. Moreover, it was found that the perpetrators, in most instances, met a need in a victim’s life that was not met by others.

Additionally, a more supportive and emphatically charged typology of groomers was identified to distinguish those perpetrators using mentoring and support tactics as their method of grooming. Here, perpetrators were found to exploit a victim’s vulnerability to gain access before manipulating the victim further based on the identified vulnerability, such as taking advantage of the victim’s sexual confusion or eating disorder. Finally, it was found that professionals acknowledge the additional strain male victims of sexual offences endure due to social stigma and masculinity norms. These norms and social stigma were also identified as areas exploited by groomers, to prevent victims from disclosing their abuse.

The emerging themes from the analysis answered the research questions of this study as followed. The overall objective and overarching research question of this study aimed to explore how professionals working with the prevention and investigation of child sexual exploitation understood the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, boys and young men (Q₁). In an attempt to answer this question, the question was further divided into the four sub questions following. The first sub question to be answered was querying how the grooming process of boys and young men unfold (Q₂). The analysis revealed that this process of grooming is as diverse as each victim, as each victim is different, and the process must be individually and developmentally tailored to succeed. The analysis did, however, revealed some commonalities in regards to both the identification of victims and the manipulation
aspect of grooming. Victims are most commonly targeted through the identification of vulnerabilities, where an identified vulnerability is exploited for manipulative purposes, to ultimately gain the trust and cooperation of the victim.

One of the most common vulnerabilities exploited was argued to be that of sexual confusion and insecurities. Similarly, the next sub question of this analysis (Q₃), enquires how the grooming process may differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation. This is where the analysis found commonalities supporting a typology of groomers who tactically take on mentoring roles as a method of sexual grooming. This method of grooming exploits vulnerabilities by having the perpetrators set themselves up in a position of guidance and mentoring for a victim, to build trust through a more supportive and empathic form of manipulative grooming. In regards to the fourth sub question (Q₄), exploring how incentives are used in the grooming process of boys and young men, the analysis revealed that while the types of material incentives such as money, technology and alcohol/drugs might differ between genders, the psychological incentives such as attention, love and guidance are similar, and builds on whichever vulnerability the perpetrator identifies in each specific victim. This ensures efficiency and helps develop a relationship between groomer and victim. The final research question (Q₅) searched for the means of which perpetrators gained access to boys and young men. Here, the analysis found that boys and young men often are groomed online, through either online gaming or online dating sites and apps.

In regards to the possible policy implications these findings may have, it is suggested that such findings could help improve investigative procedures and policies on how investigations are structured, and maybe change the way some criminal justice professionals view male victims of sexual offences, specifically CSE. The findings may also have implications on the process in which social media deals with the misuse of their services. As highlighted by one of the participants, the registration process of dating apps requires boys to be 18 years of age, and therefore generate a high level of youth registering with a false date of birth, making it more difficult for social media companies and law enforcement to police inappropriate contact between youth and adult groomers. It was suggested that if boys and young men were able to sign up to such apps with their actual age, this would assist law enforcement, and social media
and dating app companies, in combating inappropriate communication on these apps. Moreover, a suggested solution to this issue would be to implement a 100 points of ID sign up requirement, and a 24 hour processing period, as seen to be successful on some online social media websites running financial operations as a part of their services, a process of identity verification used frequently in Australia (The University of Sydney, 2018). This would hopefully make it difficult to access such services with a false identity, both for perpetrators and victims. It is however worth noting that this could simply displace the illegal activity to other digital platforms with less security measures.

The current study does however present with certain methodological issues. Firstly, this study’s initial small sample size could be argued a limitation, which was further impacted by a participant failing to complete the interviewing process, reducing the sample size to. A second stage snowball sampling would possibly have gained additional participants. Such a method was implemented but was due to both time-constrains and financial reasons discontinued. This method would also generate an even more diverse and generalizable sample and could have been carried out in other jurisdictions for increased generalizability. However, due to time constrains, application for ethical approval to sample in other jurisdictions did not seem feasible. Furthermore, a quota sample from different groups of professionals encountering CSE victims, such as law enforcement, medicine, charity organizations and education would have ensured a greater diversity of professional opinions and increased the validity of the study (Alasuutari et al., 2008). Due to the current research being undertaken as a part of a level seven master’s degree, the sampling process was restricted to include only four participants. The diversity of these participant’s professional background did, however, arguably provide a sufficiently diverse perspective to bridge the gap in the existing research on this particular topic.

Moreover, another area in which the current research could improve, was that of coding and analysis. Even though the highest possible level of impartiality was implemented, it must be noted that the transcription process and the coding of data could have been affected by the author’s unconscious personal bias. However, this could have been combated by conducting a qualitative reliability check presented in the work of Kvale.
(1996; 2008), where two separate transcriptions of the same interview are carried out for comparison, to ensure the reliability of the transcribed data. Furthermore, triangulation could be used to provide a more complete picture of the grooming process of boys and young men. Triangulation is the use of various methods for handling data within a study to ensure reliability and completeness (Adami & Kiger, 2005). Nevertheless, due to the restrictions associated with completing a master’s level research project, the researcher conducted and transcribed the interviews, to best ensure consistency in the transcription and maintain the confidentiality of the participation.

On the other hand, while approaching this topic from a qualitative perspective may produce valuable information regarding a scarcely explored area of CSE of boys and young men, the data derived from these findings are not generalizable, as findings from a quantitative research may have been (Bryman, 2016). It is therefore suggested in the following section, that further exploration of the topic should explore the possibility of conducting quantitative research into the grooming of boys and young men, to increase reliability and external validity of the findings (Bryman, 2016).

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings from the extensive literature review, and the experiences encountered throughout this current research process, the author suggests that future research should aim to gain a more specific understanding of how dating apps are used by perpetrators to gain access to and sexually exploit boys and young men. To do so, research should focus on qualitative linguistic analysis to better understand how online conversations between victims and perpetrators unfolds. Through such an analysis, research would be able to establish how groomers of boys and young men initiate first contact, how perpetrators build relationships with their victims through these apps, how victims are encouraged to meet, and possibly how perpetrators plan to sexually exploit these boys and young men. Information from this type of research can aid both governmental agencies, families and social media companies to better be able to tackle this form for manipulation and grooming.
Moreover, future research should also aim to build on what was derived from the current analysis, and further explore why young people knowingly engage with adults on online dating apps. Using a mixed method research design, youth engaging with strangers online could be sampled for an in-depth interview or a small focus group, discussing what teenagers find appealing with adults online, and why they decide to progress the social contact with these individuals.

5.3. Conclusion

This concluding chapter has provided the central research findings derived from the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, before attempting to answer the current research questions. The data derived provided sufficient information to answer all research questions. Finally, the methodological limitations of the study were discussed, for so to provide suggestions for future research on the topic. The main issues identified related to the sample size of participants, and the generalizability of the findings derived from the analysis. It was concluded that the information from this study is valuable for criminal justice professionals, and possibly social media and dating companies, and that the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of a scarcely explored area within the sexual grooming of boys and young men by exploring professional’s knowledge base, not provide transferable or generalizable findings, an aim that according to the author has been satisfactorily met.
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Appendix A. Ethical Considerations Form

**Request for ethical approval for students on taught programmes**

Please complete this form and return it to your supervisor as advised in your module handbook. Feedback on your application will be via your supervisor or co-ordinator.

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<td>Title of proposed research study</td>
<td>Child sexual grooming: An exploratory study into the grooming of sexually exploited boys</td>
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**Supervisor Comments**

| Are the ethical implications of the proposed research adequately described in this application? | Yes ☐ No ☐ |
| Does the overall study have low, moderate or high risk in terms of ethical implications? | Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ |
| Does the study method describe a process of research that is ethically sound? | Yes ☐ No ☐ |

**Signatures**

The information supplied is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I clearly understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to act at all times in accordance with University of Derby Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics: http://www.derby.ac.uk/research/ethics-and-governance/research-ethics-and-governance

Signature of applicant
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1. What is the aim of your study? What are the objectives for your study?

The aim of this study is to explore how professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders’ gain access to, and sexually exploit, adolescent boys. The purpose of this exploratory study is to consolidate an understanding of the grooming process of adolescent boys, and how it might differ from the grooming of girls. Further, the author is interested in how the grooming process might differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation/identity.

2. Explain the rationale for this study (refer to relevant research literature in your response).

Research into child sexual grooming distinguishing between male and female victims is limited. Research therefore fails to provide an understanding of whether there are unique aspects to the way in which offenders groom each gender. This study aims to add to the literature by thematically analysing the grooming process of young boys, through collecting valuable knowledge from professionals working with these types of offences. To better understand how the grooming process transpires, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the different approaches to grooming. First, a brief introduction to the topic of child sexual exploitation will be provided, followed by a more comprehensive review of the existing literature covering characteristics of grooming.

Sexual exploitation of children is defined, by EUROPOL (2017), as any sexual abuse of a person below the age of 18, including the production and distribution of images depicting such abuse. The UK government's formally acknowledged definition states that:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Department for Education, 2017, p.5)
CSE encompasses any non-familial sexual abuse of children, including sex trafficking, sex tourism, child molestation, child pornography, online grooming for the purpose of contact offences, and online grooming for strictly online communication.

According to the European Commission (2017) between 10% and 20% of European children has at some stage during their childhood been sexually assaulted. Berelowitz, Firmin, Edwards, and Gulyurtlu (2012) found that during 2010, 2 409 children were victims of CSE in the UK. Further, their report claims that during the same time period, as many as 16 500 children exhibited signs of sexual victimization. A more recent report by the National Crime Agency (2017) indicated that 1278 children under the age of 18 were found to be potential victims of child trafficking during 2016. Out of these children, 360 (28%) were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In conclusion, the prevalence of CSE throughout Europe is disconcerting, and is also occurring in the United Kingdom.

The initial phase of CSE is the grooming process. Olsen, Daggs, Ellefvolde, and Rogers (2007) define grooming as the process of social deviance, where the desired outcome is the sexual abuse of the minor being groomed. The authors further identify the development of trust as a core stage in the grooming process, which they labelled “deceptive trust development” (Olsen et al., 2007, p. 69). The grooming process rely on the offender’s ability to gain the trust of minors in order to sexually exploit them. O’Connell (2003), supported by Williams, Elliott and Beech (2013), labels this important process ‘relationship forming’, and defines it as the stage at which offenders form the illusion that they are the victim’s best friend.

The existing literature on grooming has failed to differentiate the grooming process based on to the gender of victims, and thereby omitted data that could hold valuable information about the grooming process. Research suggests that girls are more likely to become sexually victimized than boys (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod & Hambly, 2009; McGee, Garavanam, Barra, Bryne & Conroy, 2002; Pereda, Gulera, Forns & Gomez-Benito, 2009). However, in 2012 Livingstone and Palmer found that male victims who are questioning their sexuality or who identify as homosexual may be more vulnerable to grooming and victimization. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Wolok, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2004) and Wolak et al. (2008). Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Beech and Collings (2012), Suseg, Grødem, Valset and Mossige (2008), Wolak, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2004) and Wolak, Finkelhor and Mitchell (2009) all agree that sexual confusion and insecurity in male youth are being exploited by CSE offenders. However, as none of these studies look at the process in which this sexual confusion and
insecurity is being exploited, the author intends to enquire about the role sexual identity has in the grooming process.

**Grooming of Children – Offline**

Some offenders chose to groom their victims offline, and have never committed CSE online. Examples of offline grooming include where professionals misuse their position and their access to children, or where foster families, neighbours or family friends take advantage of their access to children (Bebbington, Valkenburg & Peter, 2010; Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner & Hamby, 2005; Miller, 2013; Olsen et al., 2007; Sullivan, 2009; Sullivan & Beech, 2002). Olsen et al. (2007) identified the development of trust as a main stage of offline grooming, which was labelled “deceptive trust development” (p. 69). One of the key steps in offline grooming is the exclusivity and isolation of the victim, the process where the offender ensures that the victims keep their relationship a secret by engaging in threats, controlling behaviour, offering incentives or by expressing their love for one another (Berson, 2003; O’Connell, 2003; Sullivan, 2009). Berson (2003) and Sullivan (2009) called this process a self-preservation tactic.

Another step highly correlated with self-preservation is compliance testing. This stage is where the offender, by switching roles and using reverse psychology, tests the extent to which the victim is willing to engage in sexual activities (Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017; O’Connell, 2003). Other steps included in the offline grooming process include identifying family members’ work schedules, discussing plans for travelling, querying about the victim’s sexuality and using flattery to gain favour (Black et al., 2015, O’Connell, 2003). The current study intends to further explore the importance of the victim’s sexuality to the process of grooming and enquire about the use of incentives to control male grooming victims.

**Grooming of Children – Online**

According to Whittle et al. (2013), the online sexual abuse of male children is heavily underreported, this due to various reasons too complex to address in this paper (see Lowe & Rogers, 2017; Parrat & Pina, 2017; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sleath & Bull, 2017). With online activities increasing rapidly with the evolution of technology, it has changed the way people socialise and opened up a new, more anonymous, way of interacting (al-Khateeb & Epiphaniou, 2016; Berson, 2003; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010). One concern with such anonymous interactions is the misuse of this technology by people who utilize this technology to form relationships with children to facilitate future victimization. This is a process known as online grooming. Lorenzo-Dus and Izura (2017) define online grooming as the
process by which an adult abuses the trust gained from a minor in order to exploit him or her sexually. This process is carried out specifically by the use of cyber-technology, often on social media or in online games (Lorenzo-Dus & Izura, 2017).

Furthermore, Black, Wollis, Woodworth and Handcock (2015) suggest that the anonymity of the internet allows for a more rapid grooming process through the faster development of intimate relationships online than through face-to-face interactions. The easy access to victims, and the lower risk of interference from parents or other adults is another beneficial characteristic for offenders (Black et al, 2015). In fact, contrary to what Berson (2003) and Sullivan (2009) argued in regards to offline grooming, Black et al. (2015) and Wolak and Finkelhor (2013) found that online offenders did not, to the same extent, employ self-preservation tactics to ensure the secrecy of their offender-victim interactions, seemingly fully relying on the anonymity of the internet.

In regards to the easy access to victims online, research agrees that engaging in risky behaviour online, having easy access to the internet and a lack of parental online supervision are factors that increase the risk of victimisation (Livinstone, Haddon, Görzig & Olafsson, 2011; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritis, Beech and Collins, 2013). On discussing the victim characteristic of gender in online grooming offences, studies on online victimisation disagree. The majority have found that girls are far more likely to be targeted by groomers than boys (Brå, 2007; Helweg-Larsen, Schütt & Larsen, 2011; Suseg, Skevik, Grødem, Valset & Mossige, 2008; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell & Ybarra, 2008). However, Whittle et al. (2013) argue that regardless of whether female victims are more likely to be targeted online, males spend more time online, consequently increasing likelihood and opportunity of being targeted (Livinstone, Haddon, Görzig & Olafsson, 2011). Nevertheless, statistically girls (66%) have been found to be targeted at almost double the rate of boys (34%) (Whittle et al., 2013), findings consistent with that of Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor and Wolak (2011), who found that 82% of internet initiated CSE entails female victims. Regardless, male victims of CSE and online grooming should not be excluded based on low rates of reported statistics, and are prone to the same online risk factors as girls.

A study by Maleskey (2007) analysed questionnaire responses from 31 imprisoned child sex offenders to identify what offenders look for online when searching for targets. Findings by Maleskey (2007), further supported by Quayle, Jonsson and Löf's (2014) more recent study, suggests that minors who talk about sex online, who appear to be needy or submissive, and with a sexualized username, are all important in a groomer’s decision-making process. Chat rooms and instant messaging were found to be the preferred online platforms to connect with minors.
amongst Quayle et al.’s (2014) sample. The authors further claimed that offenders rotated on the use of different platforms, until they eventually convinced the target to continue communication on SMS (Briggs, Simon & Simonsen, 2011; Webster, Davidson, Bifulco, Gottschalk, Caretti, Pham et al., 2012; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2009). Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones and Wolak (2010) found that the online communication between groomers and their targets often involved a variety of channels, such as chat rooms, instant messaging, text messaging and video calls. Further, the author found that the different platforms utilised by groomers are not only used for communication with targets, but as a source of information about the target, their location and their daily routines through online photos, likes, comments and events. It is also plausible that some offenders primarily communicate with their target to gain information about their whereabouts, in order to take the grooming process offline. As suggested by Lorenzo-Dus and Izura (2017), the sexual gratification of the offenders begins with the initiation of the grooming process. Regardless of whether the exploitation of the victim is continued offline, online grooming is regarded as child sexual exploitation, and is according to Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (2003), classed as a specific offence separate to contact offences.

Another area in which academic research is lacking, is the social progression within the conversations between victims and offenders. One study by Black et al. (2015) analysed the language used by groomers in 44 transcribed dialogues from convicted online offenders. The authors discovered five types of linguistic approaches used to manipulate victims online: “flattery, inquiring about the target’s parents’ schedule, asking the target whether he/she was an undercover police officer or probing about whether the chat log was a sting, remarking the relationship was inappropriate to gauge the target’s reaction, mentioning the dangers of communicating with others on the Internet, expressing love and trust, trying to find out about the target’s past sexual experience, and assessing the possibility of travel to meet the target” (Black et al., 2015, pp. 148-149).

Another study into the linguistics behind grooming led to the development of a model of online grooming discourse by Lorenzo-Dus, Izura and Pérez-Tattam (2016). This model consists of 3 main categories of grooming: Access, Approach and Entrapment. The entrapment stage is a complicated phase, further divided into subcategories consisting of deceptive trust development, sexual gratification, isolation and compliance testing. These two aforementioned linguistic discourse analyses, Black et al. (2015) and Lorenzo-Duz et al. (2016), are unique in that the authors explore the very process by which groomers communicate with their victims, rather than the risk factors for victimisation or the platforms utilised in the process. The current study seeks
to adopt this vision by exploring the bond created between male victims and offenders during the grooming process.

Furthermore, an interesting finding by Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell and Ybarra (2008) somewhat questions the importance of the deception process in grooming. They found that majority of online-initiated sexual offences involve adult men who seduce underage teenagers online for the purpose of sexual encounters, and that most of these victims were aware the offender was an adult looking for sex. Keeping in mind that the most common victims of CSE are adolescent children (Black et al., 2015; Katz, 2013; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2004), Wolak et al.’s (2008) findings could suggest that preventive tactics like internet safety education have little effect, and that targets decide to proceed fully aware of the risk (Ainsaar & Lööf, 2010; Baumgartner, Valkenburg and Peter, 2010; CEOPC, 2008; Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod & Hamby, 2009; Quayle, Jonsson & Lööf, 2012; Soo & Bodanovskaya, 2012; Whittle et al, 2013). As previously mentioned, boys are found to be more likely to engage in risky behaviour, increasing the likelihood of the above-mentioned scenario, and it would therefore be valuable to further explore the use and prevalence of deception in the grooming process of boys.

The various discourse analyses of grooming discussed are valuable to the current study, as they present a framework against which the collected data can be assessed and compared. It is the practical techniques or means used by offenders to achieve their goal that this study is primarily focusing on, however, the motivation for, and the value of, the grooming methods chosen by offenders are highly relevant to understanding the reasoning behind each method during the grooming process. Even though the characteristics of online and offline grooming do not differ greatly, it has been concluded that these strategies differ in the timing of each stage, and that offenders are aware different tactics need to be implemented for online and offline grooming (Lorenzo-Dun & Izura, 2017). For example, Black et al. (2015) found that offenders implement the risk assessment (self-preservation) stage of the grooming process as early as in the initial contact with the target, in contrast to face-to-face grooming where this is one of the last stages in the grooming process. As research supports a difference between online and offline grooming, it is logical to assume that there is a difference in the grooming process of male and female victims. The current study wishes to build further on this notion, and look at the grooming methods utilised towards male child victims.

References:

Please refer to the integrated list of references in the appendices below.
3. Provide an outline of your study design and methods.

Research Design.
The proposed research will use a cross-sectional, non-experimental, research design to collect and explore the restricted knowledge available on the grooming process of male youth. An interpretivist epistemological approach to a thematic analysis with an inductive qualitative stance will be implemented. Such an exploratory research design is often used to discover valuable information about the topic, and used when little research has been conducted on the topic (Clarke & Braun, 2014; Howitt, 2010; Kvale, 2008). The cross-sectional research method is one of the most common designs within the social sciences as it is time and cost efficient in regards to sampling (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008; Adler & Clark, 2015; Bryman 2012). Professionals working with the prevention and victimization support for CSE, will be asked open-ended questions in form of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are most commonly used when researchers are interested in people’s experience and understanding as well as why they experience and understand the research topic in that way, mostly due to it being a flexible and adaptable data collection method. Due to the limited academic literature on the research topic and the researcher only having a general idea of what to look for, semi-structured interviews will be utilised to enable professionals to talk about their expertise and knowledge in their own way to maximize the data collected. Upon completion of the data collection stage, a thematic analysis will be conducted to explore the professionals’ understanding of the grooming of sexually exploited boys. The current project will be carried out within 12 months as a part of a Master program at the University of Derby (see Table 1).
Population.
The targeted population consists of professionals within organisations working with male victims of child sexual exploitation. The primary population will be professionals working with the NWG Networks (Innovation House, Derby DE21 7BF). In the event that gaining access to the qualitative sample proves difficult or if access to the organization proves impracticable, alternative organizations such as The BLAST Project, The Salvation Army, The National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC), and Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT) will be approached with an offer to participate. Additionally, a contingency approach targeting male university students at the University of Derby has been prepared.

Sampling Strategy.
This study implements a purposive sampling strategy where CSE professionals (N=6) supplied by the NWG Network are questioned regarding their professional knowledge of the CSE’s grooming process. Purposive sampling describes the process whereby the researcher decides who is best suited for participation based on the accessibility of participant information relevant to the study (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008; Adler & Clark, 2015; Bryman, 2012). In this process, selected organisations will be contacted and asked to participate in an in-depth interview or focus group. It is noted that with the non-random sampling method proposed, external validity may be questioned (Adler & Clark, 2015; Bryman, 2012). Even though the research findings may not be generalisable, the findings will provide a valuable and useful insight
into professionals’ understanding of male victimization of CSE. If the purposive sampling of the NWG Network's population proves insufficient, a snowball sampling method will be employed through the professionals already participating, or contacts within the NWG Network, to increase the number of possible participants. As a contingency approach, a list of other organisations has been prepared, and is ready to be approached should any issues arise with the current population.

Data collection instrument.
Participants (N=6) will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview consisting of 23 questions (See Appendix D). The open-ended interview questions have been constructed on the basis of a wide range of literature on the research topic (See Section 2).

Ethical Considerations.
This study will proceed in accordance with the Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (University of Derby, 2011) and the Data Protection Act 1998. To ensure the research ethics are upheld, participation requires a signed informed consent form (See Appendix C), set out in accordance to guidelines provided by the University of Derby (2011) and Hutchinson (2013). This consent form addresses issues of confidentiality, requirements for participation and the option of withdrawal (See Appendix C) (Bryman, 2016; Macklin, 1999; Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). A cover letter will be provided to the participant containing a briefing of the research aims, purpose and methods (See Appendix B).

Participants will be informed that if the researcher becomes aware of illegal activity that falls within the scope of the Children Act (2004) or the Terrorism Act (2006), the researcher will be required to report them to the police. A list of participants will be created, containing name and contact information, and stored on an offline encrypted hard drive in accordance with the University Data Code of Conduct (UDCC) to ensure confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009; University of Derby, 2017).

For ethical reasons, no participants below the age of 18 will be able to participate. As the participants are all professionals working with victims, no demographics or information identifying victims will be collected. This is ensured by informing the participants that the information collected must not contain identifiable information about victims or other identifiable information from cases discussed. Further, any untoward identifiable information from the interview transcripts will be removed, and the original recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the project.
The primary data collection for this dissertation will involve the use of semi-structured interviews, which will be administered in a controlled environment, either at the University of Derby building (Kedleston Rd, Derby DE22 1GB), One Friar Gate Square (4-6 Agard St, Derby DE1 1DZ), or at organisations’ own headquarters (see 4 - Population on page 4). Research conducted at University premises does not put the researcher at any greater danger than any other study related activity. A change of venue may occur, however, this should not have any effect on the ethical approval, as the supervisor will be informed, and the risk to any participant or the researcher will be no greater than originally planned. The participant or the researcher will not be exposed to any risks greater than that which an average person would typically experience (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008). To further ensure that the data collection instrument is effective and ethically appropriate, a set of pilot interviews will be conducted prior to the time of data collection.

The research does not include any family member or other acquaintances of the researcher. This is to ensure ethical considerations are upheld, and to avoid any reliability or validity issues in the research process. Participants that do not wish to be recorded, or participants who work for any organisations requiring an Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) approval, will due to practical reasons be excluded from participating.

Regardless of the professional status of the participants, they may experience any form of emotional reaction to the research topic and the questions administered. The researcher will have information regarding support services readily available to participants. It is also noteworthy that the researcher might produce similar reactions to the research, and that the researcher is aware of the support services available, both in and outside of the educational institution.

The final report will be offered to all participants through the NWG Network, where all participants can obtain a copy without revealing their participation to peers or others outside of the organization.

**Transcription of Data**

The interviews recorded will primarily be transcribed by the researcher (with the expectation of a second transcriber for the purpose of a qualitative reliability check of the transcribed data (see below). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will assign each participant with an identification code, and this code will be the only identifiable character featured on the transcripts and on the recordings (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen, 2008; Bryman, 2016; Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000). The transcribed interview reports will be stored on an encrypted hard-drive, in accordance with the UDCC to ensure confidentiality (University of Derby, 2017). The interview transcripts will be de-identified to the extent that a lay person will not be able to positively connect
the completed responses to an individual participant. The transcripts will be destroyed upon dissertation submission, as well as at any point where a participant wishes to withdraw from the study. The researcher may retain the aggregated/anonymised data indefinitely for further research. To further ensure confidentiality, the transcription will be carried out with the use of headphones and in a location without any unnecessary persons present (Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000; MacLean, Mayer & Estable, 2004).

**Strategy for Data Analysis.**

The study will consist of a thematic analysis or the transcribed interviews. A thematic analysis is, according to Clarke and Braun (2014), "a method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data" (p. 1) and offers an accessible and flexible method for qualitative data analysis.

The researcher will be conducting and transcribing the interviews himself, to ensure consistency of transcription and maintenance of confidentiality. The qualitative data analysis software NVivo will be used for a systematic data analysis. This is a software package used in research to analyse and organise non-numerical data.

Open coding will be used to examine, conceptualise and compare data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Kvale, 2007) This is an interpretive process of data analysis used to obtain new ways of understanding the data to advance beyond subjectivity and bias (Clark & Braun, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). It is simply a way of identifying and prioritising the meanings of useful data on a micro level, by applying one or more keywords to segments or statements within the data (Clarke & Braun, 2014; Kvale, 2007).

**Procedure for assessing reliability and validity of the analysis**

A high level of reliability for the analysis will be ensured by securing good quality recordings of the interviews, to ensure a clear and precise transcription (Bryman, 2016; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Kvale, 2007). Further, transcription and coding will be done by the researcher, and will therefore ensure the highest possible validity of the transcribed data. However, a qualitative reliability check presented by Kvale (2007) will be conducted between two separate transcriptions of the same interviews, to ensure the reliability of the transcribed data. Furthermore, triangulation will be used to attempt to provide a complete picture of the grooming process of boys. Triangulation is the use of various methods for handling data within a study to ensure reliability and completeness (Adami & Kiger, 2005).
**Contingency Approach.**
In the case that access to the targeted organisations prove impracticable, a contingency approach has been prepared. In the event that gaining access to the qualitative sample proves difficult or if access to the primary organisation proves impracticable, alternative organisations such as The BLAST Project, The Salvation Army, The National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC), and Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT) will be approached with an offer to participate. These organisations will be approached to query their interest in participating in this study, and participants will be subject to the same criteria and ethical considerations discussed above, and therefore do not present any additional ethical concerns for the research.

**References:**
Please refer to the integrated list of references in the appendices below.

4. Please provide a detailed description of the study sample, covering selection, sample profile, recruitment and if appropriate, inclusion and exclusion criteria.

As highlighted in section 3, the proposed research intends to apply a purposive/snowball sampling method to sample professionals within the targeted field of study. The ideal approach includes a population consisting of professionals within organisations working with male victims of child sexual exploitation, where participants are asked to participate in a semi-structured interviewing process.

The organization NWG Network had been approached to enquire about their interest in taking part in the current research, and has agreed to participate.

Additionally, the BLAST project has offered cooperation on this project, as their focus is on male exploitation. However, as the BLAST project is heavily involved with the NWG Network and participants may overlap, it might be redundant to include BLAST employees separately at this stage. It is also noted that the organisation and/or the manager of the appropriate staff will have to allow their employees’ participation.

5. Are payments or rewards/incentives going to be made to the participants? Yes ☐ No ☑
If so, please give details below.

6. Please indicate how you intend to address each of the following ethical considerations in your study. If you consider that they do not relate to your study please say so. Guidance to completing this section of the form is provided at the end of the document.
a. Consent

Prior to participation in the study, all participants will need to read and sign an information and informed consent sheet (refer to appendices) that will also be signed and dated by the researcher. The signed form will make clear the aims and objectives of the research and the expectations associated with conduct of the project to ethical standards. The form will contain contact information for both the researcher as well as his assigned academic supervisor (Director of Studies) so that participants may contact the researcher in the event that more information may be required. The researcher will retain one copy of the signed and dated information and consent sheets and the participant will retain one copy of the form, and both copies will have an identifier number placed at the top of the form. The identifier number can be used to communicate to the researcher in the event that participants may wish to withdraw from the study before completion of the project.

Prior to engaging with individuals who are connected to a given organisation, the researcher will obtain the permission of the line manager for the relevant individuals in a given organisation as well as in respect of the possible identification of a given organisation in future research outputs.

b. Deception

The researcher will not engage in any effort to deceive the participants. The participants will receive clear information and briefing on the aims and objectives of the study (See Appendices), and the researcher will offer to orally respond to any questions participants may have about the study.

c. Debriefing

Participants will be offered a debriefing of all “significant and material” information and disclosure following completion of the schedule of questions for participants with a consent form having been signed in advance by the participant and the researcher. Participants will be offered a written debriefing (See Appendices), which will include the opportunity for them to ask the researcher any further questions about the research.

d. Withdrawal from the investigation

Prior to participation in the study, all participants will need to read, sign and date an information and informed consent sheet (See Appendices) that will also be signed and dated by the researcher (see sub-section (a) above). The researcher will retain one copy of signed and dated information and consent sheets and the participant will retain one copy of the form, and both copies will have an identifier number placed at the top of the form. The identifier number can be used to communicate to the researcher in the event that participants may wish to withdraw from the study before completion of the project. Participants will not be allowed to participate without signing a consent form, and participants will be informed verbally and in written form that they may withdraw from the study at any point up to project completion. The identifier number on the consent form will be connected to any usage of primary data (even where de-identified) such that the researcher may withdraw the participant’s data at any point in the process up to project completion. Participants will be informed that it is not possible to withdraw from the study upon project completion as the primary data will be destroyed and the researcher will then be unable to link any de-identified/aggregated data to particular individuals.

e. Confidentiality

All primary data will be de-identified prior to use in the researcher’s draft and final work and participants will only be referred to by pseudonym linked to an identifier code. The researcher
will not disclose the identity of participants or primary data to any other persons with the limited exception of compulsory university process under controlled conditions and in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

f. Protection of participants

Participants will be protected throughout the course of the study with adherence to ethical principles and respect for human rights. Participants will not be asked to engage in any activity they have not agreed to or are not comfortable with and they will be free to choose at all times whether they wish to respond or not to respond to any given question or topic relevant to the research. The researcher will at all times respect the decisions of participants.

g. Observation research

Not applicable

h. Giving advice

The researcher will not engage in the provision of advice to participants in the study.

i. Research undertaken in public places

Not applicable

j. Data protection

The research will be conducted in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). All personal data from research participants will be placed in a sealed envelope and will be secured as soon as possible by the following methods: storage of hardcopies in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher has access or in the locked filing cabinet of the director of studies (where the supervisor is the only one with a key and access), and/or electronically scanned and stored in a password protected computer to which the researcher is the only person with the password and has access. **Upon completion of the project (i.e. once the module assessment has been submitted and the grade received), all personal data whether in paper or electronic form will be permanently destroyed.**

k. Animal Rights

Not applicable

l. Environmental protection

Not applicable

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<th>8. Have / do you intend to request ethical approval from any other body/organisation?</th>
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<td>If ‘Yes’ – please give details</td>
<td>In the situation where one of the participants is an employee of a law enforcement agency, formal approval by the participant’s line manager will be requested.</td>
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9. What resources will you require? (e.g. psychometric scales, IT equipment, specialised software, access to specialist facilities, such as microbiological containment laboratories).

- NVivo – a qualitative data analysis software package

10. What study materials will you use? (Please give full details here of validated scales, bespoke questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group schedules etc and attach all materials to the application)

Please refer to the Appendices below for all the data collection instruments that may be used in relation to the proposed study.

Which of the following have you appended to this application?

- Focus group questions
- Self-completion questionnaire
- Other debriefing material
- Information sheet about your research study
- Other (please describe)

- Psychometric scales
- Interview questions
- Covering letter for participants
- Informed consent forms for participants

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION WITH ALL APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION
Advice on completing the ethical considerations aspects of a programme of research

**Consent**
Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. The form should clearly state what they will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. It should be in language that the person signing it will understand. It should also state that they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. If children are recruited from schools you will require the permission, depending on the school, of the head teacher, and of parents. Children over 14 years should also sign an individual consent form themselves. If conducting research with children or vulnerable adults you will normally also require Criminal Records Bureau clearance. Research to be carried out in any institution (prison, hospital, etc.) will require permission from the appropriate authority.

**Covert or Deceptive Research**
Research involving any form of deception can be particularly problematical, and you should provide a full explanation of why a covert or deceptive approach is necessary, why there are no acceptable alternative approaches not involving deception, and the scientific justification for deception.

**Debriefing**
Debriefing is a process of reflection once the research intervention is complete, for example at the end of an interview session. How will participants be debriefed (written or spoken feedback)? If they will not be debriefed, give reasons. Please attach the written debrief or transcript for the oral debrief. This can be particularly important if covert or deceptive research methods are used.

**Withdrawal from investigation**
Participants should be told explicitly that they are free to leave the study at any time without jeopardy. It is important that you clarify exactly how and when this will be explained to participants. Participants also have the right to withdraw their data in retrospect, after you have received it. You will need to clarify how they will do this and at what point they will not be able to withdraw (i.e. after the data has been analysed and disseminated).

**Protection of participants**
Are the participants at risk of physical, psychological or emotional harm greater than encountered ordinary life? If yes, describe the nature of the risk and steps taken to minimise it.

**Observational research**
If observational research is to be conducted without prior consent, please describe the situations in which observations will take place and say how local cultural values and privacy of individuals and/or institutions will be taken into account.

**Giving advice**
Students should not put themselves in a position of authority from which to provide advice and should in all cases refer participants to suitably qualified and appropriate professionals.
Research in public places
You should pay particular attention to the implications of research undertaken in public places. The impact on the social environment will be a key issue. You must observe the laws of obscenity and public decency. You should also have due regard to religious and cultural sensitivities.

Confidentiality/Data Protection
You must comply with the Data Protection Act and the University's Good Scientific Practice [http://www.derby.ac.uk/research/policy-and-strategy](http://www.derby.ac.uk/research/policy-and-strategy) This means:

- It is very important that the Participant Information Sheet includes information on what the research is for, who will conduct the research, how the personal information will be used, who will have access to the information and how long the information will be kept for. This is known as a 'fair processing statement.'
- You must not do anything with the personal information you collect over and above that for which you have consent.
- You can only make audio or visual recordings of participants with their consent (this should be stated on the Participant Information sheet)
- Identifiable personal information should only be conveyed to others within the framework of the act and with the participant's permission.
- You must store data securely. Consent forms and data should be stored separately and securely.
- You should only collect data that is relevant to the study being undertaken.
- Data may be kept indefinitely providing its sole use is for research purposes and meets the following conditions:
  - The data is not being used to take decisions in respect of any living individual.
  - The data is not being used in any which is, or is likely to, cause damage and/or distress to any living individual.
- You should always protect a participant's anonymity unless they have given their permission to be identified (if they do so, this should be stated on the Informed Consent Form).
- All data should be returned to participants or destroyed if consent is not given after the fact, or if a participant withdraws.

Animal rights.
Research which might involve the study of animals at the University is not likely to involve intrusive or invasive procedures. However, you should avoid animal suffering of any kind and should ensure that proper animal husbandry practices are followed. You should show respect for animals as fellow sentient beings.

Environmental protection
The negative impacts of your research on the natural environment and animal welfare, must be minimised and must be compliant to current legislation. Your research should appropriately weigh longer-term research benefit against short-term environmental harm needed to achieve research goals.
APPENDICES

A. References

B. Cover Letter and Information Briefing

C. Consent Form

D. Schedule of Questions for Participants (Interview)

E. Debriefing Material
Appendix A

References


Sunde, Mats – Identification Number: 100436630  89
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UK Data Service (2017). *Consent for Data Sharing*. Available at

University of Derby (2017) 'Data Code of Conduct.' Available at
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Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D., and Mitchell, K. J. (2004). Internet-initiated sex crimes against minors:
Implications for prevention based on findings from a national study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 35, pp. 1-10


**Figures:**
Table 1: Gantt (2016) *What is a Gantt chart?* [Table]. Available at http://www.gantt.com/ [Accessed 4 October 2017]
Appendix B

Cover Letter and Information Briefing

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This briefing explains what the study is about and how we would like you to participate.

Why this study? Little research has been conducted to examine whether there are unique aspects to the way in which offenders groom their male victims. The aim of this study is to explore how professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation (CSE) understand the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, adolescent boys. The purpose of this exploratory study is to understand the grooming process of adolescent boys, and how it might differ from the grooming process of girls. Further, the author is interested in how the grooming process might differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation and/or identity.

This study is done to contribute to the limited academic and professional knowledge on the sexual exploitation of male youth. To do so, the author has to collect data from professionals that work with and around male victims of sexual offences.

What will participation involve?
Participation involves taking part in a semi-structured interview discussing your professional experience and opinions.

How long will the participation take?
Participation involves taking part in a semi-structured interviewing process discussing your professional experience and opinions in regards to the grooming process of male child victims of CSE

The final report will be offered to all participants through the NWG Network upon completion.

Sincerely,

Mr. Mats J. Sunde
m.sunde1@unimail.derby.ac.uk
+44 (0)7719 204611

Department of Law, Criminology and Social Sciences
College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHSS)
University of Derby
One Friar Gate Square
Derby DE1 1DZ
United Kingdom
C/O Henriette Bergstrøm
Appendix C

Unique Identifier Code ……………….

Consent Form

This form is intended to obtain your informed consent for you to participate in a study conducted by Mats Jespersen Sunde (m.sunde1@unimail.derby.ac.uk) as part of his Master of Science (MSc) independent study (dissertation) research project.

This work is being conducted under the auspices of the Department of Law, Criminology and Social Sciences within the College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHSS) at the University of Derby. The project will be conducted in full compliance with the University Research Ethics Policy and Code of Practice, including that data collection involving human participants must have prior written approval and authorisation from the relevant ethics committee.

Participants who have questions or concerns about the project should, in the first instance, contact the researcher noted above. Where additional information may be needed, participants may contact the assigned Supervisor for the research project: Henriette Bergstrøm on the following email H.Bergstrom@derby.ac.uk

The aim of this study is to explore how professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, adolescent boys. The purpose of this exploratory study is to understand the grooming process of adolescent boys, and how it might differ from the grooming of girls. Further, the author is interested in how the grooming process might differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation/identity.

The signature of the participant and the researcher on this form affirms that informed consent has been provided to participate in the research project under the terms indicated below.

The participant has been given the opportunity to ask questions and receive further information about the research before signing, and participation is voluntary and without payment or incentives. Participants may decline to answer any question(s), and they may withdraw from the study at any time by providing their unique identifier number and expressing their wish to withdraw themselves and their data from the study (withdrawal is possible up to project completion).

It is understood that this project will be conducted in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998). This includes the understanding that the name or personal data of all participants will not be disclosed to third parties, and that all personal data will be destroyed upon completion of the project. Organisational permission will be obtained prior to acquiring access to members or clients.

It is understood that the researcher will anonymise all the information collected from participants for any presentation or use in the research. The words of participants may appear in academic or professional research outputs but participants will at all times remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms (false names) or generic categories.
It is understood that if the researcher becomes aware of illegal activity that falls within the scope of the Children Act (2004) or the Terrorism Act (2006), the researcher will be required to report them to the police.

It is understood that the researcher may retain the aggregated/anonymised data indefinitely for further research.

It is understood that the participant agrees to participate in the research and that both the participant and the researcher will be provided with a signed copy of this form.

Date:

Name of Participant: 

Name of Researcher: Mr. Mats J. Sunde

Signature of Participant: 

Signature of Researcher:

Mr. Mats J. Sunde
m.sunde1@unimail.derby.ac.uk
+44 (0)7719 204611
+47 415 13 091

Department of Law, Criminology and Social Sciences
College of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (LHSS)
University of Derby
One Friar Gate Square
Derby DE1 1DZ
United Kingdom
C/O Dr Henriette Bergstrøm
Appendix D

Schedule of Data Collection Instruments for Participants (Interview)

To be filled out by the researcher prior to the interview:

Time and date:

Participant Number:

Age:

Gender:

Profession:

Years of experience:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  What is your professional background with working with CSE?</td>
<td>- What is the most common age for CSE victims?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  How often do you come across male victims of child sexual exploitation?</td>
<td>- Why do you think that is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Which kind of sexual offences do you find to be the most prevalent in male child victimization?</td>
<td>- British citizens, Foreigners legally residing in the UK, illegal immigrants/Aliens in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Based on your experience, where are most of the male victims of child sexual exploitation from?</td>
<td>- Victims of Human Trafficking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Who are the male victims of CSE?</td>
<td>- Age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Can you describe a universal approach to grooming?</td>
<td>- Education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Are grooming techniques tailored to each individual victim?</td>
<td>- Vulnerabilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Can you give examples of how the grooming process of boys differs from girls?</td>
<td>- Children in care?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  How is deception used in the grooming process, and how common is it?</td>
<td>- Is there such a thing as a universal approach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Why do you think that is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How is this approach applicable to both genders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How does the age of the victim affect the grooming process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Why do you think offenders tailor/ do not tailor their grooming methods?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Is it more effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How is a tailored/ a universal approach more effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If there is no difference, why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Which type of deception is used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Have you noticed any patterns in the grooming of boys who question their sexuality? | - LGBTQI+  
- Can you explain how the grooming process of boys who question their sexuality differs from other targets?  
- Why do you think that sexuality makes a difference?  
- Does this come down to intent? How so?  
- How do offenders exploit a juvenile’s sexual confusion and insecurities?  
- How do you think a victim’s sexual confusion affects their vulnerability to grooming? |
| How and where do the offenders find targets to groom?                   | - Contact/Offline grooming  
- Social Media, Mobile Applications, Online Games  
- Why do you think that this is the most common tool?  
- Why are some preferred over others? |
| Which platforms do you find the most common tool for grooming boys?     | - Contact/Offline grooming  
- Social Media, Mobile Applications, Online Games  
- Why do you think that this is the most common tool?  
- Why are some preferred over others? |
| There have been a number of cases across Europe in the last 10 years where athletics coaches have sexually exploited their pupils. How does the grooming process of professionals who exploit their position differ from online grooming? | - What are the advantages or disadvantages of contact grooming?  
  - How does this differ between boys and girls?  
  - Why?  
  (Kelner, 2017; Mountjoy, Rhind, Tiivas, & Leglise, 2015; Vertommen, Schipper-van Veldhoven, Wouters, Kampen, Brackenridge, Rhind, Neels & Van Den Eede, 2016) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>In your opinion, how would parental online supervision decrease victim vulnerability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>In the online grooming process, what is the common age of the target?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have there been any changes in the trends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are victims younger or older now compared to 10 years ago?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>What is it that makes young boys go along with the grooming, and eventually the sexual favours?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What do groomers of boys offer them in exchange for sexual favours?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Research suggests that incentives are an effective tool in the grooming process, why do you think that is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What is the most common incentive used by offenders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What about the purchase of gifts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Is this a process primarily utilized by female offenders? (Richards &amp; Reid, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>How strong is the bond created between the groomer and target through the grooming process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do you think that there are male victims of CSE that continue the relationship with the groomers when aging above the age of consent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Why do you think that is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>What keeps the boys from telling their parents or reporting groomers to the authorities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bribes? threats? violence? love?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What about after the exploitation has discontinued?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>How do you think the reporting by victims has evolved/changed over the last 10 years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What has aided these changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>What do you think could be improved in today’s effort to prevent CSE of boys?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How could these changes best be implemented?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- What makes it difficult to implement these changes?
- Is the prevention of CSE of boys realistic?
Appendix E

Debriefing Material

Dear Research Participant,

Thank you for participating in this study! You have just participated in a research study conducted by Mats J. Sunde (see contact details below). This form provides the background about my research to help you learn more about why I am doing this study.

Little research has been conducted to examine whether there are unique aspects to the way in which offenders groom their male victims. The aim of this study is to explore how professionals working within the field of child sexual exploitation understand the grooming process by which offenders gain access to, and sexually exploit, adolescent boys. The purpose of this exploratory study is to understand the grooming process of adolescent boys, and how it might differ from the grooming of girls. Further, the author is interested in how the grooming process might differ based on the target’s perceived sexual orientation and/or identity.

As you are aware, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to withdraw your contribution to the study, please know that this is possible at any stage by contacting me or my supervisor within the date of submission (September 6, 2018). You will not be penalised for withdrawal.

You may keep a copy of this debriefing for your own records. If you have any further questions at a later stage, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. If you, as a result of your participation in this study, experience any adverse reactions, please contact The Samaritans Mental Health Helpline on telephone 116 123 or contact your local GP for assistance.

Further reading:


Thank you for your time and valuable contribution.

Sincerely,

Mr. Mats J. Sunde
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Appendix B. Word Cloud - NVivo