

**“They’re flooding the internet”: A cross-national analysis of
newspaper representations of the ‘internet predator’ in Australia,
Canada, the UK and USA**

PhD

2013

Peter Brown

Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Signed (candidate) Date

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

Signed (candidate) Date

STATEMENT 2

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The views expressed are my own.

Signed (candidate) Date

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my thesis, 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.

Signed (candidate) Date

STATEMENT 4: PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BAR ON ACCESS

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans after expiry of a bar on access previously approved by the Academic Standards & Quality Committee.

Signed (candidate) Date

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging my thanks to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding this project.

I would also like to place on record my gratitude to Professor Jenny Kitzinger for the advice, encouragement, help and general good company she has provided in the supervision of this dissertation and the two that preceded it.

Thanks, as always, must go to my family for their unrelenting love and support. Trips back to Crossways have been a source of great pleasure, for which I am particularly grateful to my parents, Sheila and Ian, my sister, Rachel, and her children, Sophia and Rosa. Special mention too for Poppy and, in particular, Twiggy, who invariably have to do very little to make the long journeys home feel worthwhile.

When commencing a PhD a startling number of people are very keen to tell you what a lonely and isolating experience it is. This, thankfully, is not something I have found, which I mainly put down to my many great friends. Any attempt to list everyone would inevitably result in the omission of some important people, but I would like to acknowledge the Cardiff ‘lads’ – in particular Neil, Gareth, Richard, Tom, Ollie and Kev – and the likes of Luke, Tom, Johnno, Gary, Bill, Alice, Neil, Janna and Clairemarie, all of whom have made various festivals, holidays and trips up north particularly memorable. Particularly special, too, has been the friendship of Iñaki Garcia-Blanco, whose kindness, good humour, generosity and vast supply of gin has provided the basis for innumerable wonderful evenings. I look forward to many more in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank Lizzie, whose love, kindness, encouragement and support has been invaluable. She is already a lovely ‘wife’ and will soon make a wonderful teacher.

Contents

Declaration	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of figures and tables	vii
Abstract	ix
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
The rise of the online predator	1
Introducing the topic	2
Positioning my thesis	3
Conducting cross-national research into a global social problem	7
Introducing the Virtual Global Taskforce	9
Research questions	11
Acknowledging the importance of ‘childhood’ theory	16
Overview of the structure of this thesis	17
Chapter 2	19
Literature Review I: Child Sexual Abuse and the Media	19
Child sexual abuse as a public issue: a brief modern history	19
Child sexual abuse in the UK	20
Child sexual abuse in the USA	22
Child sexual abuse in Canada	24
Child sexual abuse in Australia	25
Feminist critiques of child sexual abuse	27
Feminist critiques of ‘the paedophile’	28
Child sexual abuse and the media	31
Chapter summary	36
Chapter 3	37
Literature Review II: Young People and the Internet: Reviewing the Evidence	37
Australia	37
Canada	40
UK	42

USA.....	47
Chapter summary	50
Chapter 4	52
Literature Review III: Constructing the ‘Internet Predator’ and ‘Childhood’	52
Online CSA and the news media.....	52
The social construction of childhood	62
Chapter summary	69
Chapter 5	71
Methodology	71
Research Methods	71
Analysing Discourse	71
Critical Discourse Analysis.....	72
Content analysis	84
Sampling.....	89
Chapter summary	103
Chapter 6	105
Data Analysis I: Introducing the corpus.....	105
Press coverage of online CSA in Australia	105
Press coverage of online CSA in Canada.....	107
Press coverage of online CSA in the UK	109
Press coverage of online CSA in the USA.....	111
Cross-national.....	113
Chapter summary	117
Chapter 7	119
Data Analysis II: News hooks and peak weeks.....	119
Peak weeks	119
News genres	120
News Hooks	121
Reflection on key events	145
Chapter summary	148
Chapter 8	150
Children, paedophiles and dangerous (cyber)spaces.....	150
Children, space and proximity to paedophiles	150
Constructing online ‘paedophile places’	154

Paedophile places – USA	155
Paedophile places – Canada	158
Paedophile places – UK	159
Paedophile places – Australia	161
Reflection on discourses around online ‘paedophile places’	162
Children, the internet and temporal proximity to paedophiles	164
Temporal proximity – abstract risks	164
Temporal proximity – potential risks	167
Temporal proximity – veritable risks	168
Reflection on the discourse of temporal proximity	174
Conceptualising change in the time of the ‘internet predator’	176
Conceptualising change – stranger danger	178
Conceptualising change – childhood	182
Conceptualising change – the paedophile	184
Reflection on conceptualisations of change	191
Chapter Summary	193
Chapter 9	195
Constructing the internet predator as a threat to the home	195
The social construction of ‘the home’	197
Features (I): The Profile Interview and Exposé	202
Features (II): The News Backgrounder/Eyewitness Account	209
Editorials	215
Opinion Columns	218
Readers’ Letters	223
Chapter summary	230
Chapter 10	232
Conclusion	232
An overview of my findings	232
Implications	235
Implications: perpetuating myths about offline abuse in the discursive construction of online CSA	238
Implications: ‘Childhood’ and making sense of online risks to children	241
Implications for journalists and policymakers	243
Implications for practitioners	246

Methodological Reflections	247
Concluding remarks	253
References	255
Appendices	273
Appendix A: Overview of news hooks	273
Appendix B: Coding sheet	275
Appendix C: Overview of key events in Australia	276
Appendix D: Overview of key events in Canda.....	283
Appendix E: Overview of key events in the UK.....	291
Appendix F: Overview of key events in the USA.....	300

List of figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1.1: A classification of online opportunities and risks for children.....	4
Figure 1.2: Sexual contact risks – the focus of this thesis.....	5
Figure 1.3: Focus of research questions.....	12
Figure 5.1: Sampling articles for this thesis.....	89
Figure 5.2: Full Nexis search terms.....	96
Figure 5.3: Key phrases in first part of Nexis search criteria.....	97
Figure 5.4: Internet, Child and Action search terms.....	97
Figure 5.5: Gathering a purposive sample of articles for qualitative analysis.....	103
Figure 6.1: Breakdown of articles in the Australian press, 1993-2009.....	105
Figure 6.2: Cumulative number of articles in the Australian press, 1993-2009.....	107
Figure 6.3: Breakdown of articles in the Canadian press, 1993-2009.....	108
Figure 6.4: Cumulative number of articles in the Canadian press, 1993-2009.....	109
Figure 6.5: Breakdown of articles in the UK national press, 1993-2009.....	110
Figure 6.6: Cumulative number of articles in the UK national press, 1993-2009.....	111
Figure 6.7: Breakdown of articles in the USA press, 1993-2009.....	112
Figure 6.8: Cumulative number of articles in the USA press, 1993-2009.....	113
Figure 6.9: Cross-national comparison of patterns in coverage, 1993-2009.....	115
Figure 6.10: Cumulative articles across all countries, 1993-2009.....	116
Figure 7.1: Weekly news coverage in the Australian press, 2000-09.....	124
Figure 7.2: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the Australian press.....	126
Figure 7.3: Weekly news coverage in the Canadian press, 2001-09.....	130
Figure 7.4: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the Canadian press.....	131
Figure 7.5: Weekly news coverage in the UK national press, 2000-09.....	135
Figure 7.6: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the UK press.....	136
Figure 7.7: Weekly news coverage in the USA press, 1995-2009.....	141
Figure 7.8: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the USA press.....	142
Figure 9.1: Lead paragraphs from <i>The Sun</i> and <i>Sunday Mail</i>	206
Figure 9.2: Conflating ‘the home’, ‘the family’ and ‘the child’.....	215

Tables

Table 6.1: Breakdown of my corpus	105
Table 6.2: Key points about newspaper coverage in each country	114
Table 6.3: Articles in all countries during three phases, 1993-2009	117
Table 7.1: Peak weeks articles	120
Table 7.2: Genres of article in peak weeks	121
Table 7.3: Proportion of news hooks coded in peak weeks	122
Table 7.4: Peak weeks in the Australian press by year, 2000-09	125
Table 7.5: Peak weeks in the Canadian press by year, 2001-09	130
Table 7.6: Peak weeks in the UK national press by year, 2000-09	135
Table 7.7: Peak weeks in the USA press by year, 1995-2009	141
Table 7.8: Selection of grooming cases from peak weeks	146
Table 8.1: Offline and online paedophile places	163
Table 8.2: Children's temporal proximity to online risks	175

Abstract

Although online child sexual abuse is an issue of international concern, little is known about the news media's role in its construction. In this study I draw upon a corpus of 6,077 newspaper articles from Australia, Canada, the UK and USA – four member countries of the Virtual Global Taskforce set up in 2003 to combat online child abuse. Through a quantitative content analysis, I trace the trajectory of news coverage in each country and identify the news hooks and key events through which the issue has been framed during peak periods. This is complemented by a critical discourse analysis, through which I interrogate discourses around spatiality, particularly those pertaining to the paedophile's migration from the 'real world' to 'cyberspace', and from the 'outside' into the heart of 'the home'. The *quantitative* element of my study shows that: (1) although coverage began to emerge during the mid-1990s, it only began to accelerate after the turn of the century; (2) online abuse has been defined through episodic coverage, often around high-profile 'grooming' cases; (3) coverage in each country has largely followed a unique, nationally-specific narrative (shaped by its own socio-political context); and (4) although coverage has gone through periods of peaks and troughs, there are few signs that online abuse is slipping off the news agenda. In my *qualitative* analysis, I present evidence that: (1) claims-makers have drawn upon existing understandings of, and fears about, parks and playgrounds to construct aspects of the internet as online 'paedophile places'; (2) a discourse of *temporal* proximity has been adopted to depict children as being 'seconds' or 'clicks' away from an internet predator; (3) this discourse of temporal proximity has been used to *localise* a global problem and depict the internet predator as being even closer to children than the traditional figure of 'the paedophile'; and (4) the internet has been framed as bringing fundamental changes to how sexual threats to children should be understood. Through this analysis I argue that these discourses have been used to legitimise tighter regulation of children's lives and, although specific to the internet, they perpetuate myths about paedophiles, childhood, the family and home that limit thinking about child sexual abuse on a much broader scale.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The rise of the online predator

Tackling the dangerous side of the internet falls into two main categories: the content available and, *most concerning*, the potential for online predators to contact unsuspecting children. Importantly, parents and carers of children should be aware that there is no single solution for this myriad of potential dangers.

(Australian Government, 2010: 4, emphasis added)

You've seen the news reports on TV. Grown men show up for sexual encounters with children and young teenagers – after “meeting” them on Internet Web sites or chat rooms. The kids don't understand the risks they're taking. But the grown men do. They live for sleazy meetings, spending hours...or weeks...arranging the details. *They are sexual predators*. [...] Bad people can use legitimate Web sites to recruit or “groom” victims; and the predators lie so smoothly that the kids don't realize what's happening *until it's too late*.

(Dean, 2007: n.p., original emphasis)

Every minute of every day, they're flooding the Internet. While others are sleeping, shaving, eating or working, sexual predators are prowling every corner of the Internet in search of their next victims. [...] The nation's youth is under attack.

(Dean, 2007: 1)

[T]here is a new Stranger Danger so worrying and real that it makes the traditional image of a stranger as a bold man with a bag of sweets seem almost quaint. The rise of online predators is now one of the greatest threats facing our children and unlike the bogey-man with the bag of sweets it's almost certain that your children and mine will, at some stage of their online lives, encounter it.

(‘Did anybody tell Amy about stranger danger on the internet’, *Daily Mail*, 9 January 2008)

These warnings about the threats posed by so-called online predators are taken from a variety of institutional contexts from around the world. The first appeared in a public education booklet produced by the Australian Government for the launch of its \$189 million initiative *NetAlert – Protecting Australian Families Online*. The second and third come from a parenting guidebook written by an American investigative

journalist, where they appeared on the back cover and opening page respectively. The fourth was taken from a commentary piece published in an influential UK national newspaper. However, while the rhetoric may vary according to the medium and “imagined audience” (Matthews, 2007, 2008), the above examples, and the message at their core, encapsulate many of the discourses which have helped to establish online CSA as a high-profile social problem for the twenty-first century.

Across these examples, online CSA is presented as a new and unprecedented phenomena which is evolving and spreading at an almost unstoppable pace. It is ubiquitous, unremitting and indiscriminating: no child is beyond its reach. Its newness, together with its rapidly evolving nature, mean it is nebulous and only vaguely understood, making it difficult – for some, *impossible* – to protect against. The victims, ‘our’ children, are naive, unknowing subjects who don’t understand the seriousness of the dangers they face. Responsible adults, meanwhile, young people’s ‘natural’ protectors, simply cannot keep up. In short, this sexual threat is scarier and more serious than any previously faced by society and its young. It is the ultimate form of stranger danger. We have no clear solutions and, what’s more, the threat is carried by a new, more crafty and more capable perpetrator than ever previously known: the online sexual predator.

Introducing the topic

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a high-profile social problem with a long and varied history (see, for example, Critcher, 2003; Jenkins, 1998; Kitzinger, 2004; Smart, 1999, 2000). However, despite its long history, CSA has only been treated as a matter of serious importance by policymakers, journalists and the wider public since its ‘discovery’ by the media during the late 1970s and early 1980s (discussed in Chapter 2). Since then, considerable concern has been raised about various different forms of the sexual abuse of children, including incest, child pornography, paedophile rings, satanical abuse, paedophile priests, stranger danger and paedophiles in the community (Critcher, 2003; Jenkins, 1998; Kitzinger, 1999b; Pratt, 2009). Many of these issues – particularly those framed through the latterday figure of ‘the paedophile’ – have been shown to typify the elements of a ‘moral panic’ (Critcher, 2003), although this way of framing public/media/policymaker concern has been challenged by some critics (e.g. Kitzinger, 1999b). Regardless, despite concerted attention from policymakers,

educational bodies, citizens and the media, it has been argued that CSA “remains an apparently insurmountable problem in Western developed societies” (Smart, 2000: 55).

Since levels of internet access began to expand towards the end of the twentieth century, young people have been seen to be at the forefront of the ‘internet revolution’. As Livingstone et al note, “young people especially are dubbed ‘the internet generation’, ‘online experts’, etc. – labels they themselves relish, and internet adoption is considerably higher in homes with children than homes without” (2004: 3). The benefits and opportunities brought by the internet and online technologies are plentiful. They include, for example, an increased capacity for: learning, communicating, entertainment, creativity, self-expression and civic participation. However, despite the vast (and ever-expanding) array of benefits and opportunities it brings, the internet is not always presented as a positive presence in young people’s lives. Indeed, Livingstone and Haddon suggest that “it is the associated dangers of the internet that dominate the headlines” (2009a: 1).

Positioning my thesis

As has been touched upon, the internet and online technologies bring a vast range of opportunities and risks, particularly for young people. Introducing the broad spectrum of work encompassed by the EU Kids Online project, Livingstone and Haddon (2009a: 8) offer a useful classification of online opportunities and risks for children (see Figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1: A classification of online opportunities and risks for children

Reproduced from Livingstone & Haddon (2009a: 8)

	Contact: child as recipient	Contact: child as participant	Conduct: child as actor
OPPORTUNITIES			
Education, learning and literacy	Educational resources	Contacts with others who share one's interests	Self-initiated or collaborative learning
Participation and civic engagement	Global information	Exchange among interest groups	Concrete forms of civic engagement
Creativity	Diversity of resources	Being invited/inspired to creative or participate	User-generated content creation
Identity and social connection	Advice (personal/health/sexual etc.)	Social networking, shared experiences with others	Expression of identity
RISKS			
Commercial	Advertising, spam, sponsorship	Tracking/harvesting personal info	Gambling, illegal downloads, hacking
Aggressive	Violent/gruesome/hateful content	Being bullied, harassed or stalked	Bullying or harassing another
Sexual	Pornographic/harmful sexual content	Meeting strangers, being groomed	Creating/uploading pornographic material
Values	Racist, biased info/advice (e.g. drugs)	Self-harm, unwelcome persuasion	Providing advice e.g. suicide/pro-anorexia

Within the terms laid out by Livingstone and Haddon, reproduced in Figure 1.1, four categories of opportunity are identified. These are: (1) Education, learning and literacy, (2) Participation and civic engagement, (3) Creativity and (4) Identity and social connection. The four categories of risk are identified as: (1) Commercial, (2) Aggressive, (3) Sexual and (4) Values. Different aspects of these opportunities and risks are identified according to whether they relate to one of three issues: (1) Content, (2) Contact and (3) Conduct. Thus, through these different categories and classifications, Livingstone and Haddon identify 24 varieties of opportunity and risk.

In the most recent report EU Kids Online report it is noted that: “[p]ossibly the greatest public and policy concern for children’s safety on the internet has focused on the risk that a child will meet someone new online who then abuses them in a

subsequent face-to-face meeting” (Livingstone et al., 2011d: 85). It is this risk, often characterised through the figure of the ‘internet predator’ – who is described by Livingstone et al (2009a: 1) as “the greatest fear of all” – that is the focus of this thesis. In the context of EU Kids Online matrix, this issue can be identified as a contact-based sexual risk where children are classified as participants (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Sexual contact risks – the focus of this thesis

	Contact: child as recipient	Contact: child as participant	Conduct: child as actor
RISKS			
Sexual	Pornographic/harmful sexual content	Meeting strangers, being groomed	Creating/uploading pornographic material

The emergence of the world wide web, and its subsequent use for the sexual exploitation of children by adults, has raised a number of questions for policymakers, regulators, industry, citizens and, most importantly for this thesis, the media. Where has this problem come from? Who or what is responsible? Who is at risk? What can be done to tackle the problem? Who is responsible for implementing safeguards? What punishments are most suitable for perpetrators? Such questions have been addressed in a variety of ways across every media platform.

As with offline abuse in the 1970s and 1980s (see Jenkins, 1998), a considerable range of literature emerged in the 1990s and 2000s attempting to shed light on this issue, much of it in the commercial market. For example, Julian Sher, a prominent Canadian investigative journalist and author, wrote *One Child at a Time: Inside the Fight to Rescue Children from Online Predators* (Sher, 2007), while Stephen Dean, an investigative journalist who had previously gone undercover to ‘expose’ internet predators while working for a Houston-based television channel, authored the parental guidebook, *Sexual Predators: How to Recognize Them on the Internet and on the Street – How to Keep Your Kids Away*, the introduction for which is titled ‘...They’re Flooding the Internet’ (Dean, 2007: 5-8). Other titles include: *Exposed: The Harrowing Story of a Mother’s Undercover Work with the FBI to Save Children from Internet Sex Predators* (Good, 2007), by R. Stephanie Good; *To Catch a Predator: Protecting Your Kids from Online Enemies Already in Your Home* (Hansen, 2007), by

Chris Hansen; *Online Predators: A Parent's Guide for the Virtual Playground* (Sullivan, 2008) and *Safety Monitor: How to Protect your Kids Online* (Sullivan, 2002), both by Deputy Chief Mike Sullivan.

In November 2004, the 'fight' against internet predators gained particular notoriety became the subject of a hugely successful MSNBC television series, *To Catch a Predator*. Created with the assistance of an online vigilante group known as Perverted-Justice, *To Catch a Predator*, an offshoot of MSNBC's weekly news-magazine programme *Dateline NBC*, conducted a series of 'sting' operations by using false social networking accounts attributed to underage children in order to lure adult men to an address said to be the child's home. Once the adult arrived at the 'sting' location, which was equipped with hidden cameras, the show's presenter, Chris Hansen, would appear together with a film crew to interview the 'predator' before informing him that his story would be appearing on *Dateline NBC*. In some instances, although not all, law enforcement officers were on hand to arrest the alleged 'predator'. *To Catch a Predator* ran between 2004 and 2007, and used a variety of locations across North America. According to Nielsen Media Research, it averaged 9.1 million viewers, compared to 7 million for other *Dateline* programmes (Salkin, 2006: 1), and it has subsequently been exported to television channels in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Portugal. Even more pertinently, perhaps, *To Catch a Predator* seems to have had a agenda-setting role within US politics, with numerous policymakers explicitly referenced the show when sponsoring or supporting new legislation (Adler, 2010).

To Catch A Predator is a pertinent example of both the widespread interest in internet-facilitated abuse and the news media's potential to perform an agenda-setting role within the public sphere. As such this television news magazine alone has attracted a certain degree of academic scrutiny (Adler, 2010; Klein and Wardle, 2007; McCollam, 2011). My thesis, however, seeks to examine the role of the news media on a much broader scale, and my research has been designed to reflect the global nature of online CSA as a social problem.

The role of the news media has already come in for a certain level of academic criticism, particularly with regard to representations of the scale and nature of the

problem of ‘internet predators’ (e.g. Jewkes, 2010; Wolak et al., 2008). Gill (2007: 56), for example, asserts that “[w]hile the media sometimes give the impression that predatory sex offenders are a significant danger, CEOP [the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre] admits that the level of threat is in reality ‘incredibly difficult to define’”. The objective of this thesis is to critically engage with some of the discursive means through which the perceived threat of internet predators has been constructed and mobilised through the popular press in four countries: Australia, Canada, the UK and USA.

Conducting cross-national research into a global social problem

A Greek court yesterday sentenced a German man to more than eight years in jail for luring a 15-year-old American girl to Greece via the Internet. Konstantin Baehring, 36, was arrested in an Athens suburb in February 2001 after the mother of then 15-year-old Lindsay Shamrock alerted Greek police to her disappearance from her home in Florida. Baehring was charged with sexual assault, seducing a minor and assisting in illegal entry into the country. (‘Jail for Internet seduction’, *Townsville Bulletin*, 26 July 2002)

The globalised nature of the internet – or World Wide Web, as its creator named it (W3C, 1998) – means that online phenomena are rarely confined to any one locale. Consequently, researchers interested in such phenomena have (at least) two options: they can examine them from the perspective of one country (most typically the one in which they are based), or they can analyse data on the same phenomena from multiple countries.

The story above, taken from an Australian daily newspaper, neatly illustrates how online CSA is a social problem which transcends physical, geographical and cultural boundaries. Here we have the story of a German man arrested in Greece for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old American girl he had met online – all reported in an Australian regional newspaper. Thus, ‘internet predators’ represent a social problem with both global reach and ramifications. No one country is solely affected by it, nor is any one country responsible for tackling it. Therefore, when examining press coverage of this global issue, it is particularly prudent to remember that, in an age of globalised news, “we can no longer simply study ‘the news’ without qualifying whether we mean British news, or global news or the news in Eastern Europe” (2003b: 483). For this reason, the decision was taken to undertake a cross-national

study of press coverage from multiple locales.

Although cross-national research has been broadly applied for at least 60 years, guidelines published in 2009 by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) note that such work has become increasingly popular:

With the expanding tendencies of globalisation and interdependency that mark the current international system, an increased value is being placed on comparisons across different national systems and cultures, on making global connections, as well as policy learning and, policy diffusion.
(2009: 1)

Among the most typical aims of cross-national research are:

improving understanding of one's own country; improving understanding of other countries; testing a theory across diverse settings; examining transnational processes across diverse settings; examining transnational processes across diverse contexts; examining the local reception of imported cultural forms; building abstract universally applicable theory; challenging claims to universality; evaluating scope and value of certain phenomena; identifying marginalized cultural forms; improving international understanding; and learning from the policy initiatives of others.
(Livingstone, 2003b: 479)

Broadly speaking, this study's objectives are to compare levels of press coverage of online CSA in multiples countries and to examine some of the discourses through which claims-makers have conceptualised the paedophile's transition from the offline world to the 'virtual' world of cyberspace. As such, in terms of the aims and objectives outlined above, this study is perhaps best described as seeking to "mak[e] global connections" (ESRC, 2009: 1) in "evaluating scope and value of certain phenomena" (Livingstone, 2003b: 479).

When designing cross-national research, the question of which countries to study is crucial and requires careful consideration (Livingstone, 2003b: 486). However, Livingstone states that:

Surprisingly, little formal attention is paid to the question of country selection, leaving researchers open to the charge of generating post hoc justifications for what are in reality somewhat ad hoc, convenient or serendipitous decisions

regarding country selection.

(2003b: 486)

As a UK-based researcher it would, of course, have been convenient – not to mention considerably more straightforward – to focus solely on the UK press. Another option initially considered was to look at the UK and one other country, most probably the USA – cross-national studies often tend to include America, a tendency that Kohn describes as inevitable and appropriate (1989: 19). However, because online CSA is perceived to be a globalised issue, it was felt that the study of a broader range of countries – different strands of our globalised news media – would make for a richer study. Consequently, the decision was taken to incorporate newspaper coverage from the four English-speaking countries that made up the Virtual Global Taskforce when this research was proposed: Australia, Canada, the UK and US.

Introducing the Virtual Global Taskforce¹

As discussed, the global nature of the nature means that, more often than not, any online phenomena can be considered a *global* phenomena. Therefore, online problems are global problems and, as such, solutions or counter-measures often require global co-operation. Sexual risks to children, for example, are one such phenomena and, while nothing new, they take on a new dimension when they involve the internet. As Livingstone and Haddon note:

Since all human life is now online, this includes many risks – bullies, racists, cheats and, the greatest fear of all, sexual predators. Although long encountered by children in one form or another, today these risks are more available and more accessible, readily crossing national borders to reach children anywhere, anytime, too easily escaping local and national systems of child welfare and law enforcement.

(Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a: 1)

In the case of online CSA – “the greatest fear of all”, to use Livingstone and Haddon’s phrase – the Virtual Global Taskforce, is one such attempt to create a system of child welfare and law enforcement that extends *beyond* local and national boundaries.

¹ This thesis is not about the Virtual Global Taskforce *per se*. Rather, these four countries were chosen because their membership of the VGT was interpreted as an indication that online CSA was an issue of national importance for them. Further, as members of the VGT these countries were seen to be at the forefront of the ‘fight’ against internet predators.

As with offline abuse during the 1970s and 1980s (Jenkins, 1998), concern about online exploitation of children has been institutionalised on both a national and international scale. All of the countries included in this study have developed dedicated law enforcement and educational initiatives. The Australian Federal Police established the Online Child Sex Exploitation Team (OCSET) in March 2005. In Canada the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre (NCECC), a national program of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Canadian Police Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (CPCMEC), was established in 2004 as the law enforcement component of the country's National Strategy to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation on the Internet (RCMP, 2011). In 2006 the UK government launched the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), a department of its Serious Organised Crime Agency. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a division of the US federal government's Department of Homeland Security, launched Operation Predator in 2003. All of these national initiatives form part of the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT).

Launched in 2003, the VGT "seeks to build an effective, international partnership of law enforcement agencies, non government organisations and industry to help protect children from online child abuse" (VGT, 2006). The stated objectives of the VGT are threefold. They are to: (1) make the Internet a safer place, (2) identify, locate and help children at risk and (3) hold perpetrators appropriately to account (VGT, 2006).

In 2006, when this research was originally proposed, the VGT was made up of five member countries: Australia, Canada, Italy, the UK and the USA. The four English-speaking nations in this collective – Australia, Canada, the UK and USA – were subsequently chosen as the focus of this thesis (unfortunately the author cannot speak Italian). During the period that this research was undertaken, the VGT has expanded to include members from the United Arab Emirates (added in March 2010) and New Zealand (June 2010). These countries, however, do not feature in this thesis.

Ultimately, then, once the decision had been taken to include more than two countries in this study, Australia, Canada, the UK and USA were chosen because their affiliation with the VGT was viewed as an indication that online CSA is considered

an issue of national importance. The importance of these countries in terms of their position at the forefront of the international effort to tackle this issue is also evident elsewhere. For example, a briefing paper produced for the New South Wales Parliament, titled ‘Protecting Children From Online Sexual Predators’, cited legal developments and government initiatives in Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US, as well as elsewhere in Australia, when outlining potential approaches that could be adopted in NSW (Griffith and Roth, 2007: 80-81).

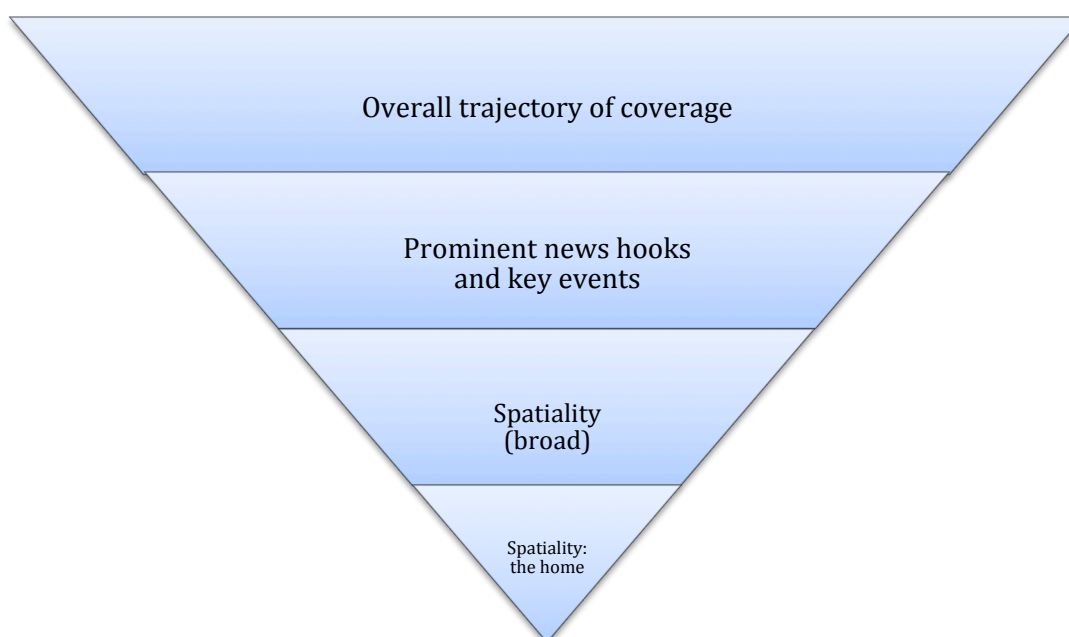
Research questions

This thesis has two key objectives. The first is to gain insight into when online CSA emerged on the news agenda in each of the countries in this study and the key topics/events through which it was defined. The second is to explore some of the discursive means through which the internet has been seen to transform CSA, reconceptualising it as a social problem that is no longer exclusively represented as something typically located ‘outside’ the home. These objectives are addressed through the following research questions:

1. When did online CSA register on the news agenda in each country?
2. Which topics/events instigated spikes in coverage in each country?
3. How did journalists and other claims-makers negotiate issues of spatiality (distance, proximity, etc.) in relation to online CSA?
4. How was the nature of the internet constructed in relation to the family home?

By starting with a broad overview of all coverage and ending with the close examination of a specific aspect of spatiality, my investigation into the impact of the internet is designed to become more focussed with each research question/chapter (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Focus of research questions



The prospect of adults using the internet to solicit children for sexual exploitation is considered to be a new problem (Wolak et al., 2008). Therefore, my first two research questions, while relatively broad, are designed to situate and contextualise my topic by offering an evidence-based overview of how online CSA emerged and was subsequently defined in each country. These questions represent the most explicitly comparative aspect of my study.

While some attention has been paid to representations of the issue, and in particular to the representation of perpetrators of internet abuse, in Canada (e.g. Pratt, 2009; Turow, 1999), the USA (Wolak et al., 2008), the UK (e.g. Jewkes, 2010) and Europe (Ponte et al., 2009), little academic work has been done comparing how this specific social problem rose to prominence in different countries. My first objective, therefore, is to trace the trajectory of the Australian, Canadian, UK and US news media's interest in this emerging issue – the development of discourses and knowledges about it (Carabine, 2001: 275) – in order to shed some light on *how* and *why* it became established high on the public agenda.

For Blommaert (1999: 5-6), “discourses... have their ‘natural history’ – a chronological and sociocultural anchoring which produces meaning and social effects in ways that cannot be reduced to text-characteristics alone”. Thus, by tracing the

evolution of newspaper coverage of online CSA, the objective is to trace the *natural history* of some of the discourse(s) that have come to anchor its representation and, by implication, *produced meaning* and *social effects*. This approach can be particularly beneficial to analyses of the media's coverage of social problems because, as Kitzinger notes: “[c]omparisons between media coverage at different points in time, several years apart, also add important perspectives. Studies adopting this method demonstrate how coverage shifts under different historical conditions” (Kitzinger, 1999a: 59). Broadly, then, attempting to answer these first two research questions is intended to offer some perspective on when and why journalists and other claims-makers have presented online CSA as a pressing social problem.

The first two, inter-related research questions are deliberately concise and their objectives are relatively modest. They are designed to provide broad context regarding the emergence and historical trajectory of this contemporary problem. By contrast, the latter two questions are concerned with ‘deeper’ issues and seek to address more specific aspects of the discourses around online CSA. Indeed, they focus on the issues that first intrigued me about this social problem and led me to examine the role of the mass media in its construction. Accordingly, these questions, which are much more qualitative in their application, are the main focus of this thesis and constitute the bulk of my findings chapters.

The third research question is concerned with space and spatiality. Meyer (2007: 86) identifies ‘space’ as one of three strategies through which the ‘cunning’ paedophile seeks to create opportunities for abuse. Specifically, “[t]he strategy of space proposes that paedophiles strategically hang out in typical children’s places in order to find children to abuse sexually” (Meyer, 2007: 86). Therefore, when framed through the popular discourse of ‘stranger danger’, the paedophile threat is often defined by children’s (potential or *likely*) *closeness* to perpetrators in certain (typically public) spaces, such as playgrounds, parks and community swimming baths. So prevalent is this discourse that Meyer has labelled these spaces “paedophile places” (Meyer, 2007). The impetus for my third research question, then, emerged from the apparent incompatibility of this aspect of the paedophile discourse with the ‘virtual’ world of the internet (‘cyberspace’). In the foreword to one of the aforementioned parenting guides, Teri Schroeder, CEO and founder of i-SAFE America, a non-profit

foundation focussed on internet safety whose Safe Schools Education Initiative and Outreach Campaign became active in all 50 US states in 2003-4, describes the distinction between the ‘physical world’ and ‘cyberspace’:

Our children now live in two diverse worlds: their physical world and the world of cyberspace. As such, they essentially live in two cultures that often conflict. Many of the lessons learned in the physical world don’t seem relevant in cyberspace as these children reach out to strangers as friends.

(Schroeder in Sullivan, 2008: 7)

She continues:

Historically, when parents taught their children to recognize and avoid dangerous situations, those situations were based on tangible, physical elements within their community. Now, danger lies in an amorphous cyber-world cloaked in the illusion of anonymity. [...] A child is no longer confined to the local community in order to socialize and gain friends; literally, cyberspace eliminates all geographical barriers and frees children to roam the world in search of that one, special “friend.” Predators are also free to roam.

(Schroeder in Sullivan, 2008: 8)

By outlining the purported differences between the nature of the threat of ‘the paedophile’ in the ‘physical world’ and ‘cyberspace’, Schroeder’s description pinpoints how and why the strategy of space may not translate to the construction of the ‘internet predator’. The ‘physical world’ and ‘cyberspace’ are described as different, “diverse worlds” with distinct “cultures”. Thus, while spatiality and physical proximity have formed a key part of the discourse used to construct the traditional image of ‘the paedophile’, they do not comfortably translate to the internet and the associated threat of the ‘internet predator’ because the internet – the *world-wide* web – transcends geographical boundaries, meaning that the respective social actors (i.e. child and paedophile, in this instance) can just as feasibly communicate from opposite sides of the planet as opposite sides of the street. This places severe limitations on the discursive power of spatiality, closeness and proximity in relation to the construction of the paedophile problem. Consequently, the purpose of my third research question is to unpack some of the discursive strategies used to negotiate the tricky issue of spatiality and children’s closeness (or otherwise) to the threat of internet predators.

Like the first two research questions, my third and fourth questions share a common theme. While the third question is designed to explore aspects of spatiality on quite a broad scale, the fourth focuses on one specific space – the family home, a space that is often excluded from mainstream discussion of CSA but is intrinsically linked to the construction of the internet predator. As noted, dominant discourses around offline abuse have often focussed on the threat of dangerous strangers/outside and, by extension, the responsibility of parents and guardians to protect their children from such characters (e.g. Kitzinger, 1999b, 2004). This, it has been argued, has resulted in the most common form of abuse – that by adults, most typically men, who are known to and trusted by the child (fathers, brothers, step-fathers, neighbours, etc.) – being sidelined or ignored (e.g. Kelly, 1996). One consequence of this ‘stranger danger’ discourse (Kitzinger, 1999b) is that the family home has often been held up as a safe haven – a sanctuary in which children are insulated and shielded from the threat of sexual abuse (Wykes, 1998). This myth is, however, potentially destabilised by threat of the internet predator. Across Europe, 87% of the 9-16 year olds who access the internet do so in their homes, making it the most common location for going online (Livingstone et al., 2011d: 5). In the UK, that figure is even higher, with 95% of children accessing the internet in their homes (Livingstone et al., 2011b: 7). Therefore, the perceived threat of internet predators, the focus of this thesis, presents a risk to children *inside* the supposed safe haven of the home. The purpose of my fourth research question, therefore, is to critically explore the manner in which journalists and other claims-makers have negotiated this reconceptualisation of the home as a possible site of abuse.

It should be noted that, unlike the first two, the latter two research questions are not intended to be explicitly comparative. Instead, these questions are more concerned with a broader exploration of discourses pertaining to the central theme of spatiality, particularly those that have hitherto been central to the construction of ‘the paedophile’ but do not comfortably translate to the internet predator (e.g. dangerous ‘paedophile places’, physical proximity to paedophiles, etc.). As Carabine (2001: 269) has argued: “Discourses are... fluid and often opportunistic, at one and the same time, drawing upon existing discourses about an issue whilst utilizing, interacting with, and being mediated by, other dominant discourses... to produce potent and new ways of conceptualizing the issue or topic”. Thus, using these terms, my third and fourth

research questions interrogate how discourses around *online* CSA and internet predators *utilise, interact with* and *are mediated by* dominant discourses around *offline* CSA (spatiality, the home, etc.) in order to *produce potent and new ways of conceptualising the issue*.

Acknowledging the importance of ‘childhood’ theory

Although not explicitly referenced in my research questions, this thesis is underpinned by an overarching interest in the social construction of childhood. In particular, my third and fourth research questions are both informed by ideas about ‘childhood’. My third research question looks at issues around space, such as children’s proximity to paedophiles. This has implications for, among other things, the perceived ‘dangerousness’ of post-internet childhood, the governance of young people’s access to certain (cyber)spaces, etc. The final research question is also concerned with spatiality – specifically the home and governance of children’s movements within this space. Childhood is implicitly – and unavoidably – linked to this discussion because, as James et al., (1998: 53) have argued, “the domestic space of ‘the home’” is “a conceptual and physical space within which the child is increasingly embedded”. It has, they argue, become “the child’s centre” (1998: 54) and, crucially, the “new interiority” for childhood (1998: 53).

James and Prout (1997b: 2) argue that national boundaries present one limitation to studies of childhood. As noted, this thesis’s primary objective is not to analyse conceptions of childhood *per se*. It does, however, seek to examine how conceptions of childhood have shaped discourses around children and the internet in a cross-national context. This is an approach advocated by Hasebrink et al in their reflection on media research conducted for EU Kids Online:

One possibility, beyond what could be achieved in this simple content analysis, is whether there are common patterns of conceptions of childhood that lie behind and are embedded in particular national media coverage. For example, in Norway there is a notion of a ‘natural childhood’, where sexuality is less of a risk while at the same time discussions of children’s rights is strong. Such underlying conceptions may well help to shape the nature of how media engage in the topic of children and the Internet.

(2008: 90)

The approach adopted in this thesis is that discourses are constructive and functional. They “builds objects, worlds, minds and social relations” (Wetherell, 2001c: 16) and are “designed to win hearts and minds” (Wetherell, 2001c: 17). As such, discourses are “productive” (Carabine, 2001: 268): they produce outcomes, legitimate control or ‘naturalise’ the social order and relations of inequality, making them appear as ‘common sense’ (Fairclough, 1985; van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, any assumptions about childhood that are used to structure discourses around online CSA have implications for (a) how the overall problem is constructed (its ‘nature’) and (b) how suitable responses are legitimised (particularly those that *legitimate or challenge control* of young people and ‘*naturalise*’ the social order and relations of inequality between young people and adults). From this perspective, implicit or explicit assumptions about the ‘nature of childhood’ are intrinsically linked to the process of *producing* ‘common sense’ understandings about online CSA.

I present a more through overview of literature around the social construction of childhood in Chapter 4.

Overview of the structure of this thesis

This thesis consists of ten chapters. In the following three chapters I contextualise my study through a literature review. Chapter 2 focuses on literature around offline CSA, its coverage in the mass media and feminist critiques of this social problem. Chapter 3 presents an overview of research into young people's internet use in the four countries included in this study. Chapter 4 looks at online CSA and its coverage in the media, as well as presenting a more detailed overview of literature around the social construction of childhood. In Chapter 5 I outline my methodology, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of my research methods (content analysis and critical discourse analysis) as well as highlighting some of the methodological challenges faced in this research. My findings are then presented across four chapters, which are structured around the research questions outlined above (Chapters 6 to 9). Chapter 6 contextualises my study by introducing my sample of articles and tracing the emergence and momentum of coverage in each country. These findings are developed in Chapter 7, which analyses peaks in coverage, addressing the question of which aspects of the problem attracted particularly high levels of attention. Chapters 8 and 9 present the qualitative findings from my third and fourth research questions. Chapter

8 looks at how journalists and other claims-makers have tackled tricky issues around spatiality, such as children's proximity to internet predators. Chapter 9 focuses on the notion that the internet predator presents a threat to idealised conceptions of the family home. Finally, in the concluding chapter I reflect on my findings, consider their implications and offer suggestions for how the issues raised could be tackled. I also make suggestions for how future research could build upon and develop the findings of this thesis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review I: Child Sexual Abuse and the Media

This thesis can be positioned within several overlapping fields of academic enquiry. In particular it relates to:

1. How child sexual abuse (CSA) has been defined as a social problem, and the mass media's role in shaping that definition;
2. children's internet use and debates around the risks posed by 'internet predators';
3. the mass media's role in constructing online CSA as a new social problem; and the social construction of childhood.

Literature pertaining to these topics is reviewed over three chapters. This chapter focuses on offline CSA. I begin by presenting a brief modern history of how CSA emerged as an issue of public concern in each of the countries in my study, highlighting the role of feminist activists and scholars in (a) putting it on the public agenda and (b) challenging common misconceptions about the issue. This is followed by an overview of how feminist critiques have sought to challenge lay assumptions about CSA and its perpetrators. Finally, I look at how the mass media has covered the issue, focussing on how the problematic concepts of 'stranger danger' and 'the paedophile' have come to dominant public debate.

Child sexual abuse as a public issue: a brief modern history

CSA as it is currently understood was 'discovered' in the West between the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, while the period between the late-1970s and mid-1990s marks a peak in public and professional interest, discussions of CSA date back over a much longer period (Atmore, 1998; Gordon, 1988; Kitzinger, 2004; Smart, 1999, 2000). In this section I present a brief modern history of how CSA has been defined and understood in the UK, US, Canada and Australia.

One of the foremost objectives of this thesis is to gain an understanding of the

trajectory and momentum of press coverage of online CSA, and the frames through which it was constructed, in each national context. In light of this, I begin my literature review by presenting an overview of some of the key landmarks and debates that have defined offline CSA in each country.

Child sexual abuse in the UK

In the UK, the sexual exploitation of children has been an issue of intermittent public interest for a number of years (Critcher, 2003; Jeffreys, 1985; Jenkins, 1992, 1998; Kitzinger, 2004; Smart, 1999, 2000). Jackson (2000a, 2000b) has looked at how CSA was dealt with during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, while Jeffreys' (1985) account highlights the role early UK feminists and 'social purity' activists played in attempting to highlight the plight of young, working-class girls who were trapped into prostitution during the late nineteenth century. Reflecting on the time it took for CSA to be recognised as an issue of serious concern, Smart (1999: 407) calls it "shocking and depressing" that "feminist campaigners in the 1910s and 1920s knew what we think we discovered in the 1970s".

CSA as it is known today, with its emphasis on abuse by parents and other caregivers, was only 'discovered' by the UK news media during the 1980s (Kitzinger, 2004). Subsequently, the period between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s encompasses "a time of dramatic shifts in the public profile of sexual, particularly incestuous, abuse" (Kitzinger, 2004: 36). Picking up on Jenkins' work on the changing attitudes and beliefs towards CSA in the UK between 1976 and 1992, Critcher (2003) identifies six key phases in what he terms "the paedophilia narrative" (2003: 100). The first period, between 1976 and 1982, saw the emergence of 'the paedophile'. During this phase, the term 'paedophile' first began to be mobilised and was linked to child pornography, paedophile rings and conspiracies among upper-class social and political elites who allegedly allowed abuse to go undetected.² The second period, between 1983 and 1989, focussed on child sex rings and high-profile police investigations into missing and murdered children. During this period, one particularly high-profile case saw Sidney Cooke and Robert Oliver imprisoned for the manslaughter of Jason Swift, a 14-year-old prostitute. It was also during this period

² This has come sharply back into focus with the revelations about media personality Jimmy Savile that emerged in late 2012.

that the Criminal Justice Act 1988 criminalised possession of child pornography and led to the formation of the Metropolitan Police's Child Pornography Squad. By the end of 1980s, "the paedophile threat was well established" (Critcher, 2003: 101).

Despite some high-profile cases – most notably those involving Robert Black, in 1990, and Frank Beck, in 1991 – the third phase, between early 1990 and late 1994, saw CSA become "a dormant issue" (Critcher, 2003: 101). The fourth phase, between mid-1994 and mid-1997, focussed on events outside the UK, most notably ones in Ireland and Belgium. The latter case, which centred around child murders committed by convicted child sexual abuser Marc Dutroux, was particularly significant. Citing a *Times* editorial on the Dutroux case which foregrounded the pathological 'difference' of child sexual abusers and their crimes, Critcher asserts that, "By mid-1996 the *unique threat* posed by 'paedophiles' [was] well established" (2003: 103, emphasis added). The fifth stage, between mid-1997 and mid-2000, was dominated by legislative changes, such as the introduction of Sex Offenders Act 1997, and the public protests and vigilantism that surrounded 'paedophiles in the community' (see Ashenden, 2002; Kitzinger, 1999b). Indeed, as Collier (2001: 228) argues, by the end of the 1990s, 'paedophilia' had become "a well-established debate about sex offending with its own trajectory, *dramatis personae* and political and legislative history". The sixth phase, between mid-2000 and the end of 2001, incorporates the murder of 8-year-old Sarah Payne and the *News of the World's* subsequent 'name and shame' campaign. This phase is notable for its illustration of how media campaigning can instigate legislative change. The campaign, which was premised on the *News of the World* agitating for the UK Government to introduce an equivalent of the US's Megan's Law, ultimately persuaded the Home Secretary to agree to 13 of the 14 legislative demands made in what the *News of the World* termed 'Sarah's Charter' (see Collier, 2001). It also led to civil unrest in many parts of the UK, most notably the Paulsgrove estate in Portsmouth, where hundreds of residents protested over several nights to demand the removal of convicted child sex offenders from their community (Bell, 2002; Collier, 2001; Critcher, 2003; Silverman and Wilson, 2002).

Applying moral panic frameworks, Critcher (2003: 109) argues that "paedophilia should be tested as a serial moral panic" because of the "prolonged nature of the panic". In the context of this thesis, Atmore's comment on the cyclical nature of

media interest in child abuse and other social problems is especially pertinent. She argues that “the present does not simply repeat an old pattern, and each specific context is worthy of its own right” (Atmore, 1996: 334). Thus, while previous discussions (and media coverage) around CSA are of obvious use, and any similarities or differences will be duly observed, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the specific context in which public discourses around *online* CSA developed and proliferated.

Child sexual abuse in the USA

CSA is often said to have ‘originated’ in America during the late 1970s (Critcher, 2003; Finkelhor, 1984, 1986; Gordon, 1988; Jenkins, 1998). According to Finkelhor (1984: 5), concern about the issue was also largely confined to the US until the early 1980s. He argues that interest in CSA did not diffuse to other nations with anything like the rapidity of that around physical (i.e. non-sexual) child abuse, an issue which swiftly became a matter of international concern following its ‘discovery’ in the US. Indeed, writing in the mid-1980s, he argued that “interest in child sexual abuse has remained primarily American” (Finkelhor, 1984: 5). Once interest in CSA had spread to become an issue of wider international concern, Jenkins (1998: 116) argues that America led the way in defining the problem, stating that “most advanced countries have demonstrated a sensitivity to child-protection issues quite akin to what was occurring in the United States and they have often done so under American influence”.

However, it could be argued that these historical accounts are not entirely accurate. As has been illustrated, while CSA may have only been ‘discovered’ by other countries’ *media* during the mid-1980s (shortly after Finkelhor’s original study), it had been a matter of concern to a number of interest groups (particularly feminist activists) long before this (Atmore, 1996; Gordon, 1988; Kitzinger, 2004; Pratt, 2009). For example, in the US, “Charity and social workers in the late nineteenth-century... were familiar with child sexual abuse and knew that its most common form of abuse was intrafamilial – that is, incest” (Gordon, 1988: 56). In light of this, Finkelhor may counter that it was in the US that CSA first made the transition from *social problem* – which he defines as “a situation recognized by some not necessarily large segment of the population” (Finkelhor, 1979: 7) – to *public issue* – a situation

“recognized by a broad section of society, particularly policy-making elements” (Finkelhor, 1979: 7).

Key to elevating CSA to a status of ‘public issue’ in the US was a coalition between the children’s protection movement and the women’s movement (Finkelhor, 1984: 3). However, Finkelhor (1984: 4) notes that while these two groups shared the common goal of drawing public attention to the issue of CSA, they often approached it from different perspectives, focussing on different aspects, adopting different theoretical frameworks and proposing different approaches to tackling the problem. Activists from the child protection movement tended to align CSA with other forms of child neglect and physical abuse and tended to see incest as “a product of family pathology” (de Young, 1982, cited in Finkelhor, 1984: 4). By contrast, feminist activists tended to align CSA with rape and extended the scope of the problem beyond incest by highlighting that children were also sexually victimised by non-family members and strangers (Finkelhor, 1984: 4). The commonality stressed by feminists was that the majority of abuse was perpetrated by men. Thus, “[r]ather than blaming dysfunctional families, feminists tended to blame patriarchal social structure and male solicitation” (Finkelhor, 1984: 4).

Interest in, and understandings of, CSA in the US have fluctuated and changed in much the same way as in the UK (see Jenkins, 1998). A particularly pivotal episode in the recent socio-political history of CSA in the US occurred in 1994 when Jesse Timmendequas confessed to the rape and murder of seven-year-old Megan Tanka. Timmendequas lived opposite the Tanka family and, unbeknown to them, had two previous convictions for sexual offences against children. Following a campaign by Tanka’s parents (the Megan Nicole Tanka Foundation), legislative changes were made to give parents access to information about any convicted ‘paedophiles’ living in their area. This legislation, known as Megan’s Law, has been taken up by all 50 American states. As has been noted, there have been numerous calls for the UK authorities to introduce an equivalent to Megan’s Law. However, the effectiveness of Megan’s Law has been called into question. For example, a 2008 report on the impact and effectiveness of Megan’s Law, produced for the US Department of Justice, found that it “showed no demonstrable effect in reducing sexual re-offenses” and “has no effect on the type of sexual re-offense or first time sexual offense (still largely child

molestation/incest)” (Zgoba et al., 2008: 2). Ultimately, it concluded that “Given the lack of demonstrated effect of Megan’s Law on sexual offenses, the growing costs may not be justifiable” (Zgoba et al., 2008: 2).

Child sexual abuse in Canada

Pratt (2009) has examined the “fluidity” with which the construction of CSA has evolved in Canada since the 1980s. He argues that it has been able to flourish as a social problem because of an ‘ecological niche’ constituted by the presence of four vectors: cultural polarity, observability, recognition of victims and expert classification (Pratt, 2009: 69). Consistent with other countries, CSA first became ‘visible’ as a social problem in Canada during the 1980s (Pratt, 2009: 71). In 1981, the Canadian government launched the Badgley Commission, a national study into the sexual exploitation of children that sought to “recommend how young people could be better protected by the law and helping services” (Badgley, 1984: 5). According to Wong, it was this study that “established sexual abuse of children and youth as a public issue of critical concern in Canada” (Wong, 2006: 167). Consequently, by the time of its publication, in 1984, CSA had become increasingly visible and was beginning to attract media interest, particularly among the press (Pratt, 2009: 72).

Prominent early studies appear to support feminist analyses of the problem. For example, the Report of Metro Toronto’s Special Committee on Child Abuse stated:

we have chosen to refer to female victims and male offenders... because most sexual abuse is committed by adults who are known to the child and acting in a care-giver capacity, much of the report focuses on these situations.
(Anon., 1982: i)

Similarly, the Badgley Commission concluded that “the main need of sexually assaulted children is for adequate protection from persons whom they already know and may trust” (Badgley, 1984: 218). A later report produced by the Children’s Aid Society stated that, “in 85-95 percent of cases, the abuser is someone known to the child: parent, relative, a person who works with the children” (Children’s Aid Society Toronto, 1994: 5).

Since the flurry of activity that occurred in the years after Canada's 'discovery' of CSA, a number of issues have attracted intermittent attention before subsequently being contested and discredited (e.g. paedophile rings, ritual abuse, false allegations, etc.). This has resulted in a series of "retractions and reconfigurations" of the issue (Pratt, 2009: 70). For example, following a series of high-profile cases involving abuse at orphanages and schools, CSA was "reconfigured" from an issue of "dysfunctional families or dangerous but sad and isolated strangers" to the realm of conspiracy and corruption among social and political elites (Pratt, 2009: 73).

In the contemporary climate, with the rise of the internet, Pratt (2009: 81) argues that the image of the dangerous, predatory stranger (the 'internet predator') once again prevails as the principle way through which sexual threats to children are conceptualised and understood. A significant consequence of this return to a discourse of 'stranger danger' is that parents and caregivers, once understood to be one of the principle sources of *danger*, have been repositioned as children's principle form of *protection* from sexual abuse – this time from cyber 'predators' on the internet. This raises the important question of how claims-makers have framed the role of parents and caregivers in relation to protecting children from online risks (I return to Pratt's work on the 'internet predator' in Chapter 4).

Child sexual abuse in Australia

Historical accounts of how CSA has been defined in Australia are scarce. However, Atmore (1998) provides a useful account that suggests Australia shares similarities with the UK, US and Canada. For example, while knowledge of the issue dates back over many decades, "the mid-1980s onwards are uniquely characterised by the involvement of increasingly pervasive mass media, focused especially on the child sexual abuse controversy" (Atmore, 1998: 127). Atmore, too, notes the prominent role feminist activists played in making CSA 'visible', particularly through their involvement in incest survivor groups from the late 1970s onwards (1998: 129).

One major issue to have occupied the Australian media and policymakers is 'sex tourism' – Australian men travelling to impoverished Asian countries such as Thailand and Cambodia to abuse child sex workers (Atmore, 1998). The plethora of media attention surrounding this issue led to the Crimes (Sex Tourism) Amendment

Act 1994, a legislative innovation for which the Australian daily newspaper *The Age* took partial credit for instigating (Atmore, 1998: 134). Atmore argues that one consequence of ‘sex tourism’ becoming the main focus of public attention, and the prism through which CSA and ‘the paedophile’ are often conceptualised, is that it has allowed the status of perpetrators to default back to the position of ‘predator’, or dangerous ‘other’ – ‘the Western predator’ in this instance (Atmore, 1998: 135). As has been seen elsewhere, a consequence of this is that it diverts attention away from more ‘domestic’ forms of abuse (within the home, family, neighbourhood, nation, etc.) and masks the connection with other forms of sexual abuse against adult women and children. It also sidelines critiques that foreground those forms of abuse that involve closer relationships (e.g. familial). Thus, we can observe that while feminist analyses (or feminist-*influenced* analyses, at least) have been marginalised and dangerous strangers/predators have become the foremost way through which CSA has been conceptualised and understood in each country, the socio-political contexts in which this process has played out have been shaped by subtle, but significant, nationally-specific events.

As this this brief overview has demonstrated, there are numerous similarities in the ways CSA has evolved as a matter of public concern in the UK, US, Canada and Australia. Broadly speaking, each country ‘discovered’ the issue between the late 1970s and early 1980s. In each instance the activism and awareness-raising activities of feminist groups played a key role in placing the issue on the public agenda, with many early analyses and responses being derived from a feminist perspective – particularly those that recognised sexual abuse within the family as a serious problem. Equally, since the ‘discovery’ of CSA in the 1970s and 1980s, the issue has gone through nationally-specific phases of “cyclical visibility” (Gordon, 1988) and the terms in which it has been understood have undergone a series of culturally-specific “retractions and reconfigurations” (Pratt, 2009: 70). Each country has also experienced major nationally/culturally-specific controversies (e.g. ‘paedophiles in the community’ campaigns, community notification, child sex tourism, etc.).

While I have acknowledged the vital role feminists played in getting CSA on the public agenda, I have so far only touched upon the key arguments they mobilised in order to do so. I turn my attention to feminist critiques of CSA, paying particular

attention to their problematisation of ‘the paedophile’.

Feminist critiques of child sexual abuse

A radical feminist approach to CSA encompasses a number of interrelated themes. As Atmore summarises:

It problematizes claims to radical disjunctions between: sex and violence; child sexual abuse and the rape of [adult] women; common masculine sexual behaviour and sexual abuse of children; the (nuclear) family as a safe haven and the threat from strangers.

(1998: 341)

Thus, feminist critiques challenge a number of normative assumptions about the nature and extent of CSA. First they highlight that, like sexual violence against women, CSA is a gendered crime: the vast majority is perpetrated by men. As Kitzinger (2004: 126) argues, “one of the few things that distinguish people who commit sexual violence from people who don’t, is that the former are usually male”. Thus, for feminists, CSA is not an issue of individual pathology, but an issue of gender. More specifically, feminists’ focus is on the social construction of gender within patriarchal society, or, to use McLeod and Saraga’s description, the “problem of masculinity” (1988: 43). Ultimately, then, by arguing against a focus on the pathological ‘difference’ of the individuals who abuse children (and the removal of these individuals from society), a focus on the social construction of masculinity renders that “the real battle lies in making fundamental changes in a society that allows and even encourages child sexual abuse” (DeYoung, 1988, cited in Kitzinger, 2004: 159). This argument is, however, often marginalised, with mainstream commentators and policymakers tending to retain their focus on identifying the pathological ‘difference’ of those individualized ‘other’ figures who perpetrate sexual abuse. As Kelly (1996: 45) comments, “Rather than sexual abuse demanding that we look critically at the social construction of masculinity, male sexuality and the family, the safer terrain of ‘abnormality’ beckons”.

Thus, this feminist critique argues that, contrary to popular rhetoric, CSA is not typically perpetrated by strangers or ‘sick’, ‘psychotic’ ‘others’, but by ‘normal’, well-adjusted men who are known to and trusted by the victim (e.g. Atmore, 1998;

Kelly, 1988, 1996; Kitzinger, 1999b). As Kelly summarises, “[i]n making child sexual abuse a political issue, feminists focussed attention on male power, challenging the idea that abusers were abnormal, sick individuals” (Kelly, 1996: 44). Without such a focus, Kelly (1996) argues, attention shifts away from the centrality of male power and control, and focuses instead on individualised, often medicalised, ‘explanations’ that foreground notions of sexual deviance, obsession and ‘addiction’.

Another key objective of this feminist critique, then, is to raise awareness that a significant amount of abuse is perpetrated by family members or other known caregivers, or ‘intimates’ (fathers, brothers, uncles, step-fathers, neighbours, family friends, etc.), often within the ‘safe haven’ of the family/home – hence the importance of incest to early feminist campaigning. Indeed, following the “explosion” of interest in the issue in the UK during the mid-1980s, Kelly (1988: 65) commented that there had been a “transformation of the meaning of the term ‘sexual abuse’ in public discourse”. She continued:

Whilst feminists have been arguing for years that children are sexually abused inside the home as well as outside it, I don’t think we [feminists] could have envisaged the shift in public perceptions to the extent that... child sexual abuse has currently become synonymous with incest.

(Kelly, 1988: 65)

However, as has been touched upon, in the years after the ‘discovery’ of CSA, there have been numerous cultural shifts in the way the subject has been conceptualised, discussed and understood. The most pervasive discourse – and the one that most contradicts feminist critiques – has been that of ‘the paedophile’.

Feminist critiques of ‘the paedophile’

Feminist poststructuralists have highlighted the importance of language in defining issues of social, personal and political importance (Atmore, 1996, 1998; Cameron, 1998; Weedon, 1997). To quote Weedon:

For poststructuralist theory, the common factor in the analysis of social organization, social meanings, power and individual consciousness is language. Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested.

At any given time language can ‘rule in’ certain ‘acceptable’ ways of thinking about an issue (ruling others out in the process). As the radical feminist media scholar Chris Atmore (1998: 126) argues, “language – how violence is talked about, for example – matters as much as the abusive practices themselves, because they are intrinsically linked”. The terms used to describe CSA are therefore significant because definitions “are as much political as they linguistic” (Kelly, 1988: 66). As Gordon (1988: 61) comments, “Without a feminist analysis, evidence of child sexual abuse means that danger lies in sex perverts, in public spaces, in unsupervised girls, in sexually assertive girls”.

Concern about applying constrictive labels to perpetrators of CSA can be traced back to the ‘discovery’ of the problem in the late 1970s. In his first study, Finkelhor (1979) discussed the difficulties associated with determining how best to define the phenomenon he was describing. Each of the most common terms, he argued – sexual abuse, child molestation, sexual victimisation, sexual harassment, sexual assault, child rape and sexual misuse – appeared to emphasise (and suppress) subtly different characteristics of the issue (for a discussion of the complexities involved in ‘defining’ CSA see Kelly, 1988). Rejecting the term ‘child molestation’, Finkelhor asserted: “[it] is a classic term, but it is too closely associated with the stereotype of the stranger in the schoolyard and does not appear to encompass the many family members who are involved” (Finkelhor, 1979: 17). This is noteworthy because, three decades on, Finkelhor’s reservations about the restrictive and misleading nature of the terms ‘child molestation’ and ‘child molester’ are just as applicable to the terms that have ultimately come to dominate the popular discourse around CSA: ‘paedophilia’ and the figure of ‘the paedophile’ (Atmore, 1998; Kelly, 1996; Kitzinger, 1999b).

Collier (2001: 242) describes the “category of the paedophile” as “a sociocultural phenomenon”. According to Jenkins (1992: 73), “[t]he current image (and term) of the pedophile can be dated back with some precision to debates that occurred in 1977 and 1978”. However, it was not until around a decade later that it really rose to prominence. Having extended established media images of the ‘sex fiend’ (Soothill and Walby, 1991), Jenkins (1992: 99) argues that by the late 1980s, “[t]he figure of

the pedophile had become one of the most terrifying folk-devils imagined in recent British history”. This dynamic term has endured and evolved, and continues to dominate popular discourse around CSA, prompting Silverman and Wilson (2002: 1) to argue that “the very word itself has become a conduit for fear and public loathing, often beyond all moderation”.

The stereotype of ‘the paedophile’ is, however, highly problematic. Feminist scholar Liz Kelly (1996: 44) has been critical of the “sloppy thinking” that has led to the routine use of the term (including by some feminist groups). Kelly argues that acceptance of this term has implications for how CSA is discussed and understood on a much broader level:

Immediately the word *paedophile* appears we have moved away from recognition of abusers as ‘ordinary men’ – fathers, brothers, uncles, colleagues – and are returned to the more comfortable view of them as ‘other’, a small minority who are fundamentally different from most men.

(Kelly, 1996: 45, original emphasis)

For Kitzinger:

‘The paedophile’ has become the dominant way through which sexual threats to children are conceptualised and articulated, but the concept is laden with ideas and assumptions which confine thinking about the issue to a very narrow focus.

(Kitzinger, 1999b: 217)

From this perspective, ‘the paedophile’ is more than just a term. It is an ideologically-loaded *concept* that reinterprets the nuanced, multi-faceted issue of CSA and repackages it in a way that is simplistic, crude and at odds with empirical evidence about the scale and nature of the problem. As such, its discursive reach has the capacity to impinge upon understandings – definitions, responses, solutions, etc. – on a personal, professional and political level. The ‘paedophile’ discourse undermines – rejects, even – many of the arguments radical feminists made (and continue to make) about the true nature and scale of CSA, thus illustrating Weedon’s argument about the power of language. As Atmore argues, it:

acts to reinforce the familiar typification of child sexual abuse as ‘out there’,

perpetrated by a demonised molester, at the expense of attention to more difficult questions about who really does abuse children, and how that relates to the existing and largely unchallenged power dynamics in phallogocentric Australian society.

(1998: 135)

Widespread use of the term 'paedophile' is therefore problematic because it restricts thinking about CSA and the people who perpetrate it to a very narrow focus. It aligns CSA with a certain *type* of person. It positions CSA within the realm of the extraordinary. It obscures the most common form of abuse (by known, trusted adults and relatives) and repositions the threat 'out there', beyond the bounds of 'normality'. In so doing, it obscures the numerous other forms of sexual victimisation to which children are subjected. It individualises the problem by locating danger in pathological, genderless 'others', ducking broader questions about male power, male socialisation and the social construction of masculinity and male sexuality. It foregrounds a discourse of 'stranger danger', diverting attention away from abuse by known, trusted adults and/or parents. Finally, it locates danger 'outside', diverting attention away from the family/home as a site of abuse.

Child sexual abuse and the media

As has been touched upon, the mass media were central to the 'discovery' of CSA. As Nelson (1986: 51) argues, "[i]n the case of child abuse, the media... helped establish a new area of public policy". Critcher (2003), Soothill et al. (1998) and Kitzinger (2004) have all noted significant increases in UK newspaper coverage of CSA during the 1980s and 1990s. Using empirical data from a study of UK newspapers, Soothill et al. (1998) demonstrate a marked increase in the number of articles containing the term 'paedophile' or 'paedophilia' between 1992 and 1998. This, they argue, is symptomatic of an "explosion of interest" (Soothill et al., 1998: 882) in CSA across the UK media. Critcher (2003) notes a similar trend in his study of the *Daily Mail* and the *Times* (and their respective Sunday titles). He argues that towards the end of the 1990s the *Daily Mail* was "less reporting paedophile news than creating it" (Critcher, 2003: 105). This coverage was, he argues, characterised by a "paedophile vocabulary" that was both "limited and repetitive" (Critcher, 2003: 105). This "limited and repetitive" vocabulary is far from unique to the UK (for international comparisons see Atmore, 1998; Goddard and Saunders, 2000; Pratt, 2009). However, while this

attention was useful for raising awareness and getting CSA on the public and political agenda, subsequent media interest has fluctuated considerably both in terms of intensity and focus (see, for example, Critcher, 2003; Jenkins, 1992; Kitzinger, 2004).

Across the media, all forms of CSA are often condensed into the all-encompassing umbrella term 'paedophilia'. Applying moral panic frameworks to media coverage of a range of high-profile issues (including AIDS, ecstasy and raves, 'video nasties'), Critcher (2003: 111) argues that "[n]o other issue... [has] provoked such intensive and extensive concern" as 'paedophilia'. One of the key ways in which understandings of CSA have been distorted is through the dominance of the 'paedophile' discourse. As a key site of representation, the mass media, and the print media in particular, have played a key role in constructing and mobilising this discourse (see Atmore, 1996, 1998; Collier, 2001; Critcher, 2002, 2003; Goddard, 2005; Goddard and Saunders, 2000; Greer, 2002; Greer and Jewkes, 2009; Kelly et al., 2000; Kitzinger, 1997, 2004, 2008; Lee, 2009; Meyer, 2007; Silverman and Wilson, 2002; Soothill et al., 1998; Soothill and Walby, 1991).

According to Heberton and Thomas (1996: 429), "media coverage... of imprisoned sexual offenders suggests that sexual offending is a narrow band of activity committed by a narrow band of offenders". Thus, across the media, this narrow and constrictive discourse manifests in the (re)mobilisation of the myth that sex crimes against children are perpetrated by a certain *type* of person ('the paedophile'). Collier (2001) has argued that the 'paedophile' discourse is a "discourse of dangerousness". In a study of the UK news media, Meyer (2007: 69) identifies four major discourses used by journalists to construct 'paedophiles': (1) evil, (2) perversion/pathology, (3) violence/destruction and (4) cunningness. Meyer argues that through categorisation and demonisation, "[p]aedophiles are not only portrayed as marginal, evil 'Others' but excluded from the category of humanity by being associated with and placed in the realm of the satanic" (2007: 70). Critcher (2003: 111) concurs, stating that, as far as the media are concerned, 'paedophiles' are "Sub-humans, [who] should be permanently removed from society".

Picking up on one particular way in which 'the paedophile' is categorised, demonised and othered, Critcher (2003: 114) argues that across the media, "[t]he paedophile

discourse is primarily a discourse of evil. [...] The language... is replete with images of evil: monsters, sex maniacs, beasts, perverts, twisted, weirdo, depraved". For Critcher (2003: 114), this discourse of evil legitimises the view that "[i]f paedophiles are less than human, then complexity can be denied". From a feminist perspective, one could also argue that an additional function is that if 'paedophiles' are not recognised as *human*, then they do not have to be recognised as *male*.

One key discursive technique used to construct 'paedophiles' as 'other' is stereotyping (Featherstone and Lancaster, 1997; Kitzinger, 1999b, 2004). As Kitzinger argues:

'The paedophile' is a concept enmeshed in a series of crass stereotypes which place the child sexual abuser 'outside' society. In the tabloid press abusers are 'animals', 'monsters', 'sex maniacs', 'beasts' and 'perverts' who are routinely described as 'loners' and 'weirdos'.

(1999b: 217)

It is also important to highlight that such stereotyping is not confined to the tabloid media (Meyer, 2007). As Kitzinger notes, "*Right across the media* it is also implied that paedophiles, far from being 'ordinary family men', are more likely to be gay" (1999b: 217, emphasis added). Again, it might be argued that this is a (homophobic) means for diverting attention away from the link between sexual abuse and hegemonic masculinity.

Highlighting that child sexual abusers ('paedophiles') are not 'outside' society but part of it (and, it might be argued, a *product* of it) has been a key part of feminist critiques. However, by prioritising the 'paedophile' discourse, the media has played a key role in marginalising this feminist argument. As Kitzinger summarises:

The media and broader cultural stereotypes encourage a focus on threats from outsiders rather than a focus on the danger posed by ordinary men close to the child. Media coverage also evades the challenge posed by feminist theorists who point out that patterns of sexual violence should make us question the operation of male power in society.

(Kitzinger, 2004: 142)

These stereotypes often manifest in a disproportionate focus on threats posed by

strangers, leading Critcher to conclude that a “society that is serious about tackling the issue [of CSA] would focus on intimates, not strangers” (2002: 533). Despite this, the focus of the media and policy makers remains very much on the latter.

The construction of ‘the paedophile’ as ‘other’ – that is, a figure who is different and/or distinguishable from ‘normal’ folk – means that the issue of CSA is represented by the image of an ‘evil’, dangerous ‘outsider’. This commonly manifests in, and contributes to the (re)mobilisation of, the pervasive discourse of ‘stranger danger’. Indeed, as Kitzinger (1999b: 219) argues, “‘the paedophile’ is a creature that embodies stranger danger. He reflects and sustains a focus on abusers as outcasts from society rather than part of it” (Kitzinger, 1999b: 219). Consequently, the construction of ‘the paedophile’ “is used to reinforce the media’s and policy makers’ disproportionate focus on ‘stranger danger’” (Kitzinger, 1999b: 219).

It has been argued, persuasively in my view, that a consequence of the limited and constrictive construction of ‘the paedophile’, and journalists’ and policy makers’ focus on ‘stranger danger’ more generally, is that it limits thinking around how to envisage solutions to problem of CSA (Atmore, 1998; Kelly, 1996; Kitzinger, 1999b, 2004). For example, as I have noted, ‘paedophiles’ are often constructed as inhuman, with journalists frequently depicting them as animals through the attribution of labels such as ‘(sex) beast’, ‘fiend’, ‘monster’ and ‘predator’ (Critcher, 2003; Kitzinger, 2004; Meyer, 2007). One discursive function of this construction is that it permits journalists, policy makers and other stakeholders to prescribe equally limited and constrictive punishments, treatments and/or solutions. As Meyer (2007: 74) notes, one such consequence is that “Animal terminology produces knowledge of paedophiles as inhuman and this understanding translates into and legitimises demands for inhuman treatments”. In this respect, it could be argued that this construction of ‘the paedophile’ promotes and/or legitimises “simplistic explanations” (Soothill and Walby, 1991: 149) and, by extension, simplistic solutions, for CSA in much the same way as Soothill and Walby have argued was the case with media coverage of sexual violence against adult women in the 1980s.

Important here is the way that journalists often use paedophiles’ physical appearance as a vehicle for foregrounding their supposed ‘difference’. The construction of ‘the

paedophile' as an "easily identifiable misfit" (Kitzinger, 2004: 215) implies their otherness makes them distinguishable from 'normal' folk. This discourse, together with the wider discourse foregrounding paedophiles' supposed inhumanity and evilness, encourages the view that, once these individuals have been identified, the problem of CSA can be 'solved' by removing them from society. This is a view endorsed by many sections of the news media:

The problem of sexual violence [is] represented by the newspaper image of the man with staring eyes or the evil smirk, the 'beast' and 'fiend' who [can] be singled out, electronically tagged, exposed and expelled. *If paedophiles are literally 'evil personified', then such evil can be exorcised by exclusion of these individuals from society.*

(Kitzinger, 1999b: 218, emphasis added)

This has been discussed in terms of the media's tendency to concurrently 'categorise' and 'individualise' paedophiles (Meyer, 2007). Acknowledging one of the obvious drawbacks of this approach, Collier highlights the disparity between deciding how to (a) respond to and (b) legislate for the individualised perpetrator ('the paedophile') and the wider issue of CSA (repackaged and articulated through the all-encompassing term 'paedophilia'). Collier argues:

while attempts may be made to expunge the body of the *paedophile* from society, in the form of expulsion from the community into which he is to be introduced on release from prison, the danger and risk of *paedophilia* appears much more evasive, powerful and threatening.

(2001: 232)

The discourse of 'stranger danger' is not confined to any one country or culture. By the end of the 1980s, the 'paedophile' discourse in the US had firmly established CSA as something extraordinary that was perpetrated by 'outsiders' and occurred outside the realm of 'normality'. As Jenkins notes, "it achieved its greatest power when it was framed in terms of molesters and paedophiles who attacked from outside the home and family, of what now came to be known as sexual predators" (1998: 188). It was in this cultural climate that some US states, such as Washington, began to introduce compulsory community notification during the early 1990s. After similar legislation had been introduced in New Jersey in 1994, in the form of 'Megan's Law' – so named after the rape and murder of Megan Kanka – it became federal law in 1996 (Critchler,

2003: 115; Zgoba et al., 2008).

As has been noted, there have been numerous calls for similar community notification to be introduced in the UK, particularly from the right-wing press. These calls reached a crescendo in 2000, when the (now defunct) *News of the World* used the murder of Sarah Payne as the catalyst to launch a campaign for ‘Sarah’s Law’, a British equivalent of Megan’s Law (see Critcher, 2002, 2003; Meyer, 2007; Silverman and Wilson, 2002). As well as advocating ‘real’ life sentences for convicted ‘paedophiles’, the *News of the World* also campaigned for “every parent’s right to know if there is a convicted paedophile living in their area” through ‘controlled access’ to the sex offenders register (Critcher, 2003: 107). Central to the long-standing argument around community notification is the assumption that if parents and caregivers are informed of the locality of convicted sex offenders, then children can be protected from the threat of sexual abuse. This discourse, of course, subsumes the knowledge that the majority of abuse is perpetrated by those who are typically framed as children’s principle source of protection.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have introduced literature around the emergence and definition of CSA. I began by presenting a brief modern history of the issue in each country, highlighting key similarities such as the role of feminist activists in recognising the problem, the surge in interest between the late 1970s and early 1980s, fluctuating levels of interest in subsequent years, and the latterday dominance of ‘the paedophile’ discourse. Having identified the role of feminist activists, I then discussed some of the key components of feminist critiques of the problem. These, I argued, tend to focus on the gendered nature of most abuse, the social construction of masculinity, and the unpopular reality that most abuse is not perpetrated by ‘sick’ other figures (‘paedophiles’) but ‘intimates’ who are known to and trusted by the child. To conclude the chapter I then discussed literature around media representations of CSA, highlighting the media’s role in marginalising feminist critiques by (re)mobilising the dominant, but problematic, discourses of ‘the paedophile’ and ‘stranger danger’.

In the next chapter, I continue my literature review by presenting an overview of research into young people’s internet use and their awareness of ‘internet predators’.

Chapter 3

Literature Review II: Young People and the Internet: Reviewing the Evidence

In this chapter I present an overview of research into young people's internet use in each of the countries included in this study. Where possible, I have attempted to cover similar areas – young people's instant messaging (IM) habits, frequency of attending offline meetings, etc. However, because there is no set template to the various studies (with the exception of AU Kids Online adopting the EU Kids Online framework), it has not always been possible to cover identical areas in each country. As such, the objective of this chapter is to present an overview of the findings and arguments most relevant to this thesis.

Australia

National studies into online sexual threats to children appear less plentiful in Australia than elsewhere. However, research conducted for the Australian government's Protecting Australian Families Online initiative offers a useful overview of the online behaviour and attitudes of a sample of 1,000 children aged between 8 and 17 (Wallis Consulting Group, 2007). Other studies have been conducted for NetAlert (Australian Broadcasting Authority and NetAlert Ltd, 2005; NetAlert, 2007a), while the EU Kids Online template has been adopted for AU Kids Online (Green et al., 2011).

Recurrent throughout these studies is parents' concerns about children encountering strangers through the internet. For instance, children interviewed for the WCG study reported that parental warnings most often relate to not disclosing personal information (45%) and not communicating or meeting with strangers they have met online (40%) (Wallis Consulting Group, 2007: 11). NetAlert (2007a) research highlights some of the disparities between the concerns of Australian youths and their parents (see also Green, 2009). After exposure to pornography (55%), parents' biggest concerns about their children's internet use relate to communicating with strangers (41%) and the use of chatrooms (23%). By contrast, in the top five things that young Australians perceive to be 'bad', the possibility of meeting/talking to

someone ‘bad’ (8%) – note this is not necessarily ‘strangers’ *per se* – was less prevalent than pop-up ads (24%), the danger of downloading a virus (17%) and the internet being too slow or difficult to use (12%) (NetAlert, 2007a: 2).

The most up-to-date large scale study is conducted by AU Kids Online, an offshoot of EU Kids Online. In keeping with Europe, the majority of Australian children (92%) use IM services to communicate with people they already know face-to-face (Green et al., 2011: 24). Around half of children (48%) reported that they are in touch with people they first met online but with whom they have an offline connection through friends or family (e.g. cousin of an offline friend). This behaviour was reported by 40% of 11-12 year olds, 45% of 13-14 year olds and 60% of 15-16 year olds, suggesting that as children get older they are more likely to widen their social circles by communicating online with people who are connected to their offline friends. In terms of interactions with ‘strangers’, 29% of 11-16 year olds communicate online with people who they first met online and to whom they have no connection in their offline social networks.

Compared to Europe, Australian respondents were much more likely to say that, in the last year, they had not sent a photo/video of themselves (89%) or personal information (94%) to someone they had never met face to face. Nor had they pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet (94%) (Green et al., 2011: 26). However, around a quarter (24%) said they had looked for new friends on the internet and one-in-five had added contacts they did not know face-to-face. Around one-third (34%) of Australian children reported making online contact with someone they had not met face-to-face, while 5% had gone to an offline meeting with someone they first met online, the same figure reported by the EU Kids Online study of the UK and a figure well below most European countries. In each case, older children (13-16 year olds) were most likely to report these activities. In these relatively rare instances of face-to-face meetings with online contacts, children tended not to have informed their parents (78%). However, the researchers are keen to assert that such behaviour should not automatically be judged as risky or dangerous: “Some of these approaches to communication might be judged to involve children in risky practices but... the key question is whether or not these practices result in more risk-related behaviours or, importantly, more harm to children” (Green et al., 2011: 26).

Despite research demonstrating young people's enjoyment of using the internet to extend their social circles, safety advice has often promoted a policy of remaining entirely anonymous on the internet. A NetAlert publication, *A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety: How to Keep Young Internet Users Safe*, for instance, contained a section on physical danger, which asserted: "'Stranger danger' is... a risk associated with the internet. [...] It is vital that children know not to provide personal information to anyone they meet online" (NetAlert, 2007b: 5). A later NetAlert publication, *Protecting Australian Families Online*, which was distributed to every house in Australia, carried a similar message, telling parents to: "Encourage your children to use anonymous names that don't reveal their age, gender or location" (NetAlert, 2010: 11).

When it comes to parental governance, Australian parents use a range of measures to manage their children's internet use. Around a quarter of parents said they always sit with their children while they are online, while 80% said they sometimes do (NetAlert, 2007a: 3). Young people's tips for keeping safe tend to mirror parents' concerns, with warnings about communicating with strangers (30%) and not disclosing personal information (25%) being the most common. Intriguingly, those whose parents have spoken to them about internet safety are more likely to be concerned (51%) than those whose have not (31%) (Wallis Consulting Group, 2007: 12), which raises questions about (potentially exaggerated or unrealistic) parental concerns increasing anxieties among young people.

More generally, internet safety – and issues around 'grooming' and stranger danger in particular – has carried considerable political capital in Australia. In 2007 a booklet on internet safety was distributed to every household in Australia, complete with a signed introduction from the then prime minister, John Howard. According to Green (2009), this campaign, which launched in September 2007, two months prior to the general election, adopted four major approaches: (1) a national internet filter scheme (\$84.4m); (2) law enforcement and prosecution, mainly of predators, via the Australian Federal Police's Online Child Sex Exploitation Team (\$47.7m); (3) increased regulation of websites, such as investigating websites that had attracted complaints and challenging websites hosted abroad (\$7.6m); and (4) a programme of

support education and awareness (\$42.9m) (see also Lumby et al., 2009). Green (2009) has criticised Australian policy responses for framing online CSA as a ‘solvable’ problem, despite the general consensus (e.g. Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a) – which she reiterates – that there is no ‘silver bullet’ solution. Additionally, Green (2009) identifies a strong focus on ‘stranger danger’ in policy responses, noting that Australian cyber predator legislation that allows police entrapment has been introduced in four out of six states and two territories (see Griffith and Roth, 2007).

Canada

The most extensive studies available for Canada are the *Young Canadians in a Wired World* studies, conducted by the Media Awareness Network in 2001 and 2005 (EnviroNics, 2001; Steeves, 2005). Findings of a more qualitative nature, based on 35 semi-structured interviews, are provided by Shade et al (2006). In keeping with other countries, research suggests that young Canadians primarily use instant messaging (IM) facilities to extend their offline networks, typically communicating with friends of offline friends or family members (Steeves, 2005: 8). Similarly, Shade et al found that “the prevalent use of IM [is] to communicate with known friends or to meet new friends within wider friendship circles” (2006: 513), while 90% of the 1350 Quebec-based 12-18 year olds surveyed by Mediapro reported using MSN on a regular basis, most commonly for “maintaining close contacts, especially with peers. In fact, teenagers communicate very rarely with their parents, teachers, or with strangers through the Internet; nor do they talk to them about the Internet” (Mediapro, 2007: 40).

As in the UK (and seemingly in exception to an AU Kids Online finding), findings from Canada suggests many young people use the internet as an opportunity to experiment with role-play: 60% of those surveyed in the largest study reported pretending to be someone else online, and “half of them do so because they want to see what it would be like to be older, to talk to older kids or flirt with other people” (Steeves, 2005: 10). As such, the internet “gave them the freedom to try on different personalities and to explore their sexuality away from the supervision of parents or teachers” (Steeves, 2005: 10). Thiel, too, has argued that instant messaging presents “an opportunity for a girl to better understand who she is and *play* with who she wants to be in the future” (2005: 197, original emphasis).

Focus group findings from Canada highlight the role of the news media in highlighting online risks. Of particular relevance to this thesis is that “[t]he young people we talked to in the focus groups were very aware of news stories about online stalking” (Steeves, 2005: 10). Possibly in keeping with increased awareness of this particular risk, a comparison of the 2001 and 2005 studies shows an increase in the number of homes with rules on meeting online acquaintances, up from 54% to 75% (Steeves, 2005: 10). It should, however, be noted that such meetings are relatively uncommon. Overall, 79% had never met an online acquaintance face to face. Of those who had, 72% reported positive experiences. The reasons for the 29% of negative experiences were varied, but most commonly related to the acquaintance’s physical appearance (31%) or personality (20%) not matching the child’s expectations (Steeves, 2005: 10). Overall, 12% of negative experiences involved “unwanted sexual interaction or vulgar sexual language” (categories I feel it would have been beneficial to separate) and 8% involved getting into fights (Steeves, 2005: 11). This appears to suggest that while some children *do* attend offline meetings, and some of them do indeed have negative experiences, this demographic represents a relatively small proportion of young internet users and the reasons for negative experiences seem varied and nuanced. This, however, is not to claim that such figures are inconsequential or mean the issue should be downplayed; rather, I would argue they suggest that children’s online experiences are not universally negative and, while negative sexual situations do occur and should be taken seriously, it is disingenuous and unhelpful to approach the issue by assuming the internet is a dangerous hotbed of paedophile activity, as some commentators have suggested.

In focus groups young Canadians participants express a preference for pedagogical and information-based approaches as opposed to top-down restrictions, leading Steeves (2005: 11) to conclude that “rather than relying on technical fixes or blanket prohibitions, they want better information about content, so they can make informed choices about the online spaces they visit”. More generally, young Canadians view freedom, independence and privacy as important elements that should be respected and protected in their internet use. As such:

privacy-invasive solutions may not help much. The young people in our focus

groups told us that they value their online privacy, especially their privacy from parents and teachers. They like the Net precisely because it gives them an opportunity to explore the adult world without supervision. This preference is in keeping with their need to test their wings outside the family.

(Steeves, 2005:12, for similar findings from a Dutch study see Peter et al., 2009: 85)

The widespread use of social networking sites, along with relative autonomy from parental control, constitute important conditions for adolescents' identity construction, their development of friendships and the exploration of the public-private boundaries of the self (Peter et al., 2009: 85). Consequently, the researchers conclude that "[t]o provide young people with the tools they need to wisely navigate the online world, it is essential that adults understand that the Net is part of their children's social environment. It is one of the places where kids connect with their friends, explore social roles, learn more about things that interest them and express themselves" (Steeves, 2005: 12).

UK

Research covering the UK is plentiful. Findings from both *UK Children Go Online* (see Livingstone and Bober, 2004, 2005; Livingstone et al., 2005) and EU Kids Online (Livingstone et al., 2011b) offer a vast range of data on children's internet use, while the *Byron Review*, a report into UK children's use of new technology, commissioned by the prime minister, also covers 'internet predators' and online stranger danger (Byron, 2008). Numerous other studies have been conducted by LSE researchers (e.g. Livingstone, 2006; Livingstone, 2007; Livingstone et al., 2011a; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007a; Livingstone and Helsper, 2007b) and Davidson and Martellozzo (2004, 2005; 2009), among others.

A common finding among UK studies is that, in keeping with other countries, young people overwhelmingly use the internet to maintain contact with existing offline friends. Livingstone and Bober (2005: 2), for instance, found that: "Most online communication is with local friends: Being in constant contact with friends is highly valued". Furthermore, there is:

Little interest in contacting strangers: While online communication is little used as an escape from real life, and many are wary about talking to strangers online, some do contact people that they have not met face to face, this being

mainly among the 21% who visit chat rooms. Generally, however, chatting to unknown others around the world has little appeal.

(2005: 16)

EU Kids Online found that “children increasingly use the internet to widen their circle of friends, with very few using online communication to meet adults (whether deliberately or inadvertently)” (Livingstone et al., 2011b: 34). Findings from the UK branch of the Mediapro study suggested “a shift from young people meeting strangers in chat rooms to being contacted by people they do not know face-to-face on instant messenger and within games spaces” but concluded that “overall negative experiences reported by young people in the sample were few and far between” (2007: 37).

Although news reports and some research have focussed on the anonymity of the internet as a potential danger, findings from the UK suggest that, as in Canada, some young people enjoy subverting this and using it to their advantage. For example, 40% of 9-19 year olds have subverted aspects of their identity (e.g. name, age, appearance, interests, sex) online (Livingstone et al., 2004: 38). Indeed, identity play is commonplace among young people, especially teenagers. This has implications for educational responses because “in designing safety advice – which often assumes a rather serious approach to the internet – it is crucial to recognise the desire to play, to mess around, with this medium” (Livingstone et al., 2004: 38).

Findings from the UK Children Go Online project suggest that education, safety campaigns and the media have been reasonably successful in raising awareness about potential dangers of the internet. For instance “three quarters of 9-19 year olds (74%) are aware of some internet safety campaign or have heard or read a news story that made them think the internet can be dangerous” (Livingstone et al., 2004: 43). Livingstone et al’s survey findings suggest that young people have a particularly heightened awareness of the potential dangers posed by strangers (e.g. ‘grooming’). As they put it, young people “are aware of public discussion, media panics and word-of-mouth difficulties. Particularly, the various public campaigns regarding online stranger danger would seem to have been successful” (Livingstone et al., 2004: 29). Overall, 48% expressed concern about being contacted by dangerous people, making this the most common concern among the 9-19 year olds surveyed (Livingstone et al.,

2004: 43). It is, however, worth noting the gender disparity in this finding, with three-fifths of girls (57%) expressing concern about being contacted by dangerous people, compared to two-fifths of boys (40%). Indeed, a higher proportion of boys expressed worry about getting a computer virus (49%) than being contacted by dangerous people (Livingstone et al., 2004: 43).

Across the UK Children Go Online sample, the potential threat from paedophiles and strangers was particularly prominent when young people were asked to describe a recent campaign or news story they had come across. Indeed, in an open-ended survey question:

one fifth (18%) referred spontaneously to the danger of paedophiles, 13% to chat room dangers, 9% to people getting into dangerous situations after having met someone online, 8% to the Government's 'think U know' campaign, 6% to recent abduction stories, 6% to stranger danger online in general, 6% to the advice not to give out personal details online, 5% to viruses, hacking, spam and credit card fraud and 4% to the danger associated with people pretending to be someone else in chat rooms.

(Livingstone et al., 2004: 43)

Therefore, responses relating to campaigns or news stories about paedophiles and/or the various threat of strangers (deception, abductions, stranger danger, etc.) accounted for 70% of all responses, suggesting that this issue is particularly visible to young people. It is, however, worth noting that responses from the Children's Call for Evidence, published in the Byron Review (Byron, 2008), suggest that repeated warnings about such risks may hinder the effectiveness of safety messages, particularly if warnings about the dangers posed by so-called strangers are framed as universal. For example, one respondent stated:

I accept that there are very real dangers – for instance internet predators and general unpleasant people on the internet, as well as virus[es] and spyware[;] however I have to say I think the whole 'predator' thing is drummed into us too much at schools. I have to admit that I just feel resentment with being told 'Everyone you meet online is trying to harm you' which is the impression we are given during our PHSE lessons. Not everyone, in fact the minority of people online are so called predators and the constant negative slant on the internet makes me resentful towards the advice we are given as it's so biased.

(quoted in Byron, 2008: 24)

On a similar theme it is argued that tight parental governance in the home may ultimately prove counter-productive in terms of ‘protecting’ children from online risks: “Simply pressing for more parental monitoring, restriction and control could encourage children’s evasion rather than their cooperation with attempts at internet regulation in the home” (Livingstone and Bober, 2005: 25).

Recurrent across the various studies is a tension in distinguishing between ‘friends’ and ‘strangers’. The final EU Kids Online report suggests this may affect conceptions of risk between parents and children:

Nowhere has the public anxiety been greater than over the tension between “meeting strangers” (as many adults see it) and “making new friends” (as children may see it). Meeting strangers is a risk. Making new friends is an opportunity. Distinguishing between the two may depend on the child and the circumstances.

(Livingstone et al., 2011c: 26)

Davidson et al’s (2009: 23) UK study used the following definition: “A stranger is someone who you may have spoken to online for some time, but who you have never met in person.” However, they state: “It should be noted that other research shows that many young people do not consider such people to be strangers; rather, they are perceived to be ‘virtual friends’”. Despite acknowledging this caveat, they conclude: “the focus groups... indicate that young people do not consider those whom they've talked to online for some time as strangers but as online friends or virtual friends. This affects the degree to which young people are willing to share information and interact with such ‘strangers’. As these are ‘high-risk’ behaviours this is an issue of grave concern” (2009: 23). Here, however, I would argue there is no escaping the issue of semantics, as researchers’ definitions – which were agreed with CEOP and the NAO – are crucial. If, as other research has suggested, friendships initially forged online are not necessarily – indeed, are rarely – problematic, then the above definitions of ‘stranger’ and of ‘high-risk’ behaviour are misleading and the conclusion that young people’s willingness to communicate with online contacts is “an issue of grave concern” seems somewhat overstated.

This issue also arose in the *UK Children Go Online* study, where:

the interviews contained some lively discussions of when ‘strangers’ became ‘people you know’, albeit only online. However, while many young teens go through a phase of playful communication with unknown others, most online communication takes place with local and, less often, distant friends that young people also know face to face. Instant messenger applications are particularly favoured for this, with email less popular and chat rooms apparently declining in use.

(Livingstone et al., 2004: 8)

Findings from the same project also found that around one-third (30%) of 9-19 year olds who go online at least once a week have made an online acquaintance (Livingstone et al., 2004: 39) and 8% have met up someone who they first met online (Livingstone et al., 2004: 41). The later EU Kids Online project (Livingstone et al., 2011b) produced similar findings, with 29% of UK children having had contact with someone they have not met face to face and 4% of UK children having gone to an offline meeting with someone they first met online, a figure which is less than half the European average (9%). This study found that older teenagers (13-16) are much more likely younger children to have made online contact with someone they have not met face to face. As in Australia, children from the older age group are also more likely to have gone on to meet online contacts in person – although such instances are rare. In a study of younger internet users, it was found that 3% of 8-11 year olds had attended a meeting (O’Connell et al., 2004: 44). Finally, Davidson et al report that “[w]hen young people were asked if they would meet a person they have only just met online most of them said they would not (96%)” (2009: 24), although it is perhaps worth considering whether a focus on people they have “only just met” – as opposed to, say, people with whom they have been communicating for a longer period – may have affected this finding.

In terms of negative experiences, UK Children Go Online found that a third of respondents had received unwanted comments that were sexual (31%) or nasty (33%) on the internet (email, chat, IM) or in a text message on their mobile phone (Livingstone et al., 2004: 37). In a later study, 12% of respondents had seen or received sexual messages in the last 12 months while 3% said they had been bothered by such messages (Livingstone et al., 2011b: 34), suggesting that while this is an issue that needs to be addressed, it does not affect the sizeable proportion of young internet users that is sometimes suggested. In terms of sexual messages received online, 2%

had been “asked on the internet for a photo or video showing [their] private parts” and 2% had been “asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet” (Livingstone et al., 2011b: 33). Again, however, it is worth noting that the sources (ages, etc.) of these requests are unknown. In relation to potential harm from people met online, Livingstone asserted that “the link between risks, incidents and actual harm is genuinely tenuous: not all risks taken result in worrying incidents, not all worrying incidents result in actual or lasting harm” (Livingstone, 2003a: 157). Additionally, a key theme to emerge from EU Kids Online is that risks and opportunity often go hand in hand – and more use tends to result in more of both. Consequently, it is argued that care should be taken to ensure attempts at reducing harm/risk do not inadvertently restrict opportunities. As Livingstone and Ólafsson (2011: 10) put it, “[s]ince nearly half of UK children say that their parents’ efforts at mediation have the effect of restricting their online activities, the trade-off is clear, if difficult for parents to manage”. Further:

In planning for risk *management*, it must be borne in mind that risk *reduction* is not always an optimal strategy – children encounter a fair number of risks that, at least as they see it, are not problematic, upsetting or harmful. Although addressing levels of risk remains important, it is the case that children learn to cope by encountering some degree of risk and, it seems, many do cope successfully – at least if one takes seriously children’s accounts of whether online risk results in being upset or harmed.

(Livingstone and Ólafsson, 2011: 10, original emphasis)

USA

Some of the most comprehensive research around internet sex crimes, their perpetrators and victims, has been conducted by Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. These include the national Youth Internet Safety Surveys (YISS-1 and YISS-2), initially conducted in 2000, and followed up in 2005 (Finkelhor et al., 2000; Wolak et al., 2006), the National Juvenile Online Victimization Study (N-JOV) (Wolak et al., 2003) and others (Wolak et al., 2004; Wolak et al., 2008; Wolak et al., 2005). Useful studies of the USA are also provided by the likes of the Pew Internet & American Life Project (e.g. Smith, 2007).

Pew Internet found 32% of US teens have been contacted by someone with whom they had no prior association, with girls more likely to be contacted (39%) than boys

(24%). Overall, 7% of teens had been contacted by someone who made them feel scared or uncomfortable. This, too, was more likely to apply to girls (11%) than boys (4%). Again, however, the definition of ‘stranger contact’ is very broad, “including but not limited to: social networking site friend requests, spam email, or comments on a personal blog or photo sharing site” (Smith, 2007: 1). As such, while they provide useful insight into the extent to which ‘stranger contact’ can be unpleasant for teenagers, the broadness of the definition means such findings are not necessarily indicative of young people’s attitudes towards more specific aspects of harmful online experiences (e.g. contact by potential ‘predators’).

In a nationally representative sample of 1501 Americans aged 10-17, 3% had formed online friendships with people aged 18 or over – most of which were between older teens, based on common interests (e.g. video games) and with parental knowledge (Finkelhor et al., 2000: 2) – and 7% had talked about sex online with someone they had never met (Finkelhor et al., 2000: 32). Around one fifth (19%) had received an unwanted sexual solicitation or approach in the last year, 5% had experienced distressing incidents of sexual solicitation and 3% had experienced someone attempting to contact them in person (e.g. telephone or postal mail) (Finkelhor et al., 2000: 1). Overall, 97% of sexual solicitations and approaches were by people the youth had originally met online (Finkelhor et al., 2000: 3). Compared to the earlier study, YISS-2 found fewer cases of online solicitations (13% compared to 19%), although there was a slight increase in incidents of people attempting to make offline contact (4% compared to 3%) (Wolak et al., 2006). Overall, 4% of youth reported being distressed by sexual solicitations, a slight decrease on YISS-1 (5%). Another particularly noteworthy finding from the YISS surveys relates to the sharp increase in solicitations by people the respondents knew in person (typically other youth, aged 17 or under), which affected 14% of respondents compared to 3% in the earlier study (Wolak et al., 2006: 24), suggesting that messages about ‘stranger danger’ are particularly misplaced for this demographic.

Wolak et al (2008) point out that reported cases of sex crimes against youths have not increased in the USA since the birth of the internet. On the contrary, evidence suggests that the number of sex abuse cases substantiated by child protection authorities, the rate of sexual assaults reported to the National Crime Victimization

Survey, the rate of teenage pregnancies and the number of child runaways have all declined (Wolak et al., 2008: 121). Although they acknowledge that much CSA goes unreported, they question why the supposed “epidemic [of abuse brought about by the internet] has not been more apparent in aggregate indicators of juvenile sexual victimization” (Wolak et al., 2008: 121). They also acknowledge the possibility that sex offences have “migrated” to the internet, but warn that in the absence of supporting evidence “it is premature to talk about the Internet as an established facilitator of sex crimes, beyond the possession and distribution of child pornography” (Wolak et al., 2008: 121). Instead, they argue: “[n]umbers suggest that Internet-initiated sex crimes account for a salient but small proportion of all statutory rape offenses and a relatively low number of the sexual offenses committed against minors overall” (Wolak et al., 2008: 125).

Wolak et al (2004: 424.e418) identify four ways in which their national representative sample of data challenges lay assumptions about online CSA: (1) the majority of cases involved older children (99% were aged 13-17 and none were younger than 12); (2) offenders did not typically deceive children about their sexual motives; (3) offenders did not typically use force or coercion to sexually abuse their victims and no cases involved abduction; (4) the notion that perpetrators are strangers is “misleading” because “in most cases they had communicated extensively with victims, both online and off before they actually met in person. Offenders used these interactions to establish romantic or otherwise close relationships before they first met victims face-to-face” (Wolak et al., 2004: 424.e418). These dynamics, they argue, have significant implications for preventative strategies (education, public information, etc.), particularly those that urge young people not to trust online contacts, disclose any personal information or arrange offline meetings. They state: “[a]lthough these may be useful messages to prevent some forms of victimization, they do not address the dynamics of the Internet sexual exploitation found in a majority of actual cases” (Wolak et al., 2004: 424.e418).

Reflecting on the various findings from across the USA, Wolak et al (2008: 121-123) make a number of recommendations for prevention and public policy: (1) Avoid descriptions of the problem that characterise victims as young children or emphasise violence and deception; (2) Be clear about why sex with underage adolescents is

wrong; (3) Focus prevention efforts more on adolescents and less on parents; (4) Focus prevention frankly on concerns relevant to adolescents, including autonomy, romance and sex; (5) Prevention should be developmentally appropriate and an aspect of broader programmes that focus on healthy sexual development and avoiding victimisation; (6) Focus prevention more on interactive aspects of internet use and less on posting personal information; (7) Educate youth about criminal behaviour and child pornography; (8) Develop targeted prevention approaches for the most at-risk youth populations; and (9) Assess for a pattern of risky online behaviour.

Finkelhor et al (2000: 6) argue that their findings present a “complex picture” of internet relationships, with many young Americans forming online relationships, most of which were positive and healthy and did not involve sexual exploitation. One implication for this, they noted, was that “simple cautions — [such as] don’t form friendships with people you don’t know, don’t form relationships with adults, or don’t have lunch with people you meet on the Internet – are unlikely to be seen as realistic, particularly by older teens” (Finkelhor et al., 2000: 7). This would seem to support findings from the UK, discussed earlier in this chapter, where youth reported disengagement with warnings about what they perceive to be exaggerated or unrealistic dangers.

As a final point, Wolak et al conclude: “Most Internet-initiated sex crimes involve adult *men* who use the Internet to meet and seduce underage adolescents into sexual encounters” (2008: 112, my emphasis). A particularly noteworthy finding from the N-JOV study in this regard is that 99% of cases that led to an arrest involved men (Wolak et al., 2004). Thus, these data suggests that online abuse appears to be every bit as gendered as offline abuse. Interestingly, though, while this finding is consistent throughout much of the CRCC’s research (e.g. Finkelhor et al., 2000; Wolak et al., 2004; Wolak et al., 2008; Wolak et al., 2006), it is not a subject that has been afforded close scrutiny.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined some important national studies from each of the countries in this study and highlighted the findings most relevant to this thesis.

Among the most important are:

- There is disparity between the issues that concern young internet users and those that concern their parents.
- When using IM services (e.g. MSN Messenger) young people are more likely to communicate with offline friends or associates of offline friends than people with whom they have no offline connection.
- Young people value freedom and privacy when using the internet.
- Young people would prefer pedagogical and information-based approaches over top-down restrictions.
- Some young people use the anonymity of the internet to experiment with role-play.
- Youth whose parents have warned them about internet risks are more likely to have concerns than those who haven't.
- Young people are aware of the risks of 'predators', but repeated warnings or stringent restrictions on privacy or access may lead to resistance or disengagement, particularly if they appear exaggerated or unrealistic.
- 'Stranger' contact is difficult to define as young people may be more likely to consider online contacts to be friends – even if they have never met them.
- Offline meetings with online contacts are relatively uncommon and do not necessarily result in negative experiences; where children report negative experiences it is not necessarily due to sexual exploitation.
- Reported instances of young people experiencing sexual exploitation after meeting an online contact appear relatively low – particularly when compared to some publicity around this issue.
- Reported instances of sex crimes against youth have not increased since the rise of the internet.
- Opportunities and risks go hand in hand, and attempts to reduce risks may inadvertently hinder opportunities.

In the next chapter I conclude my literature review by looking at research into media representations of online CSA and the figure of the 'internet predator'. This is followed by an overview of literature around the social construction of 'childhood'.

Chapter 4

Literature Review III: Constructing the ‘Internet Predator’ and ‘Childhood’

This is the final chapter of my literature review. Where the previous chapter offered an overview of empirical research into children’s internet use and the scope of the problem of ‘internet predators’, this chapter focuses on research into the mass media’s role in shaping this social problem. This is then followed by a discussion of literature pertaining to the social construction of ‘childhood’.

Online CSA and the news media

Introducing the findings of the first EU Kids Online project, Livingstone and Haddon note:

it is the... dangers of the internet that dominate the headlines. Since all human life is now online, this includes many risks – bullies, racists, cheats and, the greatest fear of all, sexual predators.

(2009a: 1)

Despite being a relatively new phenomenon, there is a generous smattering of research into the news media’s coverage of online CSA in various locales. Research by EU Kids Online (Hasebrink et al., 2008; Livingstone et al., 2011b) and the European Commission (2008) examines the extent to which parents rely on the mass media for information and advice about children’s internet use across Europe. Auclair (2001) considers the role of the media when making suggestions for a preventative approach to legislation. Haddon and Stald (2009) and Ponte et al. (2009) have conducted empirical research into newspaper coverage across Europe, while Mascheroni et al. (2010) compare coverage from Italy, Portugal and Spain. Research by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania examines the view from the American press in a report addressing the internet and the family (Turow, 1999). Pratt (2009) includes the ‘internet predator’ in a historical analysis of the “rise, retraction and reconfiguration of sexual abuse” in Canada, while Shade (2002, cited in Shade et al., 2006) conducts a content analysis of Canadian press coverage of the impact of the internet on children and families in 1999. From a UK

perspective, Jewkes (2010) examines media representations of online ‘grooming’, while the role of the UK news media is also considered as part of broader discussions by Green et al (2007), Meyer (2007), Davidson and Martellozzo (2009), Livingstone (2009) and EU Kids Online (2011c). Among the most substantive media analyses is provided by Wolak et al. (2008), who draw upon US press coverage to challenge stereotypical representations of perpetrators and victims and critique media representations of the scale and nature of online abuse. Elsewhere in America, Adler (2010) and McCollam (2011) explore the agenda-setting role of the ‘reality’ television series *To Catch a Predator*.

The news media play an important role in raising awareness and mobilising safety information about social problems. A 2008 survey by the European Commission found that respondents across Europe’s 27 member states considered the mass media (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines) to be the second most influential source of information on safer internet use, after their closest relatives (European Commission, 2008). Further, in six of the 27 member states – Finland, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – the mass media were identified as the foremost source of such information (European Commission, 2008: 61). In the UK – the only European nation included in this thesis – around two-thirds of respondents (64%) stated that they get information and advice about online safety tools and safe usage from the mass media (European Commission, 2008: 61). Other large-scale surveys have also shown the traditional mass media to be a popular source of internet safety information for parents and children in Europe (Livingstone et al., 2011d) and the UK (Livingstone et al., 2011b), albeit to a lesser degree.

Discussing the role of news coverage, Ponte et al. (2009: 159) argue that “Policy makers and researchers... seem to be sensitive if not susceptible to the media’s discourses on young people and the internet”. A paradigmatic example, they argue, is ‘happy slapping’, which was “‘discovered’ by the British press in 2005, and [is] now perceived as social problem in most European countries” (Ponte et al., 2009: 159-160). For Livingstone, the news media are the second of three key factors that shape and exacerbate public anxieties about children and the internet. These factors are summarised as follows:

first, the extraordinary rapidity of the internet's development and diffusion, outpacing adults' ability to adjust; second, an endemic cultural fear of the new, encouraged by media panics framing the internet as an unmanageable source of threat to children's safety; and third, the novelty of a reverse generation gap whereby parental expertise and authority is exceeded by children's ability to use the technology and to evade adult management.

(Livingstone, 2009: 151)

The combination of these factors, Livingstone (2009: 151) argues, "at times [results] in disproportionate reactions to perceived threats". In the case of social networking, she asserts: "Media panics amplify the public anxieties associated with social networking. The 'MySpace generation', they [media discourses] suggest, has no sense of privacy or shame" (Livingstone, 2008: 395). For this particularly technology:

it is commonly held that at best, social networking is time-wasting and socially isolating, and at worst it allows paedophiles to groom children in their bedroom or sees teenagers lured into suicide pacts while parents think they are doing their homework.

(2008: 395)

When it comes to highlighting the potential pitfalls of online technologies, Livingstone (2009: 219) notes that the "'free' route to raising awareness is by gaining media attention to messages of high risk (such as, 'Do you know who your child is talking to online?'), but this tends to amplify media panics and raise parental anxieties".

The role of media representation forms the basis of an extensive multi-disciplinary study by Wolak et al (2008). They identify some of the more common discourses found in US news media coverage of 'online predators', described by Jewkes as "one of the most feared phenomena of the age" (2010: 5). These discourses, Wolak et al argue, combine to create a stereotypical media image of a figure who: lurks in online venues popular with young people (e.g. chatrooms); uses publicly divulged personal information from social networking sites (e.g. school, home address, mobile phone number) to identify potential targets; contacts victims and uses deception to disguise their age and/or sexual intentions; entices unknowing victims into meetings or stalks and abducts them (Wolak et al., 2008: 111). However, drawing on various empirical findings, they argue that this media stereotype does not reflect the nuanced nature of the problem:

[t]he publicity about online “predators” who prey on naive children using trickery and violence is largely inaccurate. Internet sex crimes involving adults and juveniles more often fit a model of statutory rape – adult offenders who meet, develop relationships with, and openly seduce underage teenagers – than a model of forcible sexual assault or pedophilic child molesting.

(Wolak et al., 2003: 111)

Further: “[t]he reality about Internet-initiated sex crimes – those in which sex offenders meet juvenile victims online – is different, more complex, and serious but less archetypically frightening than the publicity about these crimes suggests” (Wolak et al., 2008: 111-112). Furthermore, as Quayle notes, contrary to media coverage, these crimes are less common than is often suggested:

[T]he Internet Safety Technical Taskforce (2008) argue that although they are frequently reported in the media, US internet sex crimes against minors have not overtaken the number of unmediated sex crimes against minors, nor have they contributed to a rise in such crimes.

(2010, cited in Jewkes, 2010: 13, see also Wolak, 2008 #119)

Importantly, however, Wolak et al. state that it is not their intention to claim that online CSA is not worthy of critical attention. Indeed, rather than seeking to belittle the issue, they argue that the problem is serious but *misrepresented*. As such, they argue that “[t]his is a serious problem, but one that requires approaches different from those in current prevention messages emphasizing parental control and the dangers of divulging personal information” (Wolak et al., 2003: 111).

Making recommendations for awareness-raising, in which the mass media plays an important role, the final report from EU Kids Online suggests: “[t]here is little warrant for exaggerated or panicky fears about children’s online safety online – what’s important is to empower all children while addressing the minority at significant risk of harm” (Livingstone et al., 2011c: 44). This view is endorsed by Green and Hannon, who argue that media representations of children and the internet are restricted by a discourse of a universalised child/childhood:

media narratives currently obscure anything of value in children’s digital culture. We know that these risks are real and that some children have negative experiences online, but we also need to recognise that this is not

every child's experience.

(Green and Hannon, 2007: 29)

In addition to specific critiques of 'internet predators', there is also a smattering of research examining press coverage of children and the internet on a broader scale. Turow (1999) has conducted a content analysis of the US press, Hasebrink et al. (2008) and Ponte et al. (2009) have examined coverage from across Europe, while Mascheroni et al. focus on Italy, Portugal and Spain. A recurring theme across all of these studies is the privileging of news about online risks to children, as opposed to benefits/opportunities. Turow (1999) examined 668 articles from 12 major American newspapers between 15 October 1997 and 15 October 1998. He found the internet was presented as a Jekyll-and-Hyde phenomenon and sums up the American press's construction in the following terms: "Your children need the Internet. But, if they do go online, be terrified" (Turow, 1999: 34). In terms of content, sex crimes against children featured in one in every four stories, with sexual predators and child pornography being the most common topics. Of the 429 mentions of online risks, 21% focussed on adult 'predators' (Turow, 1999: 39). Sources, when quoted, were more likely to focus solely on the dangers of the internet (48%) than its benefits (33%), with government officials and police sources quoted most frequently and most negatively. By contrast, educators tended to be more positive, but they were rarely quoted (Turow, 1999: 34). When possible 'solutions' were discussed, parents (34%) were most commonly presented as the actors responsible for their implementation (Turow, 1999: 41). By contrast, teachers (2%) and children (2%) were much less commonly cited as actors who could play a role in tackling or 'solving' the problem (Turow, 1999: 41). This broad trend for American journalists to focus on online risks was not limited to the USA. For example, a study of Canadian newspaper coverage of the internet, children and the family from 1999 found that almost 60% of coverage focussed on problems/risks, as opposed to opportunities (Shade, 2002, cited in Shade et al., 2006).

Mascheroni et al.'s (2010) study of press coverage from Italy, Portugal and Spain adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches. They, too, observed a strong focus on online risks in all three countries (average: 73%) over opportunities. Risks relating to aggression (47%) and sexual behaviour (41%) were covered much more

frequently than other risks, such as those relating to commercial exploitation (e.g. advertising, spam, tracking) (Mascheroni et al., 2010: 33). There was, however, disparity between the issues that dominated the news agendas and the concerns of young internet users in these countries. Specifically, Mascheroni et al. (2010: 39) note that “the lack of attention paid to commercial interests on the one hand, and the focus on sexual contents and aggressive conduct on the other... is worth contrasting... with the children’s perceptions of risk, which instead are focused on commercial risk”. Reflecting on this disparity, they assert that nationally-specific socio-political contexts may have been a significant factor: “[t]he greater emphasis on sexually related risks than on commercial ones may be connected to the embedded presence of a Catholic morality as well as a relative indifference towards online commerce on the part of adults, due to their low online skills” (Mascheroni et al., 2010: 39). Ponte et al.’s content analysis shows a similar pattern across the whole of Europe. Indeed, of 549 mentions of online opportunities or risks, 69% related to risks, while only 30% related to opportunities, “confirming the dominance of ‘bad news’” (Ponte et al., 2009: 163). Notably, perhaps, mentions of opportunities were entirely absent in the UK newspaper included in their study (*The Independent*). In terms of content, risks relating to aggressive (46%) and sexual (34%) behaviour were “disproportionately represented” across the European press (Ponte et al., 2009: 163). In the UK newspaper, two-thirds (67%) of articles related to sexual risks (Ponte et al., 2009: 164).

Hasebrink et al. (2008) found considerable variety in the nature and content of different European countries’ press coverage of children’s use of the internet. They note that when it comes to coverage of children on online risk, the national press does not necessarily focus solely on risks in its country of origin (Hasebrink et al., 2008: 91). However, they, too, noted that online risks appeared to be more newsworthy than opportunities across Europe (2008: 90). Of particular note for this thesis is that only Portugal (85%) returned a higher rate of risk reporting than the UK (77%). The reporting of online opportunities was also strikingly low in the UK (7%). In terms of contact crimes, such as ‘grooming’, 21% of all articles in Europe focussed on these risks (Hasebrink et al., 2008: 91).

Turning to more qualitative analyses, Meyer (2007: 123) describes how the internet

“has become a distinct and significant sub-theme of paedophilia controversies” and argues that “[i]n relation to children the Internet is generally understood through a dystopian discourse”. These mediatised discourses are, of course, often challenged within the academic community, where it is often stressed that opportunities provided by the internet should not be sidelined due to a preoccupation with risks (e.g. Livingstone and Haddon, 2009b). For example, when reflecting on a study of the European quality press, Ponte et al. note that:

news stories frequently failed to balance in their coverage the enabling and restraining aspects of the internet, whereas among researchers and policy makers there seems to be a tendency to a more nuanced approach to the prominence of the internet in children’s everyday life.

(2009: 169)

According to Meyer, both the tabloid and broadsheet press, and focus group participants perceive online grooming to be “*the* problem... because paedophiles are seen as gaining particular powers” (2007: 124, original emphasis). In this regard, she argues (2007: 124), the virtual space of the internet “becomes more dangerous than ‘reality’ as it allows the concealing of ‘true’ identities”.

Noting the prominence of a discourse of technological determinism, Meyer (2007: 125) argues that “[m]edia understanding of children and the Internet is grounded in the view that technology impacts on children’s lives in a direct and necessarily negative way due to its internal logic”. When it comes to *paedophiles* and the internet, however, the opposite principle, *socio-individual determinism*, is applied: “technology can be used in whatever way and for whatever purpose; the individual, in this case ‘the paedophile’, exercises total control” (Meyer, 2007: 125). Reflecting on these respective constructions, Meyer (2007: 128) asserts: “[a]side from the problems associated with determinism, the media have to be criticised for applying two opposite forms of determinism to the same issue in a way which suits preconceived images” of the innocent child and the evil paedophile. For this to be persuasive:

Children need to be incompetent and innocent, paedophiles need to be cunning and evil, technology needs to control children and be controlled by paedophiles – otherwise the simplistic story of the huge risk could not be told.

(Meyer, 2007: 128)

According to Jewkes:

stories about child sexual abuse and the internet have come to occupy a unique place in the collective psyche because “sex”, “risk” and “children” are three of the 12 cardinal news values that shape news production in the 21st century.
(2010: 6)

Davidson and Martellozzo (2009: 130) argue that as the internet rose to prominence, “[t]he media identified a new category of predatory sex offender”. This category has become widely accepted across both the tabloid and broadsheet press – albeit with varying levels of sensationalism (Meyer, 2007) – where the internet ‘predator’ has become a staple of media discourse around children and online risks (Jewkes, 2010; Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a; McCollam, 2011; Pratt, 2009; Wolak et al., 2008).

Pratt (2009) draws on a range of examples from the Canadian press to illustrate the “fludity” (2009: 69) with which the image of CSA (and abusers) has evolved over time. Citing his most recent examples, he argues that “[t]he growth of Internet ‘grooming’ and ‘luring’ makes the threat of the stranger all the more sinister and alarming” (Pratt, 2009: 84). For Pratt, the rise of the internet, and the subsequent focus on the threat of the ‘internet predator’ within public discourse, has not only cemented, but perpetuated, broader discursive links between CSA and ‘stranger danger’. This, by association, has (re)positioned parents and carers as children’s foremost source of protection from such abuse and, by association, obscured the possibility that those in such positions of power and responsibility could ever perpetrate it. As Pratt comments:

the shadow of the stranger is once again covering over images of family members and others *in loco parentis* in the way in which sexual abuse is understood. [...] In contrast to the various instructions that began to be issued in the 1980s about keeping children safe from those closest to them, we now find a pedagogy that provides instructions for parents and caregivers on how to keep their children safe from Internet intrusion.
(2009: 85)

Turow (1999) has called for journalists to offer more perspective when reporting the prevalence of such crimes. He argues that when it comes to stories of online risks to children (e.g. ‘predators’) ‘the public gets what the public wants’:

Journalists separately pick up and amplify conflict-based and “news-you-can-use” topics regarding the Web. News consumers are alarmed by and interested in the concerns that the press portrays. Journalists, noting this, give them more of what becomes the conventional wisdom about the Internet through this process.

(Turow, 1999: 35)

Following a similar theme, it has been argued that the specific areas of concern highlighted by journalists may have ramifications for what various publics perceive to be the most pressing issues: “media coverage in different countries is sensitising people to different kinds of risk, which may have a bearing on how the degree to which people in different countries think the various risks are prevalent” (Hasebrink et al., 2008: 91). Indeed, a common theme throughout much of the academic critique of the international news media’s coverage of online risks to children is the suggestion that journalists’ focus on risks heightens perceptions about the scale of the problem. For example, Jewkes (2010: 13) argues that: “the frequency and salaciousness with which the popular media report online sexual offences against children creates social perceptions that this type of online behaviour is common and amplifies concerns over the associated risks for young people”. Similarly, reflecting on findings from the EU Kids Online study, Hasebrink et al. hypothesise that “[p]arents in the countries with a general high level of risk reporting in the media... will have a higher perception of risks than the average of all these countries” (2008: 92).³

In broadcast news, one text that has been particularly influential in mobilising myths about internet ‘predators’ is the US series *To Catch A Predator*, a spin-off of MSNBC’s news magazine programme *Dateline NBC*. According to McCollam (2011: 30), *To Catch A Predator* has cultivated and exploited a “hyped-up fear of Internet sex fiends” to become that “rarest of rare birds in the television news world: a clear ratings winner”. He argues that the level of coverage is not proportional to the actual problem, stating that it is premised on a “mythical trend” (2011: 33). In this regard, he asserts that “*Dateline* hasn’t so much covered a story as created one”

³ I would, however, note that while this is entirely plausible, it would be wise to not be overly reliant on such hypotheses without supporting empirical evidence, particularly given the highly-contested area of media ‘effects’.

(McCollam, 2011: 33).⁴ McCollam's critique also partially relates to the political economy of contemporary, market-driven journalism (cf. Altheide, 2002; Franklin, 2008a), as he partly attributes the network and viewers' commitment towards *To Catch A Predator* to the rise of reality television, which he argues "has so altered the broadcast landscape that traditional newsmagazine fare – no matter how provocative – just doesn't cut it anymore" (McCollam, 2011: 33). In this regard, the series – and 'soft', 'tabloidised' coverage of the issue more broadly – maintains its appeal due to its "delighting in another's disgraces [which] drives much of the reality TV phenomenon" (McCollam, 2011: 30). Thus, the men who are publicly disgraced on *To Catch A Predator* – and in keeping with an earlier point about the gendered aspect of abuse, McCollam (2011: 30) notes that "to date they are all men" – become 'othered' and a comforting binary is created by 'us' (viewers) and 'them' (the disgraced 'predator', the 'other') (see also, Jewkes, 2010: 16).

Adler (2010) suggests that *To Catch A Predator* has played an agenda-setting role in the USA, claiming it has been "repeatedly praised as performing a public service" (2010: 6) and has become a "major force in public policy" (2010: 5). More pertinently, it has also "had a powerful and direct impact on law. The spectacle the show presented – a seemingly endless supply of men desperate to prey on teens for sex – terrified parents and became a catalyst for legislative action" (Adler, 2010: 8). The most prominent example of this, Adler argues, is the Adam Walsh Protection and Safety Act of 2006, legislation that "dramatically stiffened the national requirements for tracking and registering predators" (2010: 9). Indeed, two Republican senators explicitly invoked *To Catch A Predator* when outlining the Act's virtues. Similarly, "the sponsor of the Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006, cited *To Catch a Predator* as 'visual evidence' that online predators posed a problem" (Adler, 2010: 10). Other legislative activity that has emerged in the wake of the programme include: age verification requirements for social networking sites, restrictions on social networking sites in publicly funded institutions and expansion of the Federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (Adler, 2010: 9-10). Critiquing this apparent correlation, Adler identifies two significant problems with *To Catch A Predator*'s impact on public policy. First, it "appears to have distorted the public perception about the problem of

⁴ This recalls Critcher's claim, outlined in the previous chapter, that towards the end of the 1990s the *Daily Mail* was "less reporting paedophile news than creating it" (2003: 105).

child molestation. It gives the impression that online predation is a growing and overwhelming menace. But this is actually not the case” (Adler, 2010: 10). Second, it “may also reinforce a particularly tenacious but misleading myth about the actual dangers facing children: the myth that the greatest threat to children comes from strangers” (Adler, 2010: 11).

As noted, despite being key players in the issue of online CSA, children’s views are often overlooked by the news media. The European quality press “overlooks the diversity of stakeholders” and, perhaps unsurprisingly, “[y]oung citizens are still rather voiceless” (Ponte et al., 2009: 169). In the quality newspapers from Italy, Portugal and Spain, “there is almost no place for children’s voices and visions, except when they are the ‘evil perpetrators’, illustrating how the children’s communicative rights are far from being recognized” (Mascheroni et al., 2010: 38). This is something that is addressed in academic research, to some extent. For example, Green and Hannon’s (2007) study includes interviews with young people, some of whom explicitly identify media representations as a factor in their parents’ management of their internet use. Specifically, they found that “frustrations emerged when parents based their decision-making on media reports or misconceptions rather than any real understanding of what their child was doing” (Green and Hannon, 2007: 32). For example, they quote a 13-year-old girl stating: “My mum saw a news report saying MySpace might not be safe and then I wasn’t allowed on it all of a sudden” (Green and Hannon, 2007: 32).

The social construction of childhood

Central to this thesis is the notion of childhood. Philippe Ariès (1960) broke new ground in theorising childhood as a product of centuries of culturally specific changes rather than a universal expression of essential human experience. This social constructionist approach to childhood has subsequently become hugely influential across a range of academic disciplines, particularly the social sciences (e.g. Cunningham, 2006; Denzin, 1982; Fletcher and Hussey, 1999; James et al., 1998; James and Prout, 1997a; Jenks, 2005; Scraton, 1997a; Valentine, 1996). Indeed, an editorial in the journal *Childhood* describes the exploration of childhood through the prism of social constructionism as “one of the most significant dimensions of child research in recent decades” (Anon, 1998: 131).

A social constructionist approach to childhood rejects the notion that childhood is a fixed, natural, biological state in favour of the view that “[w]hat it means to be a child varies over space and time” (Valentine, 1996: 581). It therefore necessitates an exploration of “the ways in which the immaturity of children is conceived and articulated in particular societies into culturally specific sets of ideas and philosophies, attitudes and practices which combine to define the ‘nature of childhood’” (James and Prout, 1997b: 1). Adopting this perspective, Prout and James (1997) outline what they term a ‘new’ paradigm for the sociology of childhood. They state:

Childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies. Childhood is a variable of social analyses. It can never be entirely divorced from other variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. Comparative and cross-cultural analysis reveals a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon.

(Prout and James, 1997: 8)

This has obvious resonance in this thesis, given my interest in media representations of children/childhood in four western countries.

From a social constructionist perspective, discourses around children and childhood – the social construction of childhood – are important because they have *consequences*. For Potter and Wetherell, “social texts”, such as those produced by the news media, “do not merely *reflect* or *mirror* objects, events and categories pre-existing in the social world. Rather, they actively *construct* a version of these things. They do not describe things; they *do* things” (1987: 6, original emphasis). Thus, social texts addressing childhood, children and events in which they are social actors, play a role in actively constructing these things; they can be viewed as examples of discourse in action. As Jenks (2005: 124) argues, “it is clear that the way in which we think about children conceive of childhood has very practical consequences for children themselves”. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers raise a similar point, arguing that the ways in which:

children are construed not only determine the way we make sense of them as

children, but also inform and reflect social and economic policies towards children and the institutions that manage children.

(1992: 12)

The main focus of this thesis is the news media's representation of online CSA. The way(s) in which young people, key actors in this issue, are constructed is therefore a pivotal element in the broader representation of this social problem. For Davis and Bourhill (1997: 28), "[t]he media portrayal of children's involvement in crime, either as perpetrators or victims, is central in creating and reinforcing public perceptions of childhood".

Childhood is itself a broad, unfixed term which differs across time and cultural settings. However, certain dominant discourses have been identified and critiqued. Valentine's (1996: 596) historical account illustrates the "complex multiple and contested nature of childhood". She argues that dominant western constructions of childhood have oscillated between one of innate evil (e.g. depraved, sinful savages around the 17th century) and innate goodness (e.g. innocent angels). At times, such as when two-year-old James Bulger was murdered by two 10-year-old boys in the UK, these competing discourses have played out concurrently (for a discussion of how these discourses played out in public debates around the Bulger murder, see James and Jenks, 1996).

In contemporary conceptions of western childhood it is the discourse of the 'innocent' child that has dominated (James et al., 1998: 13). "An archaeology of the ideas which give rise to the modern 'child' reveals a strong and continuous commitment to conceptions of childhood innocence" (Jenks, 2005: 124). This discourse of innocence emerged with Romanticism:

Driven by contempt for the adult world of reason – associated with corruption and vice – Romantics located goodness and morality in children. Childhood became a moral and glorifying concept; the discourse of innocence idolised children and presented as beings to be worshipped. Moreover, for the first time children were seen as a specific class of persons with specific needs.

(Meyer, 2007: 31-32)

This conception of childhood "sees children as close to nature, inherently virtuous, pure, angelic and innocent" (Meyer, 2007: 31). As Jenks (2005: 124) further explains,

it is premised on the notion that “[l]eft to its own devices, the child would, by nature... be guiltless. Children are thought to be innocent because of their lack of social experience”. As such, they are “the object of all of our collective good intentions” (Frost and Stein, 1989: 3). These modern views of childhood had arguably been legally, socially, educationally and politically institutionalised by 1914 (Meyer, 2007: 33) and the protectionist approach to childhood which predominates in the west is firmly rooted in the discourse of innocence. This has ramifications on both a personal and political level. With regard to the latter, Meyer (2007: 35) argues that both the Protection of Children Act 1999 and Sexual Offences Act 2003, legislative acts introduced by the UK government, “conceive and reproduce children as innocent, vulnerable beings who cannot defend themselves and need adult protection”.

The implications of this focus on childhood ‘innocence’ are twofold. First, it disempowers children, positioning them as inherently, or *naturally*, weak, naive and susceptible to ‘corruption’. Consequently, it empowers adults, particularly parents, who are positioned as children’s ‘protectors’. Indeed, this a key part of what Archard (1993: 37) calls children’s “separateness” from adults in dominant western constructions of childhood. Burman (2003: 35) argues that normative conceptions prescribe certain “right’ kinds of childhood – innocent, playful, obedient, dependent, etc.” Thus, we can observe the juxtaposed roles of children and adults, and the power that the latter is expected to exert over the former: a ‘right’, ‘correct’ or ‘normal’ childhood is one where the child uncritically accepts his or her inferior status and depends on and obediently obeys the orders of adults (most typically parents, but also teachers, etc.). In other words, the dominant discourse around childhood limits or restricts young people and their autonomy.

An implication of this is that young people’s actions and movements can often be regulated in a way that is not necessarily the case during later life-stages. In this regard, western childhood is distinguished from other (equally socially constructed) periods (‘adulthood’, ‘middle age’, ‘old age’). Specifically:

childhood is that period during which persons are subject to a set of rules and regulations unique to them, and one that does not apply to members of other social categories. Moreover, childhood is a period in a person’s life during which he/she is neither expected nor allowed to fully participate in various

domains of social life.

(Shamgar-Handelman, 1994: 251)

This notion that ‘childhood’ should restrict what young people are *expected* or *allowed* to do is often justified on the grounds that it is protecting them from the ‘adult world’ – that it is ‘for their own good’. The argument from this perspective is that:

Children are vulnerable and underdeveloped, incapable of informed choice about mass media use or sexual activity. Adults are able to make these choices; children are not. Children are threatened by those adults who seek to exploit their vulnerability and corrupt their innocence. What therefore has to be done is to *regulate childhood*.

(Cricher, 2003: 156, original emphasis)

Viewed from a critical perspective, it has been argued that childhood innocence is used as a weapon for subjugating young people. Phil Scraton, for example, argues that:

children’s experiences are reconstructed by adults who easily portray power as responsibility, control as care, and regulation as protection. Typically adults direct and children obey with age and status (parents, guardians, professional) ensuring legitimacy.

(Scraton, 1997b: 163)

As such, the weakness inscribed in young people by dominant conceptions of ‘childhood’ – as exemplified by their supposed ‘innocence’ – serves to legitimise, or even *encourage*, their routine, systematic subordination by ‘authoritative’ adults. Young people’s voices are silenced and boundaries of acceptability are defined by their authoritative elders in many spheres of their lives. “Children’s meanings and motivations are persistently ignored, as is the position of adults, both familial and professional, as powerful definers of deviant behaviour” (Davis and Bourhill, 1997: 31).

On occasions when forms of regulation are imposed upon young people (or support for such regulation is required), the discourse of innocence often makes way for a more sinister discourse of childhood unruliness or evil. Valentine (1996), for example, examines the contemporary ‘othering’ of children and demonstrates how

spatial restrictions have been imposed in order to (re)draw boundaries between ‘us’ (adults) and ‘them’ (children). Valentine looks at some of the measures introduced to regulate young people’s movements and behaviour in public and semi-public places during the 1990s (curfews, ‘public policing’, ‘Truancy Watch’, etc.). She identifies three ways in which such measures attempt to draw or reinforce boundaries between adults (‘us’) and the demonised young (‘them’). First, Valentine argues, they demonstrate the taken-for-granted nature of adult spatial hegemony on which such controls are predicated. Second, they demonstrate the importance of space to adults’ ability to (re)produce their authority over young people. Finally, they (re)produce the notion that children are the property of their parents – that their parents ‘own’ them – and legitimise the notion that the state has the right to govern and regulate young people’s public movements when parents are failing to do so ‘appropriately’ (Valentine, 1996: 596). From this perspective, one can appreciate why spatiality, and regulation of children’s access to certain (cyber)spaces in the post-internet world, form such a central part of this thesis.

This thesis focuses on debates around one of the more contemporary risks to children, that posed by ‘internet predators’. Jackson and Scott have highlighted “the pervasiveness of public anxiety about risks to children”, arguing that “[i]n our everyday world generalized risks... are deemed more pernicious when they threaten children’s wellbeing” (Jackson and Scott, 1999: 86). Given the pervasiveness of the discourse of childhood innocence, it is perhaps unsurprising that it often plays a key role in public debates about risks to children – particularly those relating to CSA/‘paedophilia’, where it is recurrent across legislation, the media, focus groups and beyond (Meyer, 2007: 33). O’Dell (2008: 384) asserts that “publicity surrounding child abuse (particularly CSA) serves to construct and reinforce our notions of ‘normal’ childhood as circumscribed by innocence, passivity and powerlessness”. Indeed, this ideology is also reflected in book titles such as *Innocence Betrayed: Paedophilia, the Media and Society* (Silverman and Wilson, 2002). It should, however, be noted that this prominent discourse of innocence has been criticised in this particular context. Kitzinger (1997: 168), for example, has critiqued it on the basis that “[i]f the violation of innocence is the criterion against which the act of sexual abuse is judged then violating a ‘knowing’ child becomes a lesser offence than violating an ‘innocent’ child”.

Turning my attention to media representations of childhood, Davis and Bouhill (1997: 31) argue that the mass media's treatment of issues involving children tends to be heavily reliant on "simplistic generalizations". In situations where children are victims, such as those explored in this thesis, these generalisations are drawn from an "idealized view of children as pure, innocent and vulnerable, needing protection or salvation from dangers they can neither identify nor comprehend" (Davis and Bourhill, 1997: 31). This is frequently evidenced when young people are seen to be embracing new forms of media. As Livingstone (2002: 78) notes, "[m]edia have undoubtedly become central to children's lives. Yet, in key respects it is adult conceptions of childhood, and adult provision for childhood – or lack thereof – which have made them so". Buckingham claims it is "children – or more accurately, the *idea* of childhood – which is the vehicle for many... aspirations and concerns" about new media (2006: 75). For Critcher:

[t]here is a symbiosis between childhood and the mass media. Both were institutionalized in the twentieth century, though with much earlier roots. Both allegedly pose dangers which must be headed off by new regulatory bodies. Both help define a modernized society. When the two coincide, there is often unease.

(2008a: 91)

Across history, the introduction of each new medium – be it 'penny dreadfuls', cinema, television, 'video nasties', computer games or the internet – has led to much morally charged public debate about the potential risks they pose to that generation of children (Critcher, 2003, 2008a; Cunningham, 2006; Gill, 2007). According to Buckingham:

Like the idea of childhood itself, new technology is often invested with our most intense fantasies and fears. It holds out the promise of a better future, while simultaneously provoking anxieties about a fundamental break with the past. [...] Childhood therefore provides a revealing lens through which many broader aspects of new media can be more clearly seen.

(2006: 75)

While the mediums seen to embody danger have varied over time, the sense of unease has remained largely constant, particularly where children's use is concerned (Drotner, 1999). Smith (2005: 178) consequently asks whether such debates are

“motivated by a desire to protect children, or to control them”. On this subject Critcher claims:

Adult reactions to children media exposure are often about control. [...] Loss of control is remedied by invoking ideologies of childhood[.] Such images vacillate between the child as original innocent and original sinner. A past golden age is evoked when children and childhood were different, before the advent of whichever medium is being criticized.

(2008a: 101)

Thus, from this perspective, panics about children’s exposure to ‘dangerous’ forms of media (e.g. the internet, chatrooms, etc.) represent a specific way in which the discourse of ‘innocence’ is used to regulate aspects of children’s lives.

Critcher (2008a) includes the internet in a historical account of public debates about children and the mass media which also examines cinema, comic books, television and video games. On the internet, Critcher echoes many other scholars, arguing: “This latest medium has its dangers for children, but the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages” (2008a: 99). He concludes, persuasively:

What is clear is that our ability to debate the problem of regulation will be enhanced by avoiding the kinds of moral panic, class-based cultural preferences and mythical images of childhood which have so dogged past attempts to understand children and the media.

(Critcher, 2008a: 99)

At the conclusion of this thesis, I hope to be able to offer some perspective on ways in which such ‘mythical images of childhood’ have informed mediatised debate around online CSA in Australia, Canada, the UK and USA.

Chapter summary

In the first part of this chapter I presented an overview of research into the media’s role in constructing online CSA as a social problem. This research suggests that the mass media represent one of the foremost sources of information about this new issue for adults. However, quantitative studies from various countries suggest there is a disproportionate focus on online risks to children over opportunities/benefits (particularly in the UK). With regard to young people, there is a relative lack of

coverage of the risks that most concern them and they are largely ‘voiceless’ in the news media. Central to coverage of sexual risks has been the conception of the ‘internet predator’, a stereotype that, it is argued, has been a key component in the media’s misrepresentation of the problem. It has been argued that media ‘panics’ may have amplified parental anxieties and created misconceptions about nature/scale of the problem. As an important extension of this, it has been argued that the ‘internet predator’ has cemented ‘stranger danger’ as the dominant way through which CSA is constructed and has (re)positioned parents as children’s foremost protectors.

To round off my literature review I outlined key arguments around the social construction of ‘childhood’, a concept that is central to this thesis. Here I demonstrated that the discourse of ‘innocence’ has come to dominate western understandings of ‘the child’, and outlined some of the implications of this, such as the legitimisation of children’s subordination and the associated power it invests in adults. I also discussed the ‘symbiosis’ between childhood and mass media, and considered the cyclical nature of ‘panics’ about new technology, central to which are concerns about the corruption of children’s ‘innocence’.

Having discussed the key literature that informs this thesis, the following chapter outlines the methodology that was used in my own research.

Chapter 5

Methodology

This chapter discusses the overall design and specific analytical approaches adopted in this study. I begin by introducing my chosen research methods– critical discourse analysis (a qualitative method), and content analysis (a quantitative method). I discuss the main strengths of these methods, outlining their suitability to this project, while acknowledging their limitations, and discuss the process through which I gathered my sample of newspaper articles. As well as describing my keyword strategy and use of the digital newspaper archive Nexis, this chapter also outlines some of the key strengths and weaknesses of purposive sampling, the strategy adopted in this project.

Research Methods

Although it does have a quantitative element, this thesis is primarily qualitative. The qualitative research method adopted is critical discourse analysis (CDA). I therefore begin this part of the chapter with a discussion of my chosen mode of discourse analysis, CDA. This is followed by a discussion of content analysis, the quantitative research method employed in this thesis.

Analysing Discourse

As noted in Chapter 1, representations are central to this thesis. As such it is important to recognise the role of Michel Foucault, who, Hall states, studied “not language, but *discourse* as a system of representation” (1997b: 44, original emphasis). More specifically, “[w]hat concerned [Foucault] was the production of knowledge (rather than meaning) through what he called discourse” (Hall, 1997b: 42-43). Discourse, however, is a widely used, but slippery and contested term. Stuart Hall makes a useful attempt, defining discourse as:

a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. [...] Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But... since all social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect.

(1992: 291, original emphasis)

Thus, “language is constructive. Is it constitutive of social life. Discourses build objects, worlds, minds and social relations” (Wetherell, 2001c: 16). From this perspective, “the study of discourse is the study of human meaning-making” (Wetherell, 2001b: 3). The purpose of discourse *analysis*, then, is “enter into debates about the foundations on which knowledge is built, subjectivity is constructed and society is managed” (Wetherell, 2001b: 5). In other words, if discourses help to construct a certain version of ‘reality’, then the purpose of discourse analysis is to *deconstruct* and critique them.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Wetherell (2001b: 6) outlines six prominent traditions in the field of discourse analysis: conversational analysis, critical discourse analysis, Foucauldian research, discursive psychology, interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication, and Bakhtinian research. The approach adopted in this thesis is critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Fairclough and Wodak’s definition of CDA is comprehensive yet accessible, and has become popular among practitioners (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 5). They state:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people.

(Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258)

This thesis is centred around the discursive strategies used to construct specific

elements of a contemporary social problem. CDA therefore represents an appealing mode of analysis because it is specifically “concerned with social problems. It is not concerned with language or language use per se, but with the linguistic character of social and cultural process and structures” (Titscher et al., 2000).

According to Fairclough (2001: 229), the objective of CDA is to “show how language figures in social processes”. Continuing the theme of social problems, CDA “needs to focus on the discursive strategies that legitimate control, or otherwise ‘naturalize’ the social order, and especially relations of inequality” (van Dijk, 2001: 302). This neatly summarises why CDA suits a study such as this, which has children at its core. Using van Dijk’s terms, CDA enables me to unpack some of the discursive strategies employed to: legitimate control of children; ‘naturalize’ the social order in which children are subjugated and made the voiceless subject of adults’ rules; examine the relations of inequality between young people and the various adults who govern their lives (parents, policymakers, teachers, etc.). It is also because this research is being approached from this position that theory pertaining to the social construction of childhood was adopted as the foremost theoretical framework.

As Fairclough and Wodak’s definition suggests, the issue of power is central to the politics of CDA, particularly inequalities and abuses of power. It is “fundamentally interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 10). CDA approaches the study of social inequality “by focussing on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” where dominance is defined as “the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality” (van Dijk, 2001: 300). Indeed, for Fairclough this is one of the foremost ways that CDA is *critical*, although it must be noted that CDA is far from the only form of discourse analysis that is concerned with power. He argues that CDA “is critical in the sense that it aims to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination” (Fairclough, 2001: 229). In relation to studies of the media, then, “CDA engages with, analyses and critiques social power and how this is represented and, both explicitly and implicitly, reproduced in the news” (Richardson, 2007: 29)

When critiquing social inequalities, CDA “often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of [these] inequalities” (Wodak, 2001: 10). Teun van Dijk (1993: 252) goes further, stating: “Unlike other discourse analysts, critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit socio-political stance[.] [...] Their perspective, if possible, [is] that of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality”. By adopting this position, CDA seeks to “produce enlightenment and emancipation” and to “root out a particular kind of delusion” (Wodak, 2001: 10). As such, it is “rooted in a radical critique of social relations” (Billig, 2003) and therefore “seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships” (Titscher et al., 2000: 147). Taking up Wodak’s point, it could be argued that this thesis is partly intended to consider the perspective of the young people who are “rather voiceless” in media discourse around ‘internet predators’ (Ponte et al., 2009: 169’ see also Mascheroni, 2010; Turow, 1999), despite being objects of (a) abuse and (b) the unequal power relations that promote repressive responses in the name of ‘safety’. Numerous examples of the kinds of ‘delusion’ that underpin my research were introduced in my literature review, including problematic (i.e. contested but prevailing) social constructions of ‘childhood’, ‘the paedophile’ and ‘stranger danger’. These, then, are areas that CDA enables me to critically analyse and through which my analysis will ultimately seek to offer alternatives.

Fairclough’s version of CDA is:

based upon the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always have to take account of language. This means that one productive way of doing social research is through a focus on language.

(2003a: 2)

This is appealing insofar as it demonstrates how studies such as mine do not merely constitute a study of the language of newspapers for the sake of studying language or newspapers *per se*. Indeed, from this perspective, arguments resulting from the analysis of any given newspaper are not solely confined to that particular newspaper or its readers. Instead, the language used is viewed as part of an ongoing ‘conversation’

between the text, its producer, the consumer and the society of which they are all a part. This view, premised on the notion that language is constitutive of social reality and is central to relations of power and knowledge, is largely influenced by the work of Foucault (Deacon et al., 1999: 147), who is viewed as “one of the theoretical ‘godfathers’ of CDA” (Wodak, 2001: 10). Deacon et al offer a useful introduction to this from the perspective of communications researchers:

What we identify as ‘discourse’ and what we identify as ‘social’ are deeply intertwined. The discursive and social mutually inform and mutually act upon each other, so that it is not as if discourse resides here, in our words, or in the newspapers and magazines you read, while the social is out there, in some quite separate realm of living and thinking.

(1999: 147)

As a particular mode of analysis, therefore, CDA “approaches discourse as a circular process in which social practices influence texts, via shaping the context and mode in which they are produced, and in turn texts help influence society via shaping the viewpoints of those who read or otherwise consume them” (Richardson, 2007: 37).

Three dimensions of CDA

Endorsing Fairclough’s (1995a, 1995b, 2003a) approach to CDA, Richardson (2007: 37-44) outlines the three ‘dimensions’ that are attributed to every discursive event and through which CDA is conducted (cf. Titscher et al., 2000). For Fairclough, the three dimensions that critical discourse analysts are interested in are: (1) textual, (2) discursive practices and (3) social practices.

Textual analysis is “a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world” (McKee, 2003). When applying interpretive forms of textual analysis to media texts, researchers:

assume that every aspect of textual content is the result of a ‘choice’ – the choice to use one way of describing a person, an action of a process over another; the choice to use one way of constructing a sentence over another alternative; the choice to include a particular fact or opinion or argument over another, etc.

(Richardson, 2007: 38)

Thus, unlike methods such as content analysis, which focus solely on *manifest*

content, interpretative forms of textual analysis examine texts in terms of “what is included *and what is excluded*, what is made explicit or left implicit, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded” (Fairclough, 1995b: 104). By adopting this more critical perspective, textual analysis therefore enables researchers to identify and critique these ‘choices’ and thus provides the platform for examining how certain ways of ‘making sense of the world’ can encourage social discrimination. Such an analysis will often begin at the micro level, coming down to a focus on individual lexical choices – the choice of one word over another – because “[t]he words used to communicate the message(s) of a text... frame the story in direct and unavoidable ways” (Richardson, 2007: 47). Therefore, even the study of individual lexical choices can provide the springboard for an analysis of social life and processes because “words convey the imprint of society and of value judgements in particular – they convey connoted as well as denoted meanings” (Richardson, 2007: 47).

The second dimension of CDA relates to discursive practices. This dimension “involves attention to processes of text production, distribution and consumption” (Fairclough, 1995b: 9). As such, it has clear parallels with Hall’s (1973) model of encoding and decoding. Very broadly, Hall’s model asserts that producers ‘encode’ a ‘preferred’ meaning into media texts. ‘Active’ audiences then ‘decode’ the text, taking one of three positions: *dominant*, *oppositional* or *negotiated*. For Richardson CDA’s consideration of encoding and decoding marks the transition from textual analysis to discourse analysis because the latter “involves an analysis of texts as they are embedded within, and relate to, social conditions of production and consumption” (2007: 39).

From the perspective of CDA, the production process is not as clear cut as is suggested by Hall’s encoding/decoding model because a producer is not simply encoding their ‘preferred’ meaning into a text. Instead, they are also conditioned by conventions of, among other things, journalistic practice and genre.

Clearly, and most obviously, the producer and the mode of production encode meaning into the text... but the text also acts on the producer, shaping the way that information is collected and presented due to the conventions of the text-genre under construction.

(Richardson, 2007: 40)

Here, then, it may be argued that, just as active audience theories argue that “people are not blank slates who approach a [text] without any pre-existing identity, experience or resources” (Kitzinger, 2004: 20), CDA does not view producers as all-powerful but as agents who are themselves “based in particular social relations, and particular relations of power” (Fairclough, 1995b: 204). Similarly, the relationship between texts and audiences is also dialectical:

First, the messages of the text (which may or may not be ideological) attempt to shape the understandings of the reader[.] [...] When a text is consumed, this is done by readers who have perspectives, agendas and background knowledge that may differ radically from that encoded in the text. Hence, the reader of a newspaper may resist, subtly counter or directly misunderstand the encoded meaning of the report.

(Richardson, 2007: 41)

Discursive practices, then, whether in relation to producer-text or text-consumer are “a two-way street” (Richardson, 2007: 40). Thus, with producers and audiences both subject to social relations it is logical to consider the entity between them – the text – in relation to society. This leads to the third dimension of CDA, social practices.

The third dimension of CDA is interested in social practices. For Richardson, discourse analysis – itself a progression from textual analysis – becomes *critical* at the point that it asks such questions as:

[W]hat does this text say about the society in which it was produced for? What influence or impact do we think that the text may have on social relations? Will it help to continue inequalities and other undesirable social practices, or will it help to break the down?

(Richardson, 2007: 42)

These are precisely the kind of questions that I seek to address in my analysis, with particular reference to: (a) society’s attitude towards children, CSA and the people who perpetrate it, (b) social relations between young people and adults, and (c) the implications of the discourses under examination in terms of maintaining and/or perpetuating the status quo. This aspect of the process also indicates why purposive sampling can be so well suited to studies that utilise CDA. In this instance, rather than seeking to generalise about an entire population, purposive sampling has enabled me

to pinpoint texts referencing the phenomena that interest me in order to analyse them and ask the above questions through CDA.

Bringing the three dimensions of CDA together (textual analysis, discursive practices and social practices), Richardson provides a concise overview of how this approach enables researchers to deconstruct the discursive events under analysis:

In essence, CDA involves an analysis of how discourse (language in use) relates to and is implicated in the (re)production of social relations – particularly unequal, iniquitous and/or discriminatory power relations. Analysis retains the details of both textual analysis (the analysis of propositional content) and discourse analysis (the analysis of text production and consumption), but now these insights are expanded and viewed in relation to the wider society. Specifically, the form-content-function of texts, as well as their production and consumption, are subject to critical analysis – that is, subjecting discourse to ethical and political critique, challenging the features that contribute to the perpetuation of structured inequalities, [exposing abuses of power and addressing social problems].

(Richardson, 2007: 42, original emphasis)

To conclude this section, I present a brief overview of how and why CDA was deemed to be a suitable theoretical framework for this thesis.

Applying Fairclough's analytical framework for CDA

My study involves an analysis of the discourse of newspapers. In doing this analysis I adopt the approach of Richardson (2004, 2007), who views the news as an argumentative discourse genre. As such, “a journalist’s news report should aim to persuade the audience that his or her description and interpretation is the rational and appropriate one” (Kieran, 1998: 27). From this perspective, media texts are well suited to CDA because “the news is imbued with ideologies. A detailed study of such ideologies in the mass media and other forms of public elite discourse contributes to our insights into their very reproduction in society” (van Dijk, 2008: 202). Even more specific to CDA, it has been argued that “media data (e.g. the daily press) provides a fertile ground for critical discourse analysts wishing to examine how... hegemonic discourse practices play out within the public domain” (Bishop and Jaworski, 2003).

While there are no definitive rules for conducting a critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer, 2009), the five-stage analytical framework provided by Fairclough,

derived from Bhaskar (1986, cited in Fairclough, 2001), offers a useful starting point. This suggests discourse analysts should:

- 1) Focus upon a social problem that has a semiotic aspect.
- 2) Identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled.
- 3) Consider whether the social order (network of practices) ‘needs’ the problem.
- 4) Identify possible ways past the obstacles.
- 5) Reflect critically on the analysis (stages 1–4)

(Fairclough, 2001: 236)

With regard to the first step, the social problem this study focuses upon is online CSA, while news discourse – public statements about this problem, its causes, implications, solutions, etc. – constitutes the semiotic aspect.

With regard to the second step, the “objective... is to understand how the problem arises and how it is rooted in the way social life is organized, but focusing on the obstacles to its resolution – on what makes it more or less intractable” (Fairclough, 2001: 256). This study endorses feminist critiques of CSA. It is also informed by a body of theory around the social construction of childhood. Therefore the second step involves an element of “interdiscursive analysis” (Fairclough, 2001: 236) because I approach the topic from the perspective that certain problematic aspects of the discourses that underpin it (‘the paedophile’; stranger danger; the weak, naive child, etc.) represent obstacles to tackling the problem. As Fairclough (2001: 237) argues, “properties of the discourse itself [can form] part of the obstacles. This involves getting a sense of how the ‘order of discourse’ is structured – how semiosis itself is structured within the network of practices”

Addressing the third step, media researchers can use CDA to question whether certain representations are “serving some wider social interest or purpose, for example sustaining relations of authority... or producing social divisions which might facilitate strategies of domination” (Fairclough, 2001: 238). According to Fairclough (2001: 238), “[t]he point of this stage of the analysis is to assess the degree to which problems in their semiotic aspect are an insuperable part of the social order as presently constituted”. Given this study’s preoccupation with childhood, and the

social construction of ‘the child’, this third step is particularly pertinent. For example, my fourth research question examines how discursive constructions of the home are used to maintain social order and facilitate strategies of domination with regard to children’s subjugation in family life. Indeed, the majority of the qualitative dimension of this study is preoccupied with examining how certain discourses around the ‘internet predator’ serve to (re)construct adults’ “rightful authority” (2001: 238) over young people.

The fourth step in Fairclough’s framework (‘Identify possible ways past the obstacles’) directly relates to the third (‘Consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the problem’). I am seeking to examine how certain representations work to ideologically reinforce hegemonic relations in society. For example, as stated, a key concern is how they may naturalise and maintain the power of adults over young people. I am also interested in how they may maintain patriarchal relations by remobilising and relegitimising dominant discourses around CSA (e.g. stranger danger, ‘the paedophile’) that help avoid questions about the “problem of masculinity” (McLeod and Saraga, 1988). Thus, the arguments presented in this thesis must seek to question the obstacles that have been identified and offer alternatives that can potentially challenge the status quo. In so doing it is important to consider the final step, be reflexive and recognise that researchers, too, are “located within a social practice networked in particular ways with other practices, including the practices which academics research” (Fairclough, 2001: 239).⁵

Drawbacks of CDA

Several criticisms have been made of CDA. Simpson and Mayr (2010: 2) group the

⁵ More specifically, Fairclough argues that discourse analysts must consider “whether the specialist discourse of critical discourse analysis constitutes a barrier, that is, an obstacle to their work having any significance or value for people located in other social practices [outside academia]” (2001: 239). This is a point I find particularly pertinent and would argue is far from exclusive to CDA. While I recognise the importance of social and critical theory – indeed, the arguments in this thesis could not be made without it – in the course of researching this thesis I have encountered academic work that I have found almost impenetrable. This has potentially adverse ramifications insofar as one’s research may not achieve the reach or have the impact it warrants. From a personal perspective, I found myself reluctant to use potentially relevant work on the grounds that I found much of it indecipherable, often due to an excessive (to my mind) reliance on jargon or a perceived desire to replicate the ‘complex’ styles of the social theorist/s the author was drawing upon. I firmly believe that research – including social scientific work such as my own – should be written in a manner that is clear, accessible and does not alienate those outside academia, particularly when it relates to social problems that have a tangible impact on people’s lives. As such, while the theory that underpins my research has been invaluable, and is utilised throughout, I have sought to present this thesis in a way that is both accessible and engaging.

most recurrent ones into five broadly “interrelated issues”. These criticisms assert that CDA: is an exercise in interpretation, not analysis; ignores real readers and listeners; is not cognitive enough; is too selective, partial and qualitative; and is too ambitious in its quest for social change.

A vocal critic of CDA is Henry Widdowson (e.g. 1995, 1998). He has argued that “if [CDA] is an exercise in interpretation, it is invalid as analysis” and only reveals the subjective discourse perspective of the analyst (1995: 169). Ongoing dialogue between Widdowson and Norman Fairclough is reproduced by Seidlhofer (2003). Fairclough defends CDA against Widdowson’s criticisms, arguing that it “is not an exercise in interpretation in Widdowson’s sense” (2003b: 148). He also argues that Widdowson’s critique is reliant on “a very narrow view of analysis” and one that “happens not to be what CDA does” (2003b: 148).

As noted, in the approach endorsed by Fairclough and Richardson, the ‘discursive practices’ dimension shares similarities with Hall’s model of encoding and decoding. Arguments pertaining to CDA’s relationship to the production and reception of texts are the aspect I find least convincing about this framework. This has also been acknowledged as “the aspect of CDA [that] remains most under-developed” (Richardson, 2007: 39). As such, given that Hall’s groundbreaking work on encoding and decoding instigated a surge in interest in audience ‘reception research’ (Kitzinger, 2004), it has to be acknowledged that a weakness of CDA – indeed any form of textual analysis – is that it is incapable of providing insight into either the ‘intentions’ of the producer who ‘encodes’ the text or the ‘readings’ of the audiences who ‘decode’ them. Instead, “[a]ll such analysis can do is offer provocative and productive hypotheses about these processes” (Deacon et al., 1999: 182)

Philo claims that discourse analysis alone is insufficient when studying media texts, arguing that “in terms of methods... it [is] not possible to analyse individual texts in isolation from the study of wider systems of ideologies which informed them and the production processes which structured their representation” (2007: 184). Concurrently, it is “also necessary to simultaneously study processes of audience reception before making judgments about social meaning and the potential impacts of texts on public understanding” (2007: 184). Philo advocates the methodologies of the

Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG), whose research supplements textual analysis with analyses of the processes of both production and reception. For example, one GUMG text that has been particularly useful to me is *The Circuit of Mass Communication* (Miller et al., 1998). This study into media coverage of the AIDS ‘crisis’ “examine[s] all levels of the communication process: production, content and reception” (Miller et al., 1998: 9). I would, however, note that while this work is impressively thorough, it was conducted by a research *group* and thus the same depth cannot necessarily be expected of individual researchers.

Related to criticisms of CDA’s failure to research audience reception of texts is the charge that it is not cognitive enough. Simpson notes that “[r]eactions of real communities to what the analysts deem ideologically insidious discourse are rarely considered” (Simpson and Mayr, 2010: 2), while Chilton criticises CDA’s inability to address the issue of “how the human mind works when engaged in social and political action, which is largely, for human, verbal action” (, 2005: 30, cited in Simpson and Mayr, 2010: 2).

I accept that the content-only approach employed in this thesis has its weaknesses. However, I would counter that it is not possible to cover production and reception processes in a cross-national study such as this, which would require participants in Australia, Canada, the UK and USA. Although this could be partially addressed if research was conducted by a collaborative, cross-national research team, it is not feasible in a study such as mine.

Another common criticism of CDA is that it only looks for what it wants to find. (e.g. Schegloff, 1997). One potential drawback of this is that “the analyst may never be surprised by the data” (Wetherell, 2001a: 385). More generally, it is suggested that:

the analyst selects a text or type of discourse known in advance to be contentious, the confirmation for which is presented through an analysis that in essence only partially addresses certain patterns of language in the text. The linguistic analysis becomes no more than a supplement to what the analysis has decided *a priori* about the text.

(Simpson and Mayr, 2010: 2-3)

This is a criticism that is particularly applicable to this thesis, given my decision to

use purposive sampling. Through this sampling strategy I looked for instances of certain pre-defined phenomena that could be analysed through CDA. However, I would contend that it is only by *conducting* the analysis that I was able to see how discourses around those phenomena played out, and thus it was only at this post-analysis stage that I was able to surmise what those discourses tell us about the culture from which they originated. In other words, while acknowledging that I was deliberately selective in the construction of my sample, I would reject the accusation that the arguments presented were somehow pre-defined prior to the analysis.

Similarly, CDA has been criticised for encouraging analysts to take an explicit socio-political stance (e.g. Schegloff, 1997; Widdowson, 1995). Schegloff, an advocate of conversation analysis, argues:

However well-intentioned and well-disposed toward the participants – indeed, often enough the whole rationale of the critical stance is the championing of what are taken to be authentic, indigenous perspectives – there is a kind of theoretical imperialism involved here, of the critics whose theoretical apparatus gets to stipulate the terms by reference to which the world is to be understood[.]

(Schegloff, 1997: 167)

Wetherell (2001a: 385) summarises that Schegloff’s argument is “that a critical stance in discourse research is not just bad scholarship, it is also bad politics”. She notes that “[w]hat often fuels such a concern is a notion of objectivity and good scientific practice”; instead, “[t]he world is already known and is pre-interpreted in light of the analyst’s concerns” (Wetherell, 2001a: 385). Again, these are challenging arguments. In this instance, I would argue that it is better to explicitly take – and *state* – a side than to claim objectivity (which is itself a slippery term). Furthermore, if one can find repeated instances of supposedly ‘objective’ or ‘neutral’ claims-makers (or indeed claims-makers with a ideological agenda) reinforcing social inequalities or mobilising problematic discourses, then it is important to highlight and critique them in order to open a dialogue.

Overall, though, while acknowledging and grappling with CDA’s drawbacks, I feel that its strengths outweigh its weaknesses. I would echo the view that:

In spite of the interconnected criticisms [of CDA]... there is no doubt that in the broader context of language study, the practice of [critical linguistics] and CDA has brought to the fore important issues to do with ideology and power. Notably, it has helped to contribute to our understanding, among other things, of the discourses of racism and sexism.

(Simpson and Mayr, 2010: 4)

Even Widdowson has stated that CDA has “brought to our attention a whole range of issues about the dialectical interplay of language and social life, not as matters for detached academic debate but as immediately implicated in practical and political affairs” as well as “alert[ing] us to how language can be exploited in the manipulation of opinion and the abuse of power” (Widdowson, 2003: 152). Given that no research method is perfect, I would argue that these are admirable strengths to have.

Content analysis

This thesis is primarily a qualitative enquiry. However, my first two research questions, which are concerned with understanding when online CSA emerged on the news agenda and the topics that defined its coverage, can only be addressed through quantitative methods. Deacon et al note that when designing media research:

You may want to establish the frequency with which certain kinds of story occur in the press, or the frequency with which they are slanted towards a particular perspective within a high frequency of occurrence. This will mean taking an expansive, panoramic view of the phenomena you are studying, and in so doing it is appropriate to establish the incidence of such phenomena by some form of measurement.

(1999: 114)

These are precisely the objectives of my first two research questions. These questions are concerned with frequencies – the overall frequency with which articles were published and the frequency with which different types of article were published during peak periods. Thus, to address these issues I needed to take an expansive, panoramic view of my corpus as a whole. Accordingly, the second research method utilised in this thesis is content analysis.

According to Deacon et al (1999: 116), the purpose of content analysis is “to quantify salient and manifest features of a large number of texts, and the statistics are used to make broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation”. My main

corpus contains 6,077 articles, collected from four countries between 1993 and 2009. A small amount of quantitative data were derived from this corpus in order to address the question of *when* coverage appeared. Additionally, a smaller sub-sample of 1,207 articles (based on peak weeks) was constructed to identify the topics/events that appeared during peaks in coverage. This is referred to as my *coding sample* (the rationale for constructing this sample is discussed later in this chapter). These samples are too vast to examine through more in-depth qualitative methods. However, content analysis is perfectly suited to meeting my objectives.

“The purpose of the method is to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions of texts, and through this, to be able to say something about the messages, images, representations of such texts and their wider social significance” (Hansen et al, 1998: 95). As this suggests, the coding schemes and content analyses employed in communications research can be highly detailed. However, as Neuendorf (2002: 8) notes, a content analysis “can be as easy or as difficult as a researcher determines it to be”. To this end, it should be acknowledged that the content analysis employed in this thesis is very modest, focussing solely on the quantification of data regarding when articles were published and their news hooks. While this may be considered a limited application of an expansive research method, I approached my research from the perspective that “the choice of techniques... should be dictated by the task at hand and the research questions you are seeking to address” (Deacon et al., 1999: 114). My research is principally concerned with analysing the discursive means through which claims-makers grappled with elements of the ‘paedophile’ discourse that were threatened by the internet (physical proximity in ‘paedophile places’, sanctity of the home, etc.). Unlike the qualitative methods I have utilised, content analysis “is not well suited to studying ‘deep’ questions about textual and discursive forms. It is not good at exposing aesthetic or rhetorical nuances within texts” (Deacon et al., 1999: 117). As such, it is only suited to addressing my first two – relatively rudimentary – research questions, justifying its modest application in this research. Furthermore, given that content analysis is often a laborious task, “time may be far better spent analysing and counting more substantive characteristics of texts, and to *use simply the number of articles* (irrespective of size) as an adequate and sufficient indication of the extent of coverage in different newspapers or over time” (Hansen et al., 1998: 106, emphasis added).

Berger (2000: 209) suggests that “content analyses are most valuable when they have either a historical perspective or a comparative perspective – or both perspectives”. I would argue that this thesis adopts both perspectives. It is *historical* insofar as it traces the frequency with which major newspapers covered a topic over an extended period of time (1993-2009). It is *comparative* insofar as the data were collected from four separate countries, enabling me to compare aspects such as: when peaks occurred in each country, what topics/events instigated these peaks, whether they occurred simultaneously, etc.

Determining when coverage occurred

My content analysis was required to perform two separate actions: to identify (1) *when* coverage occurred and (2) the key topics/events that instigated coverage. The first of these issues, which utilised all 6,077 articles in the main corpus, was the most straightforward to address and required minimal coding. Instead, the following article data was downloaded from Nexis and imported into Microsoft Excel: date of publication; headline/s; newspaper; page; words. By adding a ‘country’ field, I was able to use the dates of each article to produce nationally-specific and comparative cross-national data on when coverage appeared by day, week, month and year. This is presented and discussed in Chapter 6.

Determining key topics and events

Content analysis is suitable for “establish[ing] patterns of representation in media content over a given period of time” (Deacon et al., 1999: 132). Winston (1990: 62) argues that it is the most effective methodological tool for drawing “maps” of media output. Therefore, it was a suitable choice for addressing my second research question as it enabled me to establish patterns from the peaks in cross-national newspaper coverage during the period 1993-2009.

Hansen et al (1998: 108-115) identify analytical categories commonly used in content analyses of media texts. These are: “Actors/Sources/Primary Definers – and Their Attributes”, “Subjects/Themes/Issues”, “Vocabulary or Lexical Choice” and “Value-Dimensions or Stance”. My content analysis focussed on the second of these, “Subjects/Themes/Issues”, which is a “key objective of many, perhaps even most,

content analyses” as it enables researchers to “classify types of sub-categories of coverage within a general area of investigation” (Hansen et al., 1998: 112).

The articles that were sampled for the main part of my content analysis were derived from the 20 weeks that generated the most articles in each country. This was designed to give an indication of the key events that had shaped discussion around the topic in each country. Media researchers on the EU Kids Online project offer a useful justification for why this is can be a prudent approach, arguing:

public discourse is strongly influenced by significant events which get extensive media coverage and thus function as “key events” which then frame the online media related perceptions of the media as well as the population.
(Hasebrink et al. 2007: 44)

The identification of key events had two stages. First, I had to pinpoint the timing of key events. This was achieved by drawing upon the weekly (Monday-Sunday) data produced in Microsoft Excel and identifying the weeks that contained the highest number of articles. These were referred to as *peak weeks*. I then focussed my attention on the 20 peak weeks in each country (the rationale for choosing 20 weeks is discussed below). This produced a sample of 1,207 articles, which constituted my *coding sample*. These articles were then coded and categorised by their genre and ‘news hook’, the latter of which is a term reporters commonly use to refer to the trigger for a story (Berkeley Media Studies Group, 2011: 7). Put another way, the ‘new hook’ is the main focus of the story or the element that makes it newsworthy. Thus, by coding and quantifying the new hook of each of the articles in my sample I was able to gain insight into the topics that had instigated peaks in coverage.

Drawbacks of content analysis

Like any research method, content analysis is not without its flaws. Berger (2000: 214) identifies a range of difficulties in conducting a content analysis: finding a representative sample; determining measurable units; obtaining reliability in coding; defining terms operationally; and ensuring validity and utility in your findings.

One of the main drawbacks of content analysis is directly related to one of its core strengths – its ability to deal with the ‘massness’ of the mass media (Gerbner, 1969,

cited in Deacon et al., 1999). As Deacon et al. (1999: 117) note, “this big picture comes at a cost. By looking at aggregated meaning-meaning *across* texts, the method tends to skate over complex and varied processes of meaning-making within texts”. Indeed, content analysis “ignores the very important issues of *context* that surround the formation of *content*” (Richardson, 2007: 20, original emphasis). Consequently, even the best content analyses can be restricted to making somewhat limited assertions on a societal level:

The problem... is how far quantification is taken in content analysis and to what degree the quantitative indicators that this technique offers are read or interpreted in relation to questions about the intensity of meaning in texts, the social impact of texts, or the relationship between media texts and the realities which they reflect.

(Hansen et al., 1998: 95)

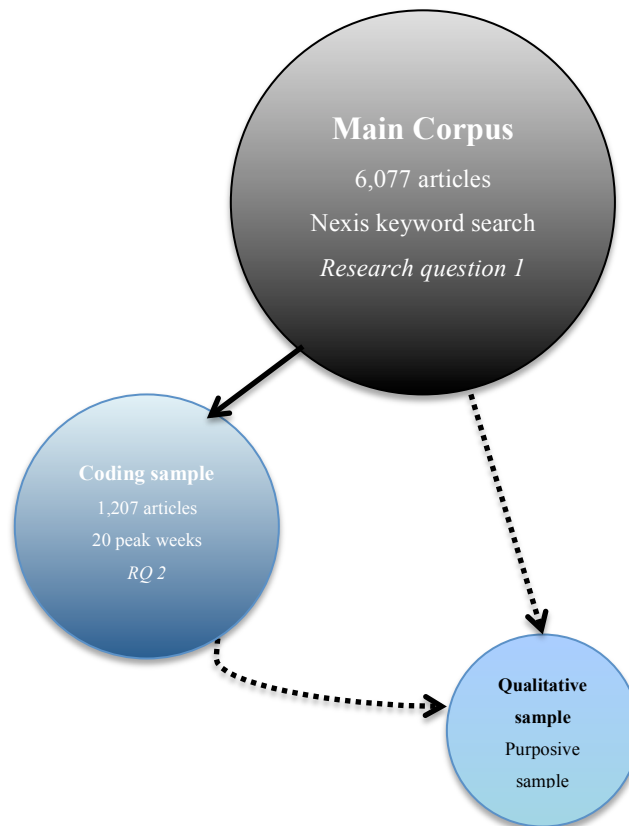
Another drawback of content analysis is that it is “an extremely directive method: it [only] gives answers to the questions you pose” (Deacon et al., 1999: 117). In other words, it is only as good as the categories and units included in the researcher’s coding scheme – and it can not offer insight about anything not included in the final coding scheme.

It should, however, be noted that some of the drawbacks of content analysis are minimised in this study due the very modest way in which this method has been employed. The objective of my content analysis was primarily to provide context about my corpus of articles. Thus, the 1,207 article *coding sample* – the purposive sample of articles derived from the 20 peak weeks in each country – was not designed to provide a platform for generalising about my overall sample. Instead, the method was intended to produce findings that were *indicative* rather than *definitive*. Additionally, the only categories that needed to be operationally defined and coded were ‘genre’ and ‘news hook’. Therefore, while these definitions were subjective, and I could not gauge their validity or the consistency with which they were applied due to the absence of inter-coder reliability tests, the associated drawbacks are relatively limited as they are confined to these two categories. In other words, had a larger proportion of my findings been dependent on a content analysis there would have been greater scope for the weaknesses of this method to hinder the overall depth of my study.

Sampling

In this section I outline the process through which I gathered the sample of newspaper articles examined in this thesis. From the outset it should be noted the design of this research effectively required three samples (a main corpus and two sub-samples). These are labelled as follows: (1) *Main corpus*, (2) *Coding sample* and (3) *Qualitative sample* (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Sampling articles for this thesis.



Main corpus

This was the large overall sample of relevant articles gathered through Nexis for the purpose of addressing my first research question – *when* the issue appeared on the news agenda. This collection of articles, my ‘corpus’ (Taylor, 2001: 13), was the source from which smaller samples were mined in order to address my other research questions. As such, while it is far from exhaustive – that is, it does not contain every relevant article ever published – it needed to be as large as possible in order to give a sufficiently reliable indication of when coverage appeared in each country. In total my

corpus contained 6,077 articles sourced from 1993-2009.

Coding sample

My second research question, which is concerned with understanding the topics/events that instigated peaks in coverage, necessitated a smaller sample from within my corpus (i.e. a sample from within a sample). This sample was constituted of articles published in the 20 weeks that contained the most coverage in each country. It was principally used for coding news hooks in order to offer insight into the type of events that attracted particularly high levels of journalistic attention. In total this sample contained 1207 articles.

Qualitative sample

Finally, a sample of articles was required to address my remaining, more qualitative, research questions. These questions pertain to very specific phenomena (spatiality, the home, etc.), but the manner in which these phenomena manifested in news discourse could not necessarily be pre-empted. This sample was gathered from the main corpus, partly based on themes and discourses that had emerged during the coding stage.

In the next section I elaborate on the process through which my main corpus and sub-samples were constructed. I discuss the sampling strategy that was employed (purposive sampling) and outline the strengths and weaknesses of using electronic databases such as Nexis.

Defining the basis of my corpus

Hansen (1998: 101) outlines some key criteria which should be considered when selecting media materials for research purposes. These include: geographical reach (e.g. national versus regional newspapers), audience size (e.g. circulation/readership), audience demographic, genre (e.g. 'quality', mid-market, tabloid), political allegiance (liberal, conservative, etc.), accessibility and availability.

This thesis examines newspaper coverage from four countries – Australia, Canada, the UK and USA. Therefore, an issue which provided challenges with regard to my sampling strategy was the disparity between the structure of each country's media system. If my research had been solely limited to the UK press, my principal decision

would have been between: (a) restricting my sample to national newspapers, or (b) sampling both national and regional newspapers. However, because I was sampling news articles from four countries the selection process was less straightforward, as none of the other countries have a ‘national’ press directly comparable to the UK’s. In Australia there are two national daily newspapers, *The Australian* and *The Australian Financial Review*, as well as 13 metropolitan newspapers, 36 regional newspaper and one suburban newspaper (APR, 2007: 11). In Canada there are two national English-language daily newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*, and 96 local daily newspapers (CNA, 2008: 5), the most popular of which, the *Toronto Star*, has a higher circulation than both of the national dailies (CNA, 2008: 18). In the USA the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* all have national reach. In total there are in excess of 500 daily newspapers (Perez-Pena, 2008: 4), 99 of which have circulations in excess of 100,000 (BurrellesLuce, 2008). Given these cross-cultural disparities, it seemed inappropriate to take the approach of solely sampling these countries’ national newspapers in the manner I did with the UK press. For this reason consideration had to be given to an inclusion/exclusion strategy for sampling newspapers from each country.

Choosing newspapers

As Deacon and colleagues note, “[w]hen sampling retrospectively... research is inevitably affected by the availability and comprehensiveness of archival sources” (2007: 122). However, while the various flaws of the Nexis database were challenging (discussed later in this chapter), this was not the first challenge faced in designing the sample for this research. Of greater concern was the issue of establishing a rationale for including/excluding newspapers from each country beyond those that were available through Nexis.

As has been noted, the media systems in each country are different, as Australia, Canada and the USA do not have a national press tradition comparable to the UK’s. There are also discrepancies in the way individual titles are published on a day-to-day basis. For instance, in some countries the same title is published seven days a week (e.g. the most read newspaper in Canada, the *Toronto Star*), while in others there are separate Sunday titles (e.g. *The Times/Sunday Times* in the UK) or separate weekend titles (e.g. *Hobart Mercury*, *Mercury on Saturday* and *Sunday Tasmanian*). Issues

such as these make it very difficult to devise truly comparable and consistent cross-national samples.

Numerous approaches were considered during the planning stage. I could, for example, have focussed on a small number of newspapers from each country (say, three from each, giving a total of twelve newspapers from which to gather a sample). This would have put me in a better position to (a) make claims regarding a degree of representativeness and (b) reach more reliable conclusions about specific titles (e.g. ‘*The Guardian* and *New York Times* tended to focus on *x*, whereas *The Australian* and *Toronto Star* privileged *y*’), genres (e.g. ‘quality’ versus midmarket versus ‘popular’) and/or socio-political positions (e.g. ‘*x* was more prominent in left-of centre and centrist titles than in right-of-centre titles’). However, this approach would have been fraught with complications, partly due to the difficulty of defining the basis for inclusion and identifying newspapers that met the relevant criteria. In other words, it is arguable whether any titles would be truly comparable. Are there, for example, newspapers directly comparable to, say, *The Guardian* or *Daily Mail* in terms of genre, political stance, readership, circulation, etc. in Australia, Canada and the USA?

Having opted to limit the UK element of my study to national newspapers, I could have decided that, as the country with the fewest newspapers, the UK would form the basis for choosing newspapers from my other three countries. However, this too would produce unavoidable complications and inconsistencies. For context, selecting ‘UK Nationals’ from the ‘Sources’ menu in Nexis returns articles from a total of 20 newspapers – 4 daily tabloids, 2 daily ‘middle brow’ titles, 4 quality dailies, 4 Sunday tabloids, 2 Sunday ‘middle brow’ titles and 4 quality Sunday titles. Thus, the task of identifying and justifying comparable equivalents in each country would still be problematic and would likely result in the exclusion of notable newspapers. Furthermore, direct comparisons are problematic because all newspapers are a product of their own culture and have their own individual histories, etc. In a comparative analysis of coverage of child murder, Wardle noted the difficulties of this in relation to the study of newspapers from the UK and USA. Indeed, Wardle’s methodology touches upon the complications that can arise and the compromises that have to be made when attempting to conduct comparative cross-national research. Wardle states: “I had originally wanted to use a broadsheet, tabloid and ‘middle-

brow' newspaper from each country, but it was impossible to compare the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Daily Mail* with each other as a distinct category, so the former was used as an example of a broadsheet, and the latter, a tabloid" (2006: 530).

Ultimately, no concerted attempt was made to compare like with like, given the danger of 'comparing apples and oranges'. Instead, guided by my research questions, I opted for a very broad-brush approach. The first of my research questions, which seeks to trace the overall trajectory of coverage in each country, is the most general and requires a large sample from which to deduce relatively broad inferences about coverage of my topic *across* the press. Therefore, I gathered circulation data for the top 25 newspapers in each country and used it as the basis for my inclusion/exclusion policy. Other options are, of course, available (e.g. genre, geographical location), but circulation data was readily available for each country, meaning it could be applied consistently, and "[s]uch sampling choices can generally be defended on the grounds of audience reach" (Hansen et al., 1998: 104). Where a newspaper was in the top 25 but had a weekend edition outside the list, the weekend title was added to the sample (e.g. the *Sunday Oregonian*, sister paper of *The Oregonian*). Having opted to restrict my sample to paid-for titles I excluded newspapers such as *MX*, a free tabloid circulated in major Australian cities. I also removed non-English language newspapers, which meant excluding four Canadian newspapers. Idiosyncrasies with the newspaper circulation data and the Nexis database also impacted upon the number of the newspapers included. In the case of the former, some entries in the top 25 contained multiple newspapers (e.g. 8th in the USA list was "*San Jose Mercury News/Contra Costa Times/Oakland Tribune*"). Where this occurred, all newspapers were included. With regard to Nexis, some newspapers were not available through the database (e.g. *Winnipeg Free Press*).

In sum, articles were gathered from a total of 98 newspapers – 28 from Australia, 21 from Canada, 20 from the UK and 29 from the USA. This disparity is unfortunate, but as guidelines published by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) acknowledge, "[a] degree of flexibility and adaptability is... required in developing and employing comparative cross-national research strategies" (ESRC, 2009: 2). Thus, having attempted to apply a consistent rationale for inclusion/exclusion across the four countries, I had to accept the outcome as a consequence of the process.

The large number of newspapers incorporated into my study resulted in a large overall corpus (described below). This, however, was desirable because it enabled me to pursue the expansive, panoramic view I described earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, the bulk of this research is qualitative and is therefore focussed on a much smaller sub-sample of articles. Therefore, issues that could potentially arise from an unmanageably large corpus do not apply. On the contrary, a large overall corpus provides a rich base from which to derive a wide range of examples through purposive sampling.

Because of the discrepancies between the four countries in terms of the number and types of newspapers included, it must be acknowledged that national data is only relative to itself, i.e. the number of articles in a given country is not directly compared to the number in a different country; however, the number of articles in a given country in a given year is broadly comparable to the number of articles in the same country in a different year. Therefore, proportional data gathered around nationally-specific peaks in coverage – in terms of timing and news hooks – *is* broadly comparable, making my corpus sufficient for addressing this aspect of my research objectives.

Despite the various complications and challenges involved with its construction, I was satisfied with the sample of newspapers that were incorporated into my main corpus and the rationale for their inclusion. I acknowledge that the quantitative findings can only be treated as indicative rather than definitive, although this is a drawback that applies to all research that is dependent on keyword searches, regardless of the sampling strategy (Moore et al., 2008). It should also be recognised that the opportunity remains for other researchers to conduct studies using the methodological approaches I rejected. These would have strengths where my approach has weaknesses and vice versa.

Digital databases and keyword searches

Newspaper articles were gathered using the electronic news database Nexis. As with most UK titles, a considerable number of Australian, Canadian and US newspapers are available through Nexis. However, while there are clear benefits to using

electronic archives for media research – most notably ease of access and convenience – there are also a number of drawbacks (Deacon 2007; Soothill and Grover 1997).

Deacon has undertaken a critical examination of Nexis in order to “highlight the methodological implications and limitations of this mode of analysis” (2007: 12), which, he argues, “have been insufficiently appreciated to date” (2007: 22). Of particular relevance to this thesis are the issues that Deacon argues can affect the ‘validity’ of research conducted using Nexis. These relate to: problems with keyword searches; the loss of news items’ visual components; and the varying availability of older news items.

Among the main drawbacks of using keyword searches in digital archives are ‘false positives’ and ‘false negatives’ (Deacon 2007; Deacon et al. 2007; Pearson and Soothill 2003; Soothill and Grover 1997). The term ‘false positives’ refers to instances where “a keyword may have several meanings and the resulting search identifies content that is not related to the focus of your research” (Deacon et al. 2007: 136). The term ‘false negatives’ refers to instances where “relevant material is inadvertently excluded from the search because the terms of the search are too constricted” (Deacon et al. 2007: 136). Soothill and Grover (1997: 592) argue that the problem of ‘false positives’ and ‘false negatives’ “can be diminished through careful piloting of the most effective search keywords”. However, Deacon (2007: 8) challenges this assumption, arguing that “key word searching is best suited for identifying tangible ‘things’ (i.e. people, places, events and policies) rather than ‘themes’ (i.e. more abstract, subtler and multifaceted concepts)”.

My topic is more of a ‘theme’ than a tangible ‘thing’. This made keyword searching very challenging. Indeed, although I conducted repeated pilot studies, modifying and extending my keyword search terms along the way, it is inevitable that a number of relevant articles were excluded (false negatives). However, it is an acknowledged methodological drawback of this approach that “keyword searches are indicative rather than comprehensive” (Moore et al., 2008: 8). As such, omissions resulting from flaws in my keyword search must be acknowledged as a regrettable, but unavoidable, by-product of using electronic archives.

Keyword searches with Nexis

The task of defining my keyword search terms was largely a process of trial and error, and repeated pilot searches aimed at limiting false negatives and false positions in order to return the highest proportion of relevant articles. I began by gathering a range of relevant articles from different genres of newspapers from the four countries in my study. Having assessed these articles for common characteristics, I identified a recurring tendency for three key characteristics to be mentioned in close proximity to one another: (1) an aspect of the internet, (2) a child and (3) an action. Having compiled a list of keywords/synonyms for each of these categories, I then conducted repeated pilot studies, seeking to identify and additional search terms and experimenting with the “w/n” connector in Nexis (e.g. a “w/5” connector would look for articles that contain two specified terms within five words of one another).

The keyword search terms I eventually arrived at are presented in Figure 5.2. The exclamation mark is a wildcard used to replace an unlimited number of letters in the middle of a word or at the end of a word (e.g. “groom!” searches for “groom”, “groomed”, “grooming”, etc.).

Figure 5.2: Full Nexis search terms

(internet groom! OR net groom! OR web groom! OR online groom! OR cyber groom! OR internet predator! OR net predator! OR web predator! OR online predator! OR cyber predator! OR cyber stranger danger OR internet stranger danger OR net stranger danger OR online stranger danger OR web stranger danger OR facebook predator! OR MySpace predator! OR chat predator! OR chat room predator! OR chatroom predator!) OR (BODY(internet OR chat room! OR chatroom! OR computer OR social network! OR online OR cyber! OR web OR bebo OR facebook OR friendster OR myspace OR network! OR website! OR bulletin board! OR email OR e-mail OR instant messag!) W/s (abduct! OR entic! OR groom! OR kidnap! OR lure! OR luring! OR missing OR prey! OR procur! OR rendezvous! OR r*n! away! OR r*n! off! OR r*naway! OR seduc! OR snare! OR snaring OR solicit! OR stalk! OR stranger! OR tryst!) W/s (boy OR boys OR child! OR daughter OR minor! OR girl OR girls OR kids OR schoolboy! OR schoolchildren OR schoolgirl! OR son OR teenage! OR young people! OR youngster!)) AND BODY(sex!)

The first part of this search criteria looks for articles that contain one or more key phrases that, when used, were almost invariably relevant to my topic. These are presented in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Key phrases in first part of Nexis search criteria

internet groom!
net groom!
web groom!
online groom!
cyber groom!
internet predator!
net predator!
web predator!
online predator!
cyber predator!
cyber stranger danger
internet stranger danger
net stranger danger
online stranger danger
web stranger danger
facebook predator!
MySpace predator!
chat predator!
chat room predator!
chatroom predator!

Any articles that contained one or more of these phrases were subsequently returned by Nexis. The second part of the search criteria used the “w/s” command to look for newspaper articles that contained one or more sentences made up of at least one of the pre-defined synonyms from each of the following three categories: (1) *Internet*, (2) *Child* and (3) *Action*. So, to give one example, Nexis would return articles that contained a combination such as “online” (*Internet*), “boys” (*Child*) and “lure” (*Action*) in the same sentence. The keywords used for each category are listed in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Internet, Child and Action search terms

<i>Internet</i>	<i>Child</i>	<i>Action</i>
Bebo	boy	abduct!
bulletin board!	boys	entic!
chat room!	child!	groom!
chatroom!	daughter	kidnap!
computer!	girl	lure!
cyber!	girls	luring!
e-mail	kids	missing
email	minor!	predator!
Facebook	schoolboy!	prey!

<i>Internet</i>	<i>Child</i>	<i>Action</i>
Friendster instant messag! internet MySpace net network! website! online social network! web	schoolchildren schoolgirl! son teenage! young people! youngster!	procur! rendezvous! r*n! away! r*n! off! r*naway! seduc! snare! snaring solicit! stalk! stranger! tryst!

In addition to these keywords, articles were also required to contain the keyword “sex!” (“sex”, “sexually”, etc.). While this additional keyword undoubtedly increased the number of false negatives, it was deemed necessary because pilot searches conducted without it repeatedly returned an unmanageably high number of false positives (e.g. considerable news coverage was given to the use of internet technology in the search for Madeleine McCann, none which was relevant to my topic). Furthermore, given that this thesis is concerned with child *sexual* abuse, it was deemed reasonable for this to be reflected in the search criteria. (N.B. “Abuse” was not incorporated in the list of *Action* keywords because it returned an unmanageable high number of false positives relating to child pornography.)

During the piloting stage, consideration was given to the inclusion of a fourth category, *Perpetrator*. This category contained the plethora of terms used to label perpetrators of CSA, such as ‘paedophile’, ‘predator’, etc. This, however, was ultimately rejected as piloting found that the three existing categories were sufficient for identifying relevant articles.

Having arrived at the above search criteria, I then conducted a series of repeat searches through Nexis’s ‘power search’ facility. These searches were typically done by country and year (i.e. articles published in Australian newspapers between 1 January 1995 and 31 December 1995).

All genres of article were included because “different media formats/types/genres set different limits for *what* can be articulated, by *whom*, through what format/context”

(Hansen et al., 1998: 107, original emphasis). Having completed these searches, the resulting articles were then manually assessed for relevance. Any duplicate or irrelevant articles were removed. For an article to be deemed relevant, online CSA did not necessarily have to be the *main* news hook. For example, during the first reading of the Sexual Offences Bill in the UK House of Lords, some newspapers prioritised changes to laws around having sex in public ahead of the newly created offence of ‘grooming’. However, in this instance, and others like it, it was felt that to exclude articles that contained a major reference to ‘grooming’ but did not necessarily privilege it as their main news hook would limit the depth of my sample, and result in the exclusion of potentially fruitful articles. However, with this in mind it must be acknowledged that the process of deciphering whether or not articles contained a suitably significant mention of the topic was entirely reliant on my own subjective interpretation. As a final point, it should be noted that additional articles that did not match the main search criteria were sought in instances where they had been referenced in articles that *had* been returned by Nexis (e.g. ”Voice of the Mirror - Page 6”).

The process of manually assessing articles was long and arduous, and it wasn’t aided by some of the idiosyncratic quirks of Nexis. For example, numerous false positives were returned as a result of the *New York Times*’s weekly publication best-selling book list, which Nexis inexplicably processed as one sentence. Overall, though, once the process of manually assessing articles had been completed, the remaining 6077 articles were then downloaded and relevant data for each record was entered into Microsoft Excel.

Notes on Nexis

Before commencing the discussion of my sampling strategy, it should be noted that the Nexis database does not contain complete records for every newspaper. For example, the ‘Source Information’ page for the UK *Daily Telegraph* states, “Documents from September 1988 through October 29, 2000 have been permanently removed by LexisNexis due to copyright reasons”. Therefore, relevant articles may be missing because they were published at a time that is not contained within the Nexis database.

Purposive sampling

The sampling strategy utilised in this thesis was purposive sampling. When using purposive sampling, items are “selected on the basis of having a significant relation to the research topic” (Tonkiss, 2004: 199). Unlike non-random sampling strategies, which are more typically employed in quantitative research, purposive sampling is not intended to produce a sample from which one can generalize about the population from which it originates. Instead, a purposive sample seeks to be “reflective (if not strictly representative) of the population” (Tonkiss, 2004: 199).

As has been noted, this thesis effectively draws upon three separate, but related, samples – a main corpus and two sub-samples. However, all three were constituted through purposive sampling, albeit in slightly different ways. In the case of the main corpus, items were included on the basis that they (a) met my keyword search criteria and (b) were deemed relevant to the research topic. This large sample was then used to gather data about the trajectory of coverage during the period 1993–2009, as was required by my first research question. The process through I gathered my corpus was discussed above. I now turn my attention to two sub-samples that were derived from the main corpus – my coding sample and qualitative sample.

The coding sample

For my second research question, I wanted to get an indication of what type of events had attracted particularly high levels of newspaper coverage in each country. This necessitated a smaller sample because I felt it was neither realistic nor necessary to attempt to code all 6,077 articles in the main corpus. Thus, when formulating my smaller coding sample I had to devise a rationale that: (a) could be consistently applied to each country, (b) would produce a sample size feasible for coding and (c) would produce sufficient data for addressing the research question.

Having explored a range of options, I decided to focus on the 20 weeks (Monday-Sunday) that had returned the most articles in each country. The decision to use 20 weeks was somewhat arbitrary, but was ultimately pursued because it produced a sample of around 1,000 articles (in fact 1,207), a figure that met the objectives of being manageable for coding and sufficiently large to answer the research question.

This is another example of purposive sampling. With this sampling strategy, “[t]he researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question... and [this] will be based on the researcher’s practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself” (Marshall, 1996: 523). In this instance, the latter point regarding “evidence from the study itself” is particularly relevant because the smaller coding sample was derived from evidence about peak weeks that had been gathered from the main corpus. In other words, it was only after conducting this initial part of the data collection process that I was in a position to decipher peaks in coverage and therefore identify the articles that would constitute the sample most productive for answering the research question.

There are, of course, limitations to purposive sampling. For example, resultant samples are not representative, so one cannot make generalisations about the population from which they were derived. However, as is noted in the *EU Kids Online Best Practice Research Guide*, “It is OK to conduct such studies as long as we are not aiming for statistical inferences from the samples to the population. We operate only within descriptive interpretations” (Lobe et al., 2008: 24). Thus, my sampling strategy is legitimate in this instance because my objectives – already acknowledged to be relatively modest – were principally to provide context by *describing* when the topic registered on the news agenda and which news hooks occurred during peaks in coverage.

The qualitative sample

The final sample used in this thesis is referred to as my qualitative sample because it was formulated to provide the basis for my two qualitative research questions. As Morse (2004: 884) notes, purposive sampling is typically adopted in qualitative research “[b]ecause, at the beginning of the study, the researcher does not know enough about a particular phenomenon, [so] the nature of the sample is not always predetermined”. This point is particularly salient with regard to the purposive sampling technique employed in the construction of my qualitative sample. This sample was required for two research questions pertaining to some very specific phenomena (spatiality, conceptions of the home). However, while I knew these were the phenomena I wished to examine, it was not possible to pre-empt how they would manifest in news discourse. I subsequently concluded that purposive sampling was

the most appropriate sampling strategy for this element of my research. Indeed, “[t]he power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich-cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied” (CEMCA, 2000: 47). Thus, this sampling strategy enabled me to manually assess the articles in my corpus – picking out ‘information rich-cases’ as and when they occurred – in order to identify examples that were particularly applicable to my research interests and of which I could conduct the analyses required to address my research questions.

Again, my objective here was not to generalise *per se*, but to examine phenomena that I considered significant and considered to have potential implications in various discursive fields (e.g. understandings of childhood, CSA, the home, parenting, etc.). My methodological approach is therefore suitable for achieving this:

An alternative to generalizing is to study something which has a particular significance in itself. [...] The claim would not be that the feature recurs but that it is significant and persistent. [...] In these cases, the researcher would not be attempting to generalize up from component elements or particular instances but rather to describe some aspect of a whole.

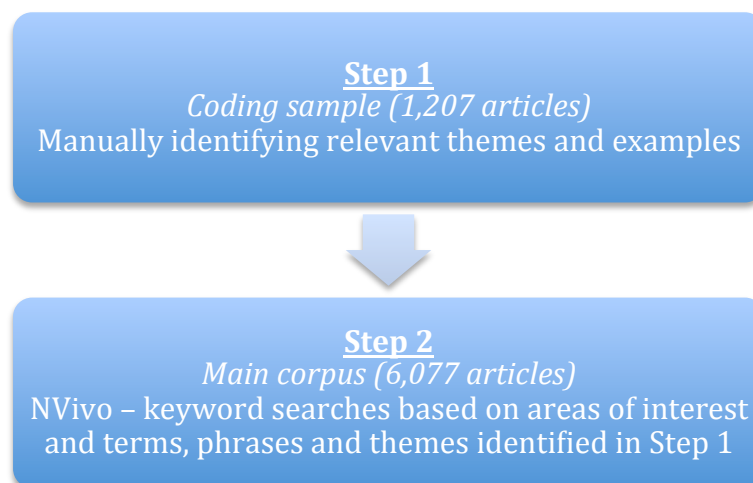
(Taylor, 2001: 14)

When deciding how to formulate my qualitative sample, consideration was given to whether to (a) restrict it articles from the coding sample (i.e. the 1,207 articles from the 20 peak weeks) or (b) utilise the entirety of the main corpus. The benefit of the former is that it would provide insight into the *extent* to which the phenomena under examination featured during periods of particularly high coverage (e.g. quantifying the frequency with which these phenomena occurred during peak weeks). Ultimately, however, it seemed unnecessarily prohibitive to limit the qualitative sample to articles derived from peak weeks, particularly given that I had invested considerable time and effort into gathering such a vast and rich corpus. Furthermore, I did not approach this research with the assumption that the phenomena that interested me were ‘dominant’ or had necessarily underpinned discourse during the height of media coverage; rather, I had identified them as potentially tricky hurdles for claims-makers to negotiate, a challenge to the status quo, and therefore wished to examine them in their own right. For this reason, the decision was taken to utilise every article in the main corpus.

Relevant articles were identified through a two-step process (Figure 5.5). First, while

coding, I took note of themes that emerged around my areas of interest, keeping a record of relevant articles, phrases, etc. Second, I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, to explore my corpus more thoroughly, incorporating examples from beyond my coding sample. All 6,077 of my articles were imported into NVivo and explored through the plethora of text search options the software offers (see Bazeley, 2007: 167-172). Following Patton (2002: 454, cited in Bazeley, 2007: 169), I created an inventory of key terms and phrases, based on my topics of interest and the themes that had emerged during the coding process, and used them as the basis for repeated searches of my articles. One particularly useful, labour-saving feature of NVivo is its ability to search for similar words to the main search term, e.g. a search for “home” can return instances of “house”, “residence”, etc. While exploring my data, I also made particular use of the ‘nodes’ feature. “Nodes provide the storage areas in NVivo for references to coded text. Each... node serves as a container for what is known about, or evidence for, one particular concept or category” (Bazeley, 2007: 15). This enabled me to code and group relevant extracts/articles ahead of conducting the main part of my analysis.

Figure 5.5: Gathering a purposive sample of articles for qualitative analysis



Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed the overall research design and the methodology employed in this thesis. As well as discussing some of their key challenges of conducting cross-national research, I have introduced my chosen research methods – content analysis and CDA – outlining their key strengths and acknowledging their

drawbacks. I have argued that my principal research method, CDA, is particularly well suited to this study because of its focus on the analysis of semiotic aspects of social problems. The second part of the chapter then described the process through which I gathered my sample of newspaper articles, outlining the suitability of my chosen sampling strategy – purposive sampling. Here I acknowledged that one of the main flaws of purposive sampling is that it does not enable me to generalise about my findings; however, I argued that this was not a major drawback because my objective was to conduct in-depth analyses of cases relating to very specific phenomena, rather than seeking to make claims regarding overall representativeness.

The following four chapters present the findings from my research. The first two chapters present the findings from my quantitative content analysis. The latter two chapters are more qualitative in nature, applying CDA in order to address my third and fourth research questions.

Chapter 6

Data Analysis I: Introducing the corpus

This is the first of two chapters presenting quantitative data gathered through my content analysis. In this chapter I introduce the corpus of 6,077 newspaper articles gathered through my keyword search of Nexis. Taking each country in turn, I analyse the emergence and trajectory of articles during the period 1993-2009.⁶ This is followed by a comparative cross-national analysis of the four countries included in this study. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to address my first research question, which seeks to understand when online CSA registered on the news agendas of each of the countries in my study. This provides the basis for the next chapter, which seeks to identify the types of key event that instigated peaks in coverage.

The distribution of the 6,077 articles in my corpus is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Breakdown of my corpus

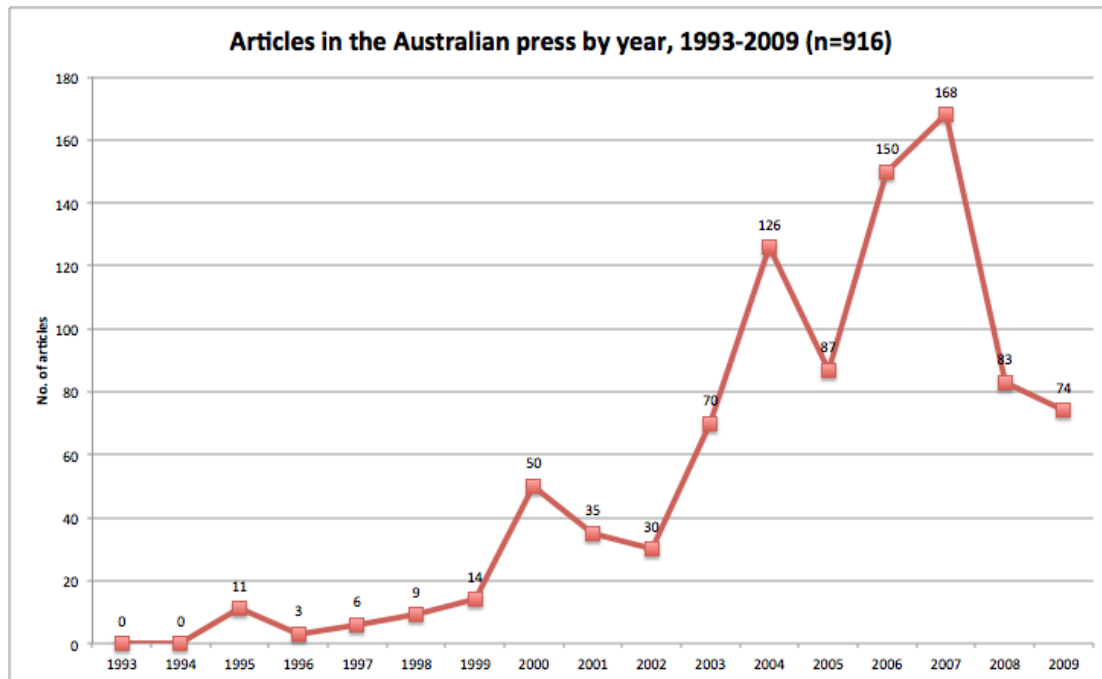
Country	Articles
Australia	916
Canada	1729
UK	1219
USA	2213
Total	6077

Press coverage of online CSA in Australia

A total of 916 articles were identified in the Australian press during the period 1993-2009. Figure 6.1 presents a breakdown of how they were distributed by year.

Figure 6.1: Breakdown of articles in the Australian press, 1993-2009

⁶ Searches were conducted for years prior to 1993. However, 1993 was the first year to contain a relevant article in any of the four countries and is therefore the first year for which data is presented.



As Figure 6.1 shows, the first relevant article from the Australian press was found in 1995. However, the first notable spike did not occur until 2000. This spike did not lead to an immediate increase in annual levels of coverage. Instead, the number of articles fell in 2001 and 2002. It is during the following period, 2003-07, that interest in the issue appears to have grown. Indeed, in the context of this period, 2005 represents something of an anomaly as the relatively low level of coverage deviates from a period of otherwise concerted annual increments. This period of annual increments in coverage culminated in the highest overall peak, in 2007. The final point of note is that coverage fell away considerably immediately after the peak of 2007. The 83 articles identified in 2008 represents a 51% fall on the previous year, while even fewer articles were found in 2009. Overall, the number of articles found in 2009 (74 articles) had returned to a similar level to that observed in 2003 (70 articles).

Figure 6.2 illustrates the upward trajectory of the cumulative number of articles and is useful for tracking the momentum of coverage between 1993 and 2009.

Figure 6.2: Cumulative number of articles in the Australian press, 1993-2009

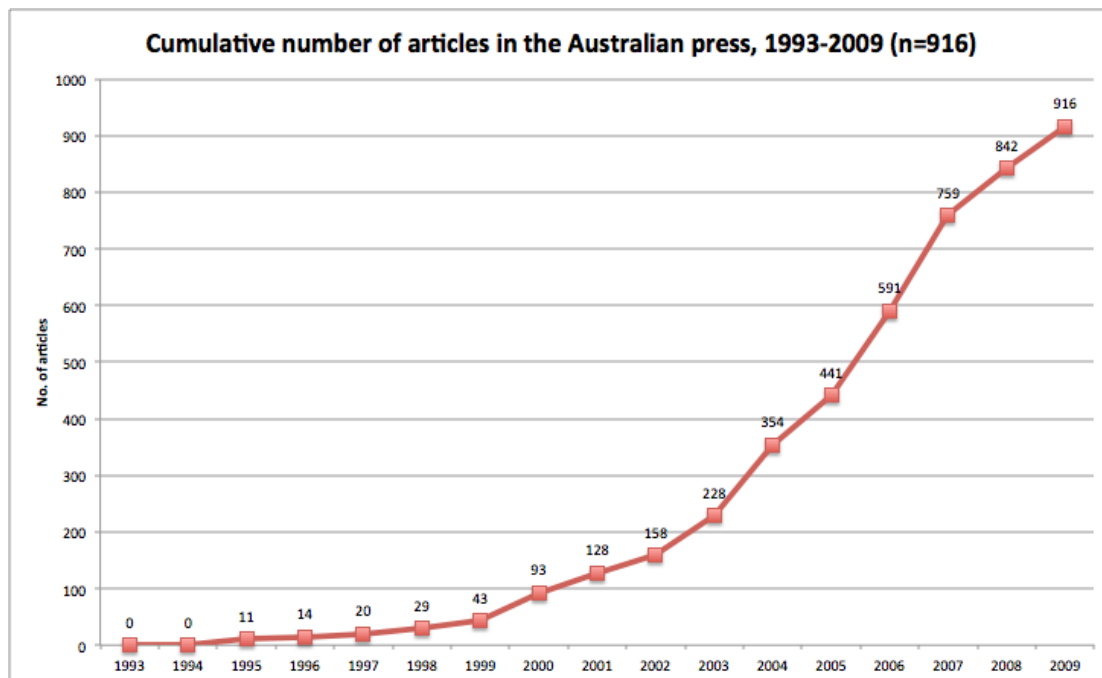
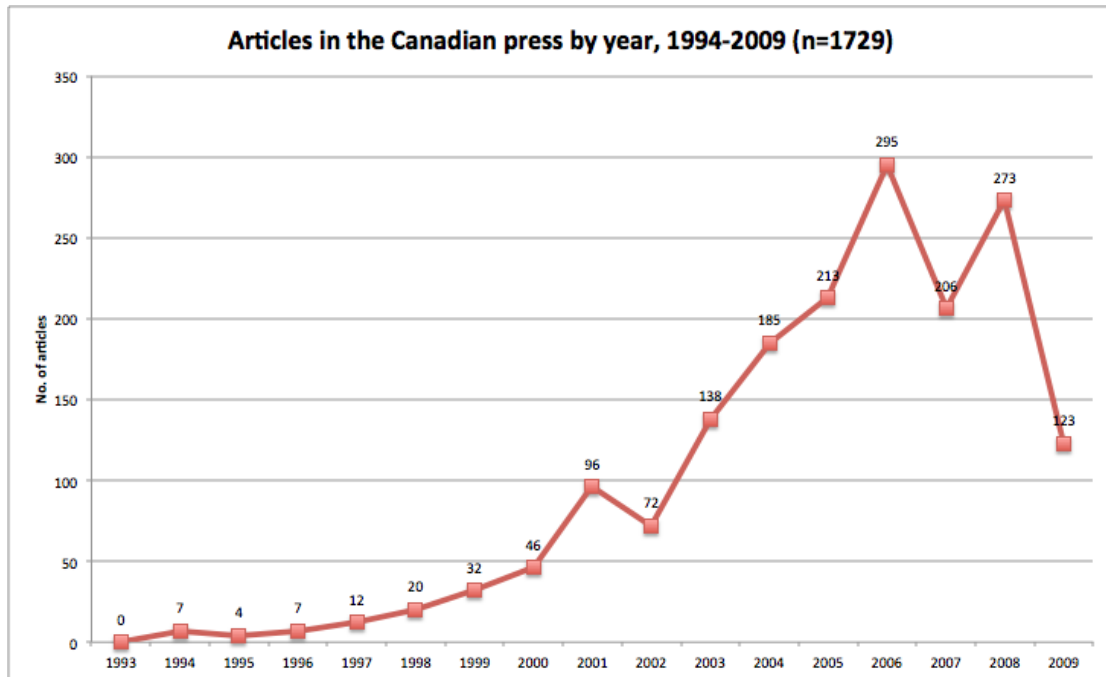


Figure 6.2 further illustrates some of the above points. The flatness of the curve during the period 1995-99 reflects the relative lack of coverage prior to 2000. During this five year period a total of 43 articles were identified (5% of the overall Australian sample), an average of 9 per year. By contrast, 50 articles were identified in 2000 alone. The more concerted levels of coverage observed during the period 2003-07 is reflected in the sharper, more concerted upward trajectory of the curve in Figure 6.2. During this period the number of collected articles rose from 158 to 759, an average of 120 per year. Finally, that the curve is far from flatlined in the final two years is indicative of how, despite a notable reduction in the number of articles (indeed the combined total for 2008 and 2009 is less than that of 2007), coverage had not fallen away entirely.

Press coverage of online CSA in Canada

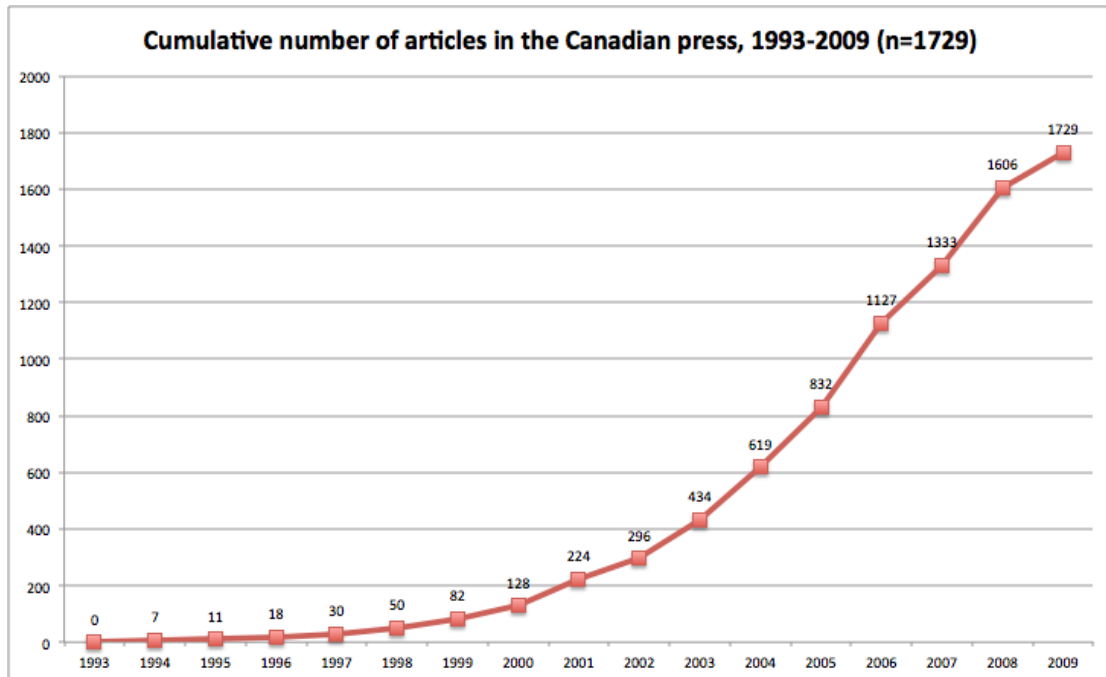
A total of 1,729 articles were identified in the Canadian press. Figure 6.3 presents a breakdown of how they were distributed by year.

Figure 6.3: Breakdown of articles in the Canadian press, 1993-2009



As Figure 6.3 shows, the first relevant article in the Canadian press was found in 1994, one year earlier than in Australia. Although there were annual increases during the period 1995-2001, the first notable spike did not occur until 2001. The 96 articles identified in 2001 represents a 109% increase on the previous year and the previous peak (46 articles in 2000). It is also worth noting that this first spike came one year later than the equivalents in Australia and the UK (both 2000), and six years later than in the USA (1995). Following a dip in 2002, a second, and more substantial, series of annual increments occurred, culminating in the overall peak of 295 articles in 2006. A similarly high level of coverage was also identified in 2008 (273 articles). Indeed, articles from these two years account for a third of the Canadian sample (33%). In 2009, however, the number of articles fell considerably, to 123 – a year-on-year decrease of 55% – returning to a similar level to 2003 (138 articles).

Figure 6.4: Cumulative number of articles in the Canadian press, 1993-2009

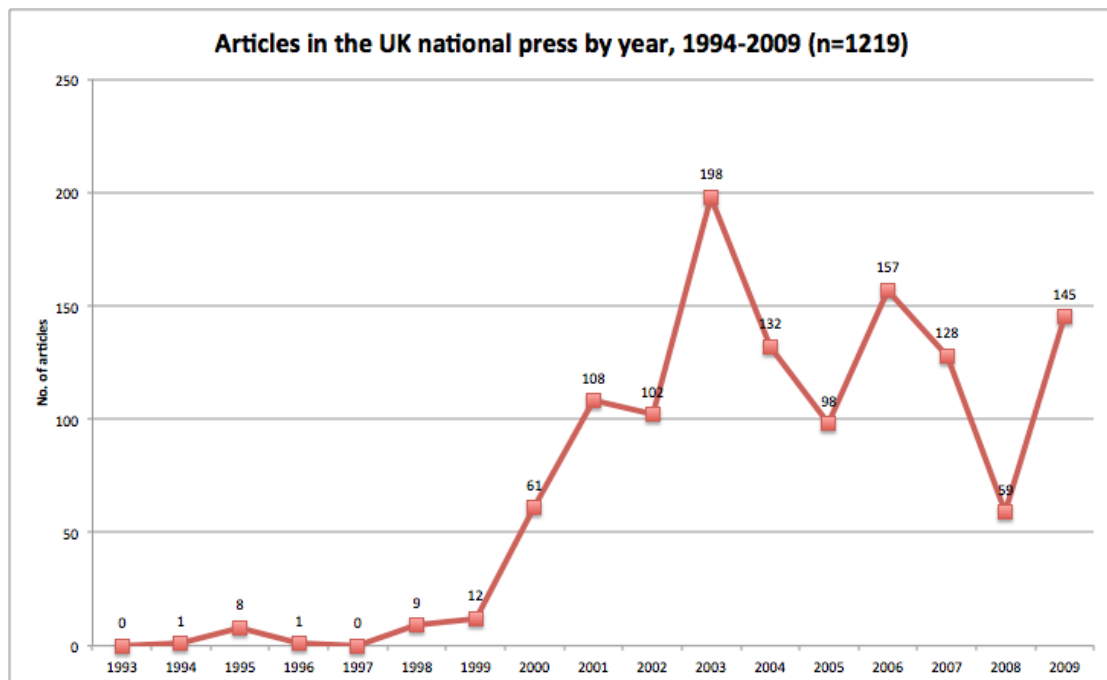


As Figure 6.4 demonstrates, during the period 1994-2000, the cumulative number of articles grew steadily, but very modestly. A total of 128 articles were identified across this seven year period, an average of 18 per year. Thus, the cumulative chart again illustrates the extent to which levels of coverage accelerated after the turn of the century. This is exemplified by the finding that 1601 (93%) of the 1,729 articles identified in Canada appeared during the nine year period 2001-09, an average of 178 per year (around ten times the average for 1994-2000).

Press coverage of online CSA in the UK

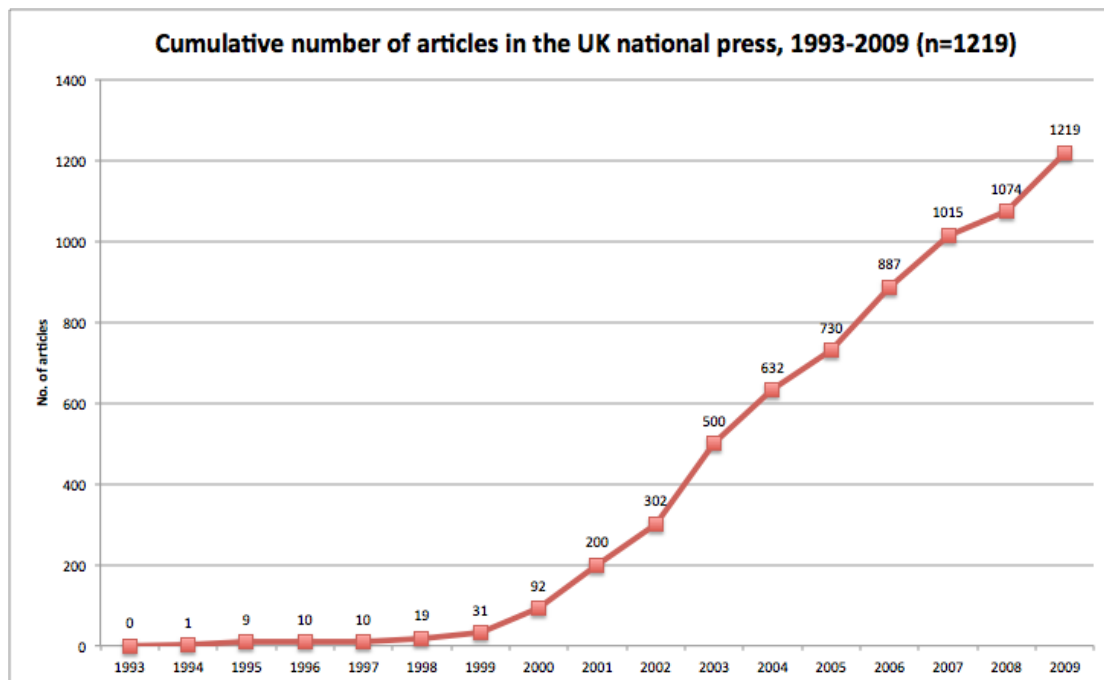
A total of 1,219 articles were identified in the UK national press. Figure 6.5 presents a breakdown of how they were distributed by year.

Figure 6.5: Breakdown of articles in the UK national press, 1993-2009



The first relevant article was identified in the UK national press in 1994. However, the first notable peak did not occur until 2000. Indeed, between 1994 and 1999 a total of 31 articles were identified, an average of 5 per year. By contrast, 61 articles were found in 2000 alone. The following year, 2001, is also notable as it demonstrates that, having started to emerge as an issue of concern in 2000, online CSA continued to attract headlines in the subsequent months. This differentiates the UK press from the other three countries, where the first notable spikes were not immediately followed by increases in coverage. In the UK, the outstanding year in terms of the overall volume of articles is 2003, when a total of 198 articles were identified. This overall highpoint is notably earlier than equivalents in Australia (2007), Canada (2006) and the USA (2006). Also of note is the erratic pattern after 2003. Where, generally speaking, coverage in the other three countries tended to work towards an overall peak before declining towards the end of the data collection period, coverage in the UK went through cyclical phases of falling for two years (2004-05 and 2007-08) before rising (2006 and 2009). The sharp fall in coverage in 2008 is particularly striking, as is the marked increase in 2009, when the number of articles increased by 146% on 2008.

Figure 6.6: Cumulative number of articles in the UK national press, 1993-2009

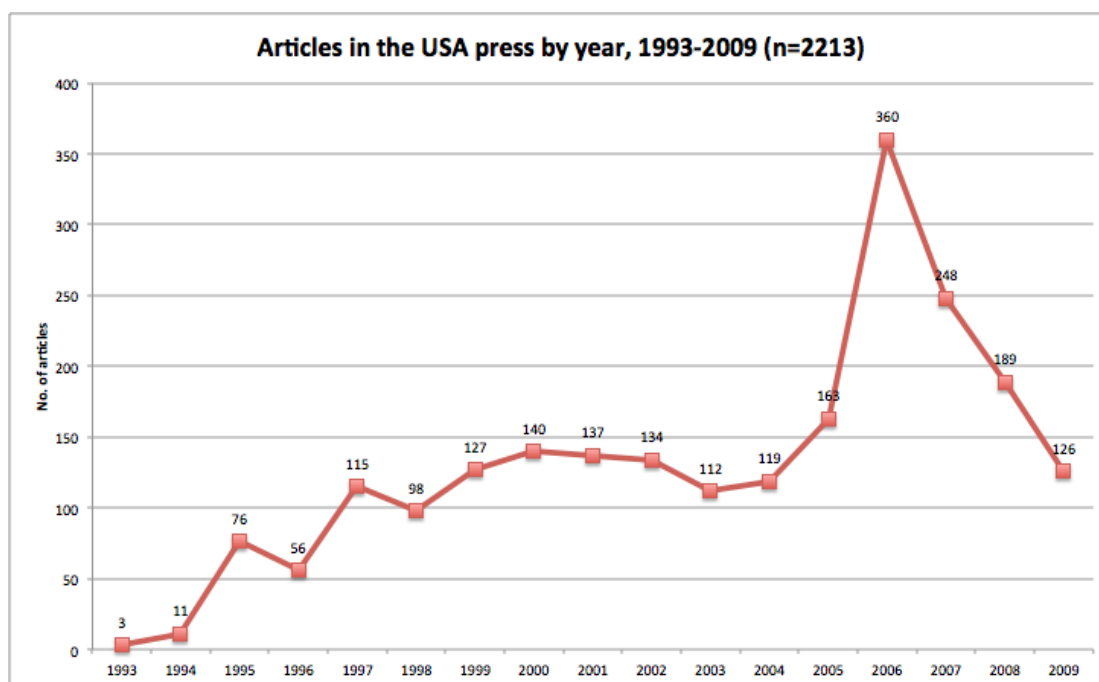


As Figure 6.6 demonstrates, the initial spike in 2000 instigated the first in a series of steady increments in the cumulative number of articles. While the curve remains almost flat between 1993 and 1999, it rises steadily, with varying degrees of sharpness, from 2000 up until 2009. Overall, 1,188 (97%) of the 1,220 articles identified in the UK sample were found during the period 2000-09, an average of 119 article per year. This equates to an increase of 114 on the annual averages identified in the years prior to 2000 (5 articles per year).

Press coverage of online CSA in the USA

A total of 2,213 articles were identified in the USA press. Figure 6.7 presents a breakdown of how they were distributed by year.

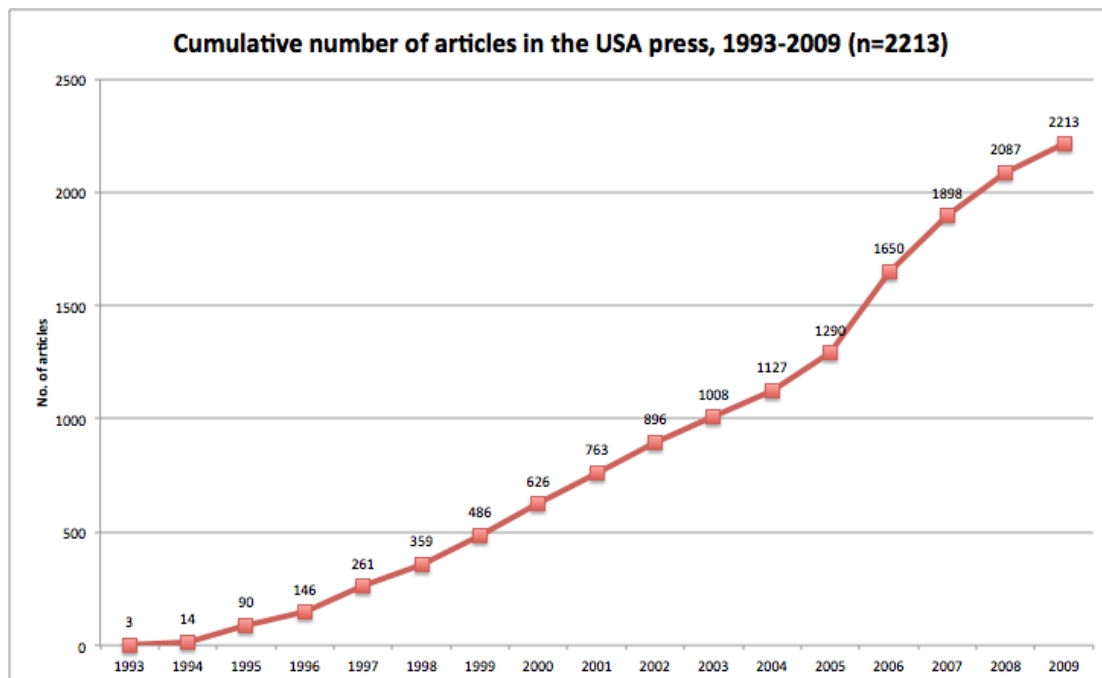
Figure 6.7: Breakdown of articles in the USA press, 1993-2009



The first relevant article was identified in 1993, which is earlier than in Australia (1995), Canada and the UK (1994). A sharp spike then occurred in 1995, which is also considerably earlier than equivalents in the other three countries. This was followed by a fall in 1996 before a remarkably consistent period between 1997 and 2004. Indeed, 115 articles were identified in 1997, 119 were identified in 2004, while the average for the period 1997-2004 was 123. This demonstrates that where the number of articles in other countries tended to fluctuate during this period (typically increasing), coverage in the US remained relatively consistent before starting to increase much later.

The standout year in the USA is 2006, when 360 articles were identified – more than double the number found in 2005. This was then followed by a period of sharp annual decreases up until 2009. However, it should be noted that although coverage in the period 2007-09 fell well below that of 2006, it remained relatively high – to the extent that 2007 and 2008 were the second and third most prolific years in the USA. By 2009 the number of articles had reduced to 126, a very similar level to that found during the period 1997-2004 (av. 123 per year).

Figure 6.8: Cumulative number of articles in the USA press, 1993-2009



Whereas my data suggests that online CSA did not receive concerted coverage in other countries until the beginning of the 21st century, Figure 6.7 shows that a concerted level of coverage began much earlier in the USA. Indeed, the only time the curve is relatively flat is between 1993 and 1994; from 1995 onwards a steady incline can be observed right up until 2009.

Cross-national

Having introduced the data for each country, I now consider it from a cross-national perspective. To begin, I recap some key points to have emerged so far in this chapter (summarised in Table 6.2).

First articles

The first articles in each country were all identified around the mid-1990s – 1993 in the USA, 1994 in Canada and the UK, and 1995 in Australia.

First peaks

In three of the four countries the first notable spikes in coverage were identified around the turn of the century. In Australia and the UK they occurred in 2000, while Canada's occurred in 2001. In the USA, however, the first spike was identified in

1995, notably earlier than the other three countries.

Highest peaks

In three of the four countries the highest peaks were identified towards the end of the data collection period. In Canada and the USA they occurred in 2006; in Australia it was in 2007. However, the highest peak in the UK occurred somewhat earlier, in 2003.

Status by the end of the data collection period

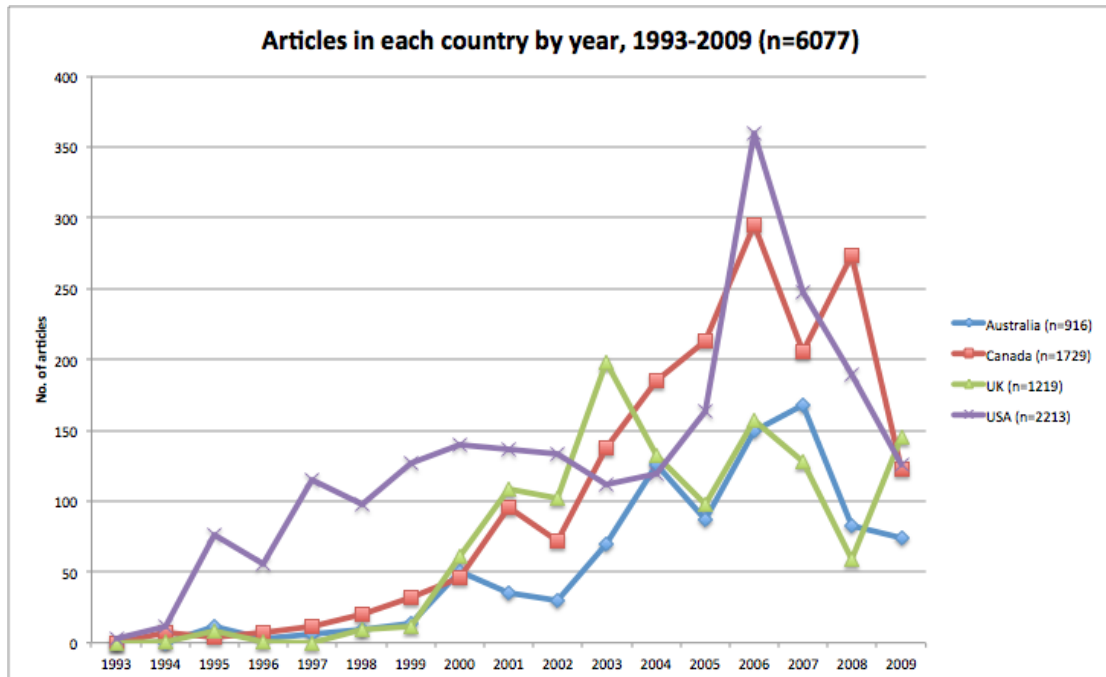
In three of the countries – Australia, Canada and the USA – the number of articles identified in 2009 was lower than in the previous year(s), considerably so in the cases of Canada and the USA. In the UK, however, the opposite trend was observed; following a notable slump in 2008, a very sharp 146% increase occurred in 2009. Also of note is that in all four countries the level of coverage found in 2009 had returned to a level very similar to those of 2003-04.

Table 6.2: Key points about newspaper coverage in each country

	Australia	Canada	UK	USA
First article	1995	1994	1994	1993
First peak	2000	2001	2000	1995
Highest peak	2007	2006	2003	2006
Status by 2009	Decline	Decline	Increase	Decline

By way of comparison, patterns in coverage for each country are presented concurrently in Figure 6.9.

Figure 6.9: Cross-national comparison of patterns in coverage, 1993-2009



As Figure 6.9 illustrates, in terms of annual coverage there are few common patterns – across all four countries. However, one observation that can be made is that online CSA is very much a 21st century problem; although articles pertaining to the issue can be traced back to the mid-1990s in all four countries, the vast majority of coverage appeared after 2000. This is further illustrated by Figure 6.10, which shows *combined* data for the four countries.

Figure 6.10: Cumulative articles across all countries, 1993-2009

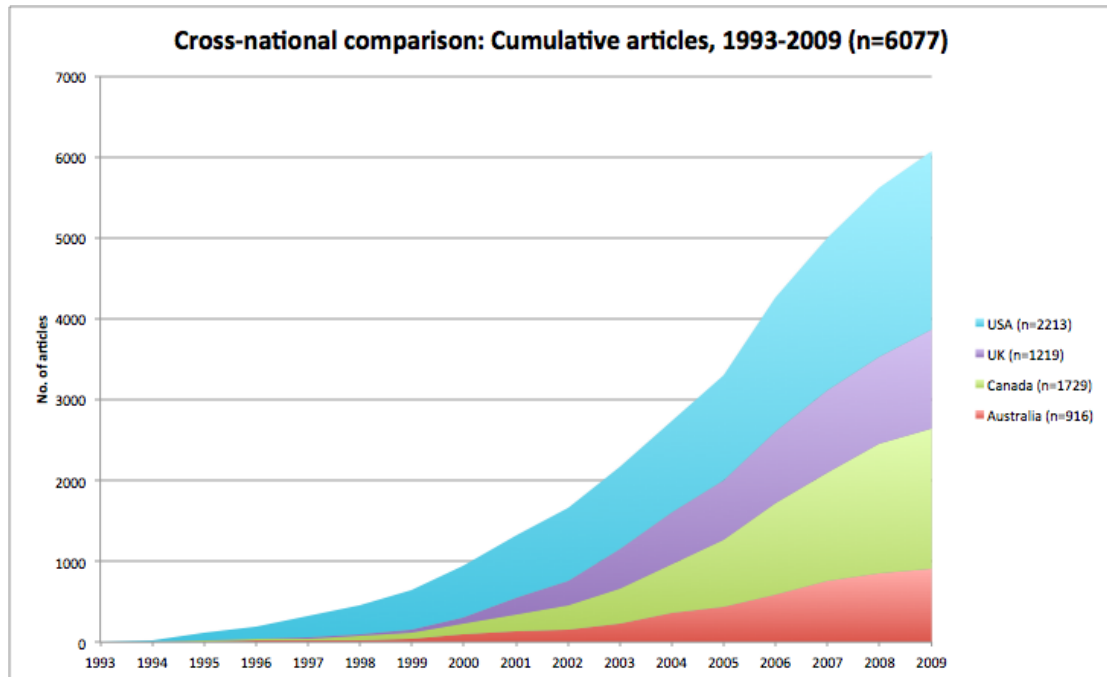


Figure 6.10 presents combined data for all four countries. This shows a steady, albeit relatively modest, incline from 1993-99, during which period a total 642 articles were found (av. 92 per year), 11% of the overall sample. This, of course, is largely due to the comparatively high level of coverage in the USA press. Following this, the period 2000-05 shows a series of steady, and much steeper, increments. These six years contain 2,651 articles (av. 442 per year), 44% of the overall sample. Finally, the period 2006-09 begins with a particularly sharp incline, due to 2006 being the most prolific year in Canada and the USA and the second most prolific year in Australia and the UK. More generally, coverage continued to grow during this four-year period, which contained 2,784 articles (av. 696 per year), or 46% of the overall sample. It is, of course, largely unsurprising that coverage has snowballed since the turn of the century as this correlates with the period through which levels of internet access and use have expanded, e.g. data from Pew Internet shows that the number of American adults going online increased from 14% in June 1995 to 50% in December 2000 and had reached 78% by August 2011 (Zickuhr and Smith, 2012).

Table 6.3: Articles in all countries during three phases, 1993-2009

Period	Articles	Proportion of corpus
1993-99	642	11%
2000-05	2,651	44%
2006-09	2,784	46%

Overall, the varied nature of each country's coverage suggests that each followed its own nationally-specific narrative (further explored in the following chapter). It is, however, worth commenting on the relative longevity of press interest in online CSA. It has grown from an initial spike between the mid-1990s (USA) and the turn of the century (other countries), and typically progressed towards an overall peak in the latter stages of the data collection period (i.e. 2006-07, except in the UK) before ultimately returning to a level comparable to 2003-04, when interest in the issue was first beginning to accelerate, as of 2009. This is noteworthy because any flatlining of coverage (Figure 6.10) in the later years might suggest that interest in the issue had tailed off as awareness grew. Thus, my data suggests that online CSA has not (yet) been subject to the kind of 'child abuse fatigue' that set in among journalists after the media's initial 'discovery' of CSA in the 1980s (Kitzinger and Skidmore, 1995). That said, it should be acknowledged that while coverage certainly did not diminish entirely, my data suggests it was on the decline in Australia, Canada and USA by 2009.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented an overview of data derived from the 6,077 articles in my corpus. As such, I have addressed my first research question, which is concerned with understanding *when* the issue of online CSA registered on the news agendas in each of the countries in this study.

My data is, of course, only indicative. However, the findings of this chapter suggest that the issue gradually emerged on the news agenda over an extended period of time: in every country the first article was found during the mid-1990s, but it was only in the USA that any concerted was found prior to the turn of the century. In the other three countries a steady trickle of coverage did not manifest into anything of note

until 2000-01. This, I suggested, may be due to the equally gradual expansion of internet access in each country, which is a key factor in defining the scope of the problem. Broadly speaking, coverage reached an overall peak towards the latter stages of the data collection period. A different pattern was observed in the UK, where coverage was characterised by a series of peak and troughs. The UK was also unique insofar as it was the only country where coverage was on an upward trajectory in 2009. A common trait identified across all four countries was that, by 2009, coverage had returned to a level roughly comparable to that of 2003 (Australia and Canada) or 2004 (UK and USA).

In sum, the key points to emerge from this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- Online CSA is a 21st century problem – although articles pertaining to the issue began to emerge during the mid-1990s, the vast majority of articles appeared after 2000.
- There are few clear similarities in terms patterns of coverage shared by all four countries, suggesting the issue has been largely framed through nationally-specific events (explored in the next chapter).
- The longevity of coverage, which has endured over many years and had far from diminished by 2009, suggests that there has been ongoing interest and that this issue has not been hampered by kind of ‘child abuse fatigue’ that affected coverage of offline abuse after the media’s initial ‘discovery’ of the problem.

The following chapter builds upon the findings of this chapter by analysing the ‘news hooks’ identified during peak weeks in order to pinpoint the key topics and events that have defined the issue in each country.

Chapter 7

Data Analysis II: News hooks and peak weeks

The previous chapter introduced my overall corpus and outlined the trajectory and momentum of newspaper coverage of online CSA between 1993 and 2009. This chapter develops those findings by presenting a more detailed analysis of the peaks in each country's coverage. As such, this chapter addresses my second research question, which is concerned with helping to understand the key topics and events that defined the construction of online CSA as a social problem.

Peak weeks

Having gathered my corpus of 6,077 newspaper articles, I identified the 20 weeks that contained the most coverage in each country ('peak weeks').⁷ Across the four countries, these peak weeks contained a total of 1,270 articles. These are broken down by country in Table 7.1.

⁷ 24 peak weeks were recorded for Australia as eight separate weeks contained the joint-seventeenth highest total of articles.

Table 7.1: Peak weeks articles

	Total articles, 1993-2009 (n)	Peak week articles	Peak week articles as % of n
Australia (24 peak weeks)	916	239	26%
Canada (20 peak weeks)	1729	374	22%
UK (20 peak weeks)	1219	330	27%
USA (20 peak weeks)	2213	327	15%
Total	6077	1270	21%

Articles found in peak weeks accounted for between 15% (USA) and 27% (UK) of the total number of articles found in each country. Across the four countries, the 1,270 articles found in peak weeks accounted for 21% of the overall corpus. This means that, on average, these 20-24 peak weeks contained around a fifth of all coverage found in the 17-year period 1993-2009. This was even more pronounced in certain years. For example, in July 2003, when the Toby Studebaker/Shevaun Pennington story was at its peak, *one* peak week in the UK press accounted for a quarter of the year's articles (25%). This tendency for high levels of coverage to be concentrated into short time periods, driven by high profile events, is indicative of what Iyengar terms "episodic framing", an approach to covering social problems whereby news coverage "depicts concrete events that illustrate issues" (1991: 14).

News genres

Each of the 1,270 articles in the peak weeks was coded into one of six categories of genre: (1) Column/opinion; (2) Feature; (3) Leader; (4) Letters; (5) News; or (6) TV/film review. The findings are presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Genres of article in peak weeks

Genre	Australia	Canada	UK	USA	Total
News	89%	90%	78%	88%	86%
Features	7%	3%	7%	3%	5%
Columns	2%	3%	8%	4%	4%
Leader	2%	3%	5%	3%	3%
Letters	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
TV/film review	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Unsurprisingly, given that my sample was derived from events that provoked peaks in coverage, the vast majority of articles were news reports (86%). These accounted for around nine-tenths of articles in Australia (89%), Canada (90%) and the USA (88%). Although news still accounted for the vast of the UK sample (78%), the proportion was markedly lower than in the other countries. Indeed, the combination of features (7%), opinion columns (8%), leaders (5%) and readers' letters (2%) accounted for over a fifth (22%) of the national sample, suggesting that the UK national press has allowed more scope for the issue to be defined through more opinionated – in some cases 'softer' – forms of journalism (see Franklin, 2008b).

In terms of differences between countries, opinion columns were notably higher in the UK (8%) than in Australia (2%), Canada (3%) and the USA (4%). Feature articles accounted for a greater proportion of articles in Australia and the UK (7%) than in Canada or the USA (3%). The proportion of leader articles was also greater in the UK (5%) than in Australia (2%), Canada (3%) or the USA (3%).

News Hooks

Articles were also coded according to their main news hook. These news hooks were collapsed into nine categories: (1) Grooming cases; (2) In-house

investigations/exposés; (3) Issue (scale, nature, etc.); (4) Legal system; (5) Other mass media; (6) Policing; (7) Research; (8) Safety; and (9) Other. (For an overview of these categories, see Appendix A.) Findings are presented in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Proportion of news hooks coded in peak weeks

News Hook	Australia	Canada	UK	USA	Total
Grooming case	50%	52%	61%	63%	56%
Safety	24%	9%	13%	17%	15%
Legal system	12%	27%	11%	6%	14%
Policing	7%	9%	3%	3%	5%
Research	3%	1%	4%	5%	3%
In-house investigation	3%	1%	5%	1%	2%
Issue (scale, nature, etc.)	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Other	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Other mass media	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Particularly noteworthy here is that over half (56%) of the coverage in peak weeks was dedicated to individual grooming cases. In the UK (61%) and USA (63%), grooming cases accounted for over three-fifths of coverage. They also accounted for around half of articles in Australia (50%) and Canada (52%). This is notable because, when such cases come to dominate the media landscape, particularly to the extent that the Studebaker/Pennington case did in the UK national press, they have the potential to become “common landmarks in public thinking” (Kitzinger, 2004: 182). This, I would suggest, may be particularly pertinent with regard to *new* social problems. After all, its newness will mean that few people will have pre-existing knowledge or experience to draw upon, meaning that the mass media has a particularly important role to play in constructing the issue, raising awareness and framing the terms of the

debate.⁸ As such, the high visibility of grooming cases is notable because it may “give... the impression that online predation is a growing and overwhelming menace [when] this is actually not the case” (Adler, 2010: 10).

Across the four countries, articles pertaining to safety measures were the second most common (15%), albeit with much less coverage than grooming cases. Articles pertaining to *safety* were particularly prominent in Australia, where they accounted for around a quarter of the national sample (24%). This is partly due to the Howard government’s heavy investment in an anti-paedophile programme aimed at ‘internet predators’ and child pornography (discussed below). Articles with *Safety* news hooks were also relatively common in the USA, where they accounted for just under one-fifth of the national sample (17%).

Similarly prominent were articles with a *Legal system* news hook. These accounted for 14% of the overall sample. These articles were particularly common in Canada, where they made up around a quarter of the national sample (24%). This is unsurprising as concerns about ‘internet predators’ were repeatedly used as justification for legislative changes (e.g. the increase to the age of consent, which took place in 2006). Articles relating to the legal system were comparatively rare in the USA (6%), but accounted for around a tenth of articles in Australia (12%) and the UK (11%).

Even when combined, articles with *Safety* and *Legal system* news hooks (29%) only accounted for around half as many articles as those pertaining to grooming cases (56%). Further, it is noteworthy that while individual grooming cases (court cases, abductions, charges, etc.) generated a vast amount of coverage, articles with *Research* or *Issue (scale, nature, etc.)* news hooks were relatively rare, accounting for a combined total of just 5% of the sample. Such coverage was particularly rare in Canada, where each of these news hooks accounted for just 1% of the national sample. More generally, one could hypothesise that the high visibility of individual grooming cases, combined with the lack of coverage of more ‘informed’ discussion of

⁸ As noted in Chapter 4, research by the European Commission (2008) found that almost two-thirds of respondents in the UK (64%) got information and advice about online safety tools and safe usage from the mass media. News reports were also found to have influenced parents’ decisions on the terms of their children’s internet use.

the issue (which may have trickled out after these cases, but was not sufficiently prominent to register during peak weeks), may result in a lack of context and understanding about the frequency of such cases and the scale of the problem more generally. From this perspective, it is striking that in-house investigations/exposés (2%) – wherein journalists typically pose as underage children in order to ‘prove’ how quickly and/or frequently they are propositioned for sex online – attracted a similar level of coverage to both *Research* (3%) and *Issue (scale, nature, etc.)* (2%). Indeed, in-house investigations were particularly common in the UK national press (5%), where they were more common than articles about research (4%), policing (3%) and the scale/nature of the problem (2%).

Peak weeks and news hooks by country

In the next section I take a closer look at the peaks weeks that were identified in each country and outline the news hooks and key events that constituted them.

Peak weeks: Australia

The first notable peak in Australian press coverage was found in 2000. A weekly breakdown of all coverage found between 2000 and 2009 is presented in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Weekly news coverage in the Australian press, 2000-09

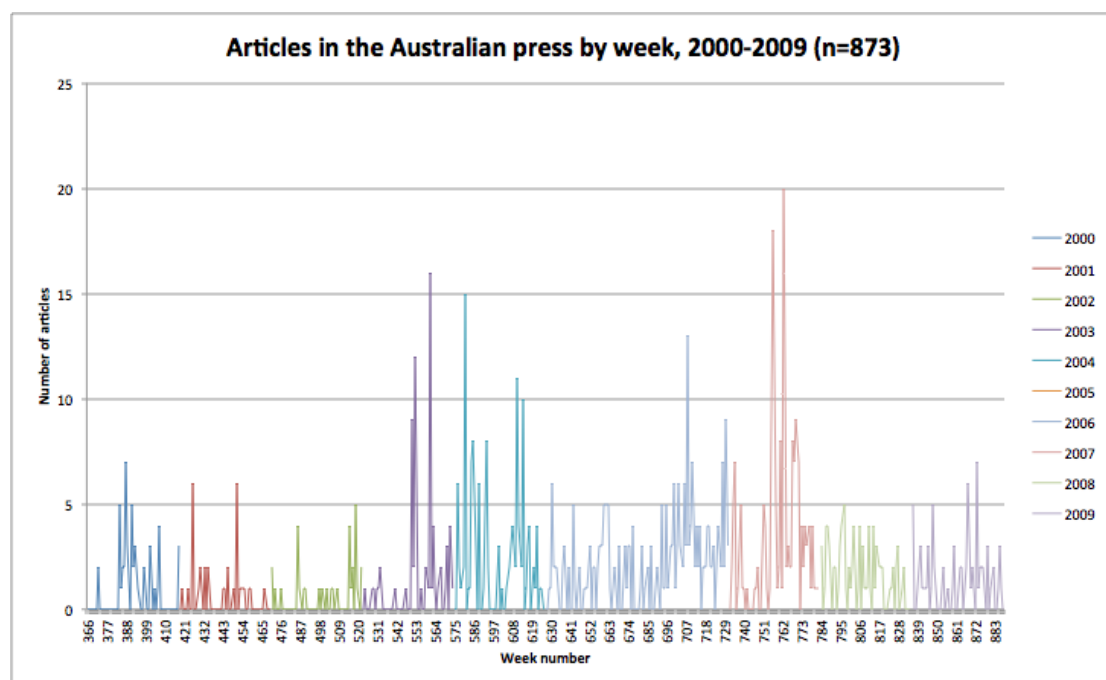


Figure 7.1 presents a weekly breakdown of the articles found in the Australian press during the period 2000-09 and demonstrates that the timings of spikes in coverage were varied, sporadic and largely unpredictable.

The number of articles contained within peak weeks ranges from seven to 20. Because eight weeks contained the minimum of seven articles, a total of 24 peak weeks are incorporated into the study of Australia. These 24 weeks contained a total of 239 articles. The years from which they originate are shown in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Peak weeks in the Australian press by year, 2000-09

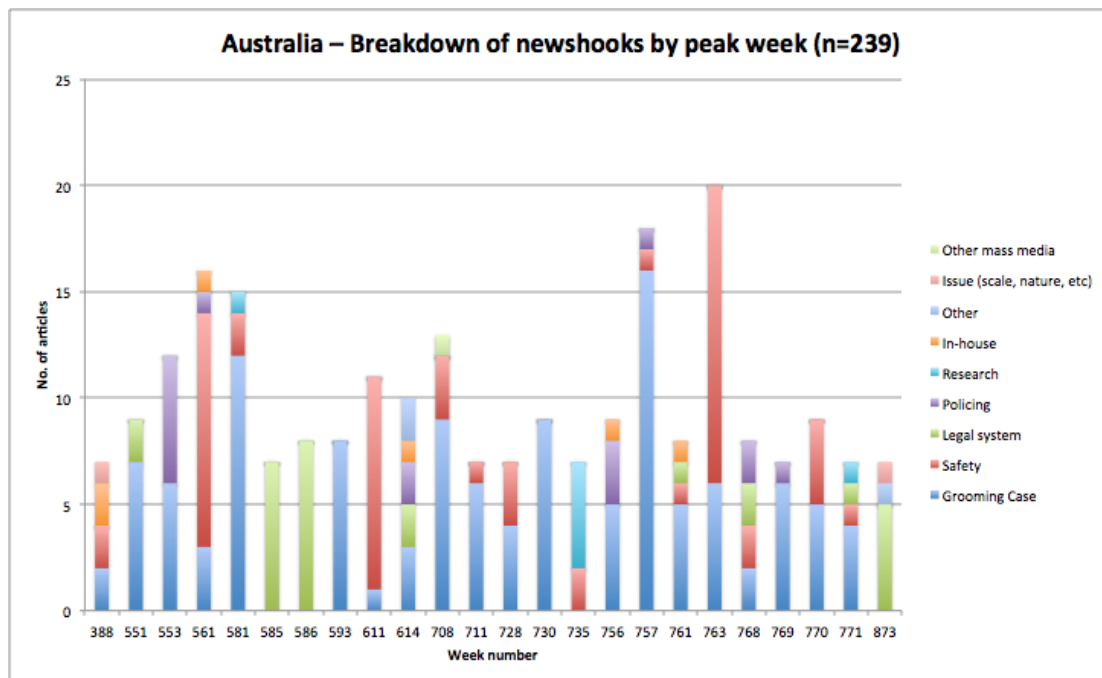
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Peak weeks	1	0	0	3	6	0	4	9	0	1	24

A few general observations can be made about the distribution of peak weeks in relation to the patterns identified in the previous chapter:

- The year of the first notable annual peak, 2000, also contained the first peak week.
- The three years that contained the highest levels of annual coverage – 2004, 2006 and 2007 – also contained the most peak weeks (4, 6 and 9 respectively).
- With the exception of 2009, which contained a peak week despite having the lowest coverage since 2003, the years where coverage dipped – 2001, 2002, 2005 and 2008 – did not contain any peak weeks.

The categories of news hook identified during 24 peak weeks in Australia are presented in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the Australian press



Particularly noteworthy events from Australia are outlined below. (A more detailed version is presented in Appendix C.)

In-house investigations

- **Week 388** (commencing 29 May 2000) – The earliest peak week in Australia. All seven articles came from the *Sunday Mail*, sister paper of the *Courier Mail*, whose in-house investigation made a front-page splash, ‘Easy prey: How we allow net predators to target our kids at home’ and reported that the prime minister, Peter Beattie, had “said he was alarmed by The Sunday Mail’s revelations” (*Sunday Mail*, 4 June 2000). Other headlines produced in this week included ‘Monsters in your child’s bedroom’ and ‘Chat pal turns into a demon’ (*Sunday Mail*, 4 June 2000).

Grooming cases

- **Week 551** (commencing 14 July 2003) – Toby Studebaker, a 31-year-old former US marine, and Shevaun Pennington, a 12-year-old from England, went missing together after forming a relationship through a chatroom. (Further details of the Studebaker case are provided in the UK table.)

- **Week 581** (commencing 9 February 2004) – Matthew Kennings, 26, became the first person to be jailed under new Queensland laws that permitted police to perform undercover ‘stings’. Sentencing him, the judge stated: “Children’s naivety and innocence can lead to them being very vulnerable to such sexual predators” (‘Net paedophile jailed’, *Townsville Bulletin/Townsville Sun*, 14 February 2004). An article in the *Courier Mail* detailed the “landmark jailing” of Kennings and noted that “parents did not appreciate how quickly an Internet predator could strike” (‘Parents warned of Net hunting ground’, 14 February 2004). This week also contained further reports on Toby Studebaker and the arrests of some Queensland men involved in an international paedophile network.
- **Week 708** (commencing 17 July 2006) – In the first conviction under anti-grooming laws in Victoria, 55-year-old Richard Meehan was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for attempting to procure a 15-year-old girl for sex through emails and text messages. This produced headlines such as ‘Landmark sex case man jailed’ (*Geelong Advertiser*, 22 July 2006) and ‘Predator jailed for sex texts: New law used for first time’ (*Herald Sun*, 22 July 2006). Also reported was the case of Terence Briscoe, who was caught trying to ‘groom’ an undercover police officer.
- **Week 757** (commencing 25 June 2007) – David Budd, a 28-year-old US navy serviceman, was caught trying to procure sex from an Australian police officer posing as a 14-year-old girl. This produced headlines such as ‘US sailor “sought sex” with girl, 14’ (*The Australian*, 25 June 2007) and ‘Child sex sting nets US sailor’ (*Hobart Mercury*, 25 June 2007). There was also news of a **police sting** targeting adults seeking to procure under-aged children through Skype, an event that produced headlines such as ‘Online sting entraps more Skype sex predators’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 June 2007).

Safety

- **Week 561** (commencing 22 September 2003) – Microsoft announced its intention to close its NineMSN chatrooms, leading to headlines such as ‘Pedophile fears cause chatrooms to close’ (*Courier Mail*, 25 September 2003), ‘Deviants force computer giant to act’ (*Herald Sun*, 25 September 2003).

2003), and ‘Microsoft praised and damned for closing chatrooms to protect children’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 September 2003).

- **Week 611** (commencing 6 September 2004) – Prime minister John Howard pledged to spend \$30.4 on a programme designed to tackle internet sex crimes against children in what *The Age* described as “the Coalition’s first policy initiative of the election campaign” (‘Howard in \$30m blitz on child sex’, 6 September 2004). This made the front pages of *The Age* and the *Canberra Times*, the latter of which reported that the initiative was designed “to protect Australian children and families from paedophiles” (‘Hey dads, it’s time to be family-friendly’, *Canberra Times*, 6 September 2004). This event also hints at the political capital of policies associated with children, families and CSA, with the *West Australian* reporting that “Mr Howard chose Father’s Day to make the announcement and said protecting Australia’s children should be the nation’s top priority. [...] He said studies had shown that almost half of parents felt the internet was a danger to their children” (‘\$30m to catch online paedophiles’, *West Australian*, 6 September 2004). Also reported was the launch of an educational campaign by Queensland police, part of which was the distribution to every police station of a booklet titled *Who’s chatting to your kids? A must read for parents with internet access*.
- **Week 708** (commencing 17 July 2006) – A new television and radio advertising campaign was launched by NetAlert, the Australian federal government’s internet safety advisory body. In one report of the NetAlert campaign, Barbara Biggs, a children’s campaigner, argued: “Few parents would leave their children alone in a house with all the windows and doors open. But this is what we do when we leave our kids on the internet without protection or monitoring” (‘Net stranger danger alert’, *Courier Mail*, 21 June 2006). A Perth headmaster quoted in the same article adopted similar rhetoric when constructing the internet as a threat to the home: “Young users become prey for those who know how to spy upon them because the internet is inherently an electronic conduit into our homes”.
- **Week 763** (commencing 6 August 2007) – The Australian government launched a new \$189m internet safety programme, *NetAlert: Protecting*

Australian Families Online, which allocated \$43.5m to the expansion of a specialist online child sex exploitation team.

Legal system

- **Weeks 585 and 586** (commencing 8 March 2004) – Draft legislation proposing to impose sentences of up to 15 years for ‘grooming’ children over the internet. According to the *Australian*, “Australia presently has no uniform national laws dealing with internet crimes against children” (‘New laws mean jail for luring children on web’, 15 March 2004). The same article reported that the justice and customs minister, Christopher Ellison, had “said the draft laws were unusually tough, and demonstrated how serious the Government was about stopping pedophiles before they meet children”.
- **Week 873** (commencing 14 September 2009) – Announcement of new legislation targeting sex tourism and online grooming, through which “Grooming an overseas child for sex will be outlawed for the first time, and a new class of internet child sex offences will also be declared” (‘Sex tourist law review’, *Courier Mail*, 14 September 2009).

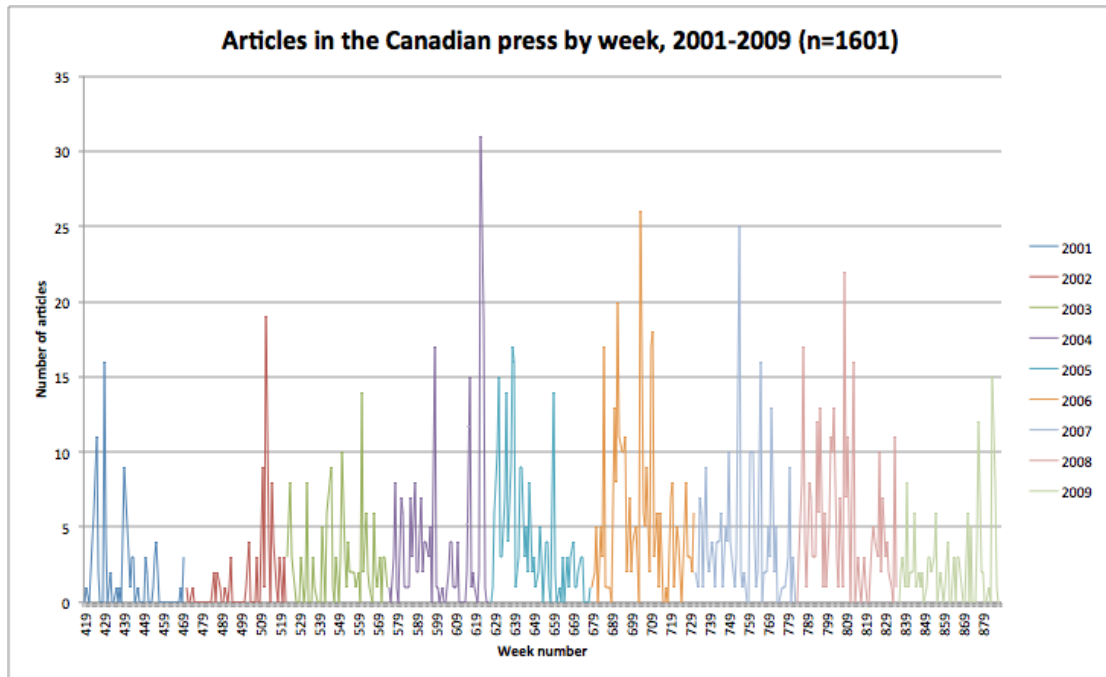
Illustration 7.1: Safety information distributed by Queensland Police and NetAlert.



Peak weeks: Canada

The first notable peak in Canadian press coverage occurred in 2001. A weekly breakdown of all coverage found between 2001 and 2009 is presented in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: Weekly news coverage in the Canadian press, 2001-09



The 20 peak weeks found in the Canadian press contained a total of 374 articles with weekly totals ranging from 15 to 31. The years from which these peak weeks originate are shown in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5: Peak weeks in the Canadian press by year, 2001-09

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Peak weeks	1	1	0	4	3	5	2	3	1	20

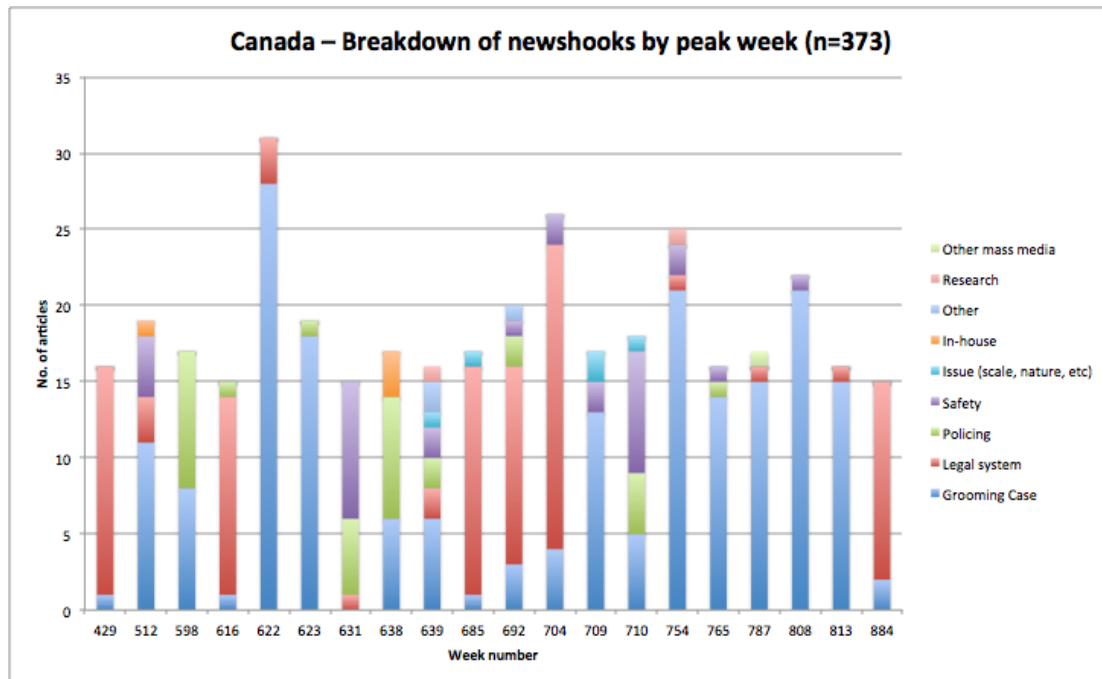
A few general observations can be made about the distribution of peak weeks in relation to the patterns identified in the previous chapter:

- The year of the first overall peak, 2001, also contained the first peak week.
- Despite seeing a sharp increase in annual coverage, 2003 did not contain any peak weeks. It was, however, the only year in the period 2001-09 that did not contain a peak week.
- The year that contained the highest number of articles, 2008, also contained the most peak weeks (five). The four next highest years – 2004, 2005, 2007

and 2008 – were the only years to contain more than one peak week (four, three, two and three respectively).

The categories of news hook identified during 20 peak weeks in Canada are presented in Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the Canadian press



Particularly noteworthy events from Canada are outlined below. (A more detailed version is presented in Appendix D.)

Legal system

- **Week 429** (commencing 12 March 2001) – The earliest peak week in Canada was dominated by proposals for new legislation that included the outlawing of internet grooming. This produced headlines such as ‘Bill targets child porn, Net stalkers’ (*Gazette*, 15 March 2001) and ‘Justice bill zeroes in on cyber pervs’ (*Toronto Sun*, 15 March 2001). The legislation was described in the *Edmonton Sun* as “a justice package that would pull the plug on cyber-predators who use the Internet to lure children for sex” (‘McLellan introduces bill to deal with internet porn’, 15 March 2001). Outlining the proposed changes, the justice minister, Anne McLellan said: “We believe that this

package is about the protection of society, particularly those parts that deal with sexual exploitation of children – protection of the most vulnerable members of society” (‘Child porn viewers on net may be charged’, *Toronto Star*, 15 March 2001).

- **Week 616** (commencing 11 October 2004) – Three years later, the justice minister, Irwin Cotler, announced proposals to store DNA records of a wider range of convicted criminals – including adults found to have sexually exploited children through the internet. This produced headlines such as ‘Online predators of children may be added to DNA bank’ (*National Post*, 16 October 2004) and ‘Perverts face DNA order’ (*Edmonton Sun*, 16 October 2004).
- **Week 685** (commencing 6 February 2006) – Coverage of government proposals to increase the age of consent from 14 to 16. The perceived threat of internet predators was key to newspaper coverage of this proposed legislative change. One leader asserted: “*Given the number of predators who use the Internet to prey on young people*, the current age of 14 is clearly too low for consent to be given” (‘The Tories should move quickly to raise age of consent’, *Vancouver Province*, 9 February 2006). A line reproduced across the Post Media Network titles stated: “The age of consent law has been in place since 1892 and the Conservatives have lobbied for years for it to be raised, particularly in light of *all-too-common luring of young people via the Internet*” (‘Tories will raise age of consent’, *Calgary Herald*, 8 February 2006). Also quoted was Roz Prober, of child advocacy group Beyond Borders, who stated: “We have been working on that for so long and so hard, it is just about a *no-brainer in the Internet era*” (‘Tories set to raise age of consent’, *Edmonton Journal*, 8 February 2006).
- **Week 692** (commencing 27 March 2006) – Debate over the criminality of ‘talking dirty’ to a child over the internet. This followed the case of Craig Legare, who had recently been acquitted in what the *Edmonton Journal*’s front page story called a “precedent-setting decision” after a judge found that despite having held sexually explicit online conversations with a 12-year-old girl, Legare had not made any attempt to meet her (‘Talking dirty to child is no crime’, *Edmonton Journal*, 1 April 2006). The same article stated that the

ruling was “the first in the country to clarify a murky Internet luring law passed in 2002”. This story attracted headlines such as ‘Internet sex chat with kids ruled legal’ (*Calgary Herald*, 1 April 2006) and ‘Online sex chats with children not considered luring, judge rules’ (*Ottawa Citizen*, 1 April 2006).

- **Week 704** (commencing 19 June 2006) – Further debate over proposals to increase the age of consent. Fears about internet predators remained central, producing headlines such as ‘Tories move to raise age of consent to 16: Bill takes aim at cyber predators’ (*Windsor Star*, 23 June 2006). In a news conference the justice minister, Vic Toews, stated: “We are committed to protecting our most vulnerable citizens. [...] More and more, ordinary Canadians are concerned about the growing problem of child sexual predators, especially in the Internet age” (‘Tories move to raise age of sexual consent’, *London Free Press*, 23 June 2006). This was welcomed in an opinion piece in the *Star Phoenix*, which stated: “The current law was established in the 19th century, long before it was envisioned that adults could be invading strangers’ homes through the use of the Internet” (‘Raising consent age in Canada highly overdue’, 20 June 2006).
- **Week 884** (commencing 30 November 2009) – Further debate over the criminality of ‘dirty talk’ after Legare’s original sentence was overturned (see Week 692). This was seen as a landmark ruling because it was “the court’s first interpretation of Canada’s seven-year-old law against Internet luring” (‘Court closes loophole in child luring law’, *Calgary Herald*, 4 December 2009). Justice Morris Fish asserted: “The offender need not meet or intend to meet the victim[.] This is in keeping with Parliament’s objective to close the cyberspace door before the predator gets in to prey” (‘Court closes loophole in child luring law’, *Calgary Herald*, 4 December 2009). Rosalind Prober, the president of child advocacy group Beyond Borders “hail[ed] [it] as a groundbreaking decision” (‘Supreme Court tightens Internet luring rules’, *Globe and Mail*, 4 December 2009) and called it “globally precedent-setting” (‘Authorities hail ruling on luring’, *Edmonton Sun*, 4 December 2009), arguing that “[o]ther countries around the world have not gone this far in their grooming legislation. This certainly puts us at the forefront of international

child rights law” (‘Supreme Court tightens Internet luring rules’, *Globe and Mail*, 4 December 2009).

Grooming cases

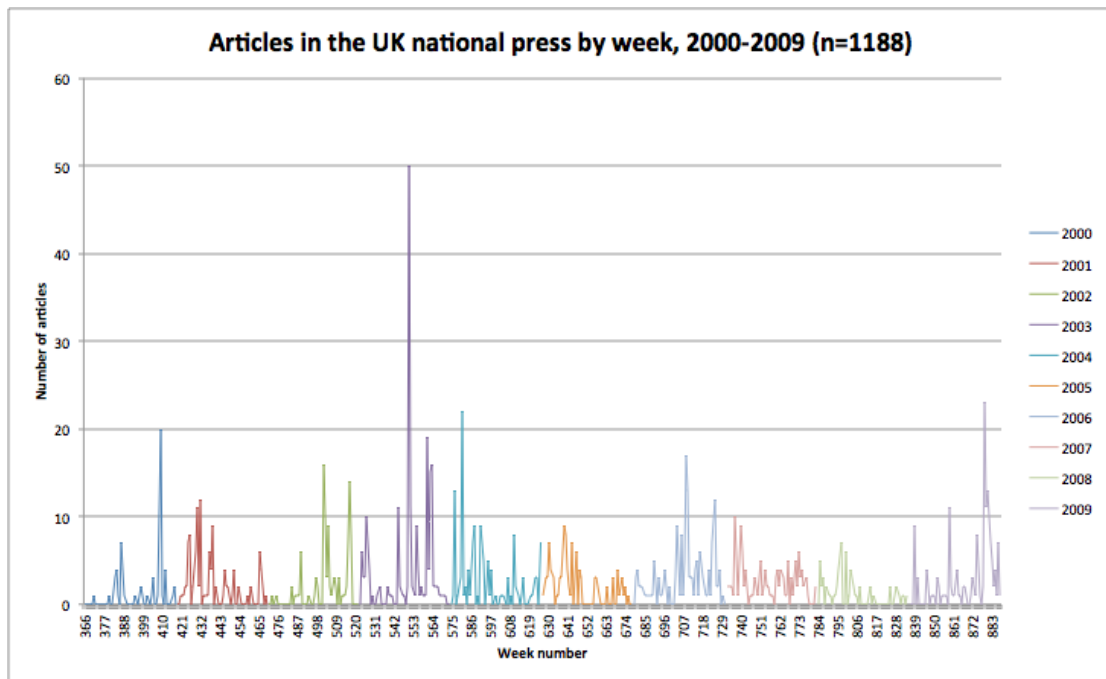
- **Weeks 622 and 623** (commencing 22 November 2004) – Sergio Arana-Martinez, a Nicaraguan, became the first person prosecuted for using a computer to facilitate sexual interference with a person under the age of 14, after luring an 11-year-old girl and keeping her captive for 15 hours. As well as being a landmark case, Martinez’s sentence caused controversy because he was not forced to serve any further jail time due to having spent 21 months in custody prior to his trial. A leader column in the *Globe and Mail* argued that the trial judge “appears not to have understood the vulnerability of children in the electronic age” (‘Lured and assaulted’, *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 2004).
- **Week 754** (commencing 4 June 2007) – Constable Seth Paine, a 32-year-old Vancouver Island RCMP officer, was charged with having sex with an underage girl he had met online, producing headlines such as ‘Mountie knew teen underage, trial told’ (*Edmonton Journal*, 6 June 2007). Also reported was the case of Shaun Bradford, a 41-year-old man who invited an undercover police officer posing as a 12-year-old girl to watch him masturbate via a webcam.
- **Week 765** (20 August 2007) – Joshua Innes, 25, was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment after using various online personas to exploit underage girls. The judge called Innes’ crimes “unprecedented”, stating “These predators have an easy in, and are afforded a new and frightening gateway to children through the internet. [...] Children must be protected. This gateway must be shut down” (‘Internet sex predator sentenced to nine years’, *Calgary Herald*, 22 August 2007). As well as claiming Innes had targeted “hundreds and hundreds” of girls in a single year, Edmonton Police Det. Randy Wickins, of the Alberta Integrated Child Exploitation team, commented, “These crimes were often committed while the parents were in the home and the child was online[.] A kid should not have privacy on the Internet... because the risks

are so high that they will meet someone like this” (‘Internet sex predator sentenced to nine years’, *Calgary Herald*, 22 August 2007).

Peak weeks: UK

The first notable peak in UK national press coverage was found in 2000. A weekly breakdown of all coverage found between 2000 and 2009 is presented in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5: Weekly news coverage in the UK national press, 2000-09



The 20 peak weeks in the UK national press contained a total of 330 articles with weekly totals ranging from 11 to 50. The years from which these peak weeks originate are shown in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Peak weeks in the UK national press by year, 2000-09

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Peak weeks	1	2	2	6	2	0	3	0	0	4	20

A few general observations can be made about the distribution of peak weeks in relation to the patterns identified in the previous chapter:

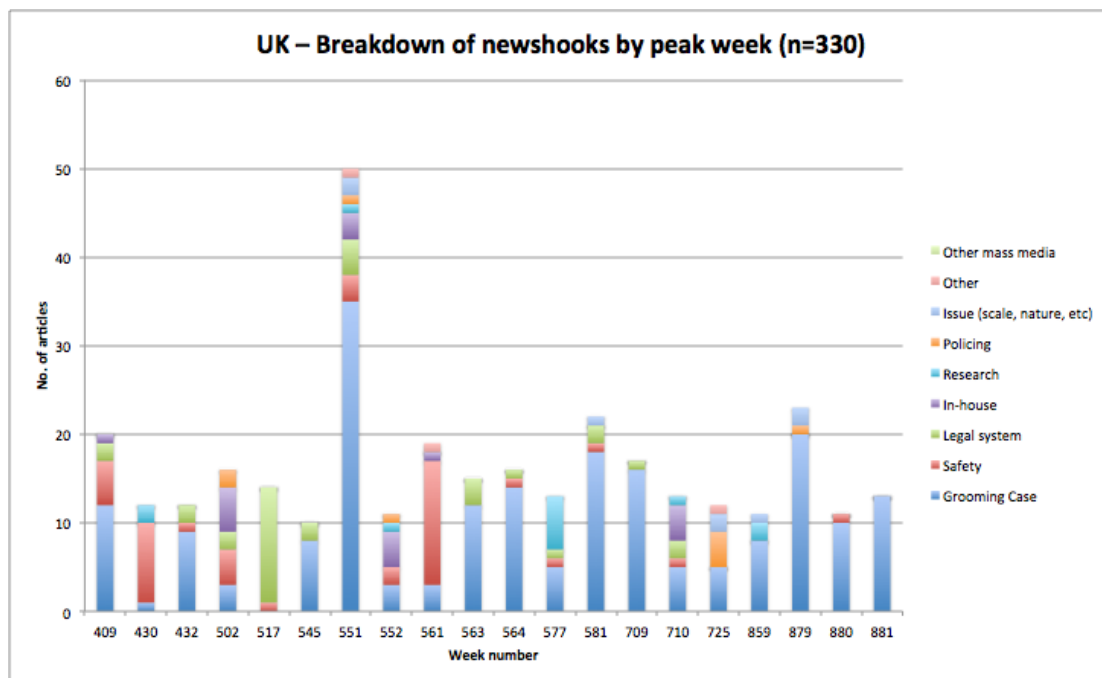
- The year of the first overall peak, 2000, also contained the first peak week.

- The three years that contained the highest levels of annual coverage – 2003, 2006 and 2009 – also contained the most peak weeks (six, three and four respectively).
- Only two years in the period 2009-09 did not contain any peak weeks – 2005 and 2008. These were years where annual coverage declined sharply.

Key events: UK

The categories of news hook identified during 20 peak weeks in the UK national press are presented in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the UK press



Particularly noteworthy events from the UK are outlined below. (A more detailed version is presented in Appendix E.)

Grooming cases

- Week 409 (commencing 23 October 2000) – The earliest peak week in the UK centred around the trial of 33-year-old Patrick Green, who was jailed for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl he had met in a chatroom. This produced front page headlines such as ‘Parents warned of internet chatroom dangers’ (*Daily Mail*, 25 October 2000) and ‘Predator’ (*Daily Mirror*, 25 October

2000). The *Daily Mirror* launched a “Protect our kids on the net” campaign, fronted by television personality Carol Vorderman. The *Daily Mail* reported that Green’s was “the first case of its kind in Britain, but the judge warned that youngsters throughout the country are at risk from such ‘predators’” (‘Parents warned of internet chatroom dangers’ (*Daily Mail*, 25 October 2000).

- **Week 545** (commencing 2 June 2003) – Michael Wheeler, 36, found guilty of ‘grooming’ two girls in chatrooms and having sex with them once they turned 13. This case caused particular controversy because he was said to have exploited a legal loophole by waiting until his victims reached 13, the age at which the maximum sentence for unlawful intercourse decreased from life to two years. This produced headlines such as ‘Outrage: Just 3 years for chatroom sex attacker of girls, 13’ (*Daily Express*, 7 June 2003) and ‘Just 3 years: This pervert had sex with two young girls he groomed in internet chat rooms’ (*Daily Mirror* 7 June 2003). It also provoked leaders such as ‘Our raped kids’ (*Sun*, 7 June 2006) and ‘Keep him caged’ (*Daily Mirror*, 7 June 2006).
- **Week 551** (commencing 14 July 2003) – The most prolific week in any country centred around Toby Studebaker, a 31-year-old American with a US marine background, who disappeared for five days with Shevaun Pennington, a 12-year-old girl from Leigh, Greater Manchester. After communicating online for around a year, Studebaker flew from America to the UK to meet Pennington before the pair flew to Paris. They then travelled to Strasbourg and Frankfurt, where they were eventually found and Studebaker was arrested. This case produced a vast amount of coverage, partly due to having the full narrative of the initial disappearance, the international search, the location of the pair, Studebaker’s arrest and Pennington’s safe return. As well as prompting readers’ letters and numerous in-house investigations, the Studebaker case also prompted columns with titles such as ‘Dangers that lurk at click of a button’ (*Express*, 15 July 2003), ‘A playground for paedophiles’ (*Daily Mail*, 16 July 2003) and ‘Stranger danger to your child at home’ (*Daily Mirror*, 16 July 2003).
- **Week 563** (commencing 6 October 2003) – Trial of 64-year-old Douglas Lindsell, who ‘groomed’ at least 73 girls from around the world, all aged

between 12 and 16. Lindsell was sentenced to five years' imprisonment after admitting to attempted abduction, sexual and threatening harassment, incitement to gross indecency and possession of indecent images of children. The prolificacy of Lindsell's grooming made this case particularly newsworthy, producing headlines such as 'World's biggest pervert' (*Sun*, 10 October 2003), 'The perfect family man who preyed on young chatroom girls: Five years for world's most prolific child groomer' (*Guardian*, 10 October 2003) and 'Sex monster, 64, preyed on girls: World's no.1 net pervert is jailed' (*Daily Star*, 10 October 2003). Drawing upon Lindsell's case, one newspaper's front page headline asked, 'Are any of our children safe on the net?' (*Daily Mail*, 10 October 2003).

- **Week 564** (commencing 7 October 2003) – Court of Appeal extended Michael Wheeler's prison sentence by 18 months. This resulted in headlines such as 'That's justice: Judge insists this evil internet pervert must stay in jail for longer' (*Daily Express*, 16 October 2003), 'Web pervert who lured schoolgirls must serve an extra 18 months' (*Daily Mail*, 16 October 2003) and 'Longer jail sentences for internet paedophiles' (*Daily Telegraph*, 16 October 2003), as well as leaders like 'Message for net perverts' (*Daily Express*, 16 October 2003) and 'Give evil fiends life' (*Daily Star*, 16 October 2003).
- **Week 581** (commencing 9 February 2004) – Trial of Toby Studebaker, which produced headlines such as 'Groomed by the Internet predator' (*Daily Mail*, 13 February 2004) and 'Internet pervert ruined the life of girl, 12' (*Daily Express*, 13 February 2004).
- **Week 709** (commencing 24 July 2006) – Three cases: Mehdi Boudjedra, a 31-year-old man who was charged with grooming a 15-year-old girl he had met online; Simon Thomas, a priest who was jailed for sexually abusing boys aged between 11 and 15 who he had groomed online; and Mark Bedford, a 21-year-old Canadian who was arrested in his homeland after a joint operation with British police. The Bedford case was particularly prominent due to allegations he had exploited over 100 girls – 42 in Kent, England, alone. This case produced headlines such as 'British girls "lured into internet sex acts" by Canadian' (*Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 2006) and attracted further coverage the following week, also a peak week, when it inspired numerous in-house

investigations and continued to produce headlines such as ‘Police took a year to find paedophile with 40 Internet victims’ (*Daily Mail*, 31 July 2007).

- **Week 879** (commencing 26 October 2009) – Ashleigh Hall raped and murdered by Peter Chapman, a 33-year-old man who had posed as a 16-year-old college student in order to befriend and arrange a date with Hall through Facebook. This case produced headlines such as ‘Groomed & killed by Facebook beast’ (*Daily Star*, 28 October 2009) and ‘Teenager found dead in field after arranging internet date’ (*The Times*, 28 October 2009).
- **Week 881** (commencing 9 November 2009) – A story high in novelty value where Cheryl Roberts, of Bridgend, Wales, created a false profile of a 14-year-old girl in order to ‘trap’ her 68-year-old husband, David Roberts, who she suspected of grooming underage girls on the internet. When he propositioned her underage persona for sex, she reported him to the NSPCC and police. This produced headlines such as ‘Wife posed as girl of 14 online to trap predator husband’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 2009), ‘Paedo trapped by wife posing as girl on web’ (*Daily Mirror*, 13 November 2009) and ‘Monster & Mrs’ (*Sun*, 14 November 2009).

Legal system

- **Week 517** (commencing 18 November 2002) – Command paper presented by the home secretary, David Blunkett, titled ‘Protecting the Public’, which outlined proposed changes to laws around sex crimes, including online offences against children. Headlines leading on the proposed ‘grooming’ law included ‘Blunkett cracks down on internet paedophiles’ (*Daily Express*, 20 November 2002) and ‘Blunkett targets paedophiles who prowl the internet’ (*Daily Mail*, 20 November 2002).

Safety

- **Week 561** (commencing 22 September 2003) – Microsoft announced it would be closing its chatrooms in response to fears about child safety. This produced front page headlines such as ‘Microsoft chatrooms to close after abuse fear’ (*Guardian*, 24 September 2003) and ‘Microsoft closes chatrooms to curb paedophile menace’ (*Independent*, 24 September 2003). Some coverage was,

however, sceptical. A *Guardian* report asked, ‘An end to chat: MSN’s decision to close hundreds of chatrooms has been widely praised, but could it make children even more vulnerable?’ (*Guardian*, 25 September 2003). This report argued that “[t]hanks to high-profile court cases vividly reported in the tabloid press, chatrooms are quickly becoming synonymous with paedophilia” and cited critics such as Dr Rachel O’Connell, director of the Cyberspace Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire, who stated, “I suspect this is perhaps a bit of a knee-jerk reaction... It doesn’t grapple with the issue”.

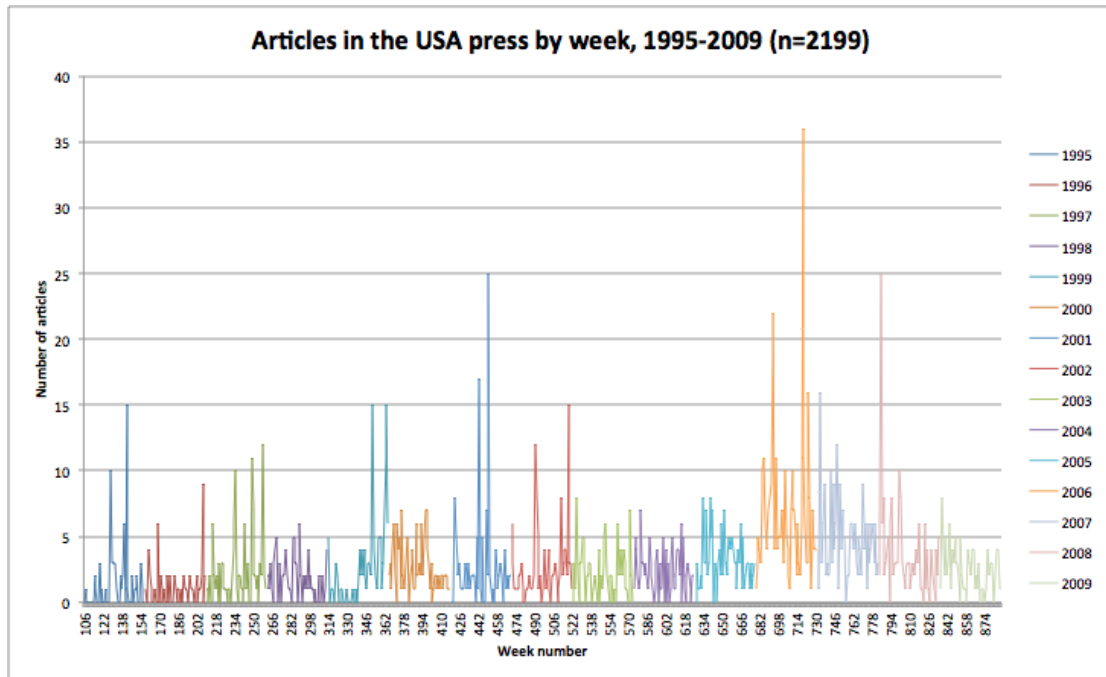
Illustration 7.2: UK press coverage of (a) Patrick Green, (b) Toby Studebaker, (c) Douglass Lindsell, (d) Mark Bedford and (e) Michael Wheeler.



Peak weeks: USA

The first notable spike in US press coverage was found in 1995. A weekly breakdown of articles found between 1995 and 2009 is presented in Figure 7.7.

Figure 7.7: Weekly news coverage in the USA press, 1995-2009



Peak weeks in the USA contained a total of 327 articles with weekly totals ranging from 11 to 36. The years from which these peak weeks originate are shown in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Peak weeks in the USA press by year, 1995-2009

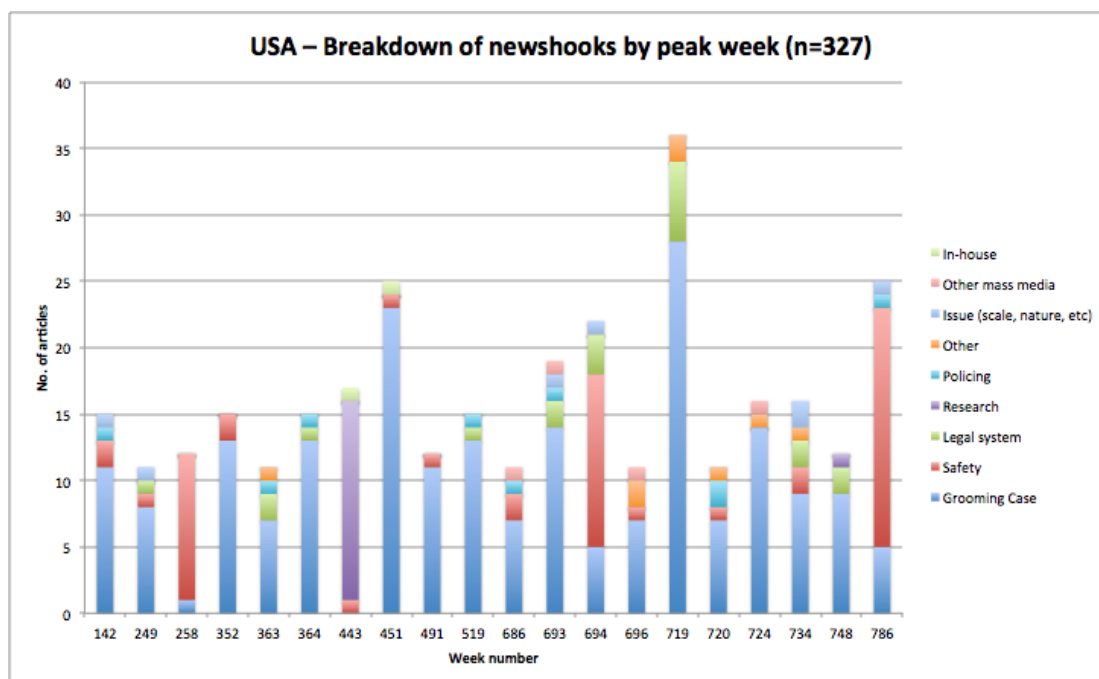
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Peak weeks	1	0	2	0	3	0	2	2	0	0	0	7	2	1	0	20

A few general observations can be made about the distribution of peak weeks in relation to the patterns identified in the previous chapter:

- The year of the first overall peak, 1995, also contained the first peak week.
- The USA was the only country to contain peak weeks prior to 2000. These occurred in 1995 (one), 1997 (two) and 1999 (three).
- The standout year in terms of overall coverage, 2006, contained more than twice as many peak weeks as any other year.

The categories of news hook identified during the 20 peak weeks in USA are presented in Figure 7.8.

Figure 7.8: Categories of news hook during peak weeks in the USA press



Particularly noteworthy events from the USA are outlined below. (A more detailed version is presented in Appendix F.)

Grooming cases

- **Week 142** (commencing 11 September 1995) – The earliest peak week in the USA focussed on twelve men arrested for soliciting sex from children through the internet. Some of this early coverage presented the internet as a serious paedophile threat for young users, e.g. the *New York Daily News* quoted a police officer saying, “There's no difference between cyberspace and everyday life historically, [paedophiles] went to playgrounds, amusement parks and malls. It's the same thing in cyberspace, they go where the kids are” (“Talkin’ dirty – online probers trolled net with jail bait’, *New York Daily News*, 15 September 1995).
- **Week 352** (commencing 20 September 1999) – Patrick Naughton, a high-ranking executive with Infoseek, an affiliate of Disney, caught soliciting sex with an FBI agent posing as a 13-year-old girl online. This produced headlines such as ‘Infoseek Executive Is Charged With Seeking Sex From Minor’ (*New York Times*, 21 September 1999) and ‘WebMaster Caught in Police Net;

Executive's Arrest On Sex Charge Shocks Disney' (*Washington Post*, 23 September 1999). Naughton's subsequent court case also featured heavily in weeks 363 and 364, also peak weeks.

- **Week 451** (commencing 13 August 2001) – Two men (James Warren and Michael Montez) and a woman (Beth Loschin) from Long Island, New York, arrested and charged with kidnapping and raping a 15-year-old Massachusetts girl they had groomed in a chatroom. Unsurprisingly, given the location of the offence, coverage was particularly prominent in the New York titles, which produced headlines such as 'Jail for 3 in girl's internet sex horror' (*New York Daily News*, 13 August 2001) and 'Cybersex mistress fingers fiend pal' (*New York Post*, 16 August 2001).
- **Week 491** (commencing 20 May 2002) – After meeting online, Saul Dos Reis, a 25-year-old Brazilian, strangled and killed 13-year-old Christina Long during a sexual encounter. This produced headlines such as 'Slain Girl Used Internet To Seek Sex, Police Say' (*New York Times*, 22 May 2002) and 'Dangers of Internet chat rooms: Slain girl was aware of risks of cyberspace, guardian says' (*Houston Chronicle*, 23 May 2002). Reflecting on the case, the *New York Times*, carried a substantial piece titled, 'Police Ask Parents to Hover When Their Children Log On' (26 May 2002), which quoted John A. Danaher III, US attorney and member of the Task Force on Internet Crimes Against Children, warning, "No parent would allow a stranger in the house and let them walk into a child's bedroom but that's what you're doing if you let a child have a computer in their own room".
- **Week 693** (commencing 3 April 2006) – Brian Doyle, a US Department of Homeland Security employee, arrested after sending sexually explicit messages and pornography to an undercover police officer posing as a 14-year-old girl. Doyle's arrest produced headlines such as 'Police put net out for online predators: Arrest of federal official reflects increasingly aggressive pursuit' (*USA Today*, 7 April 2006) and 'DHS Spokesman Is Accused of Soliciting Teen Online' (*Washington Post*, 5 April 2006).
- **Week 719** (commencing 2 October 2006) – The most prolific week in the USA press revolved around Mark Foley, a Republican congressman who was found to have sent sexually explicit emails and text messages to teenage boys

who had worked as congressional pages. Foley's case attracted much attention because he was co-Chairman of the House Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children and had earlier helped write a bill that extended penal penalties for convicted sex offenders. Referring to 'internet predators' at the time of the bill, he had said that the Bush administration was "going to make your life a living hell" ('FBI looks at Foley's emails to teens', *USA Today*, 2 October 2006).

Research

- **Week 443** (commencing 18 June 2001) – Publication of separate studies into children's internet use by the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center (CCRC) and Pew Internet. The CCRC report concluded that there were elements that "both reassure and concern those seeking to situate [online sexual solicitations] in the spectrum of threats to children's safety and well-being" (Mitchell et al., 2001: 3013). However, much of the newspaper coverage highlighted the more concerning elements, producing headline such as 'Cyber-predators lie in wait for children' (*Star-Ledger*, 20 June 2001) and 'Sex predators lure kids online easily' (*Plain Dealer*, 21 June 2001).

Safety

- **Week 694** (commencing 10 April 2006) – Two events revolving around the social networking website MySpace. First was the commencement of an advertising campaign about the site, jointly produced by the Ad Council and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This was followed by the announcement that MySpace was to appoint its first chief security officer, with *USA Today* reporting that it was "[f]acing mounting pressure to better police its fast-growing teen website against online predators" ('MySpace takes steps to keep kids safe', 12 April 2006). These events produced headlines such as 'Popular teen site warns of predators' (*San Jose Mercury News*, 11 April 2006), 'MySpace takes measures to make hip youth Web site predator-free' (*Houston Chronicle*, 12 April 2006) and 'Campaign warns about online predators' (*Chicago Sun Times*, 12 April 2006).

- **Week 786** (commencing 14 January 2008) – MySpace reached agreement with 49 states and the District of Columbia to organise a taskforce to develop safety tools that could verify the age and identity of its users. This produced headlines such as ‘MySpace Agrees to Lead Fight to Stop Sex Predators’ (*New York Times*, 15 January 2008) and ‘MySpace To Act Against Predators’ (*Washington Post*, 15 January 2008).

Reflection on key events

Having outlined the key topics and events that instigated peaks in press coverage, a couple of general observations can be made. The first relates to the absence of events generating peaks in multiple countries. The second relates to the press’s apparent preoccupation with certain ‘types’ of offender.

Although a couple of events produced cross-national peaks (e.g. news of Microsoft’s decision to close its chatrooms and coverage of the Toby Studebaker case each produced peaks in both Australia and the UK), these were few and far between. Instead, as in Europe (Mascheroni et al., 2010: 39), each country’s coverage seems to have been defined by issues relevant to its own nationally-specific socio-political context, e.g. in Canada, debate about the legal system was high on the agenda because fears about ‘internet predators’ were used as a conduit for increasing the age of consent and expanding a central DNA database; in Australia, debate over safety measures was prominent because leading politicians used the subject to try and attract votes during a general election.

The second theme to emerge from this chapter relates to press coverage of perpetrators of online CSA. As noted at the outset of this chapter, articles about individual grooming cases were by far the most recurrent during peaks in coverage. Closer consideration of high-profile events suggests the press have been particularly sensitised to cases that contain a limited number of credentials. Particularly recurrent were grooming cases that matched one or more of the following criteria:

- Landmark cases (first use of ‘grooming’ laws, cases seen to be symptomatic of flaws – and leading to changes in – in the legal system);

- Cases involving ‘elite’ individuals in prominent public positions or high-profile jobs;
- Cases involving ‘foreign’ perpetrators.

Extensive coverage was also given to instances that had particularly unusual credentials, such as:

- Cases of prolific ‘grooming’, e.g. Douglas Lindsell (UK) was variously described as the world’s “most prolific” child groomer, Mark Bedford (UK) was estimated to have exploited over 100 girls in various locales around the world from his home in Canada, and Joshua Innes (CAN) was said to have targeted hundreds of girls.
- Cases of extreme violence, such as those involving Saul Dos Reis (USA) and Peter Chapman (UK), both of which involved sexual assault and murder, and James Warren et al (USA), which involved kidnap and rape.

An overview of these cases is presented in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8: Selection of grooming cases from peak weeks

Perpetrator (Country of coverage)	Landmark case	Elite job	‘Foreign’ perpetrator	Prolific groomers	Extreme violence
Sergio Arana-Martinez (CAN)	X		X		
Mark Bedford (UK)			X	X	
David Budd (AUS)		X	X		
Peter Chapman (UK)					X
Saul Dos Reis (USA)			X		X
Brian Doyle (USA)		X			
Vincent Duval (CAN)			X		
Mark Foley (USA)		X			
Patrick Green (UK)	X				

Perpetrator (Country of coverage)	Landmark case	Elite job	‘Foreign’ perpetrator	Prolific groomers	Extreme violence
Joshua Innes (CAN)				X	
Matthew Kennings (AUS)	X				
Craig Legare (AUS)					
Douglas Lindsell (UK)				X	
Richard Meehan (AUS)	X				
Patrick Naughton (USA)		X			
Const. Seth Paine (CAN)		X			
Toby Studebaker (AUS, UK)		X	X		
Simon Thomas (UK)		X			
James Warren et al (USA)					X
Michael Wheeler (UK)				X	
Various/FBI ‘sting’ (USA)	X				

Thus, based on the findings of this chapter, I would conclude that:

- Online CSA has at times been constructed through the kind of “limited and repetitive” coverage that characterised some UK press treatment of CSA during the 1990s (Critcher, 2003: 105).
- Repeat coverage of cases involving certain ‘types’ of perpetrator – particularly those involving ‘foreigners’, prolific groomers and extreme violence – may contribute to a fear of the ‘other’, translating into a fear of dangerous ‘strangers’, which we know is common among parents (e.g. NetAlert, 2007a) and an issue to which some young people are particularly sensitised (e.g. Livingstone et al., 2004: 29).
- A focus on recurrent character traits may perpetuate the myth that sex offending is typically perpetrated by a particular ‘type’ of person, as critics have argued is the case with images of ‘the paedophile’ (e.g. Kelly, 1996).

This provides an easy way to explain away abuse (e.g. by focusing on individuals' pathological characteristics).

- Heightened interest in these cases can be seen to contribute to, and exacerbate, a tendency already observed among the European media, wherein there is disproportionate representation of deviant sexual behaviour and aggression (Hasebrink et al., 2008) and a subsequent lack of balance between coverage of online opportunities and risks (Ponte et al., 2009).
- This, in turn, may sensitise people to certain kinds of risk (Hasebrink et al., 2008), “amplif[y] concerns” by contributing to “social perceptions that this type of online behaviour is common” (Jewkes, 2010: 13) and perpetuate misconceptions about a “mythical trend” in cases of online CSA (McCollam, 2011: 33).

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have presented an overview of the data that emerged from the 20 peak weeks identified in each of the countries under examination. The 1,270 articles collected from these weeks accounted for over a fifth of my entire corpus. This, I suggested, indicates that coverage of online CSA has been characterised by the kind of episodic coverage that is typical of the media's treatment of social problems, i.e. there are bursts of coverage when a particularly newsworthy event occurs rather than concerted discussion over more extended periods (Iyengar, 1991).

My analysis of news hooks showed that coverage of individual grooming cases accounted for over half of all articles. This, I suggested, may contribute to misconceptions about the frequency of such cases. Articles with news hooks pertaining to safety or the legal system were, on average, the next most common, but much less recurrent than those about grooming cases. Notable variations between countries were taken to be indicative of the nationally-specific narratives each country's coverage has followed, while some individual events hinted at the political capital of policies associated with children/families and CSA/paedophiles.

In my analysis of news hooks I noted that informed discussion of the problem was relatively rare during peak weeks. *Research* and *Issue* (*scale, nature, etc.*) news hooks

were found to be relatively rare, attracting a similar level of coverage to in-house investigations/exposés. Such investigations were particularly common in the UK, where they accounted for a greater proportion of the national sample than articles with *Policing, Research* or *Issue (scale, nature, etc.)* news hooks. The prominence of these in-house investigations combined with the high visibility of individual grooming cases and the absence of more ‘informed’ discussion (e.g. engagement with empirical research) could, I suggested, have implications for audience understandings about the scale and nature of the problem.

Finally, having identified the news hooks that made up peak weeks in each country, I presented an overview of the key events that had driven these peaks in coverage. Particularly recurrent were grooming cases revolving around: landmark rulings, individuals in prominent public positions or high-profile jobs and ‘foreign’ perpetrators. Also recurrent: were cases seen to be symptomatic of flaws in the legal system, cases involving prolific groomers and particularly extreme/frightening cases involving kidnap, rape or murder. I suggested that the press’s focus on certain ‘types’ of offender may perpetuate fears of the ‘other’/strangers, create misconceptions about ‘trends’ and/or encourage a focus on online risks over opportunities.

Having outlined the trajectory and momentum of newspaper coverage of online CSA in the countries under examination – and identified the key events that defined this coverage – the following two chapters present a deeper, more qualitative analysis of the discursive strategies used to construct this ‘new’ form of CSA. The next chapter revolves around the theme of spatiality and looks at how journalists and other claims makers have grappled with the notion that the rise of the internet predator has seen the paedophile threat spread from the ‘physical world’ to ‘cyberspace’.

Chapter 8

Children, paedophiles and dangerous (cyber)spaces

In the previous two chapters I presented a range of quantitative data aimed at tracing the emergence of online CSA as a matter of public concern. In the remaining two findings chapters I adopt a more qualitative approach in order to conduct a deeper analysis of how discourses around children, paedophiles and spatiality have functioned in the construction of this social problem, paying particular attention to the paedophile's migration from the 'real world' to 'cyberspace'.

Children, space and proximity to paedophiles

Space and spatiality have become increasingly important concepts in much contemporary scholarship. Smith and Katz (1993: 67) note that “[m]ost recently, space has provided an attractive lexicon for many feminist, postmodernist, and postcolonial enquiries, the focus for public art and geo art, and a grammar in cultural discourse more broadly”. Reflecting on this observation, James et al argue that “such a language and politics of spatiality must now emerge in social theory for childhood too” (James et al., 1998: 40).

Spatiality is, however, a broad category. As Urry notes, it:

has various aspects besides that of region including distance, movement, proximity, specificity, perception, symbolism and meaning: and space makes a clear difference to the degree to which, to use realist terminology, the causal powers of social entities (such as class, the state, capitalist relations, patriarchy) are realised.

(Urry, 1995: 13)

This chapter examines the manner in which discourses around children and the internet draw upon notions of spatiality when constructing online CSA. As such, the aspects of spatiality that are particularly important to this chapter are distance and proximity because, as Jenks demonstrates, these aspects of spatiality are particularly important in constructions and understandings of childhood:

we might suggest that children either occupy designated spaces, that is they are placed, as in nurseries or schools, or they are conspicuous by their inappropriate or precocious invasion of adult territory. Childhood, then, is that status of personhood which is by definition often in the wrong place, like the parental bedroom, Daddy's chair, the public house or even crossing the busy road. All people in any society are subject to geographical and spatial prohibitions, whether delineated by discretion, private possession or political embargo, but the child's experience of such parameters is particularly paradoxical, often unprincipled and certainly erratic. *In terms of social space children are sited, insulated and distanced*, and their very gradual emergence into wider, adult space is by accident, by degrees, as an award or as part of a gradualist rite de passage.

(Jenks, 2005: 73-74, emphasis added)

From this perspective it can be argued that children's access to spaces, and adults' governance of children's access to and movement within these spaces, represents a key constituent of childhood. Indeed, for James (1998: 38), "[t]he central issue to be explored in relation to childhood space is... that of control".

Children's access to certain spaces, or proximity to potentially hazardous spaces, has long been a subject of concern. The potential health risks associated with living or attending school in close proximity to busy roads, mobile phone masts and nuclear power plants have all generated newspaper headlines and academic research, for example (e.g. Kaatsch et al., 2008; Venn et al., 2001). In terms of CSA, it has been argued that the issue of controlling childhood space is particularly applicable in relation to adults' attempts to guard children from the threat of paedophiles. For Meyer, this is a product of dominant discourses mobilised in the social construction of 'the paedophile':

The detailed nature of the figure of 'the paedophile' allows parents to govern their children's behaviour and movements in very specific ways, e.g. through restricting access to certain spaces or supervising children in certain situations. These particular spaces and situations have been defined as dangerous by the likely presence of 'the paedophile'.

(Meyer, 2007: 149).

Indeed, spatiality has an important role in popular discourses around CSA. In framing CSA through the concept of stranger danger, and placing the problem 'outside' – outside the bounds of the home, etc. – popular discourses 'rule in' and 'rule out' certain spaces as being dangerous, or likely sites of abuse. Consequently, certain

spaces are identified as being too risky for children to frequent without adult supervision. These spaces – typically those that are popular with children, such as playgrounds, swimming pools and funfairs – are what Meyer terms ‘paedophile places’ (2007: 87). As such, they represent spaces which discourses of ‘good parenting’ dictate that responsible parents will prohibit their children from attending without adult supervision due to the possible/likely presence of a paedophile.

Illustration 8.1: A stranger danger warning at the gates of a village playground in Norfolk, UK



(Credit: Author’s own photograph)

Spatiality also plays a key role in much awareness raising and safety advice relating to children’s internet use, albeit in a different way. Warnings or advice about the space(s) in which children access the internet (i.e. the physical location of the computer) often feature in safety information, with parents frequently advised that children should not access the internet from their bedrooms and that computers should be placed in communal areas where children’s activity can be monitored. For example, during the flurry of activity that followed the Patrick Green case, the UK Home Office issued *Chat Wise, Street Wise*, a report addressing concerns about young people’s use of internet chatrooms. This attracted headlines such as ‘Bedroom Net “puts children in danger”’ (*The Times*, 21 March 2001), ‘Ban the computer from your child’s bedroom: Home Office advice over Internet perverts’ (*Daily Mail*, 21 March 2001) and ‘Watch children on net, parents told’ (*Guardian*, 21 March 2001). Each of these examples illustrate the perceived importance of governing the spaces children

inhabit (in this instance when using a computer) in relation to monitoring their internet access and protecting them from the threat of online paedophiles. The first two assert that computers located in children's bedrooms (i.e. a relatively private space away from adults) automatically put them in 'danger' and should be 'banned'. The third asserts that children's internet access should take place in a space where their parents can monitor them. Thus, one way in which spatiality, distance and proximity manifest in news discourse around online CSA is in relation to the physical location in which children are permitted to use internet-ready computers.

As will be demonstrated, warnings about the aforementioned 'paedophile places' are also frequently applied to certain online spaces, particularly those that, like their 'real world' equivalents, tend to be more popular with young people than adults, such as chatrooms and social networking websites. In warnings about offline 'paedophile places', spatiality, proximity, distance and movement are all key, as it is the paedophile's potential *closeness* to children (hiding in the bushes of the playground, watching or swimming at the same public baths, waiting by the school gates, etc.), and the supposed ease with which children can be 'groomed', abused or abducted in these places, that constitutes danger. However, when it comes to the internet, warnings about children's proximity to paedophiles do not translate as comfortably: as a conduit for danger, *physical* proximity does not necessarily engender the same sense of immediacy when applied to the 'virtual' cyberspace of the internet because participants can just as feasibly communicate from opposite sides of the planet as opposite sides of the street.

In this chapter I demonstrate how discourses of space and spatiality have been adapted, developed and (re)mobilised in the construction of online CSA. This discussion is broken down into three sections.

- In the first, I present examples from each country that illustrate how journalists and other claims-makers have drawn upon parents' knowledge of, and fears about, 'paedophile places' to construct a discourse of dangerousness around the internet. In so doing, I explore some of the ways in which online 'paedophile places' have been conceived.

- In the second section I demonstrate how discourses of space and spatiality shifted from one of physical proximity (as in the case of the offline paedophile) to one of temporal proximity. Because of the internet, it is claimed, children's temporal proximity – i.e. the closeness in *time* – to paedophiles and sexual abuse is vastly reduced. Whether it is a matter of seconds, minutes, hours or a certain number of 'clicks' (of the mouse), the internet is said to bring paedophiles closer to children than ever before.
- In the final section, I draw upon the work of Latour (1993) and Bingham et al (1999) to demonstrate how fears about the internet have been used to conceptualise change in relation to three key concepts related to the social construction of CSA: 'stranger danger', 'childhood' and 'the paedophile'. In particular, I look at how 'the times' of pre- and post-internet conceptions of these things (e.g. 'old stranger danger' and 'new stranger danger'; 'the paedophile' and the 'internet predator') have been constructed to "spatial coexistent" and the implications for young internet users.

Constructing online 'paedophile places'

As discussed, space is central to popular discussions of CSA, particularly those framed through the concept of 'stranger danger'. Discussing the discourse of the cunning paedophile, Meyer identifies *space* alongside '*grooming*' and *employment* as "strategies" paedophiles are said to use when seeking to create opportunities for abuse. Specifically, "[t]he strategy of space proposes that paedophiles strategically hang out in typical children's places in order to find children to abuse sexually. Common examples include parks, playgrounds, funfairs and swimming baths" (Meyer, 2007: 86). In other words, journalists frequently construct certain 'real world' spaces as 'paedophile places'. Such strategies also form an important part of discourses around of the internet predator, with the playground being a particularly prominent analogy. For example, chatrooms and social networking websites have attracted headlines such as 'Guards for the cyber playground' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 2006), 'Dangerous playground inside the family home' (*Newcastle Herald*, 28 November 2006), 'All-ages playground' (*Courier Mail*, 13 June 2007) and 'A playground for paedophiles' (*Daily Mail*, 16 July 2003). Writing in *USA Today*, journalist Edward C. Baig was categorical in his assertion that online equivalents of

this offline ‘paedophile place’ had begun to emerge in cyberspace:

To be sure, shady characters hang out in the virtual playgrounds of cyberspace, just as they do in the physical world. Online predators loiter in chat rooms, dispatch pornographic spam and might try to lure youngsters to in-person meetings.

(‘Keeping Internet predators at bay’, *USA Today*, 29 January 2003)

Likewise, in a statement reproduced in the *Courier Mail* (Australia), *Daily Mail* (UK) and the New York *Daily News* (USA), the Attorney-General for Connecticut, Richard Blumenthal, argued: “MySpace is more than a place for friends to meet. It’s a playground for predators seeking to prey on children” (‘MySpace called pervplace: Lawmen from 8 states demand site close names of 10,000 predators’, *Daily News*, 15 May 2007).

To further this discussion, I present and unpack examples of how discourses around ‘paedophile places’ have been (re)mobilised in relation to the internet in each of the countries in my study.⁹ I begin with examples taken from the USA.

Paedophile places – USA

The examples discussed in this section are derived from between 1995 and 2007. The first, and earliest, comes from January 1995 and followed the case of Alan Paul Barlow, a 51-year-old Seattle man who was arrested after travelling to New York to meet a 14-year-old girl he had met online and to whom he had sent sexually explicit photographs. This case, and others like it, led to the proposal of new legislation outlawing online sexual communications with minors. In a report in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, William Sears, the Republican Senator who sponsored the bill, was quoted as saying:

Pedophiles have **moved** from the **playground** to the **Internet** and are enticing unsuspecting minors onto some dark and dangerous detours off the information superhighway.

(‘N.Y. lawmaker targeting on-line pedophiles’, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 January 1995)

⁹ Suitable examples were plentiful in each country. Consequently, the principal rationale for inclusion was variety. I decided to present examples by country in order to give an indication of the cross-national appeal of ‘paedophile places’ as a discursive strategy. The choice of individual examples came down to a desire to demonstrate the variety of ways in which this discursive strategy was deployed.

In asserting that paedophiles “have moved from the playground” (that is, they used to be there), Sears is uncritically identifying the children’s playground as a (former) paedophile place. In so doing, he is drawing upon existing knowledge of, and fears about, such spaces in order to frame the internet as the foremost site of danger, the *new* paedophile place. Thus, in this formation, the internet (in its entirety) has *replaced* the playground as the quintessential paedophile place. Furthermore, the depiction of young internet users as “unsuspecting minors” draws upon the discourse of childhood innocence and naivety in order to construct an extreme disparity in the power dynamic between the powerful, cunning (“enticing”) internet predator and the weak, naive child.

The strategy of analogising online spaces with ‘dangerous’ offline ‘paedophile places’ was also applied to more specific aspects of the internet. For example:

“The **chat rooms** are the first place that predators go,” said Monique Nelson, chief operating officer of Enough Is Enough, a conservative child-advocacy group in Washington. “In my opinion, it is **more dangerous** than to go into a **park**”.

(‘Children at center of net sex-law battles’, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 April 1998)

Unlike the previous example, in which William Sears identified the entirety of the internet as the source of risk, this conception focuses solely on chatrooms. Similar, though, is the discursive technique through which this is achieved. Like Sears, Monique Nelson draws upon a shared, accepted understanding that public parks are legitimately feared as one of the foremost paedophile places. The claim that chatrooms have become “the first place that predators go” therefore functions to position them ahead of public parks: predators now go to chatrooms before public parks and other established offline paedophile places. As such, chat rooms embody so much danger that they have superseded public parks and other established paedophile places as the foremost site of danger. In this regard, having superseded public parks in terms of dangerousness, chatrooms are presented as the ultimate paedophile place. However, unlike the previous example, this argument does not claim that online paedophile places have *entirely replaced* offline ones. Instead, the claim that chat rooms are the “first place that predators go” does not rule out other places, either

online and offline, as sites of danger.

Indeed, the suggestion that the internet has broadened the range of paedophile places was echoed by Greg Abbott, attorney general for Texas. In a *Chicago Tribune* article, Abbott stated:

When we were growing up, there would be issues about protecting **neighborhoods** [sic], keeping areas safe where kids play such as **playgrounds** and **parks**[.] Now there is a **vast virtual neighborhood of cyberspace**, and we have found that it's just as important that the virtual neighborhood be patrolled as much as the neighborhoods that people actually live in.
(‘To Texas AG, Net predators are fine prey’, *Chicago Tribune*, 5 November 2007)

In this instance, Abbot makes a clear distinction between *then* and *now*. More specifically, *then*, the time “When we were growing up” (that is, during adults’ childhood of yesteryear) is contrasted with “now” (contemporary childhood; “when *they* are growing up”). Thus, the personal pronoun “we” functions to create an ingroup for the arguer (Abbott) and the (adult) audience who broadly share the same pre-internet childhood history. As such, children form the out-group and are excluded from defining the social world(s) they inhabit (see Valentine, 1996). Although less explicit than the previous example, Abbott’s identification of playgrounds and parks as potentially unsafe areas – spaces that needed to be kept safe in order to protect entire neighbourhoods – is premised on the notion that specific spaces (“areas... where kids play”) qualify as ‘paedophile places’ and, as such, require adult supervision. Implicit in this is the assumption that contemporary childhood is more treacherous than that of yore. The “vast virtual neighbourhood” of the internet is constructed as an *additional* site of hazard, an additional space that contains peril for young people. Thus, a distinction is made between ‘then’ (pre-internet) and ‘now’ (post-internet). In the case of the former, ‘then’, adults had to make provision for “protecting” their neighbourhoods and keeping spaces like playgrounds and parks (‘paedophile places’) safe for children. ‘Now’, however, with contemporary childhood made more treacherous, adults are tasked with the dual role of maintaining children’s safety in the “virtual neighbourhood” *and* their ‘real world’ neighbourhood. In other words, there are more dangerous spaces (more ‘paedophile places’; fewer safe spaces) and, consequently, more spaces for adults to patrol in order to protect the young. This, then, can serve to legitimise further governance, further control, further

legislation, further restrictions, etc.

Paedophile places – Canada

The first example from the Canadian press is taken from the *Edmonton Journal*. This article reports on Xavier Von Erk, founder of Perverted-Justice.com, the online “anti-predator organization” that teamed up with Dateline NBC for the highly successful television series *To Catch A Predator*:

[Von Erk:] “Most of these guys don’t want to grab and run. They want to feel like these kids are their willing partners.”

It’s come to the point, Von Erk said, where children may be more in danger from predators they meet online who manipulate them, groom them for sexual contact using child pornography and lure them into real-life encounters where any number of horrible crimes can be perpetrated.

“A lot of these guys have **moved from the parks to chat rooms**,” Von Erk said. “We do a good job of teaching kids stranger danger. We don’t do as good a job when teaching them about the strangers they may meet online.”

(‘American online vigilantes strike back: Citizens group helps nab Internet child stalkers’, *Edmonton Journal*, 19 March 2006)

Here, again, chatrooms are framed as a *partial* replacement for public parks. The first sentence – “Most of these guys don’t want to grab and run” – indirectly functions to establish the internet as a credible ‘paedophile place’. After all, as is reiterated later in the extract, the paedophile problem is popularly conceived through the concept of ‘stranger danger’, which often tends to be premised on the notion of abduction (i.e. strangers abducting children from dangerous public spaces). However, this type of threat – the “grab and run” abduction – does not translate to the internet in the same way, due to the wide dispersion of users. Therefore, by distancing online predators from this type of threat, and (re)aligning them with online ‘grooming’ techniques, Von Erk is able to draw upon pre-existing, shared understandings of paedophiles (unnamed, but referenced in knowing, almost colloquial terms as “these guys”), and the nature of the threat they pose, in order to reposition them as an online threat and, therefore, legitimise the internet as a dangerous ‘paedophile place’.

Indeed, it can be argued that having displaced “the parks”, the internet is again being constructed as the foremost paedophile place. In stating that “A lot of these guys have

moved from the parks to chat rooms” and “We do a good job of teaching kids stranger danger [offline]” (i.e. regarding public spaces such as parks), Von Erk draws upon the ‘common sense’ understanding that “the parks” symbolise a dangerous space – that they are ‘paedophile places’ of which children must be wary of and should not attend without supervision – in order to convince the adult audience/parents that the internet is the modern equivalent, the *new* ‘paedophile place’. As such, they should be *at least* as wary of the internet as they were/are of public parks (and other offline paedophile places). This, of course, is premised on the notions that (a) ‘stranger danger’ is a legitimate way of conceptualising CSA and (b) it is ‘common sense’ that it be extended to the internet. In other words, online and offline strangers need to be viewed with upmost caution, and safety messages applied to the ‘real world’ need to be extended to the ‘virtual world’ (‘Never speak to strangers’, etc.).

Paedophile places – UK

Examples from the UK are examined concurrently and relate to quotes made by representatives of two leading UK-based online child safety organisations. The first, taken from a *Times* article from 2000, cites Stephen Carrick-Davis, development manager at Childnet. The second, a *Daily Express* article from 2006, cites Jim Gamble, head of the government-funded Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).

Carrick-Davis (Childnet):

Chatdanger is trying not to be sensationalist about the dangers of chat; it is a good medium, and exciting for kids. What we would stress is the use of moderated chat rooms, in the same way that you would **expect a playground to be supervised**

(‘Cyber-savvy means safe’, *The Times*, 13 November 2000)

Gamble (CEOP):

Paedophiles are **drawn to teen websites** in the same way they would be **drawn to a playground or any place that children gather**. For these men chatrooms offer a fast track to grooming.

They target the sites because it’s so easy to create a false identity and then befriend a vulnerable teenager. They can quickly build up a relationship with a

young person and then persuade them to do things or meet them.
(‘My shocking week with the chatroom predators’, *Daily Express*, 2 August 2006)

Both of these examples draw upon pre-existing knowledge of stereotypical ‘paedophile places’, sites that embody ‘stranger danger’. In the first, Stephen Carrick-Davis states that “you would expect a playground to be supervised”. Here, the personal pronoun ‘you’ appeals to a shared, ‘common sense’ viewpoint, central to which is the assumption that, when devoid of adult supervision, playgrounds are indeed dangerous spaces where children are at risk from paedophiles. Here we also see a degree of duality in the representation of two spaces, one offline and one online. As James et al note, childhood spaces often embody a degree of duality: “It is clear that these can vary through time: the dinner table transforms into the site of drawing or painting and the bedroom becomes a spatial symbol of punishment” (James et al., 1998: 39). In this instance, the safeness of two spaces – playgrounds and internet chat rooms – is determined by the level of adult supervision/moderation. Thus, when the chat room is moderated or the playground is supervised these spaces are “good” and “exciting for kids”; however, when moderation or supervision is removed, they transform into sites of danger – ‘paedophile places’, in this context.

In the second example, Jim Gamble follows the tack of aligning an online portal – “teen websites” in this instance – with offline spaces stereotypically seen to symbolise danger: playgrounds and, rather more broadly, “all place[s] that children gather” (thus implying that “all place[s] that children gather” are ‘paedophile places’). Notable, too, is Gamble’s claim about the speed with which paedophiles can ‘groom’ children for abuse (“*fast track* to grooming”). In other words, not only are teen websites and chatrooms ‘paedophile places’, they carry extra risk because they reduce the time it takes for paedophiles to groom their victims. Indeed, assuming that the “fast track to grooming” offered by chatrooms is in relation to that offered by offline places, it may be deduced that chatrooms bring children closer to paedophiles than is the case with offline equivalents (playgrounds, places that children gather, etc.). This is a discursive strategy that will be explored in further detail later in this chapter.

Also of note is the generic nature of the respective constructions of the child and the paedophile. As Meyer has noted:

Children need to be incompetent and innocent, paedophiles need to be cunning and evil, technology needs to control children and be controlled by paedophiles – otherwise the simplistic story of the huge risk could not be told.
(Meyer, 2007: 128)

This fits entirely with Jim Gamble’s description. The internet predator’s cunningness is exemplified by his: (1) targeting of sites popular with children; (2) creation of a false identity and duplicitous posturing as a figure who is appealing and/or trustworthy; (3) focus on *vulnerable* teenagers; and (4) ability to persuade them to comply with his demands. Concurrently, the child is vulnerable, naive and easily manipulated. In this case, these generic constructions serve to persuade readers of the dangerousness of “teen websites”, i.e. that they should legitimately be treated as online paedophile places.

Paedophile places – Australia

The final example in this section comes from a report the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, which stated:

Undercover police are posing as students in **cyber chatrooms** after discovering nests of paedophiles using the **Internet** to pursue victims.

The computer has replaced the **playground, park** and **beach** as the most popular place for paedophiles to prey on young children.

By using **the computer** to find and stalk victims, the potential offender minimises the amount of time spent on **the street** and possibility of arrest.
(‘Chatroom predators – Hunt for predators’, *Daily Telegraph* [Sydney], 14 March 2001)

As well as partially drawing upon animal imagery in the description of “*nests* of paedophiles” (perhaps like a ‘nest of vipers’), the journalist adopts a similar approach to that seen in the Jim Gamble example in that he uncritically identifies a raft of spaces that are popular with children – playgrounds, parks and beaches – as ‘paedophile places’ (i.e. prior to computers, these three spaces were the most popular places for paedophiles to prey on children). Equally broad is the phrase ‘the computer’, used as a metonym for every aspect of the internet, which is twice identified as paedophiles’ preferred method of ‘preying’ on children. In the second

instance, the computer is said to have replaced “the street”. Thus, the journalist has identified (1) playgrounds, (2) parks, (3) beaches and (4) streets as ‘paedophile places’, effectively declaring every public space as risky for children. From this perspective, then, ‘the computer’, representing every area of cyberspace, has replaced every public place, every area of the ‘real world’ (outside the home), as the foremost source of danger. This is partially explained by the argument that the anonymity of the internet aids predators. Compared to previous examples, the journalist is more forthright in presenting the computer/internet as the foremost ‘paedophile place’, superseding offline equivalents due to the privacy and anonymity/undetectability it affords (presumably meaning that playgrounds, parks, beaches and streets are safer than they were prior to computers).

Reflection on discourses around online ‘paedophile places’

In this section, I have presented a range of examples from Australia, Canada, the UK and USA. I have demonstrated how journalists, policymakers and other claim-makers have drawn upon existing understandings of, and fears about, established offline ‘paedophile places’ in order to make claims about the risks associated with children using the internet. This, I have argued, enables the construction of equivalent *online* paedophile places. These claims typically take one of two forms:

- 1) That online paedophile places (e.g. chatrooms, MySpace) have *replaced* offline places (e.g. playgrounds).
- 2) That online paedophile places *supplement* offline ones, although they are typically presented as paedophiles’ preference.

These claims are then used to convince of the necessity of outcomes such as:

- legislative change (e.g. outlawing of sexual communication with young people);
- increased parental governance of children’s internet use;
- increased professional/institutional governance of certain sites/services (e.g. chatrooms);
- an extension of the ‘stranger danger’ message to include the internet.

Uniting these outcomes is the construction of children as endangered, malleable *subjects* who require protection, either because the internet represents a *new* threat to childhood or because it represents an *additional* threat. With the exception of the first example, they either argue in favour of (a) increased regulation of children’s internet use, at the expense of their individual autonomy, or (b) the promotion of a flawed message (stranger danger) that encourages unjustified fear and anxiety in relation to one of young people’s most favoured online activities: meeting new people.

Drawing on the examples discussed so far in this chapter, Table 8.1 outlines some of the virtual, online ‘spaces’ that have been constructed as ‘paedophile places’.

Table 8.1: Examples of online and offline paedophile places

Online paedophile places	Offline paedophile places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chatrooms (unmoderated) • Cyberspace • The computer • The internet • MySpace • Teen websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any place that children gather • Beaches • Parks • Playgrounds (unsupervised) • The street

Unsurprisingly, ‘stranger danger’ was a prominent frame for claims about online paedophile places. Stranger danger is a broad, all-encompassing concept which frames all public spaces as perilous for children. Indeed, in one example, Jim Gamble, head of CEOP, asserted that paedophiles are attracted to “any place that children gather”. As Table 8.1 demonstrates, while specific aspects of the internet *are* identified (e.g. MySpace), it is not unusual for broader terms to be flagged, such as ‘the internet’, ‘cyberspace’ or even ‘the computer’. Rather than being online “place[s] that children gather”, these are much broader categories that encompass every aspect of children’s internet use. As such, when depicted as dangerous ‘paedophile places’, these constructions support the notion that children are at risk every time they use a computer/the internet and should be governed/monitored accordingly. Again, this is reflective of a process identified in relation to discourses around offline abuse:

Spatially, the expansion of danger through the process of universalization results in some parents not letting their children go *anywhere* unaccompanied. Paedophilia is perceived as a ubiquitous, universal risk which makes all spaces dangerous.

(Meyer, 2007: 150, original emphasis)

Children, the internet and temporal proximity to paedophiles

In the previous section, I presented a series of examples that demonstrate how fears about supposedly dangerous offline spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, have been utilised in order to construct certain aspects of the internet as dangerous online ‘paedophile places’.

However, as noted at the outset of this chapter, one of the key factors that makes offline paedophile places so dangerous does not comfortably translate to online cyberspaces: proximity – the *closeness* of the paedophile to children (standing at the school gates, watching from the park bench, etc.). In the following section I demonstrate that one way in which claims-makers negotiated this hurdle was by switching the emphasis from *physical* proximity to *temporal* proximity. To demonstrate how this was achieved, I have grouped different types of risk into three broad categories: abstract, potential, veritable. Each of these categories will now be examined in turn.

Temporal proximity – abstract risks

The first types of risk I have identified in relation to children’s temporal proximity to internet predators have been categorised as *Abstract* risks. In the context of this discussion, abstract risks are those that cite non-specific, conceptual threats in relation to children’s internet use. Examples include headlines such as ‘**Evil** just a **click** away’ (*Sunday Herald Sun*, 31 December 2000) and ‘**Danger** that lurks at **click of a button**’ (*Daily Express*, 15 July 2003). In framing the internet/predators as a risk to young people, both of these headlines cite non-specific, abstract concepts – ‘evil’ and ‘danger’. Both, too, use the ‘click’ as the unit for gauging children’s closeness to online risk. This is a notable lexical choice which forms an important part of the discourse of temporal proximity. While a ‘click’ is not a measure of time *per se*, it represents the briefest and simplest of actions, a contemporary equivalent of a ‘blink

of an eye' (i.e. 'in the time it takes to press a button'), as indicated by the preceding adverb, 'just', a synonym for merely and a lexical choice that further emphasises the briefness of the 'click'. As such, the 'click' is functioning as a metonymical device. Metonymy is "a form of substitution in which something that is associated with *x* is substituted for *x*" (Jasinski, 2001: 551). It "differs from metaphor... because there is little (if any) interaction between the two elements" (Jasinski, 2001: 551) and instead simply "allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 36). Richardson (2007: 67) describes metonyms as "a trope in which one word, phrase or object is substituted for another from a semantically related field of reference". Accordingly, then, I am arguing that, in the context of warnings about children's internet use, a 'click' operates as a conceptual metonym because it *stands for* a short timespan when using a computer, just as 'the blink of an eye' *stands for* a short timespan.

The 'click' is a popular metonymic device for presenting the internet as the key facilitator in bringing children into the close proximity of paedophiles. In an example from the *Geelong Advertiser*, an Australian daily tabloid, it is used to construct the internet as a risk not just to children, but to childhood more generally:

So what are the kids quietly up to in the home office? They're at the computer on the Internet, of course, checking out some of those fun interactive sites. They're just having a play, all innocence . . . and all curiosity. The story goes wrong when the **curious click** on the wrong item on the screen **removes that innocence in a flash**.

('A place without a heart', *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 October 2004).

In this example, children are *one click* away from relinquishing, or being dispossessed of, their 'innocence'. Given the common tendency to equate 'innocence' with (western) 'childhood', presenting the former as a fundamental component of the latter (as is further evidenced by this journalist's uncritical remobilisation of the 'common sense' understanding that children are "all innocence"), this assertion can be seen to imply that children are not just one "curious click" away from encountering child pornography or a predator, but one click away from being dispossessed of (what remains of) their childhood. Thus, given that both 'childhood' and 'innocence' are social constructs, the notion that they are endangered by the internet can be seen to

constitute an abstract risk.¹⁰

Elsewhere, an article from the *Star-Ledger*, a daily broadsheet serving New Jersey, illustrates the manner in which this discourse has manifested beyond newspapers. Reporting on an FBI-sponsored education programme it stated:

Anxious parents listened as Assistant Prosecutor W. Brian Stack recounted the case during a program by the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office called "**Danger Is Only a Click** Away: A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety."

During the forum, held last week at the county courthouse, Stack walked parents through a page on MySpace that featured seemingly harmless information: names and ages of siblings, after-school activities and screen names.

"I'm armed with the wealth of information to harm your child," Stack said, revealing how a **quick glance** at a Web page or Internet chat can give predators information to lure children.

(Parents get an Internet safety lesson: Prosecutor's program offers tips to shield kids from danger', *Star-Ledger*, 16 May 2007)

Here, again, an abstract risk – “danger” – is framed as being ‘only a click away’. This example also helps to highlight the dual function of the term ‘click’. First, as discussed, it represents a brief moment of time, which in turn signifies *closeness* (children’s closeness to ‘danger’, in this instance). Second, on a more literal level, it describes an action: the physical act of pressing/‘clicking’ a button on a computer mouse. As such, because it is ‘the child’ who is at risk of performing the action (the ‘click’) that will put them in danger (“Danger Is Only a Click Away”), this single lexical choice can be seen to be appealing to shared understandings of childhood as a period of innocence, naivety and, most importantly in this context, vulnerability. It is warning that children are vulnerable when online because, *if left to their own devices* (i.e. left unsupervised; not “shield[ed]... from danger”), their ‘natural’ fallibilities (innocence, naivety, curiosity, etc.) make them susceptible to performing an action that will quickly put them in danger. This, in turn, helps to legitimise the message at the core of this discourse: that parents need to “shield kids from danger” (to quote the

¹⁰ Also of note is the claim that one ‘click’ removes children’s innocence “in a flash”, a phrase which further supports my claim that a ‘click’ is not just being used as a unit of temporal measurement, but, in the context of temporal proximity and computers, it functions as the *briefest* period of time – ‘a click’ and ‘a flash’ effectively performing the same function.

headline).

Temporal proximity – potential risks

The second types of risk discussed in this section have been categorised as *potential* risks. One early example appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in 1998:

“In cyberspace, children are just **one mouse click** away . . . from **potential victimization**,” said Shay Bilchik, administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice in the U.S. Department of Justice. “Cyberspace has become the new schoolyard.”

(‘Children at center of net-sex law battles’, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2 April 1998)

Over a decade later, following the high profile case of Ashleigh Hall, a feature in the UK *Daily Telegraph* covered the topic of Facebook, the social networking site through which Hall met the 32-year-old man who ultimately murdered her, from the perspective of Kate Figes, a mother of teenage daughters. Describing her daughter’s Facebook profile, Figes states:

Grace shows me her own site, reassuring me that only those she invites can enter. Then she scrolls down a whole load of strange faces - the “weirdos”, she calls them. She doesn’t know who they are, even though they say they have friends in common. There they are: **a string of potential groomers**, or just sad lonely people, **just a click away**. I shiver.

(‘The mother’s view: What is the truth about Facebook?’, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 October 2009)

A particularly rich example comes from a *Daily Mail* report on the case of Mark Bedford, a 21-year-old man from Ontario, Canada, who was convicted of grooming 100 children worldwide, including 42 in Kent, England:

We now know that the paedophile who orchestrated this campaign of Internet grooming lived in Canada.

But for a few minutes Mark Bedford, it is alleged, was **effectively in the homes** of every youngster he is accused of preying on.

In cyberspace, anyone, even children in their bedrooms in Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks, are **a few clicks away from potential predators**.

(‘Two hours after she switched on her webcam, the net predator pounced’, *Daily Mail*, 3 August 2006)

Three points can be taken from this extract. First, in keeping with the two initial examples, the risk identified is a *potential* one (“potential predators”) and its proximity to children is a matter of “a few clicks”. Second, the journalist plays with the idea of physical proximity by asserting that Mark Bedford was “effectively in the homes of every youngster he is accused of preying on”. Here, then, the journalist deliberately blurs spatial boundaries, reducing Bedford’s proximity to his victims from (a) the distance between his base in Canada and theirs in various locations around the world (i.e. a matter of thousands of miles for victims in the UK) to (b) the matter of a few metres (i.e. being positioned in the same home/room). Also of note here is the invocation of social class in the qualification that the threat of potential predators extends to “anyone, *even children in their bedrooms in Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks*”. That these three quintessentially conservative, middle class towns in Kent¹¹ were cited is noteworthy because it demonstrates one way in which the internet can be presented as the great leveller when it comes to CSA and the ‘paedophile problem’: because of the internet, children living in rural idylls or quiet pockets of middle England are now as close to paedophiles as those who live in the ‘dangerous’ spaces of the inner-city and other stereotypically ‘undesirable’ locations. In short, the threat posed by internet predators is inescapable, unhindered by geographical/cultural boundaries, physical barriers (i.e. entrance to the child’s home) or social class.

Temporal proximity – veritable risks

The third types of threat identified in relation to temporal proximity have been categorised as *veritable* risks. These differ from *abstract* and *potential* risks insofar as they identify a more specific/tangible threat to children. These risks tend to manifest in headlines such as ‘**Pedophile “travelers”** are just **a click** away’ (*Houston Chronicle*, 7 August 2005), ‘After **two minutes** chatroom **perverts** swoop on “teenager”’ (*Sunday Mail*, 19 September 2004), ‘**Two hours** after she switched on her webcam, the **net predator** pounced’ (*Daily Mail*, 3 August 2006) and ‘**Perverts** lure teens in **minutes**: Police transcript to show how **quickly paedophiles** can turn an online chat with a child into a sexual conversation’ (*Weekend Australian*, 17 February

¹¹ Tunbridge Wells has been described as “the spiritual home of Middle England” (BBC, 1999).

2009).

In June 1998, the *New York Times* was among the newspapers to report on the passing of a bill designed to outlaw the use of online services for contacting a child for sexual purposes. The bill received unanimous support – 416 to 0 – which, the article claimed, “reflect[ed] Congress’s growing concern with cyberspace as the number of children who use the Internet continues to boom while pornography and pedophilia grow along with it”. During this article, temporal proximity was evoked as follows:

“**Individuals who seek children to sexually exploit and victimize them** are also **a mouse click** away,” said Representative Bill McCollum, the Florida Republican who worked with the Justice Department to draft the bill. “**Cyber predators** often cruise the Internet in search of lonely, curious or trusting young people.”

(‘House Passes Bill to Crack Down on Pedophiles Exploiting Internet’, *New York Times*, 12 June 1998)

In contrast to previous examples, which warned of (a) *abstract* notions such as ‘evil’ or (b) *potential* pitfalls (e.g. “a string of potential groomers”), McCollum’s rhetoric identifies a more specific – and notably less sensationalistic – subject: “Individuals who seek children to sexually exploit and victimize them”. These, too, are described as being “a click away”, emphasising the closeness of “cyber predators” – the unwanted by-product of the ‘booming’ number of children using the internet and the consequent ‘growth of paedophilia’ – to “lonely, curious or trusting young people”. Further, given that these predators are “*often* cruis[ing] the Internet” for victims, young people are *often* ‘one click’ from encountering them, meaning that much of their internet activity is dominated by the likely risk of encountering a paedophile.

In the months after the Patrick Green case, a number of UK national newspapers undertook in-house investigations to highlight the dangers of chatrooms. One paper to do so was *The People*, a Sunday tabloid owned by the Trinity Mirror group. The headline and subheadline of the resulting article drew upon the discourse of temporal proximity to foreground the extent of the threat posed by internet predators:

Your child is just **three clicks** away from **an evil paedophile**: A shocking Sunday People investigation that every parent should read – Carol Vorderman poses as a 12-year-old on the internet.. and uncovers a vile web of danger

waiting to snare our children

(*Sunday People*, 18 March 2001)

In addition to the abstract risk in the sub-headline – “a vile web of *danger* waiting to snare our children” – a more veritable risk is identified in the main headline. Specifically, it states that the children (“Your child...”) of “every parent” – that is, *every child* – is *three clicks* away from “an evil paedophile”. In other words, *every child* is just three clicks from an evil paedophile *every time they go online*.

In the body of the article, the author, Carol Vorderman, resident internet expert at the *Sunday People* and other *Mirror* titles, sought to substantiate this claim by outlining the case of Jim, the man at the centre of her “undercover investigation”. Jim is described as “a paedophile using an Internet chatroom in a vile attempt to ‘groom’ an *unsuspecting* child for sex”. In her conclusion, Vorderman argues:

The Internet industry should have acted five months ago after the shocking case of Patrick Green, 33 – jailed for five years for having sex with a 13-year-old girl he had met in a chatroom.

But companies seem too greedy or complacent to stop the menace. Until a monitoring system is brought in, parents must remain vigilant.

And I will continue to campaign to remind them that children are just **three clicks** away from **Jim** and **other beasts like him**.

(*Sunday People*, 18 March 2001)

Although ‘Jim’ is labelled a ‘beast’ (i.e. sub-human), his role in Vorderman’s investigation is sufficient to conclude that he is used to represent is a ‘real’, veritable (human) threat. Vorderman draws upon the high-profile Patrick Green case, and the case of ‘Jim’, which is presented as ‘typical’ of the average foray into youth-centric chatrooms, to support her argument that online paedophiles represent a real and pressing “menace” to all young internet users. The claim that children are “just three clicks” from (i.e. permanently close to) these characters (and others like them) is used to support the assertion that “a monitoring system” is the ‘obvious’ solution. Until such a system is implemented, it is parents, as opposed to children, who “must remain vigilant”, thus demonstrating the perceived ineptitude of children. In other words, before suitably tight forms of institutional governance are implemented, tight regimes of parental governance are required to regulate the lives of ‘our’ “unsuspecting”

(naive, innocent, vulnerable) children – all in the name of protection.

A year later, the *Sunday Express*, a UK midmarket tabloid, conducted a similar investigation during the disappearance of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman. Once again, the resulting headline focussed on the temporal proximity of internet paedophiles to children:

‘Missing girls: Day 7: We expose the horrifying danger to unsuspecting youngsters using computer chat rooms: **Five minutes to snare a child on net**’
(*Sunday Express*, 11 August 2002)

In this example, online chatrooms are presented as inherent embodiments of “horrifying danger” for young internet users. The construction of children, meanwhile, again draws on the discourse of childhood naivety and innocence, describing “youngsters using computer chat rooms” as “unsuspecting” (the same adjective used in the *Daily Mirror*). This, then, serves to reinforce the message that adults should ban, regulate or monitor children’s internet use – after all, ‘knowing’ adults/parents need only be absent for as little as five minutes to leave sufficient time for their “unsuspecting” child to be ‘snared’. This headline figure of five minutes is recycled in the article’s lead sentence:

Children logging on to some of the most popular teenage chat rooms on the internet are often only **five minutes** away from **meeting a paedophile prowling for victims**, a Sunday Express investigation has revealed”
(‘New breed of paedophiles lure victims in chat rooms’, *Sunday Express*, 11 August 2002)

While both the headline and lead use temporal proximity to construct the internet as inherently risky for young people, they do so in slightly different ways. The headline highlights the capabilities of the cunning, technically adroit internet paedophile and his ability to “snare” a child within five minutes, with internet chatrooms acting as the facilitator of this act. In the lead, however, the emphasis switches to closeness (in time) of children to paedophiles: when logging on to chatrooms they are “often only five minutes away from meeting a paedophile”. Thus, through use of the term “often”, the journalist is asserting that the experience of being approached by a paedophile, as described in the investigation, is a common occurrence during chatroom sessions.

As with the construction of online ‘paedophile places’, it was often chatrooms that were demonised for bringing children close(r) to predators. In an example from the *Toronto Sun*, Detective Constable Paul Krawczyk, a member of the Toronto Police child exploitation unit, claimed:

Usually **within seconds of signing on** they’re [paedophiles] jumping all over you, wanting to talk.

(‘Dark side of the net’, *Toronto Sun*, 20 March 2005)

Here, by employing the adverb “usually”, Krawczyk uses his professional authority to depict a ‘typical’ internet experience for children. Blurring the boundary between ‘the virtual’ and ‘the real’/physical (cf. Bingham et al., 1999), Krawczyk argues it is typical for paedophiles to be “jumping all over” children “within *seconds*”. This rhetoric conjures images of *close, physical* contact (‘jumping all over/on top of’) and emphasises the size/power inequality between the two parties (the predator jumps; the child is jumped upon), but nevertheless identifies a veritable risk in the form of “paedophiles... wanting to talk”.

Temporal proximity is also depicted through claims about the speed with which paedophiles can begin the process of grooming young internet users. This is a common trope in everyday discourse when, for example, one may give directions by saying that the other party is “two minutes away” from their destination, meaning they are close by. The first example of this comes from an in-house investigation conducted by the Canadian *London Free Press*. It begins:

It happens **so fast**.

All I want to do is have a look at the Internet chat rooms police warn parents about.

But I can’t just watch.

Men, attracted by my tender 13 years – that’s how I portrayed myself for this research – can’t resist.

(‘Internet rife with peril for youth’, *London Free Press*, 7 October 2004)

Thus, it is the fastness with which the ‘grooming’ process begins – that is, the

minimal amount of time it takes a 13-year-old to garner the attention of paedophiles, the closeness in time of the ‘child’ to the paedophile – that is emphasised ahead of the characterisation of the ‘insatiable’ predators who refuse to allow her to “just watch” as they “can’t resist”. Later in the article, the journalist reiterates the temporal proximity of her 13-year-old alter ego to one of the men who approached her in the chat room:

That’s all it took. **A few minutes** and a supposed 30-year-old is asking a 13-year-old to meet in person for a sexual adventure.

My nerves get the better of me.

I log off.

I feel like I’m in danger, like the screen is **too close**, that somehow this man will find me.

(‘Internet rife with peril for youth’, *London Free Press*, 7 October 2004)

Thus, in this instance, the journalist is constructing closeness through both temporal proximity (“A few minutes”) and an illusion of physical closeness created through her proximity to the tangible object through which she is seeing the alleged predator’s communications, the computer monitor (“the screen”).

A similar approach was also adopted in a piece in the Australian *Herald Sun*:

American FBI officer Laura Chappell... showed during a visit to Australia how **quickly** predators can hook kids in chat rooms.

Chappell went into chat rooms as a 12-year-old girl looking for pen friends. Within **seconds** she had hooked **six pedophiles**.

Four were from Sydney but were willing to travel Australia-wide to make **contact**. One was an old man who sent a picture of an erect penis claiming it was his and advertising the benefits of sex with older men.

(‘Don’t leave the door open’, *Herald Sun*, 17 June 2006)

Here, again, the closeness of paedophiles to children in chatrooms is defined through speed/quickness. In this instance it is argued that predators can ‘hook’ children in *seconds*; that is, children are seconds away from being ‘caught’ by a predator. Additionally, a ‘traveller’ discourse, facilitated by the internet predator’s supposed

willingness and ability to traverse geographical boundaries, also serves to construct dangerous individuals from across the country (“Australia-wide”, i.e. non-local) as a localised threat, while the transition from temporal proximity (“seconds”) to physical proximity is marked by the term “contact”. A particularly interesting lexical choice in this context is the adjective ‘hooked’. By creating a fishing analogy – the fish unknowingly endangering its life by blindly taking the bait attached to the hook of the angler’s rod – this single term positions young internet users as naive and endangered, and predators as knowing and powerful: the naive child unknowingly endangering its life by blindly taking the predator’s bait. (This analogy is arguably reversed in the second sentence when it the FBI officer is described as having “hooked six pedophiles”).

Reflection on the discourse of temporal proximity

In this section I have illustrated how a discourse of temporal proximity has been used to argue that the internet brings children close(r) to paedophiles. The types of paedophile threat invoked through this discourse were grouped into three categories: *abstract*, *potential* or *veritable*. A selection of examples found in various newspapers are presented in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Children’s temporal proximity to online risks

Category	Risk	Temporal Proximity
Veritable	(Six) Paedophiles	Seconds
Veritable	A paedophile	One click Three clicks Minutes
Veritable	A paedophile prowling for victims	Five minutes
Veritable	An evil paedophile	Three clicks
Veritable	Beasts	Three clicks
Abstract	Danger	One click A few clicks
Abstract	Evil	One click
Veritable	Individuals who seek children to sexual exploit and victimize	A mouse click
Veritable	Net predator	Two hours
Veritable	Paedophile ‘travelers’	One click

Veritable	Paedophiles jumping all over you	Seconds
Potential	Potential groomers	One click
Potential	Potential predators	A few clicks
Potential	Potential victimization	One mouse click
Abstract	Removal/lose of innocence	One curious click

Table 8.2 demonstrates how claims-makers have negotiated the paedophile's migration from 'the physical world' to 'the virtual world' by utilising a discourse that foregrounds his temporal proximity (closeness *in time*) as opposed to his physical proximity (physical closeness). As such, the discourse of temporal proximity plays an important in maintaining the potency of 'the paedophile' for shaping practices. According to Meyer:

Importantly, media discourses possess the power to shape practices as some parents will no longer leave their children unsupervised in public places, especially not in those considered typical 'paedophile places', such as parks, playgrounds or around schools.

(2007: 87)

More specifically:

The detailed nature of the figure of 'the paedophile' allows parents to govern their children's behaviour and movements in very specific ways, e.g. through restricting access to certain spaces or supervising children in certain situations. These particular spaces and situations have been defined as dangerous by the likely presence of 'the paedophile'.

(Meyer, 2007: 148-149)

From this perspective, if the online threat posed by 'the paedophile' was seen to be more distant, less pressing or immediate, its power would be diminished. So, by implication, would adults' power to govern children's behaviour and movements. Therefore, by providing an alternative to physical proximity (an integral part of the strategy of space and the construction of 'paedophile places') and helping to maintain an illusion of closeness, the discourse of temporal proximity plays an important role in maintaining established claims-makers' power to define the terms of the paedophile problem and promote solutions. It enables them to manufacture fear about the internet by regurgitating established myths about the paedophile threat in spite of the apparent

tensions/incompatibility between the strategy of space, with its emphasis on close physical proximity in the ‘real world’, and the sprawling ‘virtual world’ of cyberspace. In so doing, it maintains the status of the paedophile as an immediate, pressing threat. This, in turn, maintains and perpetuates the notion that parents must govern various – indeed more – aspects of children’s lives in the name of ‘protection’, and maintains the space for claims-makers to legitimately opine about the measures most appropriate for achieving this.

Conceptualising change in the time of the ‘internet predator’

In the preceding parts of this chapter I have introduced two ways in which ideas of space and spatiality are used to construct online CSA as a pressing social problem. The first related to the (re)mobilisation of myths about dangerous (cyber)spaces in the construction of online and offline ‘paedophile places’. The second looked at how temporal proximity has been used to claim that the internet brings children closer to paedophiles than ever before. The final section of this chapter concerns itself with an examination of some of the ways in which claims-makers have sought to conceptualise change.

The rise of online CSA as a new social problem has been said to result in changes to a variety concepts central to the social construction of CSA, namely: changes to our understandings of ‘stranger danger’; changes to our understanding of childhood and what it means to be a child; and changes to our understandings of ‘the paedophile’. Latour offers a useful framework for thinking about such changes:

the Pythagorean theorem, heliocentrism, the laws of gravity, the steam engine, Lavoisier’s chemistry, Pasteur’s vaccination, the atomic bomb, the computer – on each occasion time will be reckoned starting from these miraculous beginnings.... People are going to distinguish the time ‘BC and ‘AC with respect to computers as they do the years ‘before Christ’ and ‘after Christ’.

(Latour, 1993: 71, cited in Bingham et al., 1999)

Reflecting on this, Bingham et al (1999) argue that “[t]o conceptualise change in this way implies that access to the future results from access to innovation. In this sense, many times can be said to spatially coexist”. This, then, provides a link between spatiality and the construction of online CSA as a new social problem. In this instance, though, it relates to the overlapping concepts of *space* and *time*, and, more

specifically, the spatial coexistence (or otherwise) of ‘the time’ of ‘the paedophile’ – that is, long-established offline ‘paedophile’ – and the time of the ‘*internet* paedophile’ (generally referred to as the ‘internet predator’ in this thesis). As has been touched upon, alongside his *closeness*, a key part of the discourse around the rise of the internet predator is his *newness*. In the remaining part of this chapter I present some close readings which demonstrate some of the discursive strategies used to (a) create a distinction between the ‘time’ of ‘the paedophile’ and that of the more contemporaneous ‘internet predator’, and (b) position modern childhood in the realm of the latter.

In framing online CSA as a new kind of paedophile problem, it is often claimed that the internet has drastically altered the dynamic between paedophiles and children, and the ‘grooming’ process. For example, in the aforementioned *Sunday People* investigation conducted by Carol Vorderman it was claimed:

Chatrooms give perverts **direct access** to children in a way **previously impossible**.

The beasts know they are safe from detection in their lairs. And the Net **speeds up** the “grooming”[.]
(‘Your child is just three clicks away from an evil paedophile’, *Sunday People*, 18 March 2001)

Of course, parts of this argument draw upon well-established rhetorical tropes already associated with ‘the paedophile’, such as the invocation of animal imagery in the description of ‘beasts’ and ‘lair’. However, in this conception, the online paedophile problem is not merely an extension of the offline one. Internet chatrooms, it is claimed, provide “*direct access* to children in a way *previously impossible*”, a phrase that also plays with spatiality in the form of perception, movement, distance and proximity. Thus, in Bingham et al’s terms, this access, together with the anonymity and reduction in grooming time it is said to provide, constitutes a new ‘time’ – a time that commenced once chatrooms/the internet provided paedophiles with a *modus operandi* that was not previously available to them.

When conceptualising change in this way, the internet has also been seen to have signalled a new ‘time’ for concepts central to popular understandings of CSA, namely

‘stranger danger’, ‘childhood’ and ‘the paedophile’. It is to ‘stranger danger’ that I first turn my attention.

Conceptualising change – stranger danger

To begin this discussion, I introduce an opinion piece published in the *Daily Mail*. This piece, written by Fiona Looney, was published in response to a BBC *Panorama* programme titled ‘One Click From Danger’. It began:

Almost the first thing every parent teaches their child is not to talk to strangers. There’s even a programme in the primary school curriculum called Stranger Danger, which reinforces the warnings that children receive in the home.

But as two television documentaries demonstrated this week, there is a **new Stranger Danger** so worrying and real that it makes the traditional image of a stranger as a bold man with a bag of sweets seem almost quaint.

The rise of **online predators** is now one of the greatest threats facing our children and unlike the **bogey-man with the bag of sweets** it’s almost certain that your children and mine will, at some stage of their **online lives**, encounter it.

(‘Did anybody tell Amy about stranger danger on the internet’, *Daily Mail*, 9 January 2008)

This article begins by establishing the validity of the traditional notion of stranger danger. The stranger danger message, the author contends, is universal and shared (something that “every parent teaches their children”), and such is its importance that it is prioritised, treated as a matter of utmost urgency, in order to establish strangers as a threat to children’s wellbeing at the earliest opportunity (“Almost the *first thing...*”). Furthermore, far from being fanciful or unjustified, it is officially endorsed at the highest level, institutionalised in the school curriculum and reinforced in both the home and school. In this construction a clear distinction is created between traditional (or *old*) “Stranger Danger” and “*new* Stranger Danger”. Moreover, a clear distinction is created between the traditional paedophile (the embodiment of “Stranger Danger”) and the internet paedophile (the embodiment of “*new* Stranger Danger”), here respectively characterised as the “bold man with a bag of sweets” and the “online predator”.

Also remarkable – and at first seemingly contradictory – is the dismissive

construction of offline stranger danger. Despite being the dominant frame through which sexual threats to children have hitherto been constructed, the “traditional image” of stranger danger is described as “almost quaint”, a phrase which appears to downplays its seriousness. When contrasted with “new Stranger Danger”, the traditional form (“Stranger Danger”) is presented as being a relative rarity, something children rarely encounter(ed): “unlike the bogey-man with the bag of sweets [“Stranger Danger”] it’s almost certain that your children and mine will, at some stage of their online lives, encounter it [“new Stranger Danger”]”. That is, “the bogey-man with the bag of sweets”, a fanciful figure used to scare children, was *not* something that children would almost certainly encounter.

Here, however, is where the discursive work of the lead paragraph is realised. As noted, the lead paragraph establishes traditional Stranger Danger as something that is universal, important, valid and pressing. Thus, the later construction of Stranger Danger as “quaint” and comparatively rare is not as dismissive as it initially seems; rather, it functions to accentuate the *relative* seriousness of “new Stranger Danger”. Put another way Stranger Danger is not, *in itself*, quaint, un-concerning, rare or unreal – it only appears so *by comparison*: this problem, long established as an issue of utmost seriousness (universal, important, valid and pressing; a concern for legislators, teachers and parents), has been superseded to the greatest possible degree by this new and even more pressing problem (“*now* one of the *greatest threats* facing our children”). This strand of the discourse is extended through strategic use of the term “real” – an important qualification, given the perceived ‘virtual’ nature of internet communications. In this instance, the ‘realness’ of “new Stranger Danger” is epitomised by its omnipresence. Where “Stranger Danger” was, by comparison, a relative rarity, “new Stranger Danger” is universal, nondiscriminatory, a threat to all: it is not just possible that children *could* encounter it, it is “almost certain” that they *will*. The omnipresent nature of this new danger is not only communicated by use of the phrase “our children”, a staple of popular discourses around children and childhood, Looney also uses her role as a commentator to communicate with readers on a more personal level, using the possessive adjective ‘your’ and the pronoun ‘mine’ (“it’s almost certain that *your* children and *mine* will, at some stage of their online lives, encounter it”) to argue that this problem is universal, impossible to guard against and non-discriminatory (i.e. unaffected by factors such as social class,

education; as likely to affect the journalist at the reader).¹²

This construction of online CSA neatly encapsulates Latour's assertion that "People are going to distinguish the time 'BC and 'AC with respect to computers as they do the years 'before Christ' and 'after Christ'" (1993: 71, cited in Bingham et al., 1999). In this instance it is argued that the rise of the computer has resulted in the "rise of online predators". Moreover, the rise of the computer has created "one of the greatest threats facing our children". This is constructed in terms of "Stranger Danger" (pre-"internet predators") and "new Stranger Danger" (post-"internet predators"). Thus, in Latour's terms, 'BC' ('Before Computers') children and childhood were threatened by "Stranger Danger"; 'AC' ('After Computers') they are threatened by the addition of "new Stranger Danger".

This, however, is not to say that "new Stranger Danger" has replaced "Stranger Danger". Rather, it represents an *additional* threat to children/childhood. This is intimated through the focus on children's "online lives", a phrase which points to a duality in contemporary childhood; that is, since the advent of the internet, children must now negotiate their "online lives" (and the associated risks) alongside their 'real world' lives. Given that both 'online' and 'offline' lives contain risks (e.g. "Stranger Danger", "new Stranger Danger" and various others), this can be interpreted as an indication that children now encounter (even) more risk in their lives. Computers, and the internet in particular, have introduced multiple risks/dangers and have therefore contributed to the formation of a more dangerous, riskier conception of childhood.

This argument that the internet extends stranger danger from the offline realm into that of the online – therefore making contemporary childhood doubly perilous – can also be observed in the following *Daily Express* editorial:

Parents have long lived with the knowledge that children are vulnerable to approaches from paedophiles and perverts in the street. That is why most parents drum into them never to talk to strangers. If we are to stop similar access through the Internet, we must accept the virtual world is **just another public place** with the same dangers and pitfalls.

¹² This recalls an earlier point about the internet being a great leveller in terms of its ability to endanger children regardless of social class, etc.

Rather than trying to do the impossible and deny children access, parents need to educate youngsters so that they treat everyone who contacts them with as much suspicion as if they had been approached on the street.
(‘Teach children to wise up to the dangers of the net’, *Daily Express*, 16 July 2003)

This argument is premised on accepted “knowledge” (as opposed to a contestable opinion or belief), shared among parents, that “children are vulnerable to approaches from paedophiles and perverts in the street”. In other words, it is premised upon and remobilising the notion that ‘stranger danger’ is a valid and ‘real’ risk for young people. Like “the street” (a metonym for all public places, the outside world), where paedophiles are said to pose a constant threat to children, the internet “is just *another public place* with the same dangers and pitfalls”. Thus, in post-computer childhood there are more public places that encapsulate stranger danger – “the street” (and other public places in the ‘real world’) *and* the internet.

It is on this basis that the *Express*’s leader writer is forthright in promoting a solution for parents concerned about the risks the internet poses to their children. Namely, parents “*need to*” (as opposed to ‘could’ or ‘should’) educate their children to be as suspicious of online contacts as they are of strangers in the outside world. In other words, given the accepted “knowledge” that strangers in “the street” are equated with “paedophiles and perverts” – the consequence of which is that “most parents drum into [their children] never to talk to strangers” – this leader implores parents to encourage the view (or ‘drum it into’ their children) that anyone who contacts a child online is a paedophile/pervert and should be feared. Therefore, by drawing on a discourse of universalisation (i.e. every ‘stranger’ online is a likely paedophile and should be avoided), this proposal indirectly functions as a form of censorship; the kind of denial of access that it claims is “impossible”.

More generally, while the stated preference for education over denial of access is sensible – and something I would support – the focus of the suggested education, with its emphasis on extending the flawed message of stranger danger, is not. To encourage young people to treat all online contacts with suspicion creates unnecessary and unjustified anxiety about an aspect of the internet that many of them enjoy exploring (e.g. Livingstone and Bober, 2004; Livingstone et al., 2011c). It also

epitomises the kind of warning that some children perceive to be exaggerated and unrealistic and to which they have become desensitised (Byron, 2008).

Conceptualising change – childhood

As we have seen, childhood is a key concept in the construction of media messages about internet predators. However, it should be noted that childhood is sometimes invoked in more explicit terms than has so far been acknowledged. For example, in one of the oldest articles in my sample, Dan Coats of the *Washington Post* argued: “Childhood must be defended by parents and society as a safe harbour of innocence. It is a privileged time to develop values in an environment that is not hostile to children. But the Internet invades that protected place and destroys that innocence” (“Dark side” of the internet’, *Washington Post*, 30 June 1995). Childhood is also evoked in the title of an American government initiative aimed at tackling the problem of internet predators, ‘Project Safe Childhood’.¹³ Elsewhere, it is not uncommon for reports on incidents of online grooming to allude to the loss, destruction or curtailing of the victim’s childhood. For example, in one UK Sunday tabloid the mother of a victim stated: “I feel sick at the way he violated Kelly. He has destroyed her childhood and innocence” (‘How internet chatroom rat lured me into his evil sex trap, by girl guide of 14’, *The People*, 11 March 2001). Another was quoted as saying: “I felt a failure as a mother. I hadn’t protected my daughter properly and now her childhood had been stolen by this monster” (‘Chat room sicko: Net nightmare every parent fears’, *Sunday Mirror*, 8 February 2004).

The two examples in the previous section were premised on the notion that, by introducing a new form of stranger danger into children’s lives, the internet has made contemporary childhood *even more* dangerous. Other commentators, however, adopted a different discursive strategy, relying upon a deliberately idealised representation of pre-internet childhood in order to highlight the negative impact the internet is alleged to have had on contemporary, post-internet childhood. For example, an opinion piece by Cameron Horn, in the *Newcastle Herald*, an Australian regional tabloid, headlined ‘Dangerous playground inside the family home’

¹³ As an aside it is striking that the title implies that childhood can be made safe by achieving the programme’s aim of defeating internet predators, thus ignoring the plethora of risks that children routinely encounter in other spheres of life (e.g. family life).

(*Newcastle Herald*, 28 November 2006), began with an assertion that the internet had brought about a fundamental change in the way in which parents govern their offspring's childhoods:

It used to be comparatively simple the kids would play in the backyard or sometimes pop over to the next door neighbour, or maybe just **hang on the nature strip outside**. Most of the time, you could keep an eye on them from the kitchen window.

However, our children have found a **new and very dangerous playground** and they don't even have to leave the house.

The internet chat room has become a standard, in fact, mandatory part of a young person's social life. Along with the mobile phone and SMS, webchat may look innocuous but it has a particularly odious underbelly. So much so that the Federal Police has set up a dedicated force, the Online Child Sexual Exploitation Team (OCSET), specifically to catch chat room predators.

(‘Dangerous playground inside the family home’, *Newcastle Herald*, 28 November 2006)

While previous examples have demonstrated how journalists and other claims-makers have used the before/after computers (BC/AC) dichotomy to argue that the nature of the paedophile threat has been fundamentally changed by the introduction of the internet, Horn's argument focuses on changes to childhood and parenting more generally. The article begins by establishing a distinction between ‘old childhood’ (BC) and ‘new childhood’ (AC), using the phrase “*It used to be comparatively simple*” to hark back to a time before computers/the internet/chatrooms. Here, the notion that ‘old childhood’ was “comparatively simple” highlights the corrosive impact that computers are purported to have had on adults and children alike: they have complicated childhood and the lives of parents (they are no longer as simple) as well as endangering children by presenting them with something “new and very dangerous”. As with Fiona Looney's notion of ‘New stranger danger’, Horn dismisses – or glosses over – ‘old’ stranger danger in order to create an idealised image of a safe, carefree childhood in times past. However, unlike the Looney example, this idealised construction of the past is not seen to contain any kind of risk; that is, the new risks of the online world are not constructed as being *even worse* than those that preceded them in the offline world. Instead, ‘old’ childhood is represented as a time when children could “just hang on the nature strip outside”, a notion that negates prior concerns about stranger danger in public places (abductions, etc.) as well as other

risks related to contemporary childhood's "retreat from the outdoors", such as motor traffic (Gill, 2007: 53). The 'carefree' nature of 'old' childhood is arguably invoked in the phrase "just hang" insofar as it implies spontaneous leisure, a view derived from the perspective that "[c]hildhood is conventionally seen as a time of carefree, disorganised bliss" (Denzin, 1982: 189).

Of additional note in this extract is the manner in which the journalist draws upon a romanticised image of the home as a safe haven. Indeed, implicit in the assertion that "our children have found a new and very dangerous playground and *they don't even have to leave the house*" is the assumption that "the house", the family home, was not a site of danger prior to the dissemination of internet-connected home computers and the associated rise of the "new and very dangerous playground" of online chatrooms. In other words, to encounter danger before computers children *did* have to leave the house. Likewise, threats from within the home (e.g. parents), from intimates (e.g. "the next door neighbour") and, indeed, from 'real world' strangers (e.g. those also "hanging around the nature strip") are sidestepped in order to amplify the dangerousness of "chat room predators".

Conceptualising change – the paedophile

To conclude this section on the conceptualisation of change, I examine some of the discourses through which journalists and other claims-makers have constructed the figure at the centre of the problem, the 'internet predator'. In so doing I pay particular attention to rhetorical strategies used to depict a 'new breed', and consider how such hyperbole communicates ideas about the size and scope of the 'paedophile problem' more generally.

As has been demonstrated, central to the process of framing online CSA as a new and pressing social problem was the creation of a clear distinction between a time 'before' and 'after' computers/the internet. At times, this was achieved by focussing on the evolution of the paedophile. For example, in a *Washington Post* article outlining the aforementioned Project Safe Childhood initiative, Michelle Collins, of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, described the subjects of what the headline identified as a "growing problem" of "online predators" in the following terms:

Before the Internet era, Collins said, people who wanted to see graphic images of children “would have to go into an adult bookstore, wink-wink at the person behind the counter and hope he wouldn’t call the cops, or take the chance of ordering something through the mail. Now people can just get online and hide things on their computer. It’s really introduced **a new type of offender.**”

(‘Prosecutors Lead Effort Against Online Predators: U.S. Attorney’s Office Aims to Help Coordinate Actions as Federal Government Attacks Growing Problem’, *Washington Post*, 22 June 2006)

Other claims-makers adopted a different strategy, drawing upon well established images of ‘the paedophile’ in order to differentiate them from the new ‘type’ of offender. For example, in an article in the *West Australian*, Sergeant Dean Worthington, head of the Western Australia Police cyber predator unit, advised:

Many people may imagine that sexual predators are middle-aged or elderly men in long raincoats approaching children in the local park. That is not **the modern situation**. Sadly, there are people on the internet and in chat rooms trying to talk to young girls about sexual matters.

(‘Police cyber paedophile unit scores victory’, *The West Australian*, 21 June 2007)

This image of sexual predators is derived from a construction of ‘the paedophile’ as a ‘dirty old man’, one which is commonly associated with popular warnings about stranger danger (as implied by Sergeant Worthington’s reference to the quintessential paedophile place, “the local park”). While Worthington does not contest this flawed and widely challenged image, he asserts that it is outmoded – it belongs to a time before computers (BC) and, as such, is not “the modern situation” (i.e. after computers). In so doing, he actively creates a distinction between the time of ‘the paedophile’ and the time of ‘the internet paedophile’ (“the modern situation”).

Another way in which parts of the press defined the “modern situation” was through claims about a “new breed” of paedophile. The first example of this is taken from an article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1995:

First it was Daniel from Washington; now it’s Tara from Kentucky. In recent days, both have been enticed to run away to San Francisco, police say, by a **new breed of predators** reaching out to the young over computer networks.

The latest to leave home was 13- year-old Tara from the Louisville suburb of

St. Matthews. She apparently begged her mother for a computer and then used it – to her parents’ mortification – to talk to strange men around the country.

“**The computer – that’s what started this problem,**” said Norm Mayer, chief of the St. Matthews Police Department.
(‘On-line Chats Lure Youths Away: 13-year-old girl last seen in Texas on way to San Francisco’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 June 1995)

This extract illustrates many of the points raised so far in this chapter. First, it identifies a “new breed of predators”, thus creating a clear distinction between the pre-computer ‘paedophile’ of old and the newer, post-computer ‘internet predator’. In keeping with this, the expert source specifically identifies “[t]he computer” as the origin of the problem. As such, it fits with the beginning of ‘a time’: only with the advent of the computer did this problem come into existence – before computers, this “new breed of predators” were not in existence because they *could not* be in existence (“The computer – *that’s what started this problem*”). Also of note in the context of this chapter is the invocation of spatiality – in particular distance, movement and proximity – in the claim that paedophiles are “*reaching out* to the young over computer networks”, a claim that evokes imagery of physical contact – an adult making a physical movement, or lunge, towards a child, perhaps.

At times, the ‘new breed’ discourse was used to make claims about the size and scope of the ‘paedophile problem’ more generally. For instance, a *Sunday Express* leader published alongside an in-house investigation into chatrooms used this discourse to argue that the internet had expanded the existing ‘paedophile problem’, thus putting children at greater risk than had hitherto been the case. It argued:

The image of the Internet as a great big library in the sky is only partly accurate. It is also a Pandora’s box releasing terrible evils into the world. Not only has the Internet given perverts more access to children, it has also **increased the army of paedophiles** among us. The pornography that can so easily be viewed feeds the demon inside these men and excites them to put their fantasies into action. This **new breed of perverts** can hide their electronic activities more easily than if they were cruising the streets; they can pretend to be children and they can trick children into meetings.
(‘Now perverts are able to linger in your very home’, *Sunday Express*, 11 August 2002)

From this perspective, the internet is not necessarily responsible for creating an

entirely new problem. Instead, it is aiding the expansion of an existing one. As such, this claim shares similarities with examples discussed earlier in this chapter regarding the expansion of stranger danger. The notion that the internet is responsible for “*releasing* terrible evils” implies that rather than creating *new* evils, the internet has helped to disseminate something that had previously been repressed or contained (and was therefore less of a widescale problem). This is further substantiated through the claim that the internet has “given perverts *more access* to children” (i.e. such access to children is not new, but it has been expanded). As with Fiona Looney’s juxtaposition of “new Stranger Danger” with “Stranger Danger” and “online predators” with the “bold man with a bag of sweets”, the *Sunday Express* editorial also constructs online perpetrators in opposition to offline perpetrators, with the “new breed” being distinguished from those “cruising the streets”. Again, though, this “new breed of perverts” does not represent a replacement for the previous “breed”. Instead, it has simply “increased the [*existing*] army of paedophiles among us”. Here the rhetoric of an “army” performs two discursive functions. First, it carries connotations of vastness, force and organisation, suggesting that strong, urgent and decisive action needs to be taken in the ‘war’ against paedophiles, the enemy within. Second, because armies typically do battle with an opposition force, resulting in the creation of literal and figurative sides (‘peacekeepers’ versus ‘terrorists’, ‘us’ versus ‘them’, ‘good’ versus ‘evil’, etc.), it serves to ‘other’ internet predators by distinguishing them from ‘normal’ folk/parents. This is made more explicit through the juxtaposition of the “army of paedophiles” with “us”, a discursive strategy which creates ingroup-outgroup imagery and draws upon the established trope of constructing child sex offenders through their otherness in order to place them ‘outside’ society. It also serves to juxtapose internet predators with parents, as is common when “‘the paedophile’ as a dangerous stranger is constructed and produced in opposition to the protective safe parent” (Meyer, 2007: 150).

Another noteworthy example of this discourse is taken from a *News of the World* article, the headline of which, ‘Travel threat of web beasts’, signals that this particular threat comes from a new(er) form of paedophile – namely, internet-based “*web beasts*”. The newness and uniqueness of the threat posed by this new form of ‘web’ predator is further established at the outset of the article. An important part of the discourse around the “desperate new breed” of paedophile, part of the *newness* that

establishes him as a distinct and more dangerous type of child sex offender than has hitherto been known, is the notion that he is not confined to local ‘paedophile places’ – the local park, swimming baths, public playground, schoolyards, etc. Thus, unlike before, parents cannot necessarily protect their children from paedophiles by accompanying them to, or forbidding them from accessing, these pre-identified, blacklisted spaces. Instead, far from being relatively localised, the threat posed by the “new breed” of predators is much broader as they are “travellers”, uninhibited by distance or (inter)national geographical boundaries:

[K]ids are being targeted by a **desperate new breed** of internet sex monster...

The vile predators, known as “travellers”, are prepared to spend thousands to fly around the globe and meet up with children they have groomed in chat rooms.

Computer cops on both sides of the Atlantic fear the sick craze is a growing threat as perverts take advantage of cheap air fares.

US internet abuse expert John Sheehan said: “The world is getting smaller and it’s easier to travel around than ever before. It presents a very real danger.”

(‘Travel threat of web beasts’, *News of the World*, 26 December 2004)

This extract incorporates many of discourses outlined through the course of this chapter. First, it distinguishes between the pre-computer ‘paedophile’ and the “new breed” of post-computer “internet sex monster”. Second, spatiality is central to the process of convincing readers of the scope and urgency of the threat posed by these predators. Specifically, it is stated that the “world is getting smaller”, which reduces children’s proximity (both spatial and temporal) to “perverts” (i.e. as the planet shrinks so too does the distance between children and predatory paedophiles).

That said, the internet remains a – possibly *the* – key component in this argument: the ‘shrinking’ world, in which “it’s easier to travel around than ever before”, principally carries the risk of the “traveller” paedophile because of the facilitatory role internet chatrooms play in providing these new traveller paedophiles with ‘access’ to children. Thus, by enabling them to act upon their “desperate” urges with fewer practical restrictions or limitations, the internet removes the shackles from paedophiles and aids the creation of a new, freer, more mobile, globalised ‘breed’. Therefore, although the internet predator is indeed framed as a move away from the ‘local’, pre-computer

paedophile, arguments such as this are exemplar of the manner in which he is constructed as a *global* threat that is *local to all*. As such, he localises a global problem, meaning that, with distance no longer a prohibitive issue, children are actually seen to be closer to the paedophile threat than ever before.

Elsewhere, the ‘new breed’ of predators was also seen to be empowered by the anonymity and vastness of the internet. When Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman first went missing, the police examined the possibility that the girls had run away with, or been abducted by, somebody they had met online. During this period the *Sunday Express* – part of the Express Group, which was offering a £1 million reward for information leading to the girls’ safe return – conducted an in-house investigation into chatrooms. The resulting article, which followed the predictable narrative of highlighting the speed at which chatrooms supposedly bring (journalists posing as) children into contact with paedophiles, asserted:

Child protection agencies and the police are **powerless** to monitor the millions of messages which pass across the world wide web every hour of the day and night, and there is growing evidence that the anonymity of the Internet has created **a new breed of paedophile** – one **much harder to detect or stop**.

(‘New breed of paedophiles lure victims in chat rooms’, *Sunday Express*, 11 August 2002)

This construction shares discursive elements with the accompanying editorial (discussed earlier) insofar as it presents the new “breed” of child sex offender as being more capable than has hitherto been the case. Although frequently constructed as cunning (Meyer, 2007), previous media representations of the ‘traditional’ paedophile have often focussed on ineptitude, particularly in terms of social interactions (Kitzinger, 2004). Here, however, is one way in which the difference between offline paedophiles and the “new breed” of internet predators is defined. Aided by the anonymity of the internet, the “new breed” is seen to be much more capable than that from which it evolved. Indeed, although the assertion that the “new breed” is “harder to detect or stop” implies a degree of fallibility (i.e. they are *harder*, but not *impossible* to detect or stop), the ‘powerlessness’ of child protection agencies and the police – two of the most well resourced institutions involved in the ‘fight’ against paedophiles – highlights the powerful position of the ‘new’, ‘anonymous’ paedophile. From this perspective, the internet has brought about a power shift and

the new breed of paedophile it has spawned sits above the police and child protection agencies in the hierarchy.

As well as blaming the internet for empowering the ‘new breed’ of paedophile it allegedly spawned, some journalists presented internet predators as especially capable in their own right. Central to this process was the discursive construction of a specific kind of perpetrator, a paedophile for the twenty-first century. One way of achieving this was through the representation of the internet paedophile as more capable and progressive than his forefather (‘the paedophile’). This is exemplified by the following two examples:

To defeat an online paedophile community getting **faster** and **smarter** – learning to **cover its tracks using cyber ‘mirrors’** to block addresses and to **destroy computer evidence** – CEOP has brought together professionals from Microsoft and AOL, as well as charities and expert detectives.

(‘The net closes: We join the task force hunting online paedophiles’, *Daily Mirror*, 5 May 2006)

Cunning child-sex perverts are using Internet technology to **outwit the police** and prey on new young victims... Police have previously been able to catch them by intercepting their e-mails and downloading information stored on their computers. Now **‘smart’ paedophiles** are using **powerful new technology** which effectively **makes their crime invisible** to outsiders.

(‘Internet prowlers using a secret code’, *Daily Express*, 5 April 2000)

These examples draw upon the long established discourse of cunningness, explicitly in the case of the latter. In the first example, internet predators – homogenised into an “online paedophile community” – are constructed as “faster”, “smarter” and sufficiently computer-savvy to hide their tracks with “cyber ‘mirrors’” and destroy evidence of their activities. Likewise, the second example specifically identifies “‘smart’ paedophiles” who are ‘outwitting’ the police and disguising their activities.¹⁴ Thus, internet predators are constructed as progressive, intelligent, innovative and reformative; they are seen to be evolving at the same rapid rate as the internet technology that produced them, adapting at a faster rate than police authorities and other child protection bodies. From this perspective, the second example’s reference to “*powerful* new technology” is noteworthy as it highlights the perceived power of its

¹⁴ Here the term ‘smart’ is polysemic: as well as meaning intelligent, it is also commonly used in descriptions of cutting edge technology, e.g. ‘smartphones’.

(ab)users and the magnitude of the battle to overcome the threat they pose.

Reflection on conceptualisations of change

In this section I have drawn upon Latour and Bingham et al's work on the conceptualisation of change, paying particular attention to the idea of using 'BC' (before the computer) and 'AC' (after the computer) to distinguish between different 'times'. Using this framework, I examined some of the ways in which the internet was seen to have instigated changes in three discursive fields central to popular constructions of CSA: 'stranger danger', 'childhood' and 'the paedophile'.

I began by looking at the construction of stranger danger in the post-computer age. Here a distinction was identified between conceptions of 'old' (BC) and 'new' (AC) stranger danger. Some conceptualisations asserted that 'new stranger danger', and all of the risks it entails (e.g. internet predators), has supplemented (old) 'stranger danger' and all the risks *that* entails (e.g. the paedophile). That is, the 'time' of 'stranger danger' and that of 'new stranger danger' "spatially coexist", to use Bingham et al's (1999) phrase. In this conception, then, childhood has become doubly perilous; children's lives are seen to engender more risk than ever before because the paedophile threat continues to permeate in the 'real world' while the threat of the internet predator pervades what one journalist termed their "online lives". From this perspective, children are only safe from the paedophile threat when they are inside their homes and away from computers.

The second area I looked at was childhood. In contrast to examples presented in the discussion of stranger danger, the conceptions of childhood in this section strategically drew upon a decidedly more utopian image of 'old', pre-internet childhood in order to construct contemporary childhood as *unprecedentedly* dangerous. Thus, the rise of the internet marks the 'time' at which childhood went from being relatively safe to being fraught with danger.

Finally, I examined some of the discursive means through which the internet predator has been constructed as a 'new breed' of paedophile, analysing the extent to which he has been represented as a decidedly different 'type' of threat to that of the established figure of 'the paedophile'. Again, differences were identified in the impact the

internet predator is said to have had on the scope of the overall ‘paedophile problem’. Some claims-makers argued that the birth of the internet predator had “increased the army of paedophiles among us”, thus broadening the extent of the overall paedophile problem. Others argued that the image of the traditional paedophile was outmoded and unrepresentative of the contemporary situation, a conceptualisation that implies that the *nature* of the problem has changed as opposed to the *scope*.

A common discourse identified in the construction of the internet predator was one of cunningness and power, particularly in their ability to manipulate internet technology. A by-product of the internet, the ‘new breed’ were labelled ‘smart’, rapidly evolving in accordance with the computer technology from which they were spawned and with which they are synonymous. In one example, it was argued that internet predators were particularly dangerous because of a ‘shrinking’ world, a notion that serves to localise the (global) threat of the internet predators. At times internet predators were constructed to have the capability to ‘outwit’ police and international child protection agencies, who were ‘powerless’ to overcome them. Collectively, these different strands of the discourse aid the construction of an internet predator who is extremely technically proficient and entirely in control of the internet technology he (ab)uses. The binary opposite of this, of course, is the naive, unknowing child. Indeed, viewed as a continuum, the all-powerful internet predator is at one end, while the child is at the other, with parents, the police and other online child protection agencies positioned in between.

Whether articulated through the conceptualisation of ‘new stranger danger’, ‘new childhood’ or the ‘internet predator’ (the ‘new paedophile’), the arguments discussed in this chapter have implications for children’s lives. They claim that paedophiles have increased in power, extending the power disparity between ‘the paedophile’ and child. Concurrently, children’s main ‘protectors’, parents and the police, are struggling to contain this power, feeding a discourse that presents tighter and stricter governance of children’s movements and activities as ‘common sense’, the *only* option. In short, new forms of risk have cultivated new fears about child safety. This, in turn, has encouraged new – typically tighter – regimes of parental and/or institutional governance to regulate children’s lives, which widens the power disparity between children and adults.

Chapter Summary

This chapter was divided into three separate, but inter-related sections, all of which were concerned with spatiality and the discourses through which claims-makers have negotiated the paedophile's migration from the 'physical world' to 'cyberspace'.

The first section illustrated how claims-makers in each country have drawn upon parents' knowledge of, and fears about, offline 'paedophile places' (e.g. playgrounds) in order to present certain online spaces as equally dangerous online equivalents (e.g. chatrooms). My analysis showed that claims about online paedophile places typically took one of two forms: (1) that they have replaced offline paedophile places; or (2) that they have supplemented them. As well as identifying specific sites/services as dangerous, claims about online 'paedophile places' were also made in relation to broader aspects of the internet (e.g. 'cyberspace', 'the computer'), framing internet predators as a ubiquitous, universal threat in cyberspace.

In the second section, I demonstrated how, in the absence of a convincing discourse of *physical* proximity (which is key to the construction of offline 'paedophile places'), claims-makers have used a discourse of *temporal* proximity to argue that the internet brings children to within seconds, minutes or hours of encountering a paedophile. This discourse, I argued, serves to make the threat of the internet predator more immediate and pressing, localising a global problem. Additionally, I also demonstrated how 'clicks' have been used as a punchy alternative to traditional temporal definitions (seconds, minutes, etc.), manifesting in statements such as 'one click from danger'. The 'click', I argued, appeals to shared understandings of the child as 'naturally' fallible (innocent, naive, etc.) and functions to sensitise adults to the risks posed to the *unsupervised* child. In so doing, I suggested that this single lexical choice serves to highlight children's 'natural' vulnerability and, by association, the need for adults to protect them.

The third section of this chapter looked at how claims-makers have conceptualised change in the post-computer age. From this perspective, I considered ways in which the internet has been seen to bring fundamental changes to three key concepts central to the social construction of CSA: 'stranger danger', 'childhood' and 'the paedophile'.

In each case, I identified a distinction between the ‘old’ (pre-internet) and the ‘new’ (post-internet), with the latter typically being seen to have superseded the former in terms of the level of risk it entails. Particularly important in this regard were claims about a ‘new breed’ of ‘paedophile’ (‘internet predators’), who were seen to be evolving in line with advancements in internet technology, capable of outsmarting the police and child protection agencies, and taking advantage of a ‘shrinking’ planet to endanger children around the world. The various discourses around ‘new’, post-internet threats superseding the ‘old’, I argued, framed paedophiles as unprecedentedly powerful, making childhood unprecedentedly perilous, and served to legitimise new regimes of control to regulate children’s lives.

In the next chapter, I continue the theme of spatiality by examining discourses around ‘the home’, a specific space at the centre of debates about children and the internet.

Chapter 9

Constructing the internet predator as a threat to the home

In the previous chapter I examined discourses around spatiality in order to unpack ways in which journalists and other claims-makers have conceptualised the paedophile's migration from 'real world' public spaces to 'cyberspace'. In this chapter I turn my attention to the home, a conceptual and physical space that is central to debates around children and the internet.

In dominant discourses around CSA, with their focus on stranger danger and 'the paedophile', sexual threats to children are positioned 'outside' (Atmore, 1998; Kelly, 1996; Kitzinger, 1999b). As Jenkins notes, the stranger danger discourse "achieved its greatest power when it was framed in terms of molesters and paedophiles who attacked from outside the home and family, of what now came to be known as sexual predators" (1998: 188). Consequently, the home is marginalised, or discounted, as a potential site of abuse and reconstituted as a familial safe haven. As was touched upon in Chapter 2, this conceptualisation of the home has been critiqued and challenged by feminists (e.g. Wykes, 1998), who have long sought to highlight the reality that children are at far greater risk from 'intimates' than strangers and, therefore, far from being a safe haven, the family home actually represents a place where children can be at great risk of experiencing abuse. In the case of online CSA, however, the dominant view of the home as a safe haven comes under challenge because, as the location where children most commonly access the internet (Livingstone et al., 2011b), the home has to be recontextualised as a site of abuse – albeit from an external 'predator'.

As discussed in the previous chapter, online CSA has forced claims-makers to grapple with aspects of the paedophile discourse which do not comfortably translate to the internet. An important aspect of this was proximity – children's closeness (or otherwise) to internet predators. Meyer (2007) has argued that the anonymous nature of online communications – the 'virtuality' of such communications – is often central to the construction of the internet as an inherently dangerous space, a unique source of risk. This discourse is particularly prominent when comparing online communications

with ‘real world’, face-to-face exchanges. According to Meyer:

Virtuality makes spaces like the Internet appear dangerous by diminishing certain forms of knowledge or information. In real spaces details such as the socio-personal characteristics of another person (e.g. age, gender) are known because they can be seen, but these forms of knowledge disappear with virtuality due to a lack of visibility.

(2007: 128)

In this chapter I explore ways in which claims-makers have strategically blurred the boundaries between ‘virtuality’ and ‘actuality’ in order to construct the internet predator as a personalised threat to every household – be it ‘your home’, ‘your living room’ or ‘your child’s bedroom’. In so doing I demonstrate how ideologies around ‘the home’ have been invoked to make the case that urgent action needs to be taken to protect children from the ‘invisible’ threat of internet predators. To achieve this I conduct close analyses of examples from four distinct editorial forms, each of which facilitates different journalistic approaches in terms of style and argumentation (Franklin, 2008b; Richardson, 2007). Those considered are:

- Features
- Editorials
- Opinion Columns
- Readers’ letters

Through the course of this analysis, I aim to demonstrate:

- Ways in which ideologies about the home have been invoked in relation to the internet predator;
- How these have been used to advocate various forms of parental governance;
- What this tells us about the position of the child in relation to the home and family.

From the outset it should be clear that I am not suggesting that this discourse is common to all media, or, necessarily, ‘dominant’. However, it is a notable theme which is pervasive and enduring, and therefore worthy of close consideration. In this

chapter I attempt to map out how it functions and why it has proved such a popular discursive strategy.

The social construction of ‘the home’

As has been touched upon, ‘the home’, as an idealised, socially constructed phenomena, represents a key component in the construction of online CSA as a pressing social problem. Undertaking a social scientific examination of the home, Chapman and Hockey (1999: xi) assert: “At the intersection of the public world of planners and policy makers and the personal world of family, friends and neighbours, the home is a site within which key social and personal values can be examined”. This, in the context of this chapter, is an important point. By examining the ideologies underpinning assumptions about ‘the home’ and ‘the family’, I intend to unpack the “key social and personal values” surrounding the position of ‘the child’ in the post-internet age.

For Allan and Crow (1989: 1), the concepts of ‘family’ and ‘home’ have been bound together to form “the modern domestic ideal”. Indeed, Allan argues that there is often a tendency to conflate everyday conceptions of ‘home’ and ‘family’, with the home thought of as the family’s “natural habitat” (Allan, 1989: 143). Thus, when it comes to domestic risk, any threat to the home represents a threat to the family and vice versa.

Despite its centrality to domestic organisation, the home is not necessarily well understood, as the conflation of ‘family’ and ‘home’ can lead to the ‘private’, ‘family-orientated’ space of the home being viewed as ‘out of bounds’. Wykes (1998: 241), for example, describes a “powerful mythology surrounding the family in our culture and social organisation” and states that, “we are all so dependent on home/family myths for our sense of self, [that a] reluctance to critically explore behind closed doors is utterly understandable” (Wykes, 1998: 241). However, one could argue that to further understand ‘the home’ is to further understand a key component of wider society and social organisation more generally. Hockey (1999: 150), for example, argues that “the structure and use of the English home reveals much about how the self is conceptualised, and particularly about the nature of its relationships with others”. Following a similar line of reasoning, Allan asserts that:

how domestic life is organised and what goes on in the home are a consequence of the negotiations that occur within the family, though of course not all members have equal say and the negotiations may not be as peaceful as the idyll would imply.

(1989: 143)

Given my focus on an issue that affects children within the home/family (i.e. their internet use within the home and their parents' management of this activity), this is an important point. When it comes to such familial "negotiations", for many young people, their status as a child will mean their voice carries less authority or weight than those of the more powerful parents/adults with whom they reside. By extension, to use Allan's terms, one could argue that young people generally have the least power when it comes to organising domestic life.

As fears have grown about external threats to children (e.g. stranger danger), contemporary childhood has been said to have made a "retreat from the outdoors" (Gill, 2007: 53). As such, it has been argued that childhood has become increasingly 'privatised'. James et al. (1998: 54), for example, note the "privatizing of childhood in domestic space and the insulating role which the home takes on for children". The 'home', they argue, has become "the child's centre" (James et al., 1998: 54) and the "new interiority" for childhood (James et al., 1998: 53). From this perspective, 'the home' – in particular the notion of 'the home' as a familial safe haven – can be seen to be just as central to 'childhood' as it is to 'the family'.

The home is the focal point of this chapter. This desire to critically explore the relationship between 'the child' and 'the home', and the manner in which these concepts infused discussions around online CSA, is very much in keeping with the work of James et al. (1998). They argue that "the sanctity of the domestic space of the home as haven must be scrutinized more precisely to uncover the extent to which this refuge for 'the child' has in late modernity also become increasingly problematic" (James et al., 1998: 53). The internet, I contend, represents one of the foremost ways through which the relationship between 'the child' and 'the home' has been (further) problematised over the past decade or so. Indeed, prior to concerns about the 'corrupting' nature of the internet, James et al. had already problematised the notion

of 'home' by arguing that it is "constituted for the child through relations of power and control. Echoing the experience of schooling, space at home is bounded and constraining" (James et al., 1998: 54). Further:

As a conceptual and physical space within which the child is increasingly embedded, the domestic space of the 'home' is, in practice, of course not always an ideal space: the regulation and discipline of that space, like those of the school and the city, remain problematic for many children. Indeed, it is a paradox that in the haven which home may be said to represent, issues about surveillance, power and control of the child may come to be more strongly voiced.

(James et al., 1998: 53)

This encapsulates much of what interests me in this chapter. Despite being accessed via a computer positioned inside the home, the internet is often seen to represent a new conceptual space outside the home. The internet itself is without regulation and discipline and, as will be demonstrated, when internet technologies began to disseminate, many journalists and child campaigners viewed this as a matter of considerable concern. As discussed in the previous chapter, some claims-makers argued that the key to protecting children from 'new' online perils was the implementation of tighter and more stringent forms of parental governance. For some, parents' inability to manage their children's online activities represented a significant – and worrying – potential loss of control. After all, even when physically positioned in a parent-defined and -approved 'child' space, the under-supervised could be using the internet to engage with people or things that do not meet with parental approval (see Madigan and Munro, 1999: 66-67).

In her critique of 'the home', Wykes traces the rise of the ideology of childhood 'innocence' alongside the rise of the normative, heterosexual family set-up, arguing that the news media has been central to maintaining and (re)mobilising these intertwined constructions of 'home', 'family' and 'childhood':

As the family was instituted as the appropriate site of adult sexuality, childhood was constructed as innocent; subject to parental control; supervised by medicine and educated by the state. Today, these institutions are readily reified in the press, usually through the castigation of any 'other' manifestations of sexuality or reproduction, which are seen as causal of family and consequently of social 'problems'.

(1998: 235)

This illustrates why a disruption to ‘the home’ (itself intimately linked to ‘family’ and ‘childhood’) could be seen as central to a ‘new’ social problem. Here, I am particularly interested in the notion of ‘childhood’ being “subject to parental control” within the “child’s centre” of the home, as any such control is often seen to be a key part of tackling child-centric risks or threats. However, the notion of “parental control” is not universalised and does not *necessarily* have to be defined by strict and repressive regulation, discipline and surveillance. For example, Sibley (1995), whose interest lies in the construction of the boundaries of childhood, outlines some key distinctions between *positional* and *personalising* parenting, noting their respective attitudes towards children’s role in the home. According to Sibley, positional parenting involves:

a rigid attitude to space and time in the home and anxiety over spatial boundaries. The practice of keeping children out of rooms or spaces decreed as adult spaces and a concern for temporal regulation of children’s activities would be typically positional. Keeping control means maintaining clear, unambiguous boundaries.

(Sibley, 1995: 121)

By contrast, in personalising parenting:

all the distinguishing features of the positional family are reversed. Notionally, power is equally distributed between family members with the implication that the uses of space and time in the home are negotiable. [...] In regard to domestic space, the mixing of activities is encouraged because the exclusive use of space infringes someone’s rights. There is, therefore, no concern with boundary maintenance.

(Sibley, 1995: 121)

In the case of positional parenting/families, the ‘virtual’ nature of the internet presents complications, most notably with regard to the aforementioned differences between physical and virtual spaces and the associated difficulty in establishing, regulating and maintaining “spatial boundaries”.

Popular conceptions of ‘childhood’ depict the child as innocent, naive and vulnerable (see Chapter 4). This, in turn, has repercussions for how young people are perceived

when it comes to risks and associated risk management. For Kitzinger (1997: 175), the “focus on children’s innate vulnerability (as a biological fact unmediated by the world they live in) is an ideology of control which diverts attention away from the socially constructed oppression of young people”. This ideology of control reflects traditionally conservative forms of parenting, wherein children are subjected to strict adult discipline and control in the name of ‘protection’. Indeed, as Kitzinger (1997: 175) argues, such a “protectionist approach encourages children to live in fear... it also implies the need for increased parental control”. This control, coupled with the rise of the family home as “the child’s centre” (James et al., 1998: 54), has also been seen to have problematic repercussions in terms of strangling children’s autonomy in both the private and public spheres. As James et al. (1998: 54) note, “for some children, the absence of autonomy both in the street and at home threatens to make contemporary childhood problematic”. In this sense, the form of freedom and autonomy afforded to children by the internet, and the extent to which adults are encouraged to manage/suppress children’s use of such technology in the name of ‘protection’, forms an important aspect of this chapter.

It should also be noted that it is not only through repressive rules and regulations that children’s experience of ‘home’ can be problematic. For example, Wykes (1998: 236) notes the lack of “any popular discussions of the family as... a site of crisis for many battered women or abused children”, while Hockey (1999: 157) observes the ongoing resistance to “the idea that the much prized home offers little by way security, not only from external intrusion but also from internal attack”. This is an issue that feminist campaigners have long sought to highlight. As was discussed in Chapter 2, this came to particular prominence in the 1970s and 1980s with the media’s ‘discovery’ of incest and other forms of CSA. By highlighting the extent of abuse within the family, feminists simultaneously raised awareness of the abuse of women and children within the home, making feminists among the first to problematise the notion of ‘the home’ as ‘safe haven’. As Barrett and Coward neatly summarise:

Feminism, bringing exposures of violence... within families has certainly shown clearly that the biological family is no particularly safe place. The Englishman’s castle is often a place of violence and abuse against women. That knowledge is true for children too; terrible atrocities can be committed against children in the name of parental rights and there is no evidence that

biological ties have the power to prevent this.

(Barrett and Coward, 1985: 22)

This, of course, raises questions about the kind of ideologies that underpin assumptions about parents' 'natural' desire to protect the children in their care.

Having presented an overview of literature pertaining to the social construction of the home, I now commence my analysis of newspaper discourse around the internet's perceived threat to this important domestic space. I begin with feature articles.

Features (I): The Profile Interview and Exposé

I begin my analysis by considering two examples of feature articles. Newspaper features take numerous forms. Among the most common are: the profile interview, the news backgrounder, the self-help guide, the exposé, general interest piece and the eyewitness account (Niblock, 2008: 50). Most often contrasted with 'straight' news, the feature article "tends to be a pre-eminent example of soft news, which caters to the angles of an event or issue likely to be of greatest interest to the target audience" (Zelizer and Allan, 2010: 42). They "deal with topical issues in greater depth than can a simple news report... by accommodating the presence of the reporter, his or her opinions, multiple quotes from multiple personalities that come to life in the feature, anecdotes and extensive description" (Zelizer and Allan, 2010: 42).

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, cross-national coverage of online CSA began to gather momentum around the turn of the century. This was partly due to some high-profile cases that enabled journalists to construct the issue through personalised accounts. In the UK, the landmark case involved 33-year-old Patrick Green, who was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for sexually abusing a 13-year-old girl he had met while posing as a 15-year-old boy in a chatroom. In November 2000, a month after Green's imprisonment, *The Sun*, the UK's top-selling daily tabloid, sought to contextualise the emerging issue of online CSA through a profile interview feature with Jim Reynolds, a former Head of the Scotland Yard Paedophilia Unit. Introducing the topic, the journalist's lead paragraph asserted:

Every night a paedophile could be **visiting your home**, corrupting your kids and getting his vile sexual kicks from your children – and you wouldn't even

know.

The Internet is a paedophile's playground – a hideous nightmare which has become reality.

(‘The Scot who fights to make the world’s children safe from internet predators’, *The Sun*, 16 November 2000)

In this example, the journalist directly addresses parents with the personal pronoun ‘you’ (“you wouldn’t even know”) and repeated use of the possessive adjective ‘your’ (“your home”, “your kids”, “your children”). This discursive strategy serves to mobilise a “fear appeal argument” (Walton, 2007) built around the notion of an external (and, in this case, invisible) threat to the private, supposedly safe and secure, sanctum of the home. In order to persuade the audience of the seriousness of this threat, the author’s lead is heavily reliant on hyperbole, which Richardson defines as: “an example of excessive exaggeration made for rhetorical effect... [which] reflect[s] the sensationalism... of news reporting in the tabloid press” (2007: 65). This discursive strategy was not, however, exclusive to ‘sensational’ journalistic hyperbole. Indeed, through the course of the article, the interviewee, Jim Reynolds, described as a “recognised expert consulted by Childnet International”, argued:

there is evil out there and, on the Internet, paedophiles can **invite themselves into your home**... If your child is in their bedroom on the computer, you have to ask yourself who’s there with them?

(‘The Scot who fights to make the world’s children safe from internet predators’, *The Sun*, 16 November 2000)

In this extract the internet is held responsible for bringing CSA ‘inside’. Paedophiles are concurrently (a) the “evil out there” (external, unthreatening) and (b) “[in] your home” (internal, threatening). According to Reynolds, the internet is the middleman that enables paedophiles/evil to seamlessly make the transition from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’. Moreover they can do it at will, on their terms (“visiting”, “invite themselves”) and without detection (“you wouldn’t even know”, “you have to ask yourself...”). Thus, these dangerous strangers – from whom children were previously thought ‘safe’ when they were indoors and away from the streets – now have a direct and untraceable passage into child’s bedrooms. Here, then, is an example of online CSA being constructed in terms of paedophiles being a physical presence within the home. The internet, it is claimed, allows paedophiles to make movements in and

around the home without parents' knowledge; they can invite themselves into the home and make their way to the child's bedroom, and parents are still left wondering "who" (i.e. which *person*) is in their child's bedroom with them. This presents the internet predator as a threat that is concurrently both invisible/virtual and 'real'/physical: parents may be oblivious to it, they may not be able to see them, but paedophiles are inside their children's bedrooms.

For both the journalist and the expert interviewee, the internet represents a significant loss of control for parents, compromising their status as protectors-in-chief. This is articulated through this analogy with the home: paedophiles can "visit" of their own accord; thanks to the internet, they can "invite themselves" into the home without notice or invitation and without the homeowner's knowledge. This notion that the internet gives paedophiles direct, unopposed and undetectable access to the home constitutes the first component of a "fear appeal argument" (Walton, 2007). According to Walton, there are two basic structural properties common to all fear appeal arguments. The first premise:

presents a state of affairs that is dangerous to the respondent, and is often called "threatening." It represents a harm to the respondent, in the sense of something that is very much against the respondent's personal goals and interests. Such goals, in a fear appeal argument, typically have to do with the respondent's bodily preservation and safety. The outcome is something the respondent (presumably) wants to avoid.

(Walton, 2007: 148)

Thus, the above construction of online CSA 'fits' the first premise of Walton's definition. In the present state, paedophiles can "visit" and/or "invite themselves into" family homes in order to access children. As a threat to "the child's centre" (James et al., 1998: 54), or the "new interiority" for childhood (James et al., 1998: 53), this represents a threat to children and the security of the family and home. As such, these are the things which are expected to be against the respondent's (i.e. the newspaper's readers') personal goals and interests. While this threat is not directly to do with the respondent's bodily preservation and safety, it does relate to the bodily preservation and safety of the respondent's children (and, by extension, the family, of which the respondent is a part). However, given Western tendencies to see children as "purely private attachments to their parents" (Barrett and Coward, 1985: 22), one might argue

that harm to children equates to harm to their parents.

The second premise of a fear appeal argument:

cites a recommended course of action such that if the respondent takes it, he [*sic*] will avoid the disastrous outcome stated in the first premise. The conclusion is that the respondent should take the recommended course of action.

(Walton, 2007: 148)

In the above example, the internet poses a significant threat – a threat of “evil”, a “hideous nightmare” – to parents, their children and their homes. Indeed, both the journalist and Jim Reynolds use this discursive strategy to simplify a multi-faceted and nuanced issue and construct a threatening discourse, demanding precautions. As is common in the news media, this discourse centres around a pathological ‘other’ figure (see Hall, 1997a). As Richardson argues:

Fear of ‘the Other’ is an unwarranted, indeed largely delusional, construction used as nauseam in political discourse. Regardless of this, an arguer can use fear... to prime an audience and make them more receptive to the argument’s claims and conclusions.

(2007: 160, original emphasis)

In this instance the arguers’ “claims and conclusions” principally focus on the most effective strategies available for parents to tackle the problem and stop predators from targeting and/or accessing their children. Thus, this represents the second premise of the fear appeal argument. According to Reynolds, if paedophiles are to be stopped from ‘entering’ the home, parents must ensure that children do not have internet access in private spaces away from parental supervision. He is quoted as saying: “One way [to tackle the problem] is to insist the computer is used in the family room. DON’T keep it in the bedroom or in the study. Children should be using the computer in public” (‘The Scot who fights to make the world’s children safe from internet predators’, *The Sun*, 16 November 2000).

In Australia, an exposé by the *Sunday Mail*, sister paper of the *Courier-Mail*, made front-page news and instigated the country’s first peak week. Appearing under the headline ‘EASY PREY – How we allow net predators to target our kids at home’, the

article opened with a statement that it is notable for its similarity to the above example from the UK-based *Sun*. It began:

Unsuspecting parents are allowing cyber perverts to **sneak into their homes** to seduce their children.

(‘Easy prey’, *Sunday Mail*, 4 June 2000)

Although there is less of the hyperbole that characterised the *Sun* story, the *Sunday Mail* journalist employs the same discursive strategy by framing the issue in terms of a virtual ‘Other’ figure (“cyber perverts”) physically entering family homes and abusing children (a discourse furthered in the headline of an accompanying article published in the same edition, ‘Monsters in your child’s bedroom’). In this instance, the active verbs “sneak” and “seduce” draw upon the discourse of ‘the paedophile’ as wily, unscrupulous, calculated and deceptive. Children, by contrast, are depicted as weak *subjects* who lack agency and are instead ‘seduced’ as a direct consequence of a lack of parental protection (“unsuspecting parents... **allowing** cyber perverts into their homes”).

The marked similarity between these extracts from *The Sun* and *Sunday Mail* suggests this generic discursive strategy has a degree of cross-national reach. Indeed, by undertaking a close reading of the lead sentences from each article, we can begin to unpack the discursive strategy used by these newspapers to construct this new social issue (Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1: Lead paragraphs from *The Sun* and *Sunday Mail*

<i>The Sun</i> (UK)	<i>Sunday Mail</i> (Australia)
“Every night a paedophile could be visiting your home, corrupting your kids and getting his vile sexual kicks from your children – and you wouldn’t even know.”	“Unsuspecting parents are allowing cyber perverts to sneak into their homes to seduce their children.”

Comparing these extracts, one can observe a number of similarities:

- 1) The problem is current and ongoing (AUS: “Unsuspecting parents **are** allowing”. UK: “Every night”).
- 2) This discursive strategy is performing an awareness-raising function; it is informing parents about something of which they were previously unaware (UK: “you wouldn’t even know”. AUS: “Unsuspecting parents”).
- 3) As an extension of the previous point, it is happening *because* parents are unaware of it and, therefore, making insufficient effort to safeguard against it (in the Australian example, parents must stop “allowing” it to happen).
- 4) The perpetrator is an evil ‘Other’ figure derived from the ‘paedophile’ framework (UK: “a paedophile”. AUS: “cyber perverts”).
- 5) This paedophile figure is capable of getting inside the family home.
- 6) He is preying on passive children who have no agency and are unable to resist his advances (UK: “corrupting... and getting his vile sexual kicks from... children”. AUS: “seduce... children”).

That this discursive strategy is utilised in the lead paragraph of these articles highlights its appeal. Like the headline, the lead paragraph is a vital component of a news story. According to Bell, “[a] story’s news value focuses in the lexicon of newsworthiness in its lead sentence” (2000: 74). Indeed, it has been argued that leads can be analysed in isolation because “the lead sentence is itself a microstory even when a full story follows. It compresses the ‘news values’ that have got this story through to publication” (Bell, 2000: 67). In terms of structure, the lead paragraph is:

basically a summary of a story deriving its content and structure from the body copy... it is a directional summary, a lens through which the point of the story is focused and its news values magnified. This focus may be achieved... by raising a colourful detail to the lead.

(Bell, 1991: 183, original emphasis)

By drawing upon the ‘paedophile’ framework, journalists and other claims-makers are able to tap into – and exploit – existing shared understandings of the ‘nature’ of the perpetrator and the threat he embodies. The argument that ‘paedophiles’, whose threat was previously external, “could be” (UK) or “are” (AUS) now finding ways to penetrate the sanctuary of the home signals that this is a new and unparalleled

problem. It also highlights the severity of the threat and, by pointing to parents' ignorance, it suggests a pressing need for action to be taken in order to rectify the situation. Finally, it illustrates the centrality of 'the home' to "the modern domestic ideal" (Allan and Crow, 1989: 1), "home/family myths" (Wykes, 1998), childhood (James et al., 1998) and the conceptualisation of the self (Hockey, 1999: 150).

In terms of counter-measures, both the *Sun* and *Sunday Mail* advocate a protectionist approach that necessitates tighter parental control. As such they are premised on the discourse of childhood vulnerability and naivety. Indeed, the *Sun* describes Patrick Green's 13-year-old victim as a "naive virgin" ('The Scot who fights to make the world's children safe from internet predators', *The Sun*, 16 November 2000). Similarly, the *Sunday Mail* reported the reaction of the Australian prime minister, Peter Beattie, whose quote explicitly draws upon the discourse of childhood innocence and vulnerability:

Mr Beattie said he was alarmed by The Sunday Mail's revelations.

"It shows clearly how the **innocent** can be exploited by the **unscrupulous**," he said.

His own children often went online in chat rooms and he urged all parents to take a keen interest in who their youngsters were talking to and what they were being exposed to on the internet.

"This is about ensuring young people are **protected**, and parents have got to take a role," said Mr Beattie.

('Easy prey', *Sunday Mail*, 4 June 2000)

Thus, in Beattie's assessment we see the categorisation of three groups of social actors. First, children are "the innocent". Second, paedophiles/predators are "the unscrupulous". Finally, parents are the protectors, responsible for shielding the innocent from the unscrupulous (thus making parents the scrupulous). In one sense, Beattie's quotes are a microcosm of a fear appeal argument. In terms of the first premise, the *Sunday Mail*'s findings are "alarming" and are of relevance to "all parents" (as such, "all parents" should be "alarmed"). For the second premise, Beattie identifies a "recommended course of action" (Walton, 2007: 148) in the form of advice for parents to "take a role" in order to "ensure young people are protected". In other words, increased parental governance is Beattie's recommended course of

action. While it may be less sensational than the course of action proposed by Jim Reynolds in the *Sun* article, this, too, is derived from a similar protectionist approach to dealing with the problem at hand.

Features (II): The News Backgrounder/Eyewitness Account

Following the case of Toby Studebaker, which prompted the biggest peak in coverage found in any country, some UK newspapers attempted to provide context by seeking similar case studies involving children who had made, or arranged to make, face-to-face contact with people they had met online. Two such features appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph*, a conservative broadsheet, and the *Daily Mail*, a conservative mid-market tabloid. Arriving on back of the Studebaker case – the kind of “massive story requiring instant backgrounders” (Niblock, 2008: 51) – both of these features could be categorised as either ‘news backgrounders’ or ‘eyewitness accounts’ – or, indeed, a combination of the two (Niblock, 2008: 50). With their emphasis on “the emotions and the experiences of... individual[s]” both have characteristics that Niblock states “sit well in... mid-market national[s]” (Niblock, 2008: 50).

Of particular note in both of these features is the manner in which the parents contextualise their feelings about their children’s experiences by blurring the boundaries between virtuality and physicality. Indeed, in the case of the *Sunday Telegraph*, this discursive strategy was also utilised in the headline and sub-headline, ‘The monsters in the corner: For millions of children, the internet is a window to a world free of homework and petty parental rules. But it works both ways – every day paedophiles climb through these portals straight into British homes’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, 20 July 2003). According to this headline, the internet provides “paedophiles” with a direct, unopposed route “straight into British homes”. Thanks to the internet, then, paedophiles are inside family homes, “in the corner” of the room.¹⁵ The distinction between virtuality and physicality is further blurred by use of the verb “climb”, a physical action that typically requires strength and determination. In this instance, it evokes imagery of a burglar/intruder climbing through an open window, straight into an under-guarded home.

¹⁵ An alternative reading would be that, as the facilitator of this social ill, the internet-enabled computer is the “Monster in the corner”.

The *Sunday Telegraph* feature tells the story of Amy Singleton. It begins:

A lonely teenager called Amy Singleton had a secret life that she kept well hidden from her parents. In their eyes, Amy was a quiet, home-loving girl with a congenital heart problem, who had left school early and got herself a waitressing job. But Amy had a very busy alter ego about whom they knew little: a playful, on-line adventuress called “SexyPoohBear”.

Amy used to wait up until her mother and stepfather had gone to bed in order to use the computer in the living room. Then, once she got on-line, SexyPoohBear would often spend the next five or six hours in internet chatrooms.

In cyberspace, 16-year-old SexyPoohBear had lots of friends, including a special one called BananaBear.

(‘The monsters in the corner’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 July 2003)

This profile identifies a number of the challenging issues Amy Singleton faced in her day-to-day life: she was lonely, she had health problems (which her mother is later quoted as saying “prevented her from doing as much as other girls”) and she had not completed her education. All of these are issues that could negatively impact a young person’s self-actualisation and esteem (Byron, 2008), and by subverting aspects of her identity and experimenting with online role-play away from the supervision of parents or teachers, Amy Singleton was partaking in behaviour that is not unusual among people her age (Livingstone et al., 2004; Steeves, 2005).

The story proceeds to describe how Amy, then aged 16, sparked “a massive manhunt” when she failed to tell her parents she was travelling 200 miles from Preston, Lancashire, to Reading, Berkshire, to stay with ‘BananaBoy’, who claimed to be a 16-year-old called Craig and who Amy had been in contact with for 12 months through chat rooms, e-mail, photograph exchanges and mobile phone conversations. Craig, it transpired, “was indeed a real 16-year-old boy called Craig”. Speaking of the time she spent at Craig’s, Amy is quoted as saying:

I had a really lovely time. We watched DVDs and went out... You can tell in the chatroom if people are a bit funny, if they are just trying to get sex talk out of you, and Craig wasn’t like that. He’s still a really good friend.

‘The monsters in the corner’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, 20 July 2003)

The feature concludes by outlining the protective measures Amy Singleton’s mother

has introduced in light of her daughter's experience:

In an attempt to protect her children, Mrs Singleton has since sold the computer and Amy's younger brother now has to go to the library to do his homework. "You bring your kids up telling them not to speak to strangers, and then you put a machine in your living room where they can talk to anyone they like," says Mrs Singleton.

"It is a shop window for paedophiles to get in touch with any child they fancy. I'm sorry, but they are not coming into my living room to look at my children any more"

(‘The monsters in the corner’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 July 2003)

Here, again, we can observe the power of the ‘stranger danger’ discourse. It is taken for granted that all parents “bring [their] kids up” to fear strangers; ‘stranger danger’, it is assumed, is a key component of children’s upbringing, of their childhood years. However, in demonising computers and internet technology, Julie Singleton’s initial focus is not on the opportunities chat rooms provides for *paedophiles*, but the opportunities they provide for *children*. There are, she intimates, insufficient restrictions on who children can communicate with. Instead, “they can talk to anyone they like” in a way they apparently can not in the ‘real world’. In other words, the internet is problematic – dangerous even – because it provides children with too much personal freedom and autonomy; that is, a level that parents can not readily control – children can talk to whoever they want, rather than whoever their parents approve of. Indeed, this proved so problematic that, for this parent, whose daughter had made a like-minded friend of the same age through the internet, the most appropriate response was to remove the computer from the home altogether. This, the article states, was done “[i]n an attempt to protect her children”.

Fairclough (2003a: 51) asserts that when analysing reported speech in news discourse, there are “two inter-connected issues to address”. First, one must consider the relationship between the quote and the original event. Second, one must consider the “relationship between the [quote] and the rest of the text in which it occurs” (Fairclough, 2003a: 51). In terms of the former, the relationship between Julie Singleton’s concluding remarks and the original event is negligible: the boy involved was not a paedophile and no paedophiles had entered her living room to look at her children. As the journalists acknowledge: “Amy’s story [had] a less dramatic ending

than that of... Shevaun Pennington” and “her experience was much more benign than many” as the person she met “was indeed a real 16-year-old called Craig”. However, it is in the context of the second issue – the relationship between the quote and the rest of the text – that Julie Singleton’s quote is significant. Amy Singleton’s story is used as part of a ‘backgrounder’ on the dangers of children’s internet use. As has been discussed, the schemata of the article is set out in its headline. Following the Toby Studebaker/Shevaun Pennington case, it is premised on a discourse of dangerousness which focuses on the capacity of the internet to act as a “portal” for paedophiles to “climb... straight into British homes”. Thus, the internet embodies dangerousness and risk. It represents a threat to child users which should in turn be a source of fear and concern for parents, a view reflected in Julie Singleton’s unequivocal evaluation of the internet: “It is a shop window for paedophiles”.

In terms of the home, Julie Singleton asserts that: “they [paedophiles] are not coming into my living room... any more”. Here the phrases “are not” and “any more” have the rhetoric of an incontrovertible ‘solution’. The latter also presupposes that ‘paedophiles’ *had* previously been entering the Singleton household (specifically the living room, a communal space). Thus, her first-hand experience, however spurious, validates and strengthens the power of the virtuality/physicality metaphor: this (paedophiles coming into the living room) is what *was happening*. This is what *did happen*. This is what *does happen*. This is what could/will happen to other parents. Indeed, one could argue that by presenting the mother as the victim, her first-hand account functions as a warning to other parents, other potential victims. It also arguably strengthens the validity of her ‘solution’ to the problem (total removal of the computer from the household), a solution that strategically denied her daughter access to the “secret life that she kept well hidden from her parents”. As such, this ‘solution’ echoes examples from the previous chapter which implied that the only way to protect children from paedophiles was to keep them inside a computer-less home.

During the same week, the *Daily Mail* ran a similar first-hand account as part of its coverage of the Studebaker case. This feature, headlined ‘A playground for paedophiles’, centred on Fiona and Peter Moran, whose 10-year-old daughter, Nicole, had struck up a friendship with someone claiming to be a 13-year-old boy. The boy, it transpired, was in fact James Gilmour, a 50-year-old man with a previous conviction

for raping a 15-year-old girl. Nicole's parents discovered Gilmour's true identity a matter of hours before Nicole was due to meet him. As such, this case epitomises "the stereotypical media portrayal" of an online 'predator' using trickery and deception to entice unknowing victims into meetings (Wolak et al., 2008).

Told entirely from the mother's perspective, this article draws upon Fiona Moran's first-hand experience of being a parent 'victim' to develop an ethotic argument about the nature of the issue and its effects on victims. Concluding her story, she states:

You worry about your children when they are out of your sight, but inside your family home is the one place you believe they are safe.

I feel that our home has been invaded by the man that did this, and although Nicole is safe now, we are troubled by it every day and she will feel the effects of this abuse – for that it is what it was – for many years to come.

(‘A playground for paedophiles’, *Daily Mail*, 16 July 2003)

Here, Moran twice uses the personal pronoun 'you' to speak to and for parents about shared, taken for granted assumptions about child safety (and associated parental anxieties), stranger danger, parental protection and the family home. In the case of the latter, she explicitly draws upon the discourse of the home as a safe haven, stating: "inside your family home is the one place you believe [your children] are safe". Thus, it is assumed that the family home does not merely represent a safe haven for children, it represents the *ultimate* safe haven: anywhere away from the family home represents a potential threat to their safety ('stranger danger'). In terms of children's wellbeing and the home, therefore, to be 'inside' is to be safe, whereas to be 'outside' is to be unsafe.

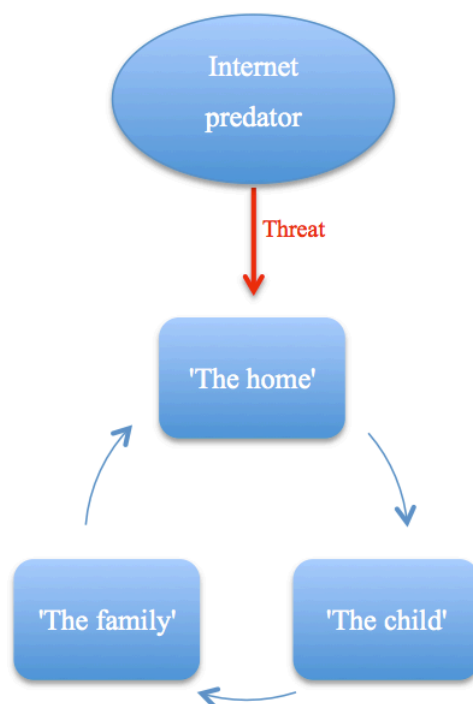
Considering this quote in relation to the rest of the text and the original event, as with the *Sunday Telegraph* account, the internet is once again responsible for taking a problem that was previously 'outside' and transporting it 'inside'. In order to articulate this, Fiona Moran adopts the discursive strategy of positioning a physical figure, an 'invader' (James Gilmour, in this instance), inside her family home. Through his online conversations with Nicole Moran, Gilmour has "invaded" the Moran's home, the verb "invaded" connoting violence, aggression and force. Uninvited, he is an intruder who has forcefully penetrated the division between

‘outside’ and ‘inside’, polluting the ‘safeness’ of ‘inside’ with the ‘unsafeness’ of ‘outside’.

To some extent, Fiona Moran’s account highlights the fluidity with which this discursive strategy allows arguers to interchange between the virtual and the physical/actual. Fiona Moran acknowledges that Gilmour did not *literally* enter the Moran’s home (“I *feel* that our home has been invaded”). However, by using this metaphor of an outsider ‘invading’ her family’s home, she is able to draw upon this discourse of virtuality/physicality in order to articulate the instability and disruption that James Gilmour’s actions have brought upon her family. This ‘invasion’ by an external Other has resulted in their home being tarnished, soiled. This, of course, is a powerful metaphor that plays upon existing fears of housebreaking to which much of the audience will relate.

Fiona Moran’s quote also evidences the conflation of the concepts of ‘the child’/‘childhood’, ‘the home’ and ‘family’ (Allan, 1989; Allan and Crow, 1989). She states: “I feel that *our home* has been invaded.... [and] *we* are troubled by it every day”. In this instance, her use of the personal pronoun ‘we’ appears to refer to the collective members of the Moran family. Thus the focus of her quote switches from ‘the home’ (“*our home*”) to ‘the family’ (“*we* are troubled”). It does not refer to the Moran home in the most literal sense (the house in which the family lives): “our home has been invaded... [and] *it* is troubled by it every day” would be nonsensical and would not have the same level of continuity as “*our family* has been invaded... [and] *we* are troubled by it every day,” for example. Thus, the (metaphorical) invasion of the Moran home has affected the entire family and consequently the family members are “troubled by it every day”. Thus, it is intimated that a disruption to the order of the home (whether real or virtual) impacts upon the order of the family as a whole – the threat to ‘the child’ equates to a threat to ‘the home’ which equates to a threat to ‘the family’ (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Conflating ‘the home’, ‘the family’ and ‘the child’



Editorials

Following the landmark case involving Patrick Green, the *Daily Mirror* ran a ‘Voice of the Mirror’ editorial titled, ‘Close the net on evil sex stalkers’. It began:

You think your child is safe shut away in his or her bedroom on their computer.

They’re off the streets, away from danger. You know where they are. But while we will all applaud yesterday’s historic conviction of Patrick Green, the case will send a shiver down the spine of every parent.

(‘Close the net on evil sex stalkers’, *Daily Mirror*, 25 October 2000)

From its lead, this editorial, which directly addresses parents, is immediately premised on the notion of ‘the home’ as a safe haven. By virtue of being in their bedrooms, within the sanctuary of the family home, parents can assume (“You think”) that their child, their private possession (Barrett and Coward, 1985: 22), is safe, despite the child being out of sight and away from immediate supervision. Perhaps unusually, in this conception of ‘the home’, immediate parental supervision is almost irrelevant: so powerful is the home/family myth (Wykes, 1998: 241) that parents need only to “know where they [their children] are” (i.e. inside the home) for child safety

to be achieved. In other words, as long as children are situated in the confines of this parent-mediated space they are automatically safe.

Of additional interest in this passage is the phrase “shut away”. This phrase evokes imagery of a possession or a domestic pet. In this instance, the child’s bedroom is tantamount to the dog’s kennel, the rabbit’s hutch, etc. As long as the child/pet is “shut away” in his or her bedroom (thus ensuring parents “know where they are”) their freedom and autonomy is sufficiently restricted – making them easy to control/manage – and thus they are automatically “safe”.¹⁶ Additionally, as in examples discussed in the previous chapter, the home is categorised as “safe” by virtue of being the binary opposite of “the streets”. In this instance, “the streets”, a *public* space away from the home, are equated with danger. By being kept away from “the streets”, children are “away from danger” – i.e. the ‘outside’ is dangerous, the ‘inside’ is safe.

An editorial allows a newspaper certain privileges with regard to the manner in which it addresses its audience and articulates its argument. As Wahl-Jorgensen notes:

[editorials] are the only place in the paper where journalists are authorised to express opinion, often guided by the political leanings of the newspaper. It is in editorials that newspapers speak both for and to their audience, creating a distinctive voice for the newspaper that is otherwise buried under the conventions of objective journalism.

(2008: 71)

This notion of journalists talking “for and to their audience” is evidenced in this example from the *Daily Mirror*. It begins by speaking ‘to’ the reader by using the personal pronouns ‘you’ and ‘your’ (“*You think your child is safe*”, “*You know where they are*”). This mode of address then switches, permitting the author, already speaking on behalf of the newspaper, to commence speaking ‘for’ the reader (“*we will all applaud...*”). Indeed, in this example, the journalist is not only talking for the audience, he or she is also incorporating them into an in-group wherein the newspaper and the audience join forces to form a collective body or voice. This in-group is

¹⁶ To further extend this reading one could argue this editorial intimates that the internet, at least partially, embodies dangerousness because it provides children with a level of autonomy and independence that parents can not readily manage at arm’s length.

further strengthened through the use of the phrase “every parent”, a phrase which homogenises audience members with children into a fixed category (‘parents’), enabling the journalist to speak on behalf of all parents. This allows the journalist to promote a vision that this universalised group of ‘parents’ is expected to recognise and endorse. Thus, when the journalist is speaking ‘for’ the audience, the parents in the audience are encouraged to recognise and endorse shared, ‘common sense’ understandings of ‘the home’, ‘the streets’ (public spaces), ‘stranger danger’ and ‘good parenting’. Any parent that does not share this worldview is positioned outside the ‘right-minded’ majority.

Having created this shared vision, the *Daily Mirror* is able to rationalise its view on: (1) the cause of the problem, (2) solutions to the problem and (3) suitable punishment for perpetrators. This, again, is typical of a “fear appeal argument” (Walton, 2007) as it is a:

practical [argument] that addresses the self interest or personal interest of the person to whom the argument is address. Fear appeals... postulate a state of affairs that is perceived as a threat to the respondent. Then the fear appeal argument recommends an action as an indicated way of avoiding the danger.
(2007: 134)

Developing its argument regarding “an action as an indicated way of avoiding the danger”, the *Daily Mirror* editorial continues:

Almost no police resources are provided to crack down on perverts who prowl the internet. There are no measures to monitor chatrooms and no systems in place to bar children from accessing them.

Yet when a computer bug threatened big business, a world-wide hunt was launched to find the hacker responsible.

It is even more important to protect children.

The same effort should be put into stopping paedophiles. Young people must be saved from those who stalk them on the internet.

(‘Close the net on evil sex stalkers’, *Daily Mirror*, 25 October 2000)

Thus, according to the *Daily Mirror*, cases of online CSA, such as that involving Patrick Green, are a result of (1) a lack of police resources and (2) a dearth of

measures and systems for controlling children's internet access (i.e. they have too much freedom). In terms of solutions, for the internet to be made 'safe', chat rooms must be monitored, children must be 'barred' from accessing chat rooms (on a public, institutionalised level) and must not be allowed to access the internet in their bedrooms (on a private, domestic level). Thus, it is the responsibility of powerful adults – parents, policy makers, law enforcers – to implement punitive restrictions on children's internet use. By presenting these punitive measures as the key to “stopping paedophiles”, “protect[ing] children” and “saving” young people from “stalkers”, the *Daily Mirror* is able to legitimise its proposals as being in children's best interests, i.e. ‘for their own good’. In terms of punishment – and, to a degree, solutions – ‘predators’ must be removed from society and incarcerated, preferably prior to having committed a crime (“we will all applaud yesterday's historic conviction of Patrick Green”, “they [‘paedophiles’] must be caught before they strike”). Only when these proposals are realised can the sanctity of the home be restored, ensuring that parents can once again assume that the child who is “shut away in his or her bedroom on their computer” is “safe”.

Opinion Columns

During the peak in coverage generated by Shevaun Pennington's disappearance with Toby Studebaker, a flurry of commentators used opinion columns to pass judgement on the case. The *Daily Mirror's* resident internet expert, Carol Vorderman, a television personality and author of the newspaper's weekly internet column, Carol@Mirror, wrote an article headlined, ‘Strangers on internet are just as dangerous’ (N.B. the headline of the Nexis version of this article is ‘Stranger danger to your child at home’). In the *Sun*, Lorraine Kelly, also a television personality, discussed the case in a column headlined ‘Send a message to net pred@tors’, as did Jane Moore, a regular *Sun* and *Sunday Times* columnist, whose piece was headlined ‘Parents should pull the plug on perils of the chatroom’. In each case ‘the home’ formed a key part of the discourse.¹⁷

¹⁷ That all three columns were written by female commentators is interesting. As Barrett and Coward put it, “Children are not merely a private responsibility, there are by and large, a *woman's* responsibility” (Barrett and Coward, 1985: 22). Indeed, in one examination of gender roles specifically focussed on television advertising, Lazar concluded that: “Fun, play and popularity appear to be the prerogative of fatherhood and take centre-stage, whereas... support and routine care are largely left to motherhood, which is relegated to the periphery” (2000: 384).

McNair (2008) identifies three types of commentary column, each of which has a different function. These are: the polemical column, the analytical-advisory column and the satirical column (McNair, 2008: 115). All three of my examples fit McNair's typology of the analytical-advisory column, wherein: "the authority of the journalist is applied to in-depth consideration of a topic in the news, typically concluding with advice for the actors involved in the story, or for the readers following it" (McNair, 2008: 115). For the advice of a journalist writing an analytical-advisory column to be trusted and followed, the author is required to have sufficient credentials to afford them "authority" on the matter at hand. As McNair (2008: 113) states: "The construction of this kind of journalistic authority... is built on the journalist's reputation for knowing and understanding things, we, the readers, do not, but should". Authority is also a key component of ethotic argumentation (cf. Richardson, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002). As Richardson notes:

[an audience] is more likely to be convinced by someone of 'good character', someone with experience or someone with firsthand experience. The character of the arguer, or an ethotic argument, is a very powerful mode of persuasion when used correctly.

(Richardson, 2007: 159-160)

Further:

to present an argument drawing on or relying on ethos, the arguer must be able to present herself as certain type of person and the audience must believe they are this certain type of person. When successful, the audience has recognised that wisdom or experience.

(Richardson, 2007: 160)

In Vorderman's case, the arguer has built a reputation as an "authority" on the topic of internet safety through her weekly column and co-authorship of the book *Carol Vorderman's Guide to the Internet: The Internet for You and Your Children* (Vorderman and Young, 1997). She had also conducted an undercover 'sting' investigation for ITV's primetime current affairs programme *Tonight with Trevor McDonald*, in 2000. This led to her being invited to represent children and parents at a House of Commons meeting on children's Internet safety in January 2001, where she appeared alongside representatives of the Internet Watch Foundation and the Internet Service Providers Association. Through the course of the column, Vorderman herself

asserts her credentials by making reference to her undercover investigation for *Tonight*... while her “authority” status is reaffirmed in a bulleted byline at the end of her column (Illustration 9.2). In terms of the *Sun* columnists, Jane Moore is a columnist noted for her “longstanding commitment to tackl[ing] serious issues about the family” (Byrnes, 2005: 4), while Lorraine Kelly is a popular and trusted television personality, well known for anchoring morning shows *TV-am*, *GMTV* and *Lorraine*.

Illustration 9.2: Carol Vorderman’s “authority” on internet safety

● *Carol Vorderman is a TV presenter and campaigner for internet safeguards for children*

When it comes to newspaper columns, a “relationship of trust between reader and journalist... [is] essential in determining the degree to which comment and opinion are successful in their persuasive functions” (McNair, 2008: 113). As such, analytical-advisory columns are a form of persuasion dialogue (Walton, 1989). As Walton explains: “If you and I are engaged in persuasion dialogue, my goal is to persuade you of my thesis. And hence my obligation should be to prove that thesis from premises that you accept or are committed to” (1989: 5). When it comes to newspaper columns, of course, this dialogue is largely unidirectional, hence the need for columnists to build a relationship of trust by demonstrating their “authority” on the subject under discussion.

The tone of Vorderman’s commentary is established by its headline, ‘Strangers on internet are just as dangerous’, the logical extension of which is ‘Strangers on internet are just as dangerous *as strangers in the offline world*’. Thus, this headline – the typical function of which is to describe “the essence of a complicated news story in a few words” (Ungerer, 2000: 48) – is immediately premised on a classic discourse of stranger danger. Through the course of her column, Vorderman attempts to persuade her audience that: (1) the internet/chatrooms represents a considerable risk to children; (2) the problem is more serious than many realise; (3) it is parents’ responsibility to manage and, where appropriate, restrict children’s internet use; (4) any parents that do not apply stringent protective measures are putting their children at risk, making them ‘bad’ or ‘irresponsible’ parents; (5) the most appropriate solution involves banning computers from children’s bedrooms, insisting computers are used

in a shared space, monitoring children's internet activity and enforcing a blanket ban on chatrooms. Thus, for Vorderman, the most appropriate 'solution' is premised on tighter parental governance and the enforcement of 'rules':

The most important rule is not to allow a child to have a computer in the bedroom.

You must be able to check what they are viewing and stress not to give out personal details like phone numbers.

(‘Strangers on internet are just as dangerous’, *Daily Mirror*, 16 July 2003)

In keeping with earlier examples, Vorderman frames her argument by drawing on the powerful discourse of ‘stranger danger’ and by blurring the boundaries between virtuality and physicality in order to evoke powerful ideologies of ‘the home’ as a familial safe haven:

[I]t's up to parents to take responsibility for what they will and won't allow into their homes. [...]

We constantly warn our children not to talk to strangers in the street yet many don't apply the same rules to the internet.

Make absolutely no mistake, the internet is like having an open door to your home. Every email sent from Toby Studabaker [*sic*] to Shevaun Pennington bypassed the lock on her front door.

(‘Strangers on internet are just as dangerous’, *Daily Mirror*, 16 July 2003)

As in the *Daily Mirror* editorial discussed earlier in this chapter, Vorderman uses the pronouns “we” and “our” to create a ‘right-minded’ parental/societal in-group. Thus, her perspective is presented as a ‘common sense’ viewpoint that is shared among her “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983) of ‘right-minded’ readers. In stating that “we constantly warn our children not to talk to children”, Vorderman not only endorses ‘stranger danger’ as a valid, accepted concept, she also strengthens it by depicting it as a message of timeless pertinence that needs to be reasserted on a regular basis (indeed, “we”, the right-minded majority, reassert it “constantly”). Furthermore, in failing to apply the same principles to the internet, many of “us” – the imagined community of parents – are endangering “our” children by making insufficient use of the ‘stranger danger’ message. In validating this assertion, Vorderman draws upon an analogy between internet security and protection of the

home, arguing: “Make absolutely no mistake, the internet is like having an open door to your home.” This rhetoric destabilises – discredits, even – any alternative approaches that may doubt the necessity for parents to disempower their children by adopting a protectionist approach to governing their internet use. Alternative perspectives (e.g. those that encourage pedagogical approaches and/or self-regulation) are a “mistake” – i.e. to trust and empower children would be a “mistake”.

Vorderman’s analogy with the image of the archetypal home is furthered in her closing sentence, where she uses the Studebaker case as evidence that electronic communications (e.g. email) have the capacity to “bypass” the lock on a front door. This simplification functions to heighten concerns about the seriousness of the threat: one of the most conventional and reliable methods of securing the home against intruders and other uninvited visitors is no longer sufficient. The old order has been challenged and destabilised by the internet; the status quo has been disrupted and previously proficient, reliable means of securing and maintaining the privacy and sanctity of the home have been supplanted by internet technologies and those (ab)using these technologies.

A strikingly similar discourse was utilised by Lorraine Kelly, in the *Sun*. Citing the Studebaker case as ‘evidence’ of a problem, Kelly began to set out some suitable responses:

There are many lessons to be learned from this sad, sordid story.

First of all it has taught parents that the Internet has to be policed and that we are the ones to do it. [...]

The Net is a wonderful device for learning more about the world and helping with homework.

But it is right to compare a computer in a child's bedroom to an unlocked door.

As parents, it is our responsibility to find the key and lock that door.

(‘Send a message to net pred@tors’, *The Sun*, 19 July 2003)

Thus, both Vorderman and Kelly create analogies between the internet and unlocked doors. Kelly asserts that this analogy is “right” and explicitly appeals to the in-group of right-minded parents by stating that “As parents, it is *our responsibility* to find the

key and lock that door”, thereby equating her earlier demand for ‘policing’ with ‘responsible’ parenting. Vorderman’s analogy is less explicit, but still functions to set certain definitions of risk and solution: a lock that can be bypassed would make it easier for intruders to break into homes (risk), thus necessitating a new, more secure lock, or multiple locks, to restore security (solution). Thus, by applying this analogy to the Studebaker case, Vorderman is able to set equivalent definitions of risk and solution to children’s internet use, with the increased level of security being achieved through closer parental mediation, i.e. new, tighter and/or additional forms of parental governance are required to ‘protect’ children.

A further point of note with regard to this analogy is that locks have a dual purpose. As well as keeping external threats *out*, they also keep inhabitants *in*. Thus, an “unlocked door” (Kelly, *Sun*) or a lock that can be “bypassed” (Vorderman, *Daily Mirror*) offers an opportunity for the freedom of ‘escape’ – a chance for children to venture beyond the spatial restrictions imposed by their parents. Therefore, both commentators’ reference to a lock is premised on – and appealing to shared understandings of – the kind of taken-for-granted adult spatial hegemony that enables adults to define boundaries in order to maintain authority and control over children (Valentine, 1996). A threat to effectiveness of the metaphorical lock equates to a threat to this adult spatial hegemony.

Readers’ Letters

Immediately after the Studebaker case, *The Sun* used its ‘Dear Sun’ section to publish an assortment of readers’ letters addressing the ‘Big Issue’ of children’s internet safety. Printed under the headline ‘The Big Issue: Don’t let your children get caught in the net’, the majority of the nine letters selected for publication were a response to a Jane Moore commentary column of two days previous. In keeping with the theme of Moore’s column (‘Parents should pull the plug on perils of the chatroom’), the dominant discourse of these letters was that the internet represents a grave threat to children, and that parents need to make provisions for safeguarding them. This was evidenced by the article’s tagline: “Readers say parents should be more aware of the Net’s dangers and should control how kids use it”. As such, these letters were echoing Moore’s calls for parents to adopt a more protectionist approach to parenting.

Given that the *Sun* is a populist, conservative newspaper positioned to the right of the political spectrum, it is perhaps unsurprising that the letters selected for publication reflect the columnist's demands for protective, conservative responses from parents. After all, as Richardson notes, "Given that [letters] are usually written in response to previous editorial contents and selected for inclusion by the letters editor, they... say something about a newspaper's news values" (2008: 65). This practice of using the letters page to reinforce, rather than challenge, a newspaper's position is, Richardson argues, particularly common among the tabloid press: "What is relevant to a tabloid editor, it seems, are letters compatible with their narrow news agenda" (2007: 57).

Jane Moore is a regular *Sun* and *Sunday Times* columnist noted for her "longstanding commitment to tackl[ing] serious issues about the family" (Byrnes, 2005: 4). As such, she has a degree of 'authority' on such matters (McNair, 2008: 113). The author of the first letter draw upon Moore's 'authority' to justify his own approach to managing his daughter's internet use:

Thanks to Jane Moore for her comments about the dangers of children using the Internet and the need for parents to limit the amount of time their kids spend online.

I police the sites my daughter can access for her own protection but she thinks all other children are allowed total freedom on the Net.

The Internet is wonderful for helping with homework and finding information but it has its dark side.

After reading Jane's comments my daughter now agrees with me that there needs to be parental guidance.

Any parent who does not monitor the Internet is placing their child in danger in their own home.

(‘Don’t let your children get caught in the net’, *The Sun*, 18 July 2003)

As is common in arguments focussed on the "dangers" of the internet (or rather "the dangers of *children* using the Internet"), the arguer attempts to display a degree of rationality by constructing the internet as a Jekyll and Hyde character (for examples of how this discourse has manifested in the Canadian press, see Turow, 1999). However, while he acknowledges both positive and negative aspects of the internet, his focus is firmly fixed on the latter, reflecting a wider tendency to focus on online

risks without giving equivalent consideration to the associated opportunities (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a). For the arguer, the mere existence of potential risks is justification enough for adults to “monitor” and “police” young people’s internet use – the implication here being that young people are incapable of deciphering the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’ for themselves. In this example, the arguer is both advocating (“I police the sites my daughter can access”) and legitimising (“my daughter now agrees with me”) a protectionist approach to regulating children’s internet use. This approach, which he defines as “parental guidance”, is presented as a necessary tool for restricting his child’s exposure to risks. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Kitzinger (1997: 175) has argued that such a protectionist approach “encourages children to live in fear... [and] implies the need for increased parental control”. This, she argues, is part of an “ideology of control which diverts attention away from the socially constructed oppression of young people” (Kitzinger, 1997: 175). For the arguer, however, the protectionist approach he is advocating is not indicative of the oppression of young people, nor is it unnecessarily restrictive or repressive. Instead, it is an entirely necessary form of “parental guidance” which his daughter – the oppressed child – “agrees” is “for her own protection”. This, one might still argue, is indicative of parental protectionism “encourag[ing] children to live in fear” (Kitzinger, 1997: 175) because, having acknowledged the similarities between her father’s notion of “parental control” and that advocated by Jane Moore, an ‘authority’ on such issues, the letter writer’s daughter purportedly recognises the internet poses a serious threat to her safety. She understands that she should be fearful of the internet and the people who use it. She has acknowledged the error of her previous ways (wherein she thought “all other children are allowed total freedom on the Net”) and “agrees” that she should permit her father to limit her freedom by “monitor[ing]” and “polic[ing]” her internet use (the implication again presumably being that she “agrees” she is incapable of doing so for herself). As such, the writer’s claim could be viewed as a strategy for justifying punitive controls under the guise of fulfilling parental responsibilities, as “[t]ypically adults direct and children obey with age and status (parents, guardians, professional) ensuring legitimacy” (Scraton, 1997b: 163).

In attempting to ‘prove’ the legitimacy of his argument, to ‘prove’ the ‘common sense’ nature of his approach, this letter writer preemptively dismisses any alternative to the protectionist approach he is advocating. He asserts that: “Any parent who does

not monitor the Internet is placing their child in danger in their own home”. In other words, a protectionist approach equates to ‘good’ parenting. By association, any other approach equates to ‘bad’ parenting. Any parent that does not implement a similar protectionist approach – one that involves policing the websites children use, limiting their freedom, making them disproportionately fearful of the “dark side” of the internet – is complicit in “placing their child in danger in their own home”.

The second of the letters selected for publication is notable for its depiction of ‘the home’ and, more specifically, its blurring of the boundaries between virtuality and reality:

Children are taught not to talk to strangers on the street and no parent would allow a succession of adults to traipse in and out of their child’s bedroom day and night – yet that’s exactly what happens when they use chatrooms.

Children should not be allowed unlimited access to the Internet.
(‘Don’t let your children get caught in the net’, *The Sun*, 18 July 2003)

This letter accepts – and subsequently remobilises – the discursive strategy identified throughout this chapter. Of parents “allow[ing] a succession of adults to traipse in and out of their child’s bedroom day and night”, the writer argues that her analogy between virtuality (chat room) and reality (bedroom) represents an ‘exact’ comparison. In keeping with much of the rhetorical argumentation seen throughout this chapter, this letter writer uses fear – fear that parents are inadvertently allowing paedophiles to invade their homes, fear that they putting their children at risk, fear that they are being ‘bad’ parents – to persuade other parents of the validity of her conclusions, namely that the internet *already* represents a threat to children, the home and the family, and that the restriction of children’s internet use is a fundamental part of tackling this threat (and restoring order to the home, family etc.). In terms of rhetorical argumentation, this letter writer uses pathos, or pathetic argumentation, as her principle mode of persuasion. As Richardson notes:

an audience can be persuaded through pathos, or emotion, and this can be used explicitly or implicitly in argument. Pathos is used in a rhetorical argument to move the audience from one emotional state to another: pathetic arguments may move an audience to anger (or pity, fear, etc.).

(2007: 160)

In this example, the letter writer explicitly uses fear in order to persuade the audience of her point of view. As Aristotle argued in his influential work on rhetoric:

If fear is associated with the expectation that something destructive will happen to us, plainly nobody will be afraid who believes nothing can happen to him [...] Consequently, when it is advisable that the audience should be frightened, the orator must make them feel that they really are in danger of something, pointing out that it has happened to others who stronger than they are, and *is happening*, or has happened, to people like themselves, at the hands of unexpected people, in an unexpected form, and at an unexpected time.

(Aristotle, 1383, cited in Richardson, 2007: 160, my emphasis)

Thus, “the arguer [can use] pathetic argumentation to put the audience in a frame of mind that makes them more receptive to what the arguer wants them to believe” (Richardson, 2007: 160). In the case of this letter, the arguer is not claiming that something destructive *will* happen, but that something destruction is *already* happening and, worse still, parents are letting it happen. As such, it serves to try and make the audience receptive to the conclusion that “Children should not be allowed unlimited access to the Internet”.

The above examples reflect a tendency for letters in tabloid newspapers to argue from personal experience (Richardson, 2008: 58). In these instances, readers are citing personal experience of applying strict parental controls to their own children’s internet use. These letters are also broadly indicative of this particular newspaper’s “pursuit of shared understanding and empathy” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002: 75) between its editorial line and its audience. According to Richardson, “the vast majority of letters to the editor are argumentative, designed to convince an audience of the acceptability of a point of view and to provoke them into an immediate or future course of action” (2008: 65). In the case of the letters printed in the ‘Dear Sun’ pages, the viewpoint of which they are designed to convince the audience is that the internet represents a considerable threat to every child that uses it. In terms of provoking an audience “into an immediate or future course of action”, eight out of the nine letters selected for publication advocate increased parental control:

- Letter 1 calls for parents to “monitor the Internet” and “limit the amount of time their kids spend online”.
- Letter 2 calls for parents to restrict children’s internet use, stating that they “should not be allowed unlimited access to the Internet”.
- Letter 3 advocates her approach of “refus[ing] to let [her] children use the Internet unless they are closely supervised”.
- Letter 4 argues that parental or technological controls should be implemented to “stop kids getting access to [chat rooms]”.
- Other letter writers speak more generally of too “little control of the children using [the internet]” and a need for increased “restraint or monitoring” (Letter 5); not allowing children to “surf the Net for such long periods of time” (Letter 6); the need for parents to “safeguard” (Letter 7) and to not “let their guard drop for a minute” (Letter 9).

Thus, these letter writers are arguing for increased parental control of children’s actions within the physical space of the home (in terms of when and where they use the computer, for how long, etc.) and the ‘virtual’ space of the internet (in terms of the content, social networks, people, etc. with which they are permitted to engage). As well as being further examples of adults seeking to maintain authority through tight control of spatial boundaries (and governance of children’s movements within such spaces) (Meyer, 2007; Valentine, 1996), such arguments are also indicative of “children’s experiences [being] reconstructed by adults who easily portray power as responsibility, control as care, and regulation as protection” (Scraton, 1997b: 163). Furthermore, they are endorsing broadly similar variations on the same kind of ‘magic bullet’ solution to safeguarding children, the type of which have been widely critiqued and criticised for being simplistic and short-sighted (Green, 2009; Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a).

Restricting children’s right to online privacy and autonomy

As the examples in this chapter have demonstrated, discourses framing internet predators as a threat to the home typically functioned to encourage tighter parental governance of children’s behaviour and movements through methods such as:

- the removal of computers from children's bedrooms;
- increased monitoring of children's internet activities, e.g. overlooking computer use in a communal space;
- banning access to particularly 'dangerous' aspects of the internet;
- total removal of computers from the home.

Measures such as these circumvent any notion of children's right to privacy or experimentation (Steeves, 2005). They bound and constrain, encouraging yet further regulation and discipline of children's home lives through increased parental surveillance, power and control (James et al., 1998: 53-54) What's more, they may restrict children's opportunities to fully embrace some of the foremost benefits provided by the internet. For example:

Communicating [offline], making new friends, developing intimacy – all this is fraught with difficulties and embarrassment for young people. The internet, it seems, *offers a space for privacy, control over communication and experimentation*. It also lets children easily get to know many new people, whether they are like them or quite different.

(Livingstone et al., 2011c: 26, my emphasis)

Thus, using the threat of internet predators as the basis for advising parents to 'hover' while their children are online, or explicitly disregard their right to privacy, is unhelpful because it serves only to hinder children and deny them the opportunity to engage in activities like social networking that many enjoy, benefit from and which aid their development. Additionally, calls for tighter governance and/or censorship of children's internet use in the home can be seen as a further assault on their right to leisure as:

empirical studies of children's use of media... recognize that children's media activities, at least in the developed world, take place in and around the places and times of family life. Asked when or why they use media... children invariably reply that it prevents them being bored. This banal explanation is implicitly a claim to leisure. Children are denied this. Their play must be invested with moral qualities. Controlling children's media use is to intervene in their right to leisure.

(Cricher, 2008a: 102)

This is particularly misguided in light of empirical findings that show that young

people “are much more likely to report that using social media has a positive impact on their social and emotional lives than a negative one” (Common Sense Media, 2012).

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have drawn upon examples from a variety of editorial formats to demonstrate how ‘the home’ has been invoked in the construction of online CSA. This was typically achieved through a metaphorical representation (Fairclough, 2003a: 143) that blurred the boundaries between virtuality and actuality in order to depict the ‘invisible’ threat of the ‘internet predator’ as a physical presence inside the family home, often ‘your living room’ or ‘your child’s bedroom’.

Through the course of this chapter I demonstrated that the generic presentation of the internet predator as a threat to the home was highly conducive to a “fear appeal argument” (Walton, 2007). As such it was typically used to promote and legitimise calls for immediate action. Although the form of argumentation differed between editorial formats and arguers (e.g. journalists, columnists, letter writers, etc.), the recommended action invariably revolved around the implementation of tighter parental governance. This discourse, I argued, is dependent on an “ideology of control” (Kitzinger, 1997: 175) – acceptance of the view that parents are *powerful* and children are *powerless*. As such, it reproduces and maintains dominant hegemonic social relations. Indeed, in some cases it was inferred that parents who do not adhere to such measures were ‘bad’ or ‘irresponsible’ parents, that they were responsible for putting children in danger ‘in their own homes’ (a claim that sidesteps the reality that in many instances parents are responsible for child abuse).

The discourse around the home outlined in this chapter also illustrated the unrelenting power of ‘stranger danger’ as a concept. That this discourse, which is premised on the notion that the internet is bringing – i.e. *introducing* – CSA into the home has been mobilised so readily suggests that this problem is still popularly perceived as being ‘outside’. As such, it is revealing about the dominance of “home/family myths” (Wykes, 1998), i.e. dominant, accepted understandings of the home as an idyll, the ultimate safe haven, as opposed to an existing site of abuse.

The following chapter concludes this thesis. In it I recap my key findings, discuss their implications, and make suggestions for future research.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the role of the press in constructing online CSA in Australia, Canada, the UK and USA. The main objectives were twofold. First, I wanted to gain a better understanding of when this social problem emerged on the public agenda and the key topics and events through which it has been framed. Second, I wanted to build upon existing scholarship around the social construction of CSA by examining how journalists and other powerful claims-makers have negotiated the paedophile's migration from the 'physical world' to 'cyberspace'. Specifically, I wanted to gain a more qualitative understanding of how claims-makers have contended with tricky dilemmas regarding space and spatiality, particularly the issue of children's physical proximity to internet predators and the internet's perceived threat to the sanctity of the home.

In this concluding chapter I recap key findings and discuss their implications before suggesting some areas in which future research could build upon this thesis.

An overview of my findings

Chapters 2 to 5 reviewed relevant literature and outlined my method. In Chapter 6, I tracked the trajectory and momentum of coverage of online CSA during the period 1993-2009. This showed that although an early trickle of articles began to emerge in each country during the mid-1990s, the vast majority of coverage occurred after 2000, reaching a cross-national peak in 2006. Consequently, I suggested that while there were few shared patterns across the four countries' coverage, one commonality was that online CSA is very much a 21st century problem and interest has grown as internet access has spread. Additionally, I noted that the longevity of coverage, which has endured over many years, suggests that online CSA has not (yet) been subject to the kind of "child abuse fatigue" that followed the media's 'discovery' of offline abuse in the 1980s (Kitzinger and Skidmore, 1995).

In Chapter 7, I analysed data on genres and news hooks in order to identify the key

topics and events through which online CSA has been defined during peaks in each country's coverage. Through this analysis I argued that cross-national coverage of online CSA fits Iyengar's (1991) model insofar it has been characterised by "episodic framing", i.e. high levels of coverage concentrated into short time periods, driven by high profile events. In terms of news hooks, articles from peak weeks were dominated by individual grooming/abduction cases, which accounted for four times as much of the sample as the next most common news hooks ('safety' and 'legal system'). There were, however, some notable national differences (e.g. the high number of 'safety' news hooks in Australia and 'legal system' news hooks in Canada, cases studies for which hinted at the political capital of online CSA more generally). Another particularly striking finding was the prominence of in-house investigations/exposés in the UK press, which accounted for more articles than those pertaining to research, policing or general discussion of the issue. The prominence of these investigations, combined with the high visibility of grooming cases and the lack of more informed, research-based discussion, may, I argued, create misconceptions about the scale and/or nature of the issue.

Closer consideration of individual peak weeks showed that very few events had generated peaks in multiple locales, suggesting that each country's coverage has followed a nationally-specific narrative (shaped by its own socio-political context). Closer analysis of grooming/abduction cases suggested a heightened interest in landmark cases and cases involving perpetrators who exhibited a limited range of unusual credentials, e.g. foreigners, violent offenders, prolific groomers and 'elite' professionals. Repeat coverage of such cases, I concluded, may exacerbate misconceptions about a 'trend' in cases of online CSA and contribute to a fear of the 'other'/strangers, providing an easy way to explain away abuse (e.g. focussing on perpetrators' individual pathologies).

Chapter 8 was concerned with spatiality and examined how claims-makers have negotiated the paedophile's migration from the 'physical world' to 'cyberspace'. This chapter was divided into three separate, but inter-related, sections. In the first section I demonstrated how claims-makers have drawn upon existing understandings of, and fears about, offline 'paedophile places' (e.g. playgrounds, public parks) in order to depict certain aspects of the internet as equally dangerous online equivalents (e.g.

chatrooms, MySpace). Claims about online paedophile places typically took one of two forms: (a) that they have replaced offline paedophile places; or (b) that they have supplemented them. As well as intimating that the internet is bringing about fundamental changes in childhood and the level and variety of risks it entails, these claims were used to encourage outcomes such as increased parental governance of children's internet use, increased professional governance of certain online sites/services and an extension of the established 'stranger danger' message to the internet.

In the second section, I demonstrated how, in the absence of a convincing discourse of physical proximity (which is key to the construction of offline 'paedophile places'), claims-makers have used a discourse of temporal proximity to argue that the internet brings children to within seconds, minutes or hours of encountering a paedophile. This discourse, I argued, serves to make the threat of the internet predator more immediate and pressing, localising a global problem. Additionally, I also demonstrated how 'clicks' have been used as a punchy alternative to traditional temporal definitions (seconds, minutes, etc.), manifesting in statements such as 'one click from danger'. The 'click', I argued, appeals to shared understandings of the child as 'naturally' fallible (innocent, naive, etc.) and functions to sensitise adults to the risks posed to the *unsupervised* child. In so doing, I suggested that this single lexical choice serves to highlight children's 'natural' vulnerability and, by association, the need for adults to protect them.

The third section of Chapter 8 looked at how claims-makers have conceptualised change in the post-computer age. From this perspective, I considered ways in which the internet has been seen to bring fundamental changes to three concepts central to the social construction of CSA: 'stranger danger', 'childhood' and 'the paedophile'. In each case, I identified a distinction between the 'old' (pre-internet) and the 'new' (post-internet), with the latter typically seen to have superseded the former in terms of the level of risk it entails. Particularly important in this regard were claims about a 'new breed' of 'paedophile' ('internet predators'), who were seen to be evolving in line with advancements in internet technology, capable of outsmarting the police and child protection agencies, and taking advantage of a 'shrinking' planet to endanger children around the world.

Chapter 9 continued the theme of spatiality by focussing on ‘the home’, a conceptual and physical space that is often excluded from mainstream discussion of CSA but is intrinsically linked to debates around children and the internet. In this chapter I demonstrated ways in which the internet is seen to have introduced the threat of CSA into the home. This was typically achieved through a metaphorical representation (Fairclough, 2003: 143) that depicted the ‘invisible’ threat of the internet predator as a physical presence inside the home. This generic construction of the internet predator as a threat to the home was, I argued, highly conducive to a “fear appeal argument” (Walton, 2007) and was typically used to promote calls for tighter governance of children’s home lives through measures such as the banning of computers from children’s bedrooms, close monitoring of their internet use or total removal of computers from the home. As such, it was dependent on an “ideology of control” (Kitzinger, 1997: 175) and offered a contemporary example of parents’ assumed spatial hegemony and the importance of space to adults’ ability to reproduce their authority over children (Valentine, 1996). More broadly, I argued that the discourse of the endangered home demonstrates (a) the unrelenting power of ‘stranger danger’ as a concept for making sense of CSA and (b) acceptance of the notion that the internet was introducing CSA into the home illustrates the dominance of “home/family myths” about the home as an otherwise safe domain (Wykes, 1998).

Implications

This thesis set out to analyse the role of the press in the construction of what is perceived to be a new, global social problem. My findings have shown that, in keeping with the introduction and spread of modern internet technology, coverage of online CSA as a matter of public concern is a relatively recent phenomena in the four countries in this study, first accelerating around the turn of the century and peaking much later. Indeed, the notion of *newness* has been recurrent throughout my findings. For example:

- Online CSA is conceptualised through a new ‘breed’ of paedophile, the ‘internet predator’;

- Cyberspaces such as chatrooms and social networking sites represent new hang-outs for paedophiles;
- The internet has signalled a new and more perilous era for stranger danger and childhood;
- The internet has introduced a new threat into the home.

All of these discourses encourage us to think about CSA in new ways and to envisage new safeguards and new solutions. However, while the internet may indeed represent a new *medium*, the fundamental elements of the problem remain the same as ever: adults, mostly men (Wolak et al., 2008), are abusing their power in order to sexually exploit children. For this reason, I am left to consider whether it is judicious to treat online CSA as an entirely ‘new’ problem. To do so runs the risk of disregarding or, at the very least, diverting attention away from, the ‘old’, *but ongoing, unresolved and more widespread*, issue of offline abuse. From this perspective, I would suggest that online CSA may be best viewed as a more contemporaneous episode in what Critcher called “the paedophilia narrative” (2003: 100).

This, of course, is categorically not to suggest that online CSA is unimportant or should be ignored. Indeed, it has never been my intention to downplay or deny the existence or seriousness of this issue. Nor has it been my intention to dismiss online CSA as a media-generated ‘moral panic’ without substance or foundation. On the contrary, there is clear evidence of a problem. We know that the internet has facilitated instances of grooming and other such sexual exploitation, and this needs to be addressed. However, what this thesis has shown is that those charged with publicising and tackling the problem of online CSA need to provide perspective on factors such as:

- the scale, scope and nature of the problem;
- the issues that negatively impact upon children and their internet use;
- the level of risk management required to strike the balance between maximising children’s access to online opportunities and empowering them to recognise and negotiate the risks.

We simply cannot expect to envisage suitable responses to this problem in a culture that endorses and perpetuates mythical images of paedophiles, childhood, family and the home. Thus, it must be recognised that while there is an element of risk for children negotiating the online world – just as there is in the offline world – the opportunities far outweigh the (potential) risks. The internet is not awash with powerful, predatory paedophiles ready and waiting to ensnare unsuspecting children every time they go online. Children are not weak, naive innocents who are susceptible to every form of risk and in need of repressive adult governance to safely negotiate every aspect of their online lives, and it is not conducive to sound policy or healthy debate to claim otherwise. Equally, it is not judicious to promote ‘solutions’ that ascribe all power and responsibility to parents (often the most likely perpetrators of sexual abuse) and introduce yet further regulation to children’s lives in the home (often the most likely site of abuse). Such discourses may help journalists structure stories that sell newspapers, or enable claims-makers to generate sufficient fear to further their own interests, but they simplify and misrepresent a nuanced issue, reducing it to a few core characteristics in a way that does little to inform the public about the matter at hand and even less to facilitate the kind of debate that is conducive to formulating thoughtful responses.

While no attempt has been made to generalise about ‘the press’ as a whole, or to claim that these discourses are necessarily the most dominant, this thesis has provided evidence that the popular press have provided a platform for the (re)circulation of problematic discourses in four of the countries that have positioned themselves at the forefront of the fight against online CSA. This is cause for concern and needs to be addressed if this issue is to be tackled.

To round off this discussion, I wish to bring together some key arguments from my four findings chapters in order to reflect upon their implications for theory around CSA and the social construction of ‘childhood’. Once I have reflected on these key areas of theory, I consider the broader implications of my findings for journalists, policymakers and practitioners in terms of responding to online CSA as a social problem.

Implications: perpetuating myths about offline abuse in the discursive construction of online CSA

As I noted in the opening chapter, it has been argued that CSA “remains an apparently insurmountable problem in Western developed societies” (Smart, 2000: 55). Based on the findings of this thesis, I would contend that discourses evident in press coverage of *online* CSA have further amplified this problem insofar as they have wilfully remobilised (and reinforced) myths about *offline* abuse and the people who perpetrate it. In particular, discourses identified in the construction of online CSA have perpetuated myths about:

- Perpetrators of CSA typically being pathological ‘others’;
- Threats posed in public spaces such as parks (‘paedophile places’);
- Children’s proximity to abuse and abusers in every day life;
- The home as an unlikely site of abuse.

The problems associated with discursive constructions of ‘internet predators’ diverting attention back to (and/or strengthen the existing focus on) dangerous strangers rather than intimates have been covered elsewhere (e.g. Pratt, 2009; Wolak et al., 2008). As well as supporting this criticism, the findings of this thesis also highlight ways in which parts of the news media continue to reinforce stereotypes about perpetrators of sexual abuse. Of particular note is the manner in which parts of the press appear have been sensitised to cases involving foreign perpetrators or those who are especially violent or prolific. In addition to reinforcing myths about dangerous strangers, these representations also encourage a focus on the individualised, pathological ‘other’. This is unhelpful because it further diverts attention away from the reality that most CSA is perpetrated by ‘normal’, unremarkable men.

This focus on individual grooming cases – particularly extraordinary ones – has possible implications in terms of audience understandings of the problem. Referring to television news, Iyengar argues:

Confronted with a parade of news stories describing particular instances or illustrations of national issues, viewers focus on individual and group

characteristics rather than historical, social, political or other such structural forces. In this respect episodic framing encourages reasoning by resemblance – people settle upon causes and treatment that ‘fit’ the observed problem.

(Iyengar, 1991: 137)

From this perspective, I would argue that the focus on extraordinary grooming cases encourages a focus on individual perpetrators’ characteristics (their foreignness, their pathological characteristics, etc.) instead of broader structural forces, such as the fact that, as feminists have long argued with regard to offline abuse, the vast majority of perpetrators of online CSA are male (Wolak et al., 2008) – a factor which raises challenging questions about hegemonic masculinity.

Also unhelpful in terms of perpetuating myths about CSA is the discourse of temporal proximity. The notion that computers, chatrooms, social networking sites or any other aspect of the internet have vastly reduced children’s proximity to sexual abusers is misleading. It is premised on the understanding that, prior to the internet, children were not *already* living in close proximity to sexual abuse(rs), and that strangers loitering in ‘paedophile places’ represented the most pertinent threat to their safety. However, because of the nature of the most common forms of abuse, the issue of proximity – children’s closeness to their abusers – has *never been in question*. After all, in its most common form, CSA is typically perpetrated *by the people* (i.e. family members, other trusted intimates), *and in the places* (i.e. homes), to which children are *already* closest.

The perpetual dominance and power of stranger danger as a concept for making sense of CSA is further illustrated by discourses around online ‘paedophile places’. Regardless of whether online ‘paedophile places’ are seen to be *supplementing* or *replacing* offline ones, these misleading claims perpetuate, remobilise and relegitimise the myth that paedophiles pose(d) a serious risk to children in certain public spaces, that the notion of ‘paedophile places’ is a credible way of conceptualising sexual risks to children – and, by extension, that withdrawing or mediating children’s access to these public spaces represents an effective method of tackling the problem of CSA.

This is also evident in the discourse of the endangered home. For this discourse to be

persuasive, for audiences to be concerned that the internet is *introducing* the threat of sexual abuse into the home, there needs to be an acceptance that the home *was not already a site of danger for young people*. That this discourse has been readily remobilised – i.e. that a variety of claims-makers consider it an effective means for conceptualising online CSA, and that it has not been widely disputed or discredited – suggests that the image of the (pre-internet) home as an idyllic safe haven is widely accepted and shared. This is revealing about dominant understandings of the home and a lack of awareness about (or acknowledgement of) the extent to which children are, and have long been, subjected to sexual abuse in the home/family environment (Wykes, 1998). Thus, although specific to the internet, the discourse of the endangered home can also be seen to be contributing to the process of myth-making about offline abuse: by remobilising the myth that the internet is transforming ‘the home’ from a site where children *were not* at risk of sexual abuse to one where they now *are* (and, by implication, if online CSA were to be tackled then the sanctity of ‘the home’ as a safe haven could be restored), it is perpetuating and reinforcing the myth that offline abuse, which remains a major problem, is something that happens ‘outside’ (in public, away from the home, perpetrated by dangerous strangers). Indeed, in examples discussed in Chapters 8 and 9 it was implied that the only sphere in which children were truly safe was in the confines of the computer-less home.

All of these discourses draw upon and relegitimise unhelpful myths from the *pre*-internet era and reinforce them as credible ways of conceptualising offline abuse in the *post*-internet era (i.e. the present). Thus, although they are specifically applied to the internet, they contribute to the process of myth-making about offline CSA; misrepresenting, misinforming and diverting attention away from the nature and scale of the problem on a much broader scale. This needs to be addressed. If journalists and other powerful claims-makers are serious about tackling CSA then it is imperative they recognise, acknowledge and raise awareness about the unpopular realities of the problem. Namely, that:

- perpetrators are not typically extraordinary;
- perpetrators are usually male;
- a great many children already live in close proximity to abuse(rs);

- intimates remain a far greater threat than strangers; and
- the home/family does not represent a safe haven.

If myths to the contrary continue to be circulated then the challenge of tackling this problem *in any form* will remain almost insurmountable (Smart, 2000: 55).

Implications: ‘Childhood’ and making sense of online risks to children

In the opening chapter I stated that this thesis is underpinned by an overarching interest in the social construction of ‘childhood’. Through the course of my analysis, I have identified and unpacked a variety of ways in which claims-makers have drawn upon shared understandings of ‘childhood’ and ‘the child’ in order to construct online CSA as a pressing social problem and to advocate suitable responses. As such, my research offers an insight into ways in which we understand childhood – and the position of ‘the child’ in the family and society more generally – in the post-internet age.

With this in mind, an important finding of this thesis is that, in negotiating the paedophile’s migration from ‘the physical world’ to ‘cyberspace’, many of the discourses I have examined construct contemporary childhood in a way that (further) subjugates and disempowers children. This has typically been a result of:

- remobilising pre-existing discourses that position ‘the child’ as ‘naturally’ vulnerable or naive;
- implicitly or explicitly encouraging strict forms of governance that place considerable limitations upon children’s autonomy and freedom;
- encouraging and legitimising an ideology of control.

With regard to ‘childhood’ *theory*, a particularly important finding of this thesis is that fears around new media have been used as a conduit for reproducing and maintaining dominant hegemonic social relations (particularly between children and their parents) in order to construct contemporary, post-internet childhood as a period through which children’s lives require tighter regulation than ever before. In particular, numerous discourses around online CSA encourage an increased level of

distrust in children: discourses around online ‘paedophile places’ imply that children cannot be trusted to safely negotiate chatrooms or social networking sites without adult intervention; the ‘click’ implies they cannot be trusted to use the internet without supervision due to the likelihood of placing themselves in peril; discourses around ‘the home’ imply they cannot be trusted to use the computer without supervision, or away from a communal area of the house, in case they ‘invite’ a paedophile in.

The solutions proposed for blocking predators from ‘entering’ the family home expand the range of ways through which parents are expected to govern children’s actions and movements in this important domestic space. They propose that, following the introduction of the computer/internet, the home – “the child’s centre” (James et al., 1998: 54), the “new interiority” for childhood (James et al., 1998: 53) – needs to become a site where children are subject to *even tighter* regulation and afforded *even less* autonomy. In short, for contemporary childhood to be ‘safe’, it *needs* to be micro-managed by adults. This extends the level of “dominance, discrimination, power and control” parents have over children (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 10). It also extends children’s “separateness” from adults (Archard, 1993: 37). Further, if we accept the argument that “for some children, the absence of autonomy both in the street and at home threatens to make contemporary childhood problematic” (James et al., 1998: 54), then calls for tighter governance of additional aspects of children’s home lives are unhelpful because they have potentially negative repercussions for young people’s development and their capacity to flourish.

In terms of the wider issue of tackling online CSA, these discourses are problematic because they disempower young people, presenting them as incompetent, a danger to themselves. Not only does this do a disservice to young people, it also limits the scope for rationally debating the issue and envisaging suitable solutions. Thus, I would conclude that discourses implicitly or explicitly constructing children as incompetent and advocating strict(er) parental governance should be avoided because they place considerable, and *unnecessary*, restrictions on young people’s freedom, privacy and autonomy while limiting the scope for developing more progressive responses (empowering children through pedagogical approaches, encouraging a degree of self-regulation, etc.). Moreover, such discourses may even prove counter-productive

because empirical research has shown that attempts to implement tight parental governance can “encourage children’s evasion rather than their cooperation with attempts at internet regulation in the home” (Livingstone and Bober, 2005: 25).

As a further point, when reflecting on the recurrent attempts to identify and promote measures intended to reduce risk (however regressive), it is worth considering whether it is even desirable to try and eliminate all risk from children’s internet use. Byron, for example, has questioned whether it is possible to “effectively implement thoughtful strategies around e-safety... within a prevailing culture where we take a zero risk approach to children and childhood” (Byron, 2009, see also Byron, 2008). Given that this thesis has identified and critiqued numerous discourses through which this “zero risk” culture has been cultivated and perpetuated, it could be argued that parts of the press are hindering the development and implementation of thoughtful responses to the very problem they are seeking to publicise. Furthermore, while we certainly should not disregard the important issue of risk *management*, or ignore the minority of children who are adversely affected by negative online experiences, it needs to be recognised that “evidence of risk is not, in and of itself, direct evidence of actual harm” (Livingstone and Haddon, 2008: 248) and exposure to a degree of risk is widely considered to be a vital part of children’s development (Byron, 2008, 2009; Gill, 2007; Livingstone and Ólafsson, 2011). From this perspective, as well as shining a light on contemporary theoretical conceptions of ‘childhood’, this thesis has also identified discourses through which journalists and other powerful claims-makers, however well-intentioned, have cultivated a culture that may ultimately hinder children’s development.

Implications for journalists and policymakers

In reflecting on the wider implications of this thesis, it is worth making a point with regard to journalists and policymakers. With regard to the former, my findings reaffirm the need for journalists to be aware of the power they hold in terms of identifying, defining and providing a forum for debating contemporary social issues. If journalists are to aid, rather than potentially hinder, the process of addressing social problems like online CSA, they need to cover such issues in a way that reflects their scope, scale and nature as accurately and rationally as possible. Failure to do so can have various negative ramifications.

First, given that the mass media are a popular source of information about issues pertaining to online safety (e.g. European Commission, 2008; Livingstone et al., 2011b; Livingstone et al., 2011d), existing coverage could perpetuate unnecessary parental anxieties about their children being groomed, which we already know is one of the foremost concerns reported by parents, if not their children (e.g. NetAlert, 2007a; Wallis Consulting Group, 2007). Second, it could create unnecessary anxieties among young people who see the stream of coverage about grooming cases and frightening headlines such as ‘Are any of our children safe on the net?’ (*Daily Mail*, 10 October 2003). It is easy to assume that young people are disengaged from the news (particularly newspapers), but Steeves, for example, found that the young people in her focus groups “were very aware of news stories about online stalking” (2005: 10), while UK Children Go Online found that three quarters of 9-19 year olds were aware of an internet safety campaign or had encountered a news story that made them think the internet can be dangerous and, when asked to describe a recent campaign or news story they had come across, the most common response referred to the danger of paedophiles (Livingstone et al., 2004: 43). Concurrently, though, it is equally plausible that the media’s preoccupation with grooming stories could *desensitise* children to advice or education on internet safety, as some research with young people has found resentment of repeated warnings about predators, particularly those deemed unrealistic, exaggerated or biased (e.g. Byron, 2008).

In light of the findings of this thesis, I would therefore conclude that:

- journalists should take more care to provide informed context to the issue, based on *empirical* research, at times when it is high on the media agenda and most visible to the public (and indeed when it is not);
- journalists should critically reflect on the elements that make online CSA newsworthy and the overall image of the problem this promotes to their audience;
- editors and journalists should consider the impact of concentrating on events/episodes rather than the broader issues that underpin the problem (Kitzinger, 2004: 197);

- headline writers should reflect on their role in contributing to and/or perpetuating misconceptions about the issue.

With regard to policymakers, this thesis further highlights the need for policy to be based on sound empirical evidence rather than newspaper headlines. Tanya Byron, who was commissioned by the UK government to write an independent report on the risks posed to children by the internet and video games, has already argued that the “judgemental and aggressive way in which many policymakers... approach this... global issue because of the political currency that evolves around it... is entirely unhelpful” (Byron, 2009). Reflecting on her experiences with a government select committee, Byron also speculated about the importance of media representations, expressing frustration at “policymakers asking the most inane question[s] based on something that they probably read in the *Daily Mail* that morning”. Although somewhat anecdotal, such concerns are far from restricted to the UK. In Chapter 4, for example, I highlighted the agenda-setting role that *To Catch A Predator* has been said to have played in influencing policy in the USA, where the sponsors of the Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006 cited the programme as “visual evidence” of a serious problem (Adler, 2010: 10).

In terms of the findings of this thesis, the perceptions of new and evolving risks evident in constructions of ‘new’, post-computer ‘stranger danger’, ‘childhood’ and ‘paedophiles’, together with the high visibility of grooming cases, claims about the universality of the threat and the ‘visual evidence’ presented in the undercover exposés so beloved of the UK national press, all harbour the potential to cultivate anxieties and create a clamour for policy responses, for ‘something to be done’ – even if it means responding to parents’ (largely unfounded) anxieties rather than taking an evidence-based approach or responding to the issues that most concern children. Indeed, having become an issue of considerable political currency, online CSA is now an issue to which policymakers are sensitised and feel they must be seen to be addressing (Adler, 2010; Byron, 2009; Ponte et al., 2009). However, policymakers’ desire to appease concerns by being seen to take swift action can lead to the kind of ‘silver bullet’ solutions that purport to provide wide-scale protection but have been widely denounced as simplistic and unrealistic (e.g. Byron, 2009; Green, 2009; Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a), such as with Australian prime minister John

Howard's expensive, and largely unsuccessful, internet safety programme, announced as part of the 2004 election campaign and introduced in 2007 (Green, 2009). This is undesirable because such broad-brush measures invariably result in the kind of top-down responses that young people don't want (Steeves, 2005), that inhibit their freedom and autonomy (James et al., 1998) and restrict their access to beneficial opportunities (Livingstone et al., 2011c).

Highly respected scholars in the field have concluded that "the link between risks, incidents and actual harm is genuinely tenuous" (Livingstone, 2003a: 157) and the numbers affected are "salient but small" (Wolak et al., 2008: 125). Therefore, attempts to frame online CSA as an unprecedented issue that endangers all children are, I would argue, at best misguided, and at worst disingenuous, irresponsible and counter-productive. In my opinion, action is required to better understand the small, but important, population of young people who suffer from negative online experiences. Only then can appropriate responses be tailored and implemented. The findings of this thesis suggest that the press does not necessarily provide a suitably nuanced and considered approach to explaining the problem (at least not during peaks in coverage), which further highlights the need for research by the likes of EU Kids Online and the Crimes Against Children Research Center to take precedence when it comes to planning and implementing policy.

Implications for practitioners

In light of my findings, I would argue that when practitioners are designing educational programmes, safety information and awareness raising materials it would be judicious to:

- Avoid positioning parents as children's sole protectors;
- Inform adults and children through age-appropriate education based on sound, empirical knowledge of the scope, scale and nature of the issue;
- Recognise that a degree of risk is a vital to children's development;
- Recognise that risk is not direct evidence of harm;
- Empower children by allowing them to enjoy the internet with freedom, privacy and autonomy;

- Take considerable care in the choice of language, e.g. avoiding a lexicon that frames children as ‘naturally’ fallible (naive, etc.) and in need for protection, such as the ‘click’.

Methodological Reflections

“Essentially arbitrary decisions intrude at all stages of the research process: what you count, how much you sample, how you categorise, etc.; and all of these decisions are ultimately produced by the researcher’s subjective judgement of what is significant” (Deacon et al., 1999: 131). Before concluding I reflect on some of the decisions that shaped my thesis in relation to the following issues:

- Focussing on content over production and reception
- Conducting cross-national research
- Sampling newspapers based on circulation
- Combining content analysis and CDA
- Focussing on examples from the right-wing press
- Excluding other potentially relevant theoretical frameworks

Focussing on content over production and reception

This thesis focuses solely on textual analysis. One of the foremost criticisms of this approach is that it “cannot make safe assertions about the intentions of a text’s producers, nor can it validly infer the impact of the text on readers, viewers or listeners” (Deacon et al., 2007: 189). These limitations apply to this study and have been acknowledged from the outset.

On reflection, while production and/or audience studies would unquestionably have added an additional dimension to my findings, their inclusion would not have been without compromise. First, they would have negatively impinged upon the depth of the textual analysis that this research was designed (and funded) to undertake. Second, they could have produced an unmanageably large amount of data for one study. Third, the addition of relatively rudimentary audience and/or production studies – for this is all that could be facilitated without drastically reducing the textual analysis that this thesis was designed to undertake – would themselves be open to

charges of being under-developed or incomparable (i.e. due to the countries from which participants were found, their respective socio-economic backgrounds, the political leanings of journalists/their newspapers, etc.). Consequently, I would conclude that rather than attempt to squeeze production, content and audience studies into one study, there is value in using an in-depth content study as the springboard for further research. After all, “claims that emerge from... linguistic analysis help us to know what questions to ask of readers, and can give powerful clues as to likely readings, but they can only be provisional and hypothetical without complementary research” (Deacon et al., 2007: 190). Such analysis also helps us to know what questions to ask of producers. Thus, this study provides a platform from which future research could examine issues around production and reception (e.g. my content analysis suggests that journalists/editors privilege certain types of event, thus providing a platform for understanding why this is the case).

Conducting cross-national research

The treatment of online CSA as a problem with international reach – as indicated by the formation of the Virtual Global Taskforce – was the driving force behind my decision to conduct cross-national research. However, it should be acknowledged that the decision not to focus on one country, and the subsequent selection of four broadly similar countries (i.e. ‘developed’, Western, Anglophone, etc.), had implications for the design and scope of my study. Focussing solely on one country may, for example, have enabled me to expand my methodology to incorporate production and/or reception studies. However, as Livingstone has argued in relation to contemporary media research, “In a time of globalization, one might even argue that the choice not to conduct a piece of research cross-nationally requires as much justification as the choice to conduct cross-national research. This is both because the phenomena – industries, texts, audiences – of media and communications research reach across diverse countries and because basing a project in one country generates claims whose specificity or generalizability are indeterminate without comparable projects in other countries” (2003b: 478). Not only does this assessment support my decision to adopt a cross-national approach, it also raises a pertinent point regarding my choice of four seemingly similar countries. After all, while one might hypothesise that there are likely to be similarities in the news hooks/events through which online CSA has been constructed in Australian, Canadian, UK and USA newspapers, such claims can only

be substantiated by applying the same research design to each country.

With regard to my choice of countries, it should also be noted that, where research involving multiple countries is concerned, a distinction has been made between that which is cross-cultural and that which is cross-national. The term 'cross-cultural' has typically been used to describe studies examining cultures that are markedly different from one another (e.g. East versus West, industrialised versus unindustrialised, capitalist versus socialist), while 'cross-national' has tended to be used to describe studies examining national character, social and political values, belief systems and related concerns, typically between industrialised nations (Berger, 1992: 13). In the field of media and communications, Edelstein defines comparative cross-national research as "a study that compares two or more nations with respect to some common activity" (1982: 14). Thus, this thesis is best described as a cross-national study because it compares four nations with respect to the following "common activity": (a) the emergence of newspaper coverage of online CSA, (b) the frequency with which it occurred from its emergence up until the end of 2009, and (c) the genres, news hooks and topics through which the issue was defined during peaks in coverage.

It should, however, be acknowledged that while this study covers four of the countries that have positioned themselves at the forefront of the fight against online CSA, it cannot offer insights beyond these 'developed', Western, Anglophone nations. In other words, it is not a cross-cultural study and it does not seek to offer any conclusions from this perspective. This presents an opportunity for future research because, as an issue with global reach, there is scope to examine the construction of online CSA across a varied range of cultural contexts. At the time of writing the Nexis database contains articles from 2061 newspapers from a vast range of countries, thus providing a rich and varied springboard from which to begin research from a cross-cultural, rather than cross-national, perspective.

Choosing newspapers based on circulation

In this study newspapers were selected on the basis of their circulations. This approach was taken because I wanted to ensure a consistent inclusion/exclusion policy was applied, and comparable circulation data were easily accessible for each country. It should, however, be noted that these objectives could have been met

through alternative approaches. For example, I could have based my selection on the geographical locations of, say, 15 newspapers from each country (60 in total), sampling one quality, one mid-market and one popular title from northern, southern, eastern, western and central regions of each country. This would have ensured a more balanced spread in terms of the geographical locations of the newspapers in my sample (the UK sample is almost entirely made up of London-based national titles, the USA sample contains a disproportionate number of New York titles, etc.), although it would have necessitated the exclusion of some influential newspapers (e.g. making a choice between the New York Times and the Washington Post) and may have been less representative of the ‘massness’ of the news media. Regardless, such an approach has considerable merit and could be pursued in future research, as, indeed, could a study of regional UK newspapers’ role in the construction of online CSA.

Combining research methods

Although this study is principally a qualitative enquiry, it also employs quantitative methods. Quantitative and qualitative techniques are often combined to negate some of the weaknesses of individual methods and to triangulate findings (Deacon et al., 1999: 135). In this study, however, these approaches are used quite independently, as directed by my research questions.

When this study was conceived there was no empirical evidence of when online CSA had emerged on the public agenda or the topics through which it has been defined. Thus, the quantitative aspects of my study, addressed through a content analysis and presented in chapters 6 and 7, were required to provide context for the qualitative analyses presented in chapters 8 and 9. As such, the objective of the quantitative content analysis was to offer insight on the ‘newness’ of online CSA as a phenomena ahead of the qualitative analysis, which examined discourses constructing the internet as a new threat to childhood, the home, etc. Thus, although my content analysis was not necessarily used in direct collaboration with my discourse analysis (i.e. it was not used to counter some of the flaws of CDA), it was designed to address this gap in existing scholarship and, in so doing, makes an original contribution to knowledge in its own right.

Focus on right-wing newspapers

Although I stated from the outset that the qualitative parts of my study were not intended to be comparative in the manner of their quantitative counterparts, it must be acknowledged that the examples analysed in chapters 8 and 9 are largely derived from right-wing newspapers. Indeed, the examples in Chapter 9 are almost exclusively derived from right-wing UK newspapers. This was largely dictated by my research questions and sampling strategy. With regard to Chapter 9, the main objective of my research question was to examine how discourses around the family home have been mobilised in the construction of online CSA as a pressing, and in some regards unprecedented, social problem. As such, it was not principally concerned with cross-national comparison per se. With purposive sampling “[t]he researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question... and [this] will be based on the researcher’s practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself” (Marshall, 1996: 523). As such, it permits the researcher to select examples that best suit their objectives. My objective was not to generalise about ‘the press’ as whole, nor was my research question designed to compare countries or genres of newspaper. Instead, I sought to illuminate some of the discursive strategies through which ideologies around the family home have been invoked in relation to the internet and online CSA. With space restricted by the depth of analysis required for each close reading, I therefore selected examples that: (a) I considered richest in terms of their scope for illustrating how discourses around the internet and the family home have been constructed, and (b) enabled me to demonstrate a wide variety of ways in which these discourses have functioned. These objectives were, in my opinion, largely met. However, the lack of variety in the newspapers from which my examples were selected (genres, countries) must be acknowledged as a shortcoming. That said, while the strategic selection of examples that achieved greater balance across genres and countries would be another approach, and could add a different dimension to the analysis, it is not necessarily the ‘correct’ one. However, scope remains for a comparative approach to be adopted in future research. Additionally, having highlighted numerous instances of journalists from right-wing UK newspapers drawing upon problematic conceptions of the family home in the construction of online CSA, an additional opportunity for future, production-based research presents itself (e.g. interviews with journalists who have covered child abuse for such newspapers, in order to enhance understandings of the production

process).

Alternative theoretical approaches

The principal theoretical frameworks employed in this thesis were critical discourse analysis and childhood theory. Other paradigms relevant to the topic include moral panic theory, frame analysis and risk society.

“Theories tell us what to look for, how to describe the things we are interested in, and how a particular piece of research can contribute to our general knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural world” (Deacon et al., 2007: 11). A considerable body of work exists around the theory of moral panic analysis (see Cohen, 1973; Critcher, 2003; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). However, while online CSA is a topic ripe for this kind of analysis (indeed, I have suggested that it could be viewed as the latest episode in a serial panic about ‘paedophilia’), this thesis was not designed to be a moral panic study. It is not a paradigm I find particularly convincing, nor do I feel could it be effectively applied without being the foremost framework through which the study was conducted.

Another paradigm that could be applied to a study of online CSA is frame analysis. In terms of media and communications, “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations” (Entman, 1993: 52). According to Entman, frames: define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993: 52). This has resonance in the qualitative parts of this study and, from this perspective, it could be argued that parts of my analysis resemble a frame analysis. However, frame analysis does not feature as a prominent theoretical framework because I do not feel it has the depth, rigour or clarity of CDA, which is explicit in its goal to analyse and critique the reproduction of power inequalities within society. Indeed, Scheufele, for example, has argued that “Research on framing is characterized by theoretical and empirical vagueness” (1999: 103), although such criticism is countered by Deacon et al., who acknowledge that “framing analysis may... be less developed in terms of the clear methodological steps it provides the media analyst”, but suggest that “when used in combination with other analytical

methods, it does possess considerable value” (2007: 165).

A third theoretical framework that could be applied to a study of online CSA is risk society (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Lupton, 1999). The notion of risk is recurrent throughout this dissertation, but theory derived from the field of risk society is used only fleetingly. While Beck’s risk society thesis is focussed principally on environmental issues, some of the broader ideas around manufactured uncertainties can be applied to online CSA and Beck’s work has been drawn upon in parts of the EU Kids Online project (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009a). On reflection, it may have been beneficial to supplement my use of childhood theory with a risk analysis – as do Jackson and Scott (1999) – and this represents another potential improvement to this study.

Bringing together some of these paradigms, it has been suggested that moral panic models can be connected to risk society and discourse analysis (Critcher, 2003; Thompson, 1998). Indeed, of risk society and discourse analysis, Critcher claims: “Separately, they impinge on moral panic analysis. Together, they could move it to a new level” (Critcher, 2008b: 1139). Thus, while they have not been heavily drawn upon in this thesis, online CSA could provide a case study through which risk society, discourse analysis and moral panic could be combined to test this claim.

Concluding remarks

An ever-increasing amount of our lives is taking place online. It is therefore inconceivable that fears about internet predators should be used to deny children the right to explore and enjoy this important part of their social environment with freedom and privacy.

While there is evidence that the internet has facilitated instances of CSA, such cases are relatively rare and it is unhelpful (and untrue) to suggest that cyberspace is riddled with wily sexual predators ready and waiting to pounce on unsuspecting victims. For children to get maximum use of the vast array of opportunities afforded by the internet, we therefore need to focus our attention on responses that empower the majority while addressing the minority who experience harm. For this to happen, citizens need to be properly informed about the scope, scale and nature of online CSA

as a social problem. The news media has an important role to play in this.

This thesis has demonstrated that the press has provided a platform for powerful claims-makers to frame online CSA through problematic discourses pertaining to paedophiles, childhood, family and the home. Such discourses are entirely unhelpful and create misconceptions about CSA and the people who perpetrate it. Only when we succeed in cultivating a culture that recognises and accepts the unpopular realities will we be in a position to tackle the sexual abuse of children – both online and offline.

References

- Adler, A. (2010) 'To Catch a Predator'. Paper presented at the *Judith Butler Symposium*, Columbia Law School, 5 March 2010.
- Allan, G. (1989) 'Insiders and Outsiders: Boundaries around the Home' in G. Allan and G. Crow (eds) *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, pp. 141-158.
- Allan, G. and Crow, G. (1989) 'Introduction' in G. Allan and G. Crow (eds) *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere*. Palgrave: Basingstoke and New York, pp. 1-13.
- Altheide, D. L. (2002) 'Children and the Discourse of Fear', *Symbolic Interaction*, 25 (2), pp. 229-250.
- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anon (1998) 'Editorial: The social construction of childhood - and its limits', *Childhood*, 5 (2), pp. 131-132.
- Anon. (1982) *Report of Metro Toronto's Special Committee on Child Abuse* Toronto: Office of the Queen's Printer.
- APR (2007) *State of the News Print Media: A Supplement to the 2006 Report*. Sydney: Australian Press Council.
- Archard, D. (1993) *Children's Rights and Childhood*. London: Routledge.
- Ariès, P. (1960) *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Paris: Plon.
- Ashenden, S. (2002) 'Policing Perversion: The Contemporary Governance of Paedophilia', *Cultural Values*, 6 (1-2), pp. 197-222.
- Atmore, C. (1996) 'Cross-Cultural Media-tions: Media Coverage of Two Child Sexual Abuse Controversies in New Zealand/Aotearoa', *Child Abuse Review*, 5, pp. 334-345.
- Atmore, C. (1998) 'Towards 2000: Child sexual abuse and the media' in A. Howe (ed) *Sexed Crime in the News*. Sydney: The Federation Press, pp. 124-144.
- Auclair, E. (2001) 'Paedophilia: the work of associations and the role of the media and research' in C.A. Arnaldo (ed) *Child Abuse on the Internet: Ending the Silence*. Paris: UNESCO, pp. 51-56.
- Australian Broadcasting Authority and NetAlert Ltd (2005) *kidsonline@home: Internet Use in Australian Homes*. Sydney: ABA.
- Australian Government (2010) *NetAlert: Protecting Australian Families Online*.

Sydney: Australian Government.

Badgley, R. (1984) *Report of the Committee on Sexual Offences against Children and Youths*. Ottawa: Government Publications.

Barrett, M. and Coward, R. (1985) 'Don't Talk To Strangers', *New Socialist*, November 1985, pp. 21-23.

Bazeley, P. (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*. London: Sage.

BBC (1999). *Tunbridge Wells: The spiritual home of Middle England* [Online]. <Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1999/02/99/e-cyclopedia/318036.stm> [Accessed: 15 August 2012]

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Bell, A. (1991) *The Language of News Media*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bell, A. (2000) 'The discourse structure of news stories' in A. Bell and P. Garrett (eds) *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 64-104.

Bell, V. (2002) 'The vigilant(e) parent and the paedophile: ' *Feminist Theory*, 3, pp. 83-102.

Berger, A. A. (1992) 'Texts in contexts: Analyzing media and popular culture from a cross-cultural perspective' in F. Korzenny, S. Ting-Toomey and E. Schiff (eds) *Mass Media Effects Across Cultures*. Newsbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 11-23.

Berger, A. A. (2000) *Media and Communication Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Berkeley Media Studies Group (2011) 'Case by Case: News coverage of child sexual abuse, 2007–2009', *Issue*, May 2011 (19).

Billig, M. (2003) 'Critical discourse analysis and the rhetoric of critique' in G. Weiss and R. Wodak (eds) *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 35-46.

Bingham, N., Valentine, G. and Holloway, S. L. (1999) 'Where do you want to go tomorrow? Connecting children and the Internet', *Environment and planning D: Society and space*, 17, pp. 655-672.

Bishop, H. and Jaworski, A. (2003) '“We beat’em’: nationalism and the hegemony of homogeneity in the British press reportage of Germany versus England during Euro 2000', *Discourse & Society*, 14 (3), p. 243.

Blommaert, J. (1999) 'The debate is open' in J. Blommaert (ed) *Language Ideological Debates*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 1-38.

Buckingham, D. (2006) 'Children and New Media' in L.A. Lievrouw and S. Livingstone (eds) *The Handbook of New Media: Updated Student Edition*. London:

Sage, pp. 75-91.

Burman, E. (2003) 'Childhood, sexual abuse and contemporary political subjectivities' in P. Reavey and S. Warner (eds) *New Feminist Stories of Child Sexual Abuse: Sexual Scripts and Dangerous Dialogues*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 34-52.

BurrellesLuce (2008). *2008: Top Newspapers, Blogs & Consumer Magazines* [Online]. <Available at: http://www.burrellesluce.com/top100/2008_Top_100List.pdf> [Accessed: 7 December 2008]

Byron, T. (2008) *Safer Children in a Digital World: The Report of the Byron Review*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.

Byron, T. (2009) 'EU Kids Online conclusions and policy recommendations'. Paper presented at the *EU Kids Online Conference*, New Academic Building, London School of Economics, 11 June 2009.

Cameron, D. ed. (1998) *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader (2nd edition)*. London and New York: Routledge.

Carabine, J. (2001) 'Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis' in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 267-310.

CEMCA (2000) *Manual for Educational Media Researchers: Knowing your Audience*. Vancouver: Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia.

Chapman, T. and Hockey, J. (1999) 'Preface' in T. Chapman and J. Hockey (eds) *Ideal Homes? Social Change and Domestic Life*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. xi-xii.

Children's Aid Society Toronto (1994) *Metropolitan Service Plan*. Children's Aid Society, Toronto Archives, series 531, file 267, Minutes, Board of Directors 1993. Toronto: Children's Aid Society.

CNA (2008). *The Scoop on Daily Newspapers in Canada* [Online]. <Available at: http://www.cna-acj.ca/en/system/files/The_Scoop_on_Canadian_Daily_Newspapers_WEB.pdf> [Accessed: 17 December 2008]

Cohen, S. (1973) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. St Albans: Paladin.

Collier, I. (2001) 'Dangerousness, Popular Knowledge and the Criminal Law: A Case Study of the Paedophile as Socio-Cultural Phenomenon' in P. Alldridge and C. Brants (eds) *Personal Autonomy, the Private Sphere and the Criminal Law: A Comparative Study*. Oxford and Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing, pp. 223-245.

Common Sense Media (2012). *Social Media, Social Life: How Teens View Their Digital Lives* [Online]. <Available at: <http://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/socialmediasociallife->

[final-061812.pdf](#)> [Accessed:

Critcher, C. (2002) 'Media, Government and Moral Panic: the politics of paedophilia in Britain 2000-1', *Journalism Studies*, 3 (4), pp. 521-535.

Critcher, C. (2003) *Moral Panics and the Media*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Critcher, C. (2008a) 'Making Waves: Historical Aspects of Public Debates about Children and Mass Media' in K. Drotner and S. Livingstone (eds) *The International Handbook of Children, Media and Culture*. London: Sage, pp. 91-104.

Critcher, C. (2008b) 'Moral Panic Analysis: Past, Present and Future', *Sociology Compass*, 2 (4), pp. 1127-1144.

Cunningham, H. (2006) *The Invention of Childhood*. London: BBC Books.

Davidson, J. and Martellozzo, E. (2004) 'Educating Children About Sexual Abuse & Evaluating The Metropolitan Police Safer Surfing Programme', *Educating Children About Sexual Abuse & Evaluating The Metropolitan Police Safer Surfing Programme*, pp. 1-46.

Davidson, J. and Martellozzo, E. (2005) 'Policing The Internet And Protecting Children From Sex Offenders Online: When Strangers Become "Virtual Friends"', *Cybersafety Conference, University of Oxford, 8-10 September 2005*, pp. 1-13.

Davidson, J. and Martellozzo, E. (2009) 'Internet Sex Offenders: Individual Autonomy, "Folk Devils" and State Control' in S.D. Sclater, F. Ebtehaj, E. Jackson and M. Richards (eds) *Regulating Autonomy: Sex, Reproduction and Family*. Portland, OR.: Hart Publishing Ltd, pp. 129-145.

Davidson, J., Martellozzo, E. and Lorenz, M. (2009) *Evaluation of CEOP ThinkUKnow Internet Safety Programme and Exploration of Young People's Internet Safety Knowledge*. London: Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies, Kingston University.

Davis, H. and Bourhill, M. (1997) "'Crisis': The Demonization of Children and Young People' in P. Scraton (ed) *'Childhood' in 'Crisis'?* London: UCL Press Limited, pp. 28-57.

Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (1999) *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. London: Arnold.

Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (2007) *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis (Second Edition)*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Dean, S. (2007) *Sexual Predators: How to Recognise Them on the Internet and on the Street. How to Keep your Kids Away*. Aberdeen, WA.: Silver Lake.

- Denzin, N. (1982) 'The work of little children' in C. Jenks (ed) *The Sociology of Childhood*. London: Batsford, pp. 189-194.
- Drotner, K. (1999) 'Dangerous Media?: Panic Discourses and Dilemmas of Modernity', *Paedagogica Historica*, 35 (3), pp. 593–619.
- Edelstein, A. S. (1982) *Comparative Communication Research*. Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage.
- Entman, R. (1993) 'Framing: towards clarification of a fractured paradigm', *Journal of Communication*, 41 (4), pp. 6-27.
- Environics (2001). *Young Canadian in a Wired World: The Students' View* [Online]. <Available at: http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/special_initiatives/survey_resources/students_survey/yiciww_students_view_2001.pdf> [Accessed: 9 February 2012]
- ESRC (2009). *Specification for Methods for Comparative Cross-National Research: An ESRC Initiative* [Online]. <Available at: http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Comparative_Crossnational_Research_Methods_Specification_tcm6-31888.pdf> [Accessed: 9 September 2009]
- European Commission (2008) 'Towards a safer use of the Internet for children in the EU – a parents' perspective: Analytical Report', *Towards a safer use of the Internet for children in the EU – a parents' perspective: Analytical Report*, pp. 1-65.
- Fairclough, N. (1985) 'Critical and descriptive goals in discourse analysis', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9, pp. 739-763.
- Fairclough, N. (1995a) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995b) *Media Discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Fairclough, N. (2001) 'The Discourse of New Labour: Critical Discourse Analysis' in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 229-266.
- Fairclough, N. (2003a) *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2003b) 'A reply to Henry Widdowson's "Discourse analysis: a critical view"' in B. Seidlhofer (ed) *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 145-152.
- Fairclough, N. and Wodak, R. (1997) 'Critical Discourse Analysis' in T.A. van Dijk (ed) *Discourse as Social Interaction (Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. Volume 2)*. London: Sage, pp. 258-284.

- Featherstone, B. and Lancaster, E. (1997) 'Contemplating the unthinkable: men who sexually abuse children', *Critical Social Policy*, 17 (4), pp. 51-71.
- Finkelhor, D. (1979) *Sexually Victimized Children*. New York: The Free Press.
- Finkelhor, D. (1984) *Child Abuse: New Theory and Research*. New York: Free Press.
- Finkelhor, D. (1986) *A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Finkelhor, D., Mitchell, K. J. and Wolak, J. (2000) *Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth*. Alexandria, VA: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.
- Fletcher, A. and Hussey, S. eds. (1999) *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Franklin, B. (2008a) 'The future of newspapers', *Journalism Studies*, 9 (5), pp. 630-641.
- Franklin, B. ed. (2008b) *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Frost, N. and Stein, M. (1989) *The Politics of Child Welfare: Inequality, Power and Change*. London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gill, T. (2007) *No Fear: Growing Up In A Risk Averse Society*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
- Goddard, C. (2005) 'Read all about it! The news about child abuse', *Child Abuse Review*, 5, pp. 301-309.
- Goddard, C. and Saunders, B. J. (2000) 'The Gender Neglect and Textual Abuse of Children in the Print Media', *Child Abuse Review*, 9, pp. 37-48.
- Good, R. S. (2007) *Exposed: The Harrowing Story of a Mother's Undercover Work with the FBI to Save Children from Internet Sex Predators*. Nashville, TN: Nelson Current.
- Goode, E. and Ben-Yehuda, N. (1994) *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gordon, L. (1988) 'The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse: Notes from American History', *Feminist Review*, 28 (Spring 1988), pp. 56-64.
- Green, H. and Hannon, C. (2007) *Their Space: Education for a digital generation*. London: Demos.

- Green, L. (2009) 'Child protection or online censorship?: Australian responses to Internet content regulation'. Paper presented at the *EU Kids Online: European research on cultural, contextual and risk issues for children and the internet*, New Academic Building, London School of Economics, 11 June 2009.
- Green, L., Brady, D., Ólafsson, K., Hartley, J. and Lumby, C. (2011) *Risks and safety for Australian children on the internet: Full findings from the AU Kids Online survey of 9-16 year olds and their parents*.
- Greer, C. (2002) *Sex Crime and the Media: Sex Offending and the Press in a Divided Society*. Cullompton: Willan.
- Greer, C. and Jewkes, Y. (2009) 'Extremes of Otherness: Media Images of Social Exclusion', *Social Justice*, 32 (1), pp. 20-31.
- Griffith, G. and Roth, L. (2007). *Briefing Paper No 10/07: Protecting Children From Online Sexual Predators* [Online]. <Available at: [http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/publications.nsf/0/3043e49ab3f4abf9ca2573530006f989/\\$FILE/Dealing_with_Online_PredatorsFINAL&INDEX.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/publications.nsf/0/3043e49ab3f4abf9ca2573530006f989/$FILE/Dealing_with_Online_PredatorsFINAL&INDEX.pdf)> [Accessed: 27 September 2011]
- Haddon, L. and Stald, G. (2009) 'A Comparative Analysis of European Press Coverage of Children and the Internet', *Journal of Children & Media*, 3 (4), pp. 379-393.
- Hall, S. (1973) 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse' in S. Hall (ed) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 128-138.
- Hall, S. (1992) 'The West and the Rest' in S. Hall and B. Gieben (eds) *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press/Open University, pp. 275-332.
- Hall, S. (1997a) 'The spectacle of the "other"' in S. Hall (ed) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage, pp. 223-290.
- Hall, S. (1997b) 'The Work of Representation' in S. Hall (ed) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage, pp. 13-74.
- Hansen, A., Cottle, S., Negrine, R. and Newbold, C. (1998) *Mass Communication Research Methods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Hansen, C. (2007) *To Catch a Predator: Protecting Your Kids from Online Enemies Already in Your Home*. New York: Dutton.
- Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2008) *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: Cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online*. London: EU Kids Online (Deliverable D3.2).
- Hebenton, B. and Thomas, T. (1996) 'Sexual Offenders in the Community:

Reflections on Problems of Law, Community and Risk Management in the U.S.A., England and Wales', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 24, pp. 427-443.

Hockey, J. (1999) 'Houses of Doom' in T. Chapman and J. Hockey (eds) *Ideal Homes?: Social Change and Domestic Life*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 147-160.

Iyengar, S. (1991) *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jackson, L. A. (2000a) *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*. London: Routledge.

Jackson, L. A. (2000b) "'Singing Birds as well as Soap Suds": The Salvation Army's Work with Sexually Abused Girls in Edwardian England', *Gender and History*, 12 (1), pp. 107-126.

Jackson, S. and Scott, S. (1999) 'Risky anxiety and the social construction of childhood' in D. Lupton (ed) *Risk and Sociocultural Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 86-107.

James, A. and Jenks, C. (1996) 'Public Perceptions of Childhood Criminality', *British Journal of Sociology*, 47 (2), pp. 315-331.

James, A., Jenks, C. and Prout, A. (1998) *Theorizing Childhood*. Oxford: Polity Press.

James, A. and Prout, A. eds. (1997a) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. London: Falmer Press.

James, A. and Prout, A. (1997b) 'Introduction' in A. James and A. Prout (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 1-6.

Jasinski, J. (2001) *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jeffreys, S. (1985) *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930*. London: Pandora.

Jenkins, P. (1992) *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Great Britain*. New York: Alpine de Gruyere.

Jenkins, P. (1998) *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Jenks, C. (2005) *Childhood – Second Edition*. Oxon: Routledge.

Jewkes, Y. (2010) 'Much ado about nothing? Representations and realities of online soliciting of children', *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 16 (1), pp. 5-18.

Kaatsch, P., Spix, C., Schulze-Rath, R., Schmiedel, S. and Blettner, M. (2008) 'Leukaemia in young children living in the vicinity of German nuclear power plants',

- International Journal of Cancer*, 122 (4), pp. 721-726.
- Kelly, L. (1988) 'What's in a Name?: Defining Child Sexual Abuse', *Feminist Review*, 28 (Spring 1988), pp. 65-73.
- Kelly, L. (1996) 'Weasel words: paedophiles and the cycle of abuse', *Trouble & Strife*, 33 (1996), pp. 44-49.
- Kelly, L., Regan, L. and Burton, S. (2000) 'Sexual exploitation: A new discovery or one part of the continuum of sexual abuse in childhood?' in C. Itzin (ed) *Home Truths About Child Sexual Abuse: Influencing Policy and Practice. A Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 70-102.
- Kieran, M. (1998) 'Objectivity, impartiality and good journalism' in M. Kieran (ed) *Media Ethics*. London: Routledge, pp. 23-36.
- Kitzinger, J. (1997) 'Who Are You Kidding? Children, Power and the Struggle Against Sexual Abuse' in A. James and A. Prout (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 165-189.
- Kitzinger, J. (1999a) 'Researching risk and the media', *Health, Risk & Society*, 1 (1), pp. 55-69.
- Kitzinger, J. (1999b) 'The ultimate neighbour from hell? Stranger danger and the media framing of paedophiles' in B. Franklin (ed) *Social Policy, the Media and Misrepresentation*. London: Routledge, pp. 207-221.
- Kitzinger, J. (2004) *Framing Abuse: Media Influence and Public Understanding of Sexual Violence Against Children*. London: Pluto Press.
- Kitzinger, J. (2008) 'The "paedophile-in-the-community" protests: press reporting and public responses' in G. Letherby, K. Williams, P. Birch and M. Cain (eds) *Sex As Crime?* Cullumpton: Willan.
- Kitzinger, J. and Skidmore, P. (1995) 'Playing safe: media coverage of child sexual abuse prevention strategies', *Child Abuse Review*, 4 (1), pp. 47-56.
- Klein, B. and Wardle, C. (2007) "'Predator" or Prey: Journalistic Surveillance on Dateline's To Catch a Predator Series'. Paper presented at the *CRESC Annual Conference: Re-Thinking Cultural Economy conference*, University of Manchester, 6 September 2007.
- Kohn, M. L. (1989) 'Introduction' in M.L. Kohn (ed) *Cross-National Research in Sociology*. Newbury Park, CA.: Sage, pp. 17-33.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Latour, B. (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Lazar, M. M. (2000) 'Gender, discourse and semiotics: the politics of parenthood representations', *Discourse & Society*, 11 (3), pp. 373-400.
- Lee, J. (2009) *Celebrity, Pedophilia, and Ideology in American Culture*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.
- Livingstone, S. (2002) *Young People and New Media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment*. London: Sage.
- Livingstone, S. (2003a) 'Children's Use of the Internet: Reflections on the Emerging Research Agenda', *New Media & Society*, 5 (2), pp. 147-166.
- Livingstone, S. (2003b) 'On the Challenges of Cross-National Comparative Media Research', *European Journal of Communication*, 18 (4), pp. 477-500.
- Livingstone, S. (2006) *Opportunities and constraints framing children and young people's internet use*. London: LSE Research Online.
- Livingstone, S. (2007) 'Strategies of parental regulation in the media-rich home', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23 (2), pp. 920-941.
- Livingstone, S. (2008) 'Taking risky opportunities in youthful content creation: teenagers' use of social networking sites for intimacy, privacy and self-expression', *New Media & Society*, 10 (3), p. 393.
- Livingstone, S. (2009) *Children and the Internet*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Livingstone, S. and Bober, M. (2004) *UK Children Go Online: Surveying the experiences of young people and their parents*. London: LSE Research Online.
- Livingstone, S. and Bober, M. (2005) *UK Children Go Online: Final report of key project findings*. London: London School of Economics and Political Sciences.
- Livingstone, S., Bober, M. and Helsper, E. (2004) *Active participation or just more information? Young people's take-up of opportunities to act and interact on the Internet [online]*. London: LSE Research.
- Livingstone, S., Bober, M. and Helsper, E. (2005) *Internet literacy among children and young people: Findings from the UK Children Go Online project*. London: LSE Research Online.
- Livingstone, S., Gorzig, A. and Olafsson, K. (2011a) *Disadvantaged children and online risk*. EU Kids Online.
- Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2008) 'Conclusion' in S. Livingstone and L. Haddon (eds) *Kids Online: Opportunities and Risks for Children*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 241-252.
- Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2009a) 'Introduction' in S. Livingstone and L.

- Haddon (eds) *Kids Online: Opportunities and Risks For Children*. Bristol: Polity Press, pp. 1-15.
- Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. eds. (2009b) *Kids Online: Opportunities and Risks for Children*. Bristol: Polity Press.
- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011b) *Risks and safety for children on the internet: the UK report. Full findings from the EU Kids Online survey of UK 9-16 year olds and their parents*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011c) *EU Kids Online: Final Report*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011d) *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full Findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
- Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E. (2007a) 'Gradations in digital inclusion: children, young people and the digital divide', *New Media & Society*, 9 (4), p. 671.
- Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E. (2007b) 'Taking risks when communicating on the internet: The role of offline social-psychological factors in young people's vulnerability to online risks', *Information, Communication & Society*, 10 (5), pp. 619-644.
- Livingstone, S. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risky communication online*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
- Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Simões, J. A. (2008) *Best Practice Research Guide: How to research children and online technologies in comparative perspective*. London: EU Kids Online (Deliverable D4.2).
- Lumby, C., Green, L. and Hartley, J. (2009) *Untangling the Net: The Scope of Content Caught By Mandatory Internet Filtering*. (Unpublished).
- Lupton, D. (1999) *Risk*. London: Routledge.
- Madigan, R. and Munro, M. (1999) "'The more we are together": domestic space, gender and privacy' in T. Chapman and J. Hockey (eds) *Ideal Homes?: Social Change and Domestic Life*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 61-72.
- Marshall, M. N. (1996) 'Sampling for Qualitative Research', *Family Practice*, 13 (6), pp. 522-526.
- Mascheroni, G., Ponte, C., Garmendia, M., Garitaonandia, C. and Murru, M. (2010) 'Comparing media coverage of online risks for children in southern European countries: Italy, Portugal and Spain', *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 6 (1), pp. 25-43.
- Matthews, J. (2007) 'Creating a new(s) view of the environment: How children's news

- offers new insights into news form, imagined audiences and the production of environmental news stories', *Journalism*, 8 (4), pp. 428-448.
- Matthews, J. (2008) 'The imagined audience, news practices and the production of children's news', *Journalism Practice*, 2 (2), pp. 264-279.
- McCollam, D. (2011) 'The Shame Game', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 45 (5), pp. 28-33.
- McKee, A. (2003) *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. London: Sage.
- McLeod, M. and Saraga, E. (1988) 'Challenging the orthodoxy: towards a feminist theory and practice', *Feminist Review*, 28 (Spring 1988), pp. 16-55.
- McNair, B. (2008) 'I, Columnist' in B. Franklin (ed) *Pulling Newspapers Apart*. Routledge: Oxon, pp. 112-120.
- Mediapro (2007). *The Appropriation of Media by Youth* [Online]. <Available at: <http://www.mediapro.org/publications/finalreport.pdf>> [Accessed: 5 February 2012]
- Meyer, A. (2007) *The Child at Risk: Paedophiles, Media Responses and Public Opinion*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Miller, D., Kitzinger, J., Williams, K. and Beharrell, P. (1998) *The Circuit of Mass Communication*. London: Sage.
- Mitchell, K. J., Finkelhor, D. and Wolak, J. (2001) 'Risk Factors for and Impact of Online Sexual Solicitation of Youth', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285 (23), pp. 3011-3014.
- Moore, K., Mason, P. and Lewis, J. (2008). *Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008* [Online]. <Available at: http://www.channel4.com/news/media/pdfs/Cardiff_Final_Report.pdf> [Accessed: 4 June 2011]
- Morse, J. M. (2004) 'Purposive Sampling' in A.E. Bryman, T. Futing Liao and M.S. Lewis-Beck (eds) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods, Volume 1*. London: Sage, pp. 884-885.
- Nelson, B. J. (1986) *Making an Issue of Child Abuse: Political Agenda Setting for Social Problems*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- NetAlert (2007a) *Attitudes and behaviour of young people online: Research summary*. Australian Government.
- NetAlert (2007b) *A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety: How to Keep Young Internet Users Safe*. Melbourne: Australian Communications and Media Authority.
- NetAlert (2010) 'NetAlert: Protecting Australian Families Online', pp. 1-24.

- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002) *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. London: Sage.
- Niblock, S. (2008) 'Features' in B. Franklin (ed) *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 48-57.
- O'Connell, R., Price, J. and Barrow, C. (2004) *Emerging trends amongst Primary School Children's use of the Internet*. Preston: Cyberspace Research Unit.
- Perez-Pena, R. (2008) 'Newspaper Circulation Continues to Decline Rapidly', *New York Times*, 28 October 2008, p. 4.
- Peter, J., Valkenburg, P. M. and Schouten, A. P. (2009) 'Characteristics and Motives of Adolescents Talking with Strangers on the Internet', *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9 (5), pp. 526-530.
- Philo, G. (2007) 'Can discourse analysis successfully explain the content of media and journalistic practice?', *Journalism Studies*, 8 (2), pp. 175-196.
- Ponte, C., Bauwens, J. and Mascheroni, G. (2009) 'Children and the internet in the news: agency, voices and agendas' in S. Livingstone and L. Haddon (eds) *Kids Online: Opportunities and risks for children*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 159-172.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Pratt, J. (2009) 'From Abusive Families to Internet Predators?: The Rise, Retraction and Reconfiguration of Sexual Abuse as a Social Problem in Canada', *Current Sociology*, 57 (1), pp. 69-88.
- Prout, A. and James, A. (1997) 'A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems' in A. James and A. Prout (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Childhood*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 7-33.
- Quayle, E. (2010) 'Child pornography' in Y. Jewkes and M. Yar (eds) *Handbook of Internet Crime*. Cullompton: Willan, pp. 343-367.
- RCMP (2011). *National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre* [Online]. <Available at: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ncecc-cncc/index-accueil-eng.htm>> [Accessed: 19 September 2011]
- Richardson, J. (2004) *(Mis)Representing Islam: The Racism and Rhetoric of the British Broadsheet Press*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Richardson, J. (2007) *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richardson, J. (2008) 'Readers' Letters' in B. Franklin (ed) *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 56-66.
- Salkin, A. (2006) 'Web Site Hunts Pedophiles, and TV Goes Along', *The New York*

Times, 13 December 2006, p. 1.

Schegloff, E. A. (1997) 'Whose Text? Whose Context?', *Discourse & Society*, 8, pp. 165-187.

Scheufele, D. A. (1999) 'Framing as a Theory of Media Effects', *Journal of Communication*, 49 (1), pp. 103-122.

Scraton, P. ed. (1997a) '*Childhood*' in '*Crisis*'? London: UCL Press Limited.

Scraton, P. (1997b) 'Whose "Childhood"? What "Crisis"?' in P. Scraton (ed) '*Childhood in Crisis*'? London: UCL Press Limited, pp. 163-186.

Seidlhofer, B. ed. (2003) *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shade, L. R., Porter, M. and Sanchez, W. (2006) "'You can see anything on the Internet, you can do anything on the Internet!': Young Canadians Talk about the Internet', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 30 (4), pp. 503-526.

Shamgar-Handelman, L. (1994) 'To whom does childhood belong?' in J. Qvortrup (ed) *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. Aldershot: Avebury, pp. 249-266.

Sher, J. (2007) *One Child at a Time: Inside the Fight to Rescue Children from Online Predators*. London: Vision Paperbacks.

Sibley, D. (1995) 'Families and Domestic Routines: Constructing the Boundaries of Childhood' in S. Pile and N. Thrift (eds) *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. London: Routledge, pp. 114-127.

Silverman, J. and Wilson, D. (2002) *Innocence Betrayed: Paedophilia, the Media and Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Simpson, P. and Mayr, A. (2010) *Language and Power: A Resource Book for Students*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Smart, C. (1999) 'A History of Ambivalence and Conflict in the Discursive Construction of the "Child Victim" of Sexual Abuse', *Social & Legal Studies*, 8 (3), pp. 391-409.

Smart, C. (2000) 'Reconsidering the Recent History of Child Sexual Abuse, 1910-1960', *Journal of Social Policy*, 29 (1), pp. 55-71.

Smith, A. (2007) *Teens and Online Stranger Contact*. Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Smith, N. and Katz, C. (1993) 'Grounding metaphor: towards a spatialized politics' in M. Keith and S. Pile (eds) *Place and the Politics of Identity*. London: Routledge, pp. 66-81.

- Smith, S. (2005) *Children, Cinema and Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Soothill, K., Francis, B. J. and Ackerley, E. (1998) 'Paedophilia and paedophiles', *New Law Journal*, 148 (6844), pp. 882-892.
- Soothill, K. and Walby, S. (1991) *Sex Crime in the News*. London: Routledge.
- Stainton Rogers, R. and Stainton Rogers, W. (1992) *Stories of Childhood*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Steeves, V. (2005) *Young Canadian in a Wired World - Phase II: Trends and Recommendations*. Ottawa: Media Awareness Network.
- Sullivan, M. (2002) *Safety Monitor: How to Protect your Kids Online*. Santa Monica, CA: Bonus Books.
- Sullivan, M. (2008) *Online Predators: A Parent's Guide for the Virtual Playground*. Longwood, FL: Xulon.
- Taylor, S. (2001) 'Locating and Conducting Discourse Analytical Research' in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 5-48.
- Thiel, S. M. (2005) "'IM me": Identity construction and gender negotiation in the world of adolescent girls and instant messaging' in S.R. Mazzarella (ed) *Girl wide web: Girls, the Internet and the negotiation of identity*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, pp. 179-202.
- Thompson, K. (1998) *Moral Panics*. London: Routledge.
- Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak, R. and Vetter, E. (2000) *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Tonkiss, F. (2004) 'Using focus groups' in C. Seale (ed) *Researching Society and Culture (Second Edition)*. London: Sage, pp. 193-206.
- Turow, J. (1999) *The Internet and the Family: The View from Parents and the Press*. Philadelphia, PA.: Anneberg Public Policy Center.
- Ungerer, F. (2000) *English Media Texts, Past and Present: Language and Textual Structure*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Urry, J. (1995) *Consuming Place*. London: Routledge.
- Valentine, G. (1996) 'Angels and devils: moral landscapes of childhood', *Environment and Planning D*, 14, pp. 581-599.
- van Dijk, T. (1993) 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', *Discourse and Society*,

4, pp. 249-285.

van Dijk, T. (2001) 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis' in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse, Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 300-317.

Venn, A. J., Lewis, S. A., Cooper, M., Hubbard, R. and Britton, J. (2001) 'Living Near a Main Road and the Risk of Wheezing Illness in Children', *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, 164 (12), pp. 2177-2180.

VGT (2006). *Virtual Global Taskforce: What We Do* [Online]. <Available at: http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/what_we_do.asp> [Accessed: 17 February 2011]

Vorderman, C. and Young, R. (1997) *Carol Vorderman's Guide to the Internet: The Internet for You and Your Family*. London: Prentice Hall.

W3C (1998). *The World Wide Web: A very short personal history* [Online]. <Available at: <http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/ShortHistory.html>> [Accessed: 22 September 2011]

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2002) 'Understanding the Conditions for Public Discourse: Four Rules for Selecting Letters to the Editor', *Journalism Studies*, 3 (1), pp. 69-81.

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2008) 'Op-ed pages' in B. Franklin (ed) *Pulling Newspapers Apart*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 67-74.

Wallis Consulting Group (2007) *A snapshot of the online behaviour and attitudes of children: Report on key findings*. Report commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

Walton, D. (2007) *Media Argumentation: Dialect, Persuasion, and Rhetoric*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Walton, D. N. (1989) *Informal Logic: A Handbook for Critical Argumentation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wardle, C. (2006) "'IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU'", *Journalism Studies*, 7 (4), pp. 515-533.

Weedon, C. (1997) *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wetherell, M. (2001a) 'Debates in Discourse Analysis' in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 380-399.

Wetherell, M. (2001b) 'Editor's Introduction' in M. Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 9-13.

Wetherell, M. (2001c) 'Themes in Discourse Research: The Case of Diana' in M.

- Wetherell, S. Taylor and S.J. Yates (eds) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 14-28.
- Widdowson, H. (1995) 'Discourse analysis: a critical view', *Language and Literature*, 16 (4), pp. 510-516.
- Widdowson, H. (1998) 'Review article: The Theory and Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis', *Applied Linguistics*, 19 (1), pp. 136-151.
- Widdowson, H. (2003) 'Reply to Fairclough: Discourse and interpretation: conjectures and refutations' in B. Seidlhofer (ed) *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 152-163.
- Winston, B. (1990) 'On Counting the Wrong Things' in M. Alvarado and J.O. Thompson (eds) *The Media Reader*. London: British Film Institute, pp. 50-64.
- Wodak, R. (2001) 'What is CDA about?: A summary of its history, important concepts and its developments' in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 1-13.
- Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (2009) 'Critical discourse analysis: history, agenda, theory and methodology (Second Edition)' in R. Wodak and M. Meyer (eds) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 1-33.
- Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D. and Mitchell, K. (2004) 'Internet-initiated Sex Crimes against Minors: Implications for Prevention Based on Findings from a National Study', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 35, pp. 424.e411-424.e420.
- Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D., Mitchell, K. J. and Ybarra, M. L. (2008) 'Online "Predators" and Their Victims: Myths, Realities, and Implications for Prevention and Treatment', *American Psychologist*, 63 (2), pp. 111-128.
- Wolak, J., Mitchell, K. and Finkelhor, D. (2003) *Internet Sex Crimes Against Minors: The Response of Law Enforcement*. Durham, NH: Crimes Against Children Research Center.
- Wolak, J., Mitchell, K. and Finkelhor, D. (2005). *National Juvenile Online Victimization Study: Methodology Report* [Online]. <Available at: <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/jvq/CV72.pdf>> [Accessed: 9 February 2012]
- Wolak, J., Mitchell, K. and Finkelhor, D. (2006) *Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later*. Alexandria, VA: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, pp. 1-96.
- Wong, J. P. (2006) 'Age of consent to sexual activity in Canada: Background to proposed new legislation on "age of protection"', *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 15 (3-4), pp. 163-169.
- Wykes, M. (1998) 'A Family Affair: The British press, sex and the Wests' in C. Carter, G. Branston and S. Allan (eds) *News, Gender and Power*. London: Routledge, pp.

233-247.

Zelizer, B. and Allan, S. (2010) *Keywords in News and Journalism Studies*.
Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Zgoba, K., Witt, P., Dalessandro, M. and Veysey, B. (2008). *Megan's Law: Assessing the Practical and Monetary Efficacy* [Online]. <Available at:
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=247350>> [Accessed: 9
October 2010]

Zickuhr, K. and Smith, A. (2012). *Digital differences* [Online]. <Available at:
http://pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2012/PIP_Digital_differences_041312.pdf> [Accessed: 16 October 2012]

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of news hooks

Category	Description
Grooming cases	Articles relating to the online solicitation of children ('grooming'). These were typically reports of arrests, police charges, court cases, children who had gone missing with adults they had met online, etc.
In-house investigations	Articles relating to instances of journalists conducting investigations into chatrooms or social networking websites, typically involving journalists posing as young children in order to demonstrate the speed and frequency with which they were engaged in sexualised conversations or 'groomed'.
Issue (scale, nature, etc.)	Articles outlining the scale and/or nature of the problem without necessarily relating to grooming cases, research findings, in-house investigations, etc.
Legal system	Articles relating to the suitability of each country's legal system for dealing with online CSA. These were typically reports of legislative change directly related to the issue (prospective or agreed), such as the introduction of a 'grooming' or 'luring' law, increases to the age of consent, changes to maximum sentences for convicted perpetrators, etc.
Other mass media	Articles relating to coverage of the issue in other forms of mass media, such as television programmes (e.g. <i>Dateline: To Catch A Predator</i> , <i>Frontline: Growing Up Online</i>) or films (e.g. <i>Hard Candy</i>).
Policing	Articles relating to the work of police authorities. These were typically reports on developments in policing

Category	Description
	strategies, profiles of the work of individual officers or units, the formation of new task forces (e.g. VGT) or difficulties faced in policing the internet.
Research	Articles relating to findings or recommendations from research or reports produced by academic groups, charities, etc.
Safety and education	Articles about action taken to improve safety and raise awareness about online risks to young people. This is perhaps the broadest category, encompassing the following: educational developments (e.g. distribution of new public health information); technological developments (e.g. 'virtual IDs'); safety advice (e.g. launch of safety adverts on MySpace); summits on internet safety; government initiatives (e.g. internet filters for families) and other safety measures (e.g. closure of Microsoft chatrooms).
Other	Articles that did not fit into any of the above categories. Examples included coverage of the vigilante 'sting' group Perverted Justice, general discussion of contemporary childhood and debate about paedophiles in the community.

Appendix B: Coding sheet

Article ID	<input type="text"/>	
Date of publication	<input type="text"/>	
County of origin		
<input type="checkbox"/> Australia	<input type="checkbox"/> Canada	
<input type="checkbox"/> UK	<input type="checkbox"/> USA	
Newspaper	<input type="text"/>	
Headline	<input type="text"/>	
Sub-headline	<input type="text"/>	
Genre		
<input type="checkbox"/> Column/opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Feature	<input type="checkbox"/> Leader
<input type="checkbox"/> Letters	<input type="checkbox"/> News	<input type="checkbox"/> TV/film review
News hook		
<input type="checkbox"/> Grooming case	<input type="checkbox"/> In-house investigation	<input type="checkbox"/> Issue (scale, nature, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal system	<input type="checkbox"/> Other mass media	<input type="checkbox"/> Policing
<input type="checkbox"/> Research	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety and education
<input type="checkbox"/> Other/Miscellaneous		


Appendix C: Overview of key events in Australia

Week	Key event(s)
<p>388 29 May- 4 June 2000</p>	<p>Week 388 was the earliest peak week identified in Australia. All seven of the articles came from the <i>Sunday Mail</i>, sister paper of the <i>Courier Mail</i>, which had published findings from an in-house investigation with the front-page splash, ‘Easy prey: How we allow net predators to target our kids at home’ (<i>Sunday Mail</i>, 4 June 2000). As part of its front-page story, the paper reported that the prime minister, Peter Beattie, had “said he was alarmed by the The Sunday Mail’s revelations” and quoted him saying, “It shows clearly how the innocent can be exploited by the unscrupulous” (‘Easy prey: How we allow net predators to target our kids at home’, <i>Sunday Mail</i>, 4 June 2000). Other headlines produced in this week included ‘Chat pal turns into a demon’ and ‘Monster’s in your child’s bedroom’ (<i>Sunday Mail</i>, 4 June 2000).</p>
<p>551 14-20 July 2003</p>	<p>Of the 9 articles found in week 551, 7 news hooks were coded as <i>Grooming case</i>. This was due to the case of Toby Studebaker, a 31-year-old former US marine, and Shevaun Pennington, a 12-year-old from England, who went missing together after forming a relationship through a chatroom. (Further details of the Studebaker case are provided in the UK table.) Among the headlines produced by this event were ‘Marine’s family urges him to return girl, 12’ (<i>Gold Coast Bulletin</i>, 16 July 2003) and ‘Missing web girl phones home’ (<i>Australian</i>, 17 July 2003). The Perth-based <i>Sunday Times</i> also referred to the Studebaker case when reporting that legislation to protect children from such abuse was being considered by the attorney-general for Western Australia (‘Purge on chatroom predators’, 20 July 2003).</p>
<p>561 22-28 September 2003</p>	<p>Of the 16 articles found in week 561, 11 were coded as having a <i>Safety</i> news hook. This was largely due to reports of Microsoft’s intention to close its NineMSN chatrooms, an event which led to</p>

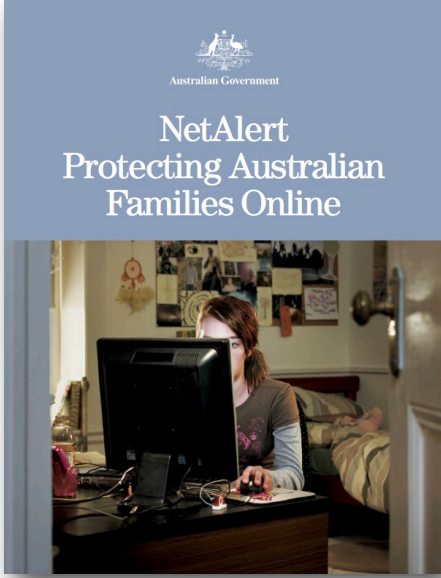
Week	Key event(s)
	<p>headlines such as ‘Pedophile fears cause chatrooms to close’ (<i>Courier Mail</i>, 25 September 2003), ‘Deviants force computer giant to act’ (<i>Herald Sun</i>, 25 September 2003), ‘Abuse kills an internet liberty’ (<i>West Australian</i>, 25 September 2005) and ‘Microsoft praised and damned for closing chatrooms to protect children’ (<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>, 26 September 2003). Additionally, the <i>Sunday Tasmanian</i> conducted an undercover investigation into chatrooms under the headline ‘An out-of-line evil stalks our kids’ (28 September 2003). This feature warned: “These sites tend to be rife with pedophiles. [...] Unfortunately, just because a room is monitored doesn’t mean it is pedophile or pervert-free”.</p>
<p>581 9-15 February 2004</p>	<p>Of the 15 articles found in week 581, 12 were coded as having a <i>Grooming case</i> news hook. Prominent in this week was the case of Matthew Kennings, a 26-year-old man who was caught attempting to procure sex from an undercover police officer posing as a 13-year-old girl and became the first person to be jailed under new Queensland laws that permitted police to perform undercover ‘stings’. Sentencing him, the judge stated: “Children’s naivety and innocence can lead to them being very vulnerable to such sexual predators” (‘Net paedophile jailed’, <i>Townsville Bulletin/Townsville Sun</i>, 14 February 2004). This case resulted in headlines such as ‘Prison for pedophile’ (<i>Cairns Post/Cairns Sun</i>, 14 February 2004), ‘Man jailed for Net child sex’ (<i>Courier Mail</i>, 14 February 2004) and ‘Net paedophile jailed’ (<i>Townsville Bulletin/Townsville Sun</i>, 14 February 2004). An article in the <i>Courier Mail</i> described the “landmark jailing” of Kennings and noted that “parents did not appreciate how quickly an Internet predator could strike (‘Parents warned of Net hunting ground’, <i>Courier Mail</i>, 14 February 2004)”. It offered parents advice on “How to protect your child from sexual predators on the internet”, which included tips such as “Randomly check your child’s email account”. In addition to the Kennings case, there were also reports of Toby Studebaker (the most prominent</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	case in the UK press in weeks 551 and 581) and the arrests of some Queensland-based men involved in an international paedophile network .
<p>585 8-14 March 2004</p> <p>586 15-21 March 2004</p>	<p>Weeks 585 and 586 are best considered jointly because all of the articles they encompass cover the same topic and appeared on two successive days which happened to be split between the final day of one week and the first of the next. These weeks contained 8 and 7 articles respectively, all of which were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. Coverage in this week focussed on the release of draft legislation that proposed to impose sentences of up to 15 years for child ‘grooming’ or the distribution of child pornography over the internet. According to the <i>Australian</i>, “Australia presently has no uniform national laws dealing with internet crimes against children” (‘New laws mean jail for luring children on web’, 15 March 2004). The same article reported that Christopher Ellison, the justice and customs minister who had announced the proposals, had “said the draft laws were unusually tough, and demonstrated how serious the Government was about stopping pedophiles before they meet children”. This event produced headlines such as ‘New laws for Net predators’ (<i>Illawarra Mercury</i>, 15 March 2004), ‘Jail for Internet child sex’ (<i>Sunday Herald Sun</i>, 14 March 2004), ‘Crackdown on paedophiles’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 15 March 2004) and ‘New laws mean jail for luring children on web’ (<i>Australian</i>, 15 March 2004).</p>
<p>611 6-12 September 2004</p>	<p>Of the 11 articles found in week 611, all but one were coded as having <i>Safety</i> news hooks. This week was dominated by election coverage as Prime Minister John Howard pledged to spend \$30.4 on a programme designed to tackle internet sex crimes against children in what <i>The Age</i> described as “the Coalition's first policy initiative of the election campaign” (‘Howard in \$30m blitz on child sex’, 6 September 2004). This news made the front pages of <i>The Age</i> and the <i>Canberra Times</i>. Howard described the initiative as “further practical assistance to the Australian Federal Police to further</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>challenge and pursue the evil activity of those in our community who would commit, in a sense, the ultimate crime against our society of despoiling and depraving our children” (“Squad to hit online pedophile networks’, <i>The Australian</i>, 6 September 2004). The <i>Canberra Times</i> stated that it was designed “to protect Australian children and families from paedophiles” (“Hey dads, it's time to be family-friendly’, 6 September 2004). Also of note is the element of tabloid rhetoric that entered Howard’s announcement in statements such as “Authorities tell us that... perverts are... using the internet to groom or procure children for their depraved ends” (“Howard in \$30m blitz on child sex’, <i>The Age</i>, 6 September 2004). This event also hints at the political capital of policies associated with children, families and CSA. The <i>West Australian</i>, for example, reported that “Mr Howard chose Father's Day to make the announcement and said protecting Australia's children should be the nation’s top priority. [...] He said studies had shown that almost half of parents felt the internet was a danger to their children” (“\$30m to catch online paedophiles’, <i>West Australian</i>, 6 September 2004). The announcement of this initiative produced other headlines such as ‘Strike force to hunt child predators’ (<i>Advertiser</i>, 6 September 2004) and ‘Cyber predators in sights’ (<i>Courier Mail</i>, 6 September 2004). Also reported this week, and coded as <i>Safety</i>, was the launch of an educational campaign by Queensland police, part of which was the distribution to every police station of a booklet titled <i>Who’s chatting to your kids? A must read for parents with internet access</i>.</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	
<p>708 17-23 July 2006</p>	<p>Of the 13 articles found in week 708, nine were coded as having a <i>Grooming case</i> news hook. The most prominent case was that of 55-year-old Richard Meehan. In the first conviction under anti-grooming laws in Victoria, Meehan, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for attempting to procure a 15-year-old girl for sex through emails and text messages. This resulted in headlines such as 'Landmark sex case man jailed' (<i>Geelong Advertiser</i>, 22 July 2006), 'Predator jailed for sex texts: New law used for first time' (<i>Herald Sun</i>, 22 July 2006) and 'Sex predator' (<i>Newcastle Herald</i>, 22 July 2006). Also in the news was the case of Terence Briscoe, who was caught trying to 'groom' an undercover police officer, and details of a new television and radio advertising campaign from NetAlert, the Australian federal government's internet safety advisory body. In one report of the NetAlert campaign, Barbara Biggs, a CSA campaigner, argued: "Few parents would leave their children alone in a house with all the windows and doors open. But this is what we do when we leave our kids on the internet without protection or monitoring" ('Net stranger danger alert', <i>Courier Mail</i>, 21 June 2006). A Perth headmaster quoted in the same article adopted similar rhetoric when constructing the internet as a threat to the home: "Young users become prey for those who know how to spy upon</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	them because the internet is inherently an electronic conduit into our homes”.
<p>757 25 June-1 July 2007</p>	<p>Of the 18 articles found in week 757, 16 were coded as having a <i>Grooming case</i> news hook. The most prominent case was that of David Budd, a 28-year-old US navy serviceman who was caught trying to procure sex from an Australian police officer posing as a 14-year-old girl. This resulted in headlines such as ‘US sailor “sought sex” with girl, 14’ (<i>The Australian</i>, 25 June 2007), ‘Child sex sting nets US sailor’ (<i>Hobart Mercury</i>, 25 June 2007) and ‘Court told net child sex accused has family - Navy man given bail’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 27 June 2007). There was also news of a police sting designed to catch adults using Skype to procure under-aged children for sex, an event that resulted in headlines such as ‘Net closes on predators with “virtual girl” trap’ (<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>, 26 June 2007) and ‘Online sting entraps more Skype sex predators’ (<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>, 29 June 2007).</p>
<p>763 6-12 August 2007</p>	<p>With 20 articles, week 763 contained the most articles of any in Australia. Of these 20 articles, 14 were coded as having <i>Safety</i> news hooks. This was largely due to the Australian government’s launch of a new \$189m internet safety programme, <i>NetAlert: Protecting Australian Families Online</i>, part of which allocated \$43.5m to the expansion of a specialist online child sex exploitation team. This resulted in headlines such as ‘Police funds to target child sex predators’ (<i>Geelong Advertiser</i>, 11 August 2007), ‘\$43m for AFP online child protection force’ (<i>Canberra Times</i>, 11 August 2007), ‘Howard pitch for family vote with internet filter’ (<i>The Age</i>, 10 August 2007) and ‘\$189m to clean up internet content in homes’ (<i>Gold Coast Bulletin</i>, 10 August 2007).</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	 <p>The image shows a promotional graphic for 'NetAlert'. At the top, it features the Australian Government crest and the text 'Australian Government'. Below this, the title 'NetAlert' is prominently displayed, followed by the subtitle 'Protecting Australian Families Online'. The bottom portion of the graphic is a photograph of a young girl sitting at a desk in a bedroom, looking at a computer monitor.</p>
<p>873 14-20 September 2009</p>	<p>Of the 7 articles found in week 873, 5 of the news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. This was due to new legislation that targeted sex tourism and online grooming. According to the <i>Courier Mail</i>, “Grooming an overseas child for sex will be outlawed for the first time, and a new class of internet child sex offences will also be declared” (‘Sex tourist law review’, <i>Courier Mail</i>, 14 September 2009). This event produced headlines such as ‘Overhaul of child sex laws’ (<i>Advertiser</i>, 14 September 2009), ‘Child sex offenders face tougher laws’ (<i>Hobart Mercury</i>, 14 September 2009) and ‘Child-sex laws improved’ (<i>Herald Sun</i>, 15 September 2009).</p>

Appendix D: Overview of key events in Canada

Week	Key event(s)
<p>429 12-18 March 2001</p>	<p>The earliest peak week in Canada occurred in March 2001. Of the 16 articles found in this week, 15 news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. This week was dominated by news and discussion of new, wide-ranging legislation, proposed by the justice minister, Anne McLellan, which included the outlawing of using the internet to groom child for sexual purposes. This event produced headlines such as ‘New child sex bill introduced’ (<i>Globe and Mail</i>, 13 March 2001), ‘Bill targets child porn, Net stalkers’ (<i>Gazette</i>, 15 March 2001) and ‘Justice bill zeroes in on cyber pervs’ (<i>Toronto Sun</i>, 15 March 2001). As the report in <i>Globe and Mail</i> began, “The Liberals plan to make it harder for sex predators to lure children on the Internet, while handing authorities the power to prosecute on-line sex crimes” (‘Liberals target on-line sex offences’, 15 March 2001). The legislation was described in the <i>Edmonton Sun</i> as “a justice package that would pull the plug on cyber-predators who use the Internet to lure children for sex” (‘McLellan introduces bill to deal with internet porn’, 15 March 2001). Outlining the proposed changes, McLellan said: “We believe that this package is about the protection of society, particularly those parts that deal with sexual exploitation of children - protection of the most vulnerable members of society” (‘Child porn viewers on net may be charged’, <i>Toronto Star</i>, 15 March 2001). A leader in the <i>Gazette</i> was, however, critical, arguing: “Too many of the new provisions seem more designed to score political points than to help in law enforcement. The new Criminal Code offence targeting those who use the Internet to lure and exploit children for sexual purposes is one example. It is already illegal to lure and exploit children for sexual</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>purposes. The old-fashioned way of offering candies, money or attention is just as worthy of criminal prosecution as the use of the Internet. The motive of sexual abuse of a child is the same in both cases” (‘Too much for one bill’, 16 March 2001).</p>
<p>616 11-17 October 2004</p>	<p>Of the 15 articles found in week 616, 13 news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. This was largely due proposals by the justice minister, Irwin Cotler, to store DNA records of a wider range of convicted criminals on an existing national database – including adults found to have sexually exploited children through the internet. This event produced headlines such as ‘Online predators of children may be added to DNA bank’ (<i>National Post</i>, 16 October 2004), ‘Perverts face DNA order’ (<i>Edmonton Sun</i>, 16 October 2004), ‘Feds beef up sex crime law’ (<i>Calgary Herald</i>, 16 October 2004) and ‘DNA-bank law targets pimps, Web predators, extortionists’ (<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>, 16 October 2004).</p>
<p>622 22-28 November 2004</p>	<p>Week 622 contained the most articles of any found in the Canadian press. Of the 31 articles found, 28 news hooks were coded as <i>Grooming case</i>. This week was dominated by the case of Sergio Arana-Martinez, a Nicaraguan man who became the first person prosecuted for using a computer to facilitate sexual interference with a person under the age of 14, an offence introduced in 2002, after luring an 11-year-old girl over the internet and keeping her captive for 15 hours. As well as being a landmark case, Martinez’s sentence caused controversy because he was not forced to serve any further jail time due to having spent 21 months in custody prior to his trial. This event produced headlines such as ‘First Internet luring sentence assailed’ (<i>Globe and Mail</i>, 25 November 2004), ‘Predator term ripped: Chief irate over 3-year sentence for luring girl’ (<i>Toronto Sun</i>, 25 November 2004), ‘Nicaraguan pedophile to stay in jail’ (<i>Vancouver Sun</i>, 27 November 2004) and ‘A child</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>pays the price' (<i>Toronto Sun</i>, 27 November 2004). The <i>Toronto Sun</i> was critical of the "laughable sentence" ("They took law into their own hands', <i>Toronto Sun</i>, 2004) and Julian Fantino, chief of the Toronto Police Service, asserted: "The system failed this young girl. It failed all of us" ('Internet luring sentence sparks outcry', <i>London Free Press</i>, 25 November 2004). The Crown prosecutor asserted: "He's the manifestation of evil that this legislation proposed to stop" ('Internet luring sentence sparks outcry', <i>London Free Press</i>, 25 November 2004). In a leader column, the <i>Globe and Mail</i> argued that the trial judge "appears not to have understood the vulnerability of children in the electronic age" ('Lured and assaulted', <i>Globe and Mail</i>, 26 November 2004). Coverage of this case continued into the following week, also a peak week, when 18 of the 19 articles were also coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>.</p>
<p>685 6-12 February 2006</p>	<p>Of the 17 articles found in week 685, 15 news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. This week was dominated by debate around government proposals, led by the justice minister, Vic Toews, to increase the age of consent from 14 to 16. This event produced headlines such as 'Age of consent is out of date: It's not 1892 anymore and teenagers need added protection from sexual predators' (<i>Times Colonist</i>, 9 February 2006), 'Tories plan to raise age of consent: Bill will take aim at sexual predators' (<i>National Post</i>, 8 February 2006), 'Protection for kids' (<i>Leader-Post</i>, 11 February 2006) and 'Traditional views or not, new minister good for kids' (<i>Vancouver Sun</i>, 10 February 2006). The perceived threat of internet predators was key to newspaper coverage of this prospective legislative change. One leader asserted: "Given the number of predators who use the Internet to prey on young people, the current age of 14 is clearly too low for consent to be given" ('The Tories should move quickly to raise age of consent', <i>Vancouver</i></p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p><i>Province</i>, 9 February 2006). A line replicated across a news story carried by the Post Media Network titles reported: “The age of consent law has been in place since 1892 and the Conservatives have lobbied for years for it to be raised, particularly in light of <i>all-too-common luring of young people via the Internet</i>” (‘Tories will raise age of consent’, <i>Calgary Herald</i>, 8 February 2006). Also quoted was Roz Prober, of child advocacy group Beyond Borders, who stated: “We have been working on that for so long and so hard, it is just about a <i>no-brainer in the Internet era</i>” (‘Tories set to raise age of consent’, <i>Edmonton Journal</i>, 8 February 2006).</p>
<p>692 27 March-2 April 2006</p>	<p>Of the 20 articles found in week 692, 13 news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. This was largely due to high-profile debate about whether or not an adult could be convicted for ‘talking dirty’ to a child over the internet. This followed the case of Craig Legare, who had recently been acquitted in what the <i>Edmonton Journal</i>’s front page story called a “precedent-setting decision” after a judge found that despite having held sexually explicit online conversations with a 12-year-old girl, Legare had not made any attempt to meet her (‘Talking dirty to child is no crime’, <i>Edmonton Journal</i>, 1 April 2006). The same article stated that the ruling was “the first in the country to clarify a murky Internet luring law passed in 2002”. This story attracted headlines such as ‘Internet sex chat with kids ruled legal’ (<i>Calgary Herald</i>, 1 April 2006), ‘Online sex chats with children not considered luring, judge rules’ (<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>, 1 April 2006) and ‘Court puts limits on Internet luring law’ (<i>Times Colonist</i>, 1 April 2006). Three years later, in December 2009, the verdict in the Legare case was overturned, resulting in a retrial and another peak in coverage, in week 884. This resulted in further headlines such as ‘Supreme Court ruling likely to “close the cyberspace door” on web predators’</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>(<i>National Post</i>, 4 December 2009), ‘New trial ordered in luring case: Cyberspace door is closing on predators’ (<i>Gazette</i>, 4 December 2009), ‘Top court cracks down on Internet predators; New trial for man over online chats with girl, 12’ (<i>Ottawa Citizen</i>, 4 December 2009), ‘Supreme Court tightens Internet luring rules: Decision says offenders need not meet intended victims to be convicted of luring children for sexual purposes’ (<i>Globe and Mail</i>, 4 December 2009) and ‘Online “grooming” of kids ruled a crime’, <i>Toronto Star</i>, 4 December 2009).</p>
<p>704 19-25 June 2006</p>	<p>Of the 26 articles found in week 704, 20 news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. Like week 685 four months earlier, week 704 was dominated by the proposed increase to the age of consent. Once again, fears about internet predators were central, producing headlines such as ‘Tories move to raise age of consent to 16: Bill takes aim at cyber predators’ (<i>Windsor Star</i>, 23 June 2006) and ‘Mom of lured girl welcomes new law’ (<i>Toronto Sun</i>, 23 June 2006). The <i>Vancouver Province</i> report began: “The Conservatives have moved to raise the age of sexual consent by two years to 16, saying kids need better protection from adult predators in an Internet era” (‘Age-of-consent bill just playing to right wing, says opposition’, 23 June 2006). In a news conference the justice minister, Vic Toews, stated: “We are committed to protecting our most vulnerable citizens. [...] More and more, ordinary Canadians are concerned about the growing problem of child sexual predators, especially in the Internet age. They have looked to this government to take whatever steps it can to address the issue” (‘Tories move to raise age of sexual consent’, <i>London Free Press</i>, 23 June 2006). This was welcomed in an opinion piece in the <i>Star Phoenix</i>, where it was stated: “The current law was established in the 19th century, long before it was envisioned that adults could be invading strangers’ homes through the use of the</p>


Week	Key event(s)
	<p>Internet” (‘Raising consent age in Canada highly overdue’, 20 June 2006). Elsewhere, a detective from the Toronto police child exploitation team suggested that the bill enabled authorities to catch a new ‘type’ of perpetrator: “There will be a new group of kids we will be looking after and a new group of pedophiles we will be charging” (‘How old is old enough?’, <i>Edmonton Sun</i>, 23 June 2006).</p>
<p>754 4-10 June 2007</p>	<p>Of the 25 articles found in week 754, 21 were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. The high volume of articles was largely due to the trial of Constable Seth Paine, a 32-year-old Vancouver Island RCMP officer charged with having sex with an underage girl he had met online. This case produced headlines such as ‘Mountie knew teen underage, trial told’ (<i>Edmonton Journal</i>, 6 June 2007), ‘Teen testifies about sex with “one hot cop for you”’ (<i>Vancouver Province</i>, 6 June 2007) and ‘Ex-Mountie not guilty of using Internet to lure teen’ (<i>Times Colonist</i>, 9 June 2007). This week also included two reports on the case of Shaun Bradford, a 41-year-old man who invited an undercover police officer posing as a 12-year-old girl to watch him masturbate via a webcam. Coverage of this case produced headlines such as ‘Conditional sentence given to man charged with luring’ (<i>Star Phoenix</i>, 9 June 2007) and ‘Regina man regrets inviting minor to watch sex acts over Web’ (<i>Leader-Post</i>, 9 June 2007).</p>
<p>765 20-26 August 2007</p>	<p>Of the 16 articles found in week 765, all but two were coded as grooming cases. Prominent this was the case of Joshua Innes, 25, who was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment after using various online personas to exploit underage girls. The judge called Innes crimes “unprecedented”, stating “These predators have an easy in, and are afforded a new and frightening gateway to children through the internet. [...] Children must be protected. This gateway must be shut down” (‘Internet sex</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>predator sentenced to nine years', <i>Calgary Herald</i>, 22 August 2007). As well as claiming Innes had targeted "hundreds and hundreds" of girls in a single year, Edmonton Police Det. Randy Wickins, of the Alberta Integrated Child Exploitation team, commented, "These crimes were often committed while the parents were in the home and the child was online[.] A kid should not have privacy on the Internet... because the risks are so high that they will meet someone like this" ('Internet sex predator sentenced to nine years', <i>Calgary Herald</i>, 22 August 2007).</p>
<p>808 16-22 June 2008</p>	<p>Of the 22 articles found in week 808, all but one were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. As in week 622, which centred around the trial of a man from Nicaragua, the case that dominated week 808 involved a man from outside Canada. In this instance, Vincent Duval, a 32-year-old Belgian, stood charged with sexually exploiting and abducting a 13-year-old girl he had met online. This event was largely covered through routine court reporting and produced headlines such as 'Man, 31, nabbed with girl, 13, had sent her many e-mails' (<i>Vancouver Sun</i>, 16 June 2008), 'Belgian charged with luring girl, 13' (<i>Globe and Mail</i>, 17 June 2008), 'Internet lurer pleads guilty to sex charges' (<i>Edmonton Journal</i>, 21 June 2008) and 'Internet predator pleads guilty to six sex charges' (<i>Windsor Star</i>, 21 June 2008). The Duval case was also largely responsible for the peak in week 813, when it produced further headlines such as 'Belgian will serve luring sentence in Canada' (<i>Calgary Herald</i>, 25 June 2008) and 'Internet predator sentenced to 20 months' (<i>Vancouver Sun</i>, 25 July 2008).</p>
<p>884 30 November- 6 December 2009</p>	<p>The final peak week found in Canada occurred in week 884. As noted in the overview of week 692, the peak in week 884 was dominated by the decision to overturn the ruling that had seen Craig Legare acquitted despite sending sexually explicit</p>


Week	Key event(s)
	<p>messages to an underage girl. The overturning of Legare’s acquittal was seen as a landmark ruling because it was “the court's first interpretation of Canada's seven-year-old law against Internet luring” (‘Court closes loophole in child luring law’, <i>Calgary Herald</i>, 4 December 2009). Justice Morris Fish asserted: "The offender need not meet or intend to meet the victim[.] This is in keeping with Parliament's objective to close the cyberspace door before the predator gets in to prey” (‘Court closes loophole in child luring law’, <i>Calgary Herald</i>, 4 December 2009). Rosalind Prober, the president of child advocacy group Beyond Borders “hail[ed] [it] as a groundbreaking decision” (‘Supreme Court tightens Internet luring rules’, <i>Globe and Mail</i>, 4 December 2009) and called it “globally precedent-setting” (‘Authorities hail ruling on luring’, <i>Edmonton Sun</i>, 4 December 2009), arguing that “[o]ther countries around the world have not gone this far in their grooming legislation. This certainly puts us at the forefront of international child rights law” (‘Supreme Court tightens Internet luring rules’, <i>Globe and Mail</i>, 4 December 2009). The co-founder of Breaking Borders, Mark Hecht, was also widely quoted endorsing the decision: “By recognizing that Internet luring can occur even where an adult has no intent to actually meet the child, the court has interpreted the offence so that it affords maximum protection for children” (‘Court closes loophole in child luring law’, <i>Calgary Herald</i>, 4 December 2009).</p>


Appendix E: Overview of key events in the UK


Week	Key event(s)
<p>409 23-29 October 2000</p>	<p>Week 409 was the earliest peak week found in the UK. It contained 20 articles, 12 of which were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. Central to this was the trial of Patrick Green, a 33-year-old man who was jailed for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl he had met in a chatroom. This event dominated the week's coverage, producing front page headlines such as 'Parents warned of internet chatroom dangers' (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 25 October 2000) and 'Predator' (<i>Daily Mirror</i>, 25 October 2000). Additionally, the <i>Daily Mirror</i> launched a "Protect our kids on the net" campaign, fronted by television personality – and the paper's resident internet expert – Carol Vorderman. The <i>Daily Mail</i> reported that Green's was "the first case of its kind in Britain, but the judge warned that youngsters throughout the country are at risk from such 'predators'" ('Parents warned of internet chatroom dangers' (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 25 October 2000). The same article also stated that "the case illustrates a worrying gap in UK law". A <i>Daily Mirror</i> leader stated that "while we will all applaud yesterday's historic conviction of Patrick Green, the case will send a shiver down the spine of every parent" ('Close the net on evil sex stalkers', 25 October 2000). The same newspaper's main coverage of the story contrasted "sweet, obedient, hard-working schoolgirl" victim and her "wealthy, articulate" parents with the "sly, manipulative and evil" Green ('Lucky she is alive', <i>Daily Mirror</i>, 25 October 2000), while Vorderman stated that the internet "has been an accelerator pedal for paedophiles" ('I went to a chatroom and said I was 13...', <i>Daily Mirror</i>, 26 October 2000).</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	
<p>517 18-24 November 2002</p>	<p>Of the 14 articles found in week 517, all but one of the news hooks were coded as <i>Legal system</i>. This was due to the presentation of a command paper by the home secretary, David Blunkett, titled ‘Protecting the Public’, which outlined proposed changes to laws around sex crimes, including online offences against children. Not all of the papers led on the proposed ‘grooming’ law – e.g. ‘Gays free to “cruise” as sex laws relaxed’ (<i>The Sun</i>, 20 November 2002) – but those that did contained headlines such as ‘Blunkett cracks down on internet paedophiles’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 20 November 2002), ‘Blunkett targets paedophiles who prowl the internet’ (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 20 November 2002) and ‘Let’s foil the paedophiles’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 20 November 2002).</p>
<p>545 2-8 June 2003</p>	<p>An important case in the UK was that of Michael Wheeler, a 36-year-old man found guilty of ‘grooming’ two girls in chatrooms and having sex with them when they turned 13. Coverage of this case first emerged in week 545, when a total of 10 articles were found, eight of which were coded as having a <i>Grooming case</i> news hook. The Wheeler case caused particular controversy because he was said to have exploited a legal loophole by waiting until his victims reached 13, the age at which the maximum sentence for unlawful intercourse decreased from life to two years. Consequently, he received a sentence of three years – 30 months for unlawful sex and six months for indecent assault. This case produced headlines such</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>as ‘Outrage: Just 3 years for chatroom sex attacker of girls, 13’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 7 June 2003), ‘Chatroom abuser ‘groomed’ girls, 13: NSPCC urges law change as paedophile jailed for 3 years’ (<i>Guardian</i>, 7 June 2003) and ‘Just 3 years: This pervert had sex with two young girls he groomed in internet chat rooms’ (<i>Daily Mirror</i> 7 June 2003). It also provoked leaders such as ‘Our raped kids’ (<i>Sun</i>, 7 June 2006) and ‘Keep him caged’ (<i>Daily Mirror</i>, 7 June 2006). The Wheeler case was back in the news four months later, in week 564 (7-13 October 2003), another peak week, when the Court of Appeal extended his prison sentence by 18 months. This resulted in headlines such as ‘That’s justice: Judge insists this evil internet pervert must stay in jail for longer’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 16 October 2003), ‘Web pervert who lured schoolgirls must serve an extra 18 months’ (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 16 October 2003) and ‘Longer jail sentences for internet paedophiles’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 16 October 2003), as well as leaders like ‘Message for net perverts’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 16 October 2003) and ‘Give evil fiends life’ (<i>Daily Star</i>, 16 October 2003).</p> <div> </div>
<p>551 14-20 July 2003</p>	<p>Week 551 contained the most articles of any week in any country. Of the 50 articles found, 35 news hooks were coded as <i>Grooming case</i>. This was because of the case of Toby Studebaker, a 31-year-old American with a US marine background, and Shevaun Pennington, a 12-year-old girl from</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>Leigh, Greater Manchester, with whom Studebaker disappeared for a total of five days. After communicating online for around a year, Studebaker flew from America to the UK to meet Pennington – who had told her parents she was going shopping – before the pair flew to Paris. They then travelled to Strasbourg and Frankfurt, where they were eventually found and Studebaker was arrested. This case produced a vast amount of coverage, partly due to having the full narrative of the initial disappearance, the cross-national search, the location of the pair, Studebaker’s arrest and Pennington’s safe return. Among the headlines were ‘Schoolgirl is snatched on the internet’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 15 July 2003), ‘Hunt for girl, 12, and US marine, 31, she met on the internet’ (<i>Guardian</i>, 15 July 2003), ‘Family defends the “child-like” American missing with a 12-year-old he met in a chatroom’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 16 July 2003) and ‘Escape from internet sex monster’ (<i>Daily Express</i>, 17 July 2003). As well as prompting readers’ letters and numerous in-house investigations, the Studebaker case also inspired columns with titles such as ‘Dangers that lurk at click of a button’ (<i>Express</i>, 15 July 2003), ‘A playground for paedophiles’ (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 16 July 2003) and ‘Stranger danger to your child at home’ (<i>Daily Mirror</i>, 16 July 2003), as well as features like ‘How to protect your children’ (<i>Sun</i>, 16 July 2003) and ‘The monsters in the corner’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 20 July 2003).</p> 

Week	Key event(s)
	
<p>561 22-28 September 2003</p>	<p>Of the 19 articles found in week 561, 14 news hooks were coded as <i>Safety</i>. As was the case in the same week in Australia, this was due to Microsoft’s announcement that it would be closing its chatrooms in response to fears about child safety. This produced front page headlines such as ‘Microsoft chatrooms to close after abuse fear’ (<i>Guardian</i>, 24 September 2003), ‘Chatrooms crackdown’ (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 24 September 2003) and ‘Microsoft closes chatrooms to curb paedophile menace’ (<i>Independent</i>, 24 September 2003). Some coverage was, however, critical of the move. In the <i>Guardian</i> (25 September 2003), for example, the headline to Emily Bell’s commentary argued, ‘The internet isn’t evil - and Microsoft’s move to close chatrooms is more about profit than paedophilia’. The headline of another report asked, ‘An end to chat: MSN’s decision to close hundreds of chatrooms has been widely praised, but could it make children even more vulnerable?’ (<i>Guardian</i>, 25 September 2003). This report argued that “[t]hanks to high-profile court cases vividly reported in the tabloid press, chatrooms are quickly becoming synonymous with paedophilia” and cited critics such as Dr Rachel O’Connell, director of the Cyberspace Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire, who stated, “I suspect this is perhaps a bit of a knee-jerk reaction... It doesn’t grapple with the issue” .</p>
<p>563</p>	<p>A total of 15 articles were found in week 563, 12 of which were</p>

Week	Key event(s)
6-12 October 2003	<p>coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. This week was dominated by the case of Douglas Lindsell, a 64-year-old man who had ‘groomed’ at least 73 girls from around the world, all aged between 12 and 16. Lindsell was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment after admitting to attempted abduction, sexual and threatening harassment, incitement to gross indecency and possession of indecent images of children. The prolificacy of Lindsell’s grooming made this case particularly newsworthy, producing headlines such as ‘World’s biggest pervert’ (<i>Sun</i>, 10 October 2003), ‘The perfect family man who preyed on young chatroom girls: Five years for world’s most prolific child groomer’ (<i>Guardian</i>, 10 October 2003) and ‘Sex monster, 64, preyed on girls: World’s no.1 net pervert is jailed’ (<i>Daily Star</i>, 10 October 2003). The <i>Daily Mail</i>’s front page headline also drew upon the case and asked, ‘Are any of our children safe on the net?’ (10 October 2003). Elsewhere, Lindsell’s sentence was strongly criticised in articles such as Carole Malone’s <i>Sunday Mirror</i> column, titled ‘Pervs get green light’ (12 October 2003).</p> <div>  </div>
581 9-15 February 2004	<p>Of the 22 articles found in week 581, 18 of the news hooks were coded as <i>Grooming case</i>. This was largely due to coverage of the trial of Toby Studebaker, whose case had earlier dominated week 551. Coverage of Studebaker’s trial produced headlines such as ‘Groomed by the Internet predator’</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>(<i>Daily Mail</i>, 13 February 2004), ‘Internet pervert ruined the life of girl, 12’ (<i>Express</i>, 13 February 2004) and ‘Paedophile escapes life for abduction’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 13 February 2004).</p>
<p>709 24-30 July 2006</p>	<p>Week 709 contained 17 articles, 16 of which were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. However, this is an instance where coverage was spread among numerous cases as opposed to being dominated by one. Three cases were reported in week 709: Mehdi Boudjedra, a 31-year-old man who was charged with grooming a 15-year-old girl he had met online; Simon Thomas, a priest who was jailed for sexually abusing boys aged between 11 and 15 who he had groomed online; and Mark Bedford, a 21-year-old Canadian who was arrested in his homeland after a joint operation with British police. The Bedford case was particularly high-profile, largely due to the allegations that he had sexually exploited over 100 girls – 42 in Kent, England, alone. This case produced headlines such as ‘British girls “lured into internet sex acts” by Canadian’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 30 July 2006) and attracted further coverage the following week, also a peak week, when it inspired numerous in-house investigations (see below) and continued to produce headlines such as ‘Police took a year to find paedophile with 40 Internet victims’ (<i>Daily Mail</i>, 31 July 2007).</p> <div> </div>

Week	Key event(s)
<p>879 26 October- 1 November 2009</p>	<p>Of the 23 articles found in this week, 20 news hooks were coded as <i>Grooming case</i>. Coverage was dominated by the rape and murder of Ashleigh Hall by Peter Chapman, a 33-year-old man who had posed as a 16-year-old college student in order to befriend and arrange a date with Hall through Facebook. This case produced headlines such as ‘Groomed & killed by Facebook beast’ (<i>Daily Star</i>, 28 October 2009), ‘The sex killer’ (<i>Sun</i>, 28 October 2009), ‘Teenager found dead in field after arranging internet date’ (<i>The Times</i>, 28 October 2009) and ‘Tragic teens mother warns about dangers of Facebook’ (<i>Express</i>, 29 October 2009). A report in the <i>Daily Mirror</i> contained advice for parents – ‘Web experts warn of stranger danger’ – which cited tips from charities like Kidscape, such as: “Make sure your children know they must never email, chat or text-message with strangers. It's never OK to meet a stranger offline or online” (‘I killed a girl’, 28 October 2009). Notable (and surprising), too, was a commentary piece from <i>Daily Mail</i> journalist Jan Moir, which challenged common misconceptions about ‘internet predators’ and CSA more generally. Moir argued: “Dubious chatrooms and paedophile online networks are the manifestation of the abuse and exploitation of children, not the cause of it. [...] It is not stranger-danger that children or teenagers should be worried most about. The truth is that more than 80 per cent of sexually abused children are harmed by someone they know. Far from being a new chatroom friend, the bogeyman is more likely to be a stepfather or father, a teacher, an uncle, a primary carer. Even a woman, as we have reluctantly come to accept” (‘The net has no monopoly on predators’, <i>Daily Mail</i>, 30 October 2009).</p>
<p>881 9-15 November</p>	<p>All 13 of the articles found in week 881, the final peak week in the UK, were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. Coverage in this week</p>

Week	Key event(s)
2009	<p>was dominated by a case of high novelty value, wherein Cheryl Roberts, of Bridgend, Wales, created a false profile of a 14-year-old girl in order to ‘trap’ her 68-year-old husband, David Roberts, who she suspected of grooming underage girls on the internet. When he propositioned her underage persona for sex, she reported him to the NSPCC and police. This produced headlines such as ‘Wife posed as girl of 14 online to trap predator husband’ (<i>Daily Telegraph</i>, 13 November 2009), ‘Paedo trapped by wife posing as girl on web’ (<i>Daily Mirror</i>, 13 November 2009) and ‘Monster & Mrs’ (<i>Sun</i>, 14 November 2009).</p>

Appendix F: Overview of key events in the USA

Week	Key event(s)
<p>142 11-17 September 1995</p>	<p>Week 142 was the earliest peak week identified in any country. Of the 15 articles found, 11 were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. This was largely driven by the arrest of 12 men caught soliciting sex from children through the internet. News of these arrests produced headlines such as ‘FBI’s on-line dragnet nabs 12 across U.S. on child sex charges’ (<i>Houston Chronicle</i>, 14 September 1995), ‘Use of Computer Network For Child Sex Sets Off Raids’ (<i>New York Times</i>, 14 September 1995) and ‘FBI Agents Posed as Teenagers In On-Line Child Porn Inquiry’ (<i>Washington Post</i>, 15 September 1995). Some of this early coverage presented the internet as a serious paedophile threat for young users. For example, a <i>New York Daily News</i> article described how police had been “patrolling the playgrounds of the future” and quoted an officer saying, “There’s no difference between cyberspace and everyday life historically, they went to playgrounds, amusement parks and malls. It’s the same thing in cyberspace, they go where the kids are” (‘Talkin’ dirty – online probers trolled net with jail bait’, <i>New York Daily News</i>, 15 September 1995). Similarly, the <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> article began, “Fears of silent stalkers in cyberspace have prompted parents and teachers alike to clamp down on online access for kids” (‘FBI Raid on Cyberporn Heightens Concern About Children Online’, 15 September 1995).</p>
<p>352 20-26 September 1999</p>	<p>A total of 15 articles were found in week 352, 13 of which were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. These were dominated by the case of Patrick Naughton, a high-ranking executive with Infoseek, an affiliate of Disney, who was caught soliciting sex with an FBI agent posing as a 13-year-old girl online. This case produced</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>headlines such as ‘Infoseek Executive Is Charged With Seeking Sex From Minor’ (<i>New York Times</i>, 21 September 1999), ‘Web star takes a tawdry fall: How an Infoseek exec’s alleged internet dalliance snared him in an FBI sting’ (<i>San Jose Mercury News</i>, 21 September 1999), ‘WWW.LOSE.YOUR.CAREER’ (<i>San Jose Mercury News</i>, 22 September 1999) and ‘WebMaster Caught in Police Net; Executive's Arrest On Sex Charge Shocks Disney’ (<i>Washington Post</i>, 23 September 1999). Naughton’s subsequent court case also featured heavily in weeks 363 and 364, both of which were also peak weeks.</p>
<p>443 18-24 June 2001</p>	<p>Week 443 contained 17 articles, 15 of which were coded as having a <i>Research</i> news hook. This focus on research was due to the publication of separate studies on children’s internet use by the University of New Hampshire’s Crimes Against Children Research Center (CCRC) and Pew Internet. The CCRC report concluded that there were elements that “both reassure and concern those seeking to situate [online sexual solicitations] in the spectrum of threats to children’s safety and well-being” (Mitchell et al., 2001: 3013). However, much of the newspaper coverage highlighted the more concerning elements, producing headline such as ‘Cyber-predators lie in wait for children’ (<i>Star-Ledger</i>, 20 June 2001), ‘Sex predators lure kids online easily’ (<i>Plain Dealer</i>, 21 June 2001), ‘Web pervs woo 20% of online kids’ (<i>New York Post</i>, 20 June 2001) and ‘Studies Detail Solicitation Of Children for Sex Online’ (<i>New York Times</i>, 20 June 2001). It should, however, be noted that other headlines were less sensational, such as ‘Most teens ignore Net's sexual solicitations: Though they're frequently targeted, many seem unfazed by come-ons’ (<i>USA Today</i>, 20 June 2001).</p>
<p>451 13-19 August 2001</p>	<p>Week 451 contained 25 articles, 23 of which were coded as having <i>Grooming case</i> newshooks. Dominating the news this</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>week was the case of two men (James Warren and Michael Montez) and a woman (Beth Loschin) from Long Island, New York, who were arrested and charged with kidnapping and raping a 15-year-old Massachusetts girl they had groomed in a chatroom. Unsurprisingly, given the location of the offence, coverage was particularly prominent in the New York titles (<i>Daily News, Post</i> and <i>Times</i>), which accounted for 18 of the week's articles. This event produced headlines such as 'Jail for 3 in girl's internet sex horror' (<i>New York Daily News</i>, 13 August 2001), "In over her head," teen kidnapped, raped after Internet meeting, cops say' (<i>Philadelphia Daily News</i>, 14 August 2001) and 'Cybersex mistress fingers fiend pal' (<i>New York Post</i>, 16 August 2001).</p>
<p>491 20-26 May 2002</p>	<p>Week 491 contained 12 articles, 11 of which were coded as having <i>Grooming case</i> news hooks. This was largely due to the case of 13-year-old Christina Long, who was strangled and killed during a sexual encounter with Saul Dos Reis, a 25-year-old man from Brazil who she had met online. This event produced headlines such as 'Girl, 13, slain on net date' (<i>New York Daily News</i>, 21 May 2002), 'Girl killed by cyber mate: Cops' (<i>New York Post</i>, 21 May 2002), 'Slain Girl Used Internet To Seek Sex, Police Say' (<i>New York Times</i>, 22 May 2002) and 'Dangers of Internet chat rooms: Slain girl was aware of risks of cyberspace, guardian says' (<i>Houston Chronicle</i>, 23 May 2002). Reflecting on the case, the <i>New York Times</i>, carried a substantial piece titled, 'Police Ask Parents to Hover When Their Children Log On' (26 May 2002), which quoted John A. Danaher III, US attorney and member of the Task Force on Internet Crimes Against Children, warning, "No parent would allow a stranger in the house and let them walk into a child's bedroom but that's what you're doing if you let a child have a computer in their own room". Elsewhere, <i>Houston Chronicle</i></p>

Week	Key event(s)
	coverage of the case quoted an officer from Connecticut State Police stating that the internet has changed the process of searching for missing children: “Before, we looked in the treehouse, we looked in the attic... Now, the first question is, ‘Is there a computer in the house?’” (‘Dangers of Internet chat rooms: Slain girl was aware of risks of cyberspace, guardian says’, 23 May 2002).
693 3-9 April 2006	Of the 19 articles found in week 693, 14 were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i> . This was largely due to the case of Brian Doyle , a US Department of Homeland Security employee who was arrested after sending sexually explicit messages and pornography to an undercover police officer posing as a 14-year-old girl. Doyle’s arrest produced headlines such as ‘Police put net out for online predators: Arrest of federal official reflects increasingly aggressive pursuit’ (<i>USA Today</i> , 7 April 2006), ‘Homeland official accused in Internet child-sex sting’ (<i>Philadelphia Daily News</i> , 5 April 2006) and ‘DHS Spokesman Is Accused of Soliciting Teen Online’ (<i>Washington Post</i> , 5 April 2006).
694 10-16 April 2006	Of the 22 articles found in week 694, 13 were coded as having <i>Safety</i> news hooks. This was primarily due to two events revolving around the social networking website MySpace . First was the commencement of a public service advertising campaign about the site jointly produced by the Ad Council and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This was followed by the announcement that MySpace was to appoint its first chief security officer, with <i>USA Today</i> reporting that it was “[f]acing mounting pressure to better police its fast-growing teen website against online predators” (‘MySpace takes steps to keep kids safe’, 12 April 2006). These events produced headlines such as ‘Popular teen site warns of predators’ (<i>San Jose Mercury News</i> , 11 April 2006), ‘Wide-

Week	Key event(s)
	open MySpace.com filled with teens, danger' (<i>Chicago Sun Times</i> , 12 April 2006), 'MySpace takes measures to make hip youth Web site predator-free' (<i>Houston Chronicle</i> , 12 April 2006) and 'Campaign warns about online predators' (<i>Chicago Sun Times</i> , 12 April 2006).
<p>719 2-8 October 2006</p>	<p>Week 719 was the most prolific in the USA press. Of the 36 articles found, 28 were coded as <i>Grooming cases</i>. This was largely due to a very high-profile case involving Mark Foley, a Republican congressman who was found to have been sending sexually explicit emails and text messages to teenage boys who had worked as congressional pages. Foley's case attracted particularly high levels of attention because he was co-Chairman of the House Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children and had earlier helped write a bill that extended penal penalties for convicted sex offenders. Referring to 'internet predators' at the time of the bill, he had said that the Bush administration was "going to make your life a living hell" ('FBI looks at Foley's emails to teens', <i>USA Today</i>, 2 October 2006). The Foley case produced headlines such as 'FBI investigating Foley's email' (<i>New York Daily News</i>, 2 October 2010), 'Sick new Foley e-mails: Had virtual sex with teen between votes' (<i>New York Post</i>, 4 October 2006) and 'Lawmaker's Intentions Appear Clear In Exchanges' (<i>Washington Post</i>, 5 October 2006).</p>
<p>786 14-20 January 2008</p>	<p>Week 786 contained the joint-second highest number of articles in the USA. Of the 25 articles found, 18 were coded as having <i>Safety</i> news hooks. As in week 694, twenty months earlier, coverage was dominated by the actions of MySpace. In this instance, the site had agreed with 49 states and the District of Columbia to organise a taskforce to develop safety tools that could verify the age and identity of its users. This announcement produced headlines such as 'MySpace Agrees to</p>

Week	Key event(s)
	<p>Lead Fight to Stop Sex Predators’ (<i>New York Times</i>, 15 January 2008), ‘Social networks take first steps to protect kids’ (<i>San Jose Mercury News</i>, 17 January 2008) and ‘MySpace To Act Against Predators: Site, States Reach Deal to Bolster Online Safety’ (<i>Washington Post</i>, 15 January 2008). Some titles welcomed the move – e.g. ‘Wise move by MySpace’ (<i>Star-Ledger</i>, 17 January 2008) – but others questioned the effectiveness of the measures through articles such as ‘Is the MySpace plan enough to protect kids from predators?’ (<i>Star-Ledger</i>, 17 January 2008) and ‘Will MySpace deal make Internet safer? New restrictions aren't likely to have major impact’ (<i>Star Tribune</i>, 18 January 2008).</p>