Online Sexual Behaviours Among Swedish Youth

Characteristics, Associations and Consequences

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What I like about my mobile phone? Well, my iPhone and me are one. I prefer talking to friends by texting, well if we don't meet of course. And I love meeting new people at Klubb6. You can talk about anything and it is like you are important, in a way I never feel at home or in school. Here I am a girl who can discuss, debate and have something to say. It is so fun and there are so many fun and strange people there... that are like me. I love to talk to people about my day, what upsets me, discussing sex and getting to hear that I look great. My only concern is that it takes so much of my time and that I never will find one real boyfriend. I really want to have kids and so on. I don´t know how to make contacts with boys outside the Internet so I think I need to meet him online. You know, thanks to being able to chat online I get to talk to people I never would have met otherwise.

(Mandy, participant in study III & IV)

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ABSTRACT

Online sexual behaviours refer to sexual activities where the Internet and/or mobile phone are used. The aims of this thesis were to investigate young people and their experiences of different online sexual behaviours with regard to characteristics, associations and consequences, by using data from a representative sample of 3,503 Swedish youth (m= 18.3 years). In addition 16 interviews were made with young women who had sold sex online before the age of 18. Focus in these interviews were in which ways contacts between buyer and seller were established and the motivational factors for selling sex online.

In study I (n= 3,288), 20.9% (19.2% boys and 22.3% girls) reported experiences of voluntary online sexual exposure: flashing in webcam/mobile; posted partially undressed pictures or films; masturbated on webcam; had sex on webcam. Multivariate analysis showed a significant association between voluntary online sexual exposure and a number of different forms of harassments online. Neither poorer psychological health nor problematic relations with parents remained significant in the final model predicting voluntary online sexual exposure. In study II (n= 3,432) four online sexual behaviours were studied: meeting a person online for sex online; meeting a person online for sex offline; posted sexual pictures online; selling sex online. These were investigated in relation to socio-demographic factors, psychosocial wellbeing and risk behaviours. Bivariate logistic regressions were followed by multiple logistic regressions. The data suggested that most Swedish youth do not perform any of the assessed online sexual behaviours, but those who did (15.2%) reported a more problematic background, rated their health as poorer, had a more sexualised life and had experienced more sexual or physical abuse. This was especially prevalent among those who had sold sex online. In study III, young women with experiences of selling sex online before the age of 18 were interviewed. The interviews focused on the role Internet and mobile phone play and the methods of contacts and characteristics of the communication between buyer and seller. Two main themes were identified: Internet use - part of daily life for good and bad, depending on mood; Patterns of contacts - innocent/curious, dating, advertising. In the fourth study the interviews with the young women who had sold sex online before the age of 18 were analysed focusing on the women's perceptions of the reasons why they started, continued and stopped selling sex. Three themes and eight sub-themes were identified in relation to different stages in their lives in the sex trade, each with its own storyline: Entering, adverse life experiences - traumatic events, feeling different and being excluded; Immersion, using the body as a regulating tool - being seen, being touched, being in control, affect regulation and self-harming; Exiting, change or die - living close to death, the process of quitting.

In conclusion, the results from this thesis showed that most young people use Internet and mobile phones for non-sexual activities. Sexual behaviours online were associated with a more problematic background and poorer wellbeing. More research, attention and support are needed, especially related to young people selling sex online.

SAMMANFATTNING PÅ SVENSKA

Med sexuella beteenden på nätet menas sexuella aktiviteter där Internet eller/och mobiltelefon används. Föreliggande avhandling syftade till att undersöka unga och deras erfarenheter av sex via nätet utifrån karaktäristik, associationer och konsekvenser av beteendet, genom att använda data från ett representativt urval av 3,503 svenska ungdomar (*m*= 18.3 år). Utöver detta intervjuades 16 unga kvinnor (*m*= 18.9 år) som hade sålt sex på nätet innan 18 års ålder. Fokus i intervjuerna var på kontaktvägarna mellan säljare och köpare och om anledningarna till varför de sålde sex.

I studie I, (*n*= 3,288), rapporterade 20.9% (19.2% pojkar och 22.3% flickor) erfarenhet av frivillig sexuell exponering på nätet vilket innefattade posering i webcam/mobiltelefon; lagt ut delvis avklädda bilder eller filmer; onanerat i webcam eller haft sex i webcam. Den multivariata analysen visade att det finns ett signifikant samband mellan frivillig sexuell exponering på nätet och olika former av utsatthet på nätet. Varken psykisk ohälsa eller en sämre föräldrarelation kvarstod signifikant i den slutliga modellen. I studie II (*n*= 3,432) undersöktes olika sexuella beteenden på nätet: träffat någon via nätet för att ha sex på nätet; träffat någon på nätet för att ha sex utanför nätet; lagt ut sexuella bilder eller sålt sex via nätet. Dessa undersöktes i relation till socio-demografisk bakgrund, psykosocial hälsa och riskbeteenden. Bivariata logistiska regressioner följdes av multipla logistisk regressioner. Resultaten visade att de flesta inte hade erfarenheter av att ha sex via nätet på de sätt som undersöktes i studien men att de som hade denna erfarenhet (15.2%) hade en mer problematik bakgrund, skattade sin hälsa som sämre, hade ett mer sexualiserat liv, hade oftare erfarenhet av sexuella övergrepp och fysisk misshandel. I studie III, intervjuades unga kvinnor, som innan de fyllt 18 hade sålt sex via nätet med fokus på vilken roll Internet och mobiltelefonen spelade i deras liv samt på vilka kontaktvägar och vilken typ av kommunikation som användes mellan säljaren och köparen. Två huvudteman identifierades: Internetanvändande - del av vardagen på gott och ont, beroende på humör. Kontaktmönster - oskyldig/nyfiken, dating och annonsering. I studie IV analyserades intervjuerna med de unga kvinnorna som hade sålt sex innan 18 års ålder, utifrån deras upplevelser om varför de började, fortsatte och slutade sälja sex. Tre teman och åtta underteman identifierades i relation till i vilket stadie de befanns sig då det gällde att sälja sex på nätet. Starta, negativa livshändelser - traumatiska händelser, känna sig annorlunda och exkluderad; Fortsätta, använda kroppen som en regulator - bli sedd, bli berörd, ha kontroll, känsloreglering och självskadande; Sluta, förändra eller dö - leva nära döden, processen att sluta.

Sammanfattningsvis visar denna avhandling att de flesta ungdomar använder Internet och mobiltelefoner på andra sätt än för sexuella aktiviteter. Att ha sex på nätet visade sig ha samband med en mer problematisk bakgrund och ett sämre välbefinnande. Mer forskning samt uppmärksamhet och stöd behövs, särskilt vad gäller unga som säljer sex på nätet.

LIST OF PAPERS

I.   Jonsson, L. S., Priebe, G., Bladh, M., & Svedin, C. G. (2014). Voluntary sexual exposure online among Swedish youth - social background, Internet behavior and psychosocial health. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 30, 181-189. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2013.08.00

II.   Jonsson, L. S., Bladh, M., Priebe, G., & Svedin, C. G. (2015). Online sexual behaviours among Swedish youth - Associations to background factors, behaviours and abuse. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. doi:10.1007/s00787-015-0673-9

III.   Jonsson, L. S., Svedin C. G., & Hydén, M. (2014). "Without the Internet, I never would have sold sex" - Young women selling sex online. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8(1), article 4. doi:10.5817/CP2014-1-4

IV.   Jonsson, L. S., Svedin, C. G., & Hydén, M. (2015). Young Women Selling Sex Online - Narratives on Regulating Feelings. *Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics*, 16, 17-27. doi:10.2147/AHMT.S77324

ABBREVIATIONS

AAI   Adult Attachment Interview
BUP   Barn och Ungdomspsykiatri (Child and adolescent psychiatry)
IRMA   Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale
LGBTQ   Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer
NGO   Non Governmental Organization
PBI   Parental Bonding Instrument
RSES   Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale
SA   Sexual Abuse
SCL-25   Symptom Checklist-25
SFS   Svensk Författningssamling
SoC   Sense of Coherence Scale
SRB   Sexual Risk Behaviour
STI   Sexually Transmitted Infection
TFI   Teller Focused Interview
UN   United Nations
WHO   World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Background to the thesis

He said his name was Alexandra and contacted hundreds of young Swedish girls on different Internet sites and offered them modelling contracts.

Alexandra: Well, hi there!

Pernilla: Hi!

Alexandra: How's it going?

Pernilla: Just fine. You?

Alexandra: Great. Have you thought any more about what we talked about last time?

Pernilla: I don't know. I'd really like to be a model but don't know if I'd be right for that...

Alexandra: Send some pictures of yourself so I can see.

Pernilla sends over some pictures of herself.

Alexandra: You're going to make LOTS of money if you work with us!

Pernilla: Really :-). But I'm only 13…

Alexandra: We have a lot of girls your age.

Pernilla: Okay.

Alexandra: Are you only interested in pictures? You can make loads of money on dates if you want.

Pernilla: What are dates?

Alexandra: Meeting a guy. Having fun, having a nice time, being cozy;-) and making a lot of money.

Pernilla: What do you mean, cozy?

Alexandra: Should we maybe be honest here?

Alexandra: Like making out, maybe fooling around... depends how much money you want to make.

Pernilla: But I don't want that!

Alexandra: Answer honestly. If I can set it up with a customer (young, handsome, nice) would you consider like, a little bit of fooling around with him,,,, and if you do you get 1000 SEK in cash?

Pernilla: But that would be selling myself and I don't want that.

(Internet chat log from Pernilla. In Rogland & Christianson, 2012)

The "Alexandra" case became a well-known criminal case in Sweden in 2006. A 31-year old man who used the alias Alexandra was prosecuted for having sexually abused almost 50 young Swedish girls. He met girls on different chat sites and made them send him sexually explicit pictures and films of themselves. He also had sexual encounters with some of the girls, both online and offline. Media portrayed the victims in this case as "ordinary" girls who were lured into the sexual engagements. The Alexandra case called into question how common this phenomenon was, which children were at risk and whether it would be prudent to forbid children to use computers without parental supervision, among other concerns. In addition, legal aspects of this phenomenon were at issue.

Almost ten years later, there have been many cases similar to the "Alexandra case" and most are aware that there can be risks associated with sexual contacts online. Advances in mobile phone and Internet technology have made available almost unlimited possibilities for communication. Children of today are connecting to the world around the clock as this technology has become an integral part of their lives, for some also their sex lives. Internet and mobile phone technology has introduced new ways for children to acquire information about sex as well as offering an expanded forum for meeting potential sexual partners. At the same time, technology has created new challenges with regard to sexual harassment and abuse.

The sexual behaviour of children and youth is regulated by certain laws and is influenced by a range of social norms pertaining to what is and is not acceptable. Although there is concern among adults that adolescents are not developmentally ready to have sexual relations, most youth have had their sexual debut before the age of 18. The average age of sexual debut is 15 years of age among Swedish youth (Kastbom, Sydsjö, Bladh, Priebe, & Svedin, 2015), which is the same as the legal age of consent (Svensk Författningssamling [SFS], 1962:700).

During the last decade there has been a discussion regarding in what way technology effects young peoples sexual behaviours. Most research in this area has focused on the negative effects of online sexual behaviour with little attention given to the potential positive experiences (Tolman & McCleeland, 2011). There is also an emerging discussion concerning which online sexual behaviours should be considered risky and whether or not there has been an increase in sexual abuse or sexual victimisation due to technology (see e.g. Finkelhor, 2014; Jones, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2012; Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Even if some argue that the risk of negative consequences resulting from online sexual behaviour is small, such abuse can have life-threatening or lifelong ramifications. Taken together, the research field related to online sexual behaviours among youth today are scarce and there is a big gap of knowledge that needs to be filled.

This thesis is about youth's online sexual behaviour, online sexual abuse and the grey zone in between the two. It will examine the differences and similarities among children and youth who are actively communicating about sex online. By increasing our understanding of youth and sexuality in conjunction with knowledge of the risks and consequences of their online behaviour, professionals and adults can begin to recognize signals that indicate cause for concern and point to the need for intervention.

The term *child* refers to all human beings under the age of 18, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). The term *adolescent* refers to persons between 10-19 years of age according to the World Health Organization (2014) and the term *youth* is used in a broader sense to include people between the ages of 15 and 25.

All quotes in the thesis are authentic and name and places have been anonymised.

Sexuality of children and youth

Sexual development

There are different theories describing how a person becomes a sexual human being and what affects sexuality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO: 2006) sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. The sexual development starts already during early childhood but with an intense phase during adolescence and continuing into adulthood (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2010). Adolescence is a period in life, which is characterised by changes. There are significant physical changes due to ongoing puberty. The body grows and there is a sexual maturation (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2010). With regard to cognitive development there are changes in how adolescents think, reason and understand. They think about their future, evaluate alternatives and set personal goals (Keating, 1990). According to the theories of Eriksson (1968), establishing a sense of identity is one of the central tasks of adolescent development. This is part of the emotional development and involves establishing a realistic and coherent sense of identity in the context of relating to others and learning to cope with stress and manage emotions (Santrock, 2001). Changes

in social behaviour also take place during adolescence. Social development involves creating new relationships with peers, family, school, work and community. One of the most obvious differences is that the focus of the adolescent's social world shifts from the family to peers (O´Koon, 1997). In addition, it is during this time most people begin to date (American Psychological Association, 2002).

During early adolescence most children have knowledge about sex and sexual intercourse, but have not yet practiced together with someone else. Most have some knowledge about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases (Finkel & Finkel, 1981). Sexual fantasies play an important role and masturbation is the predominant sexual outcome (Scott-Jones & White, 1990). During middle adolescence there is an increase in the sexual behaviours and both the pubertal development and the sexual behaviours of best friends predict the onset of specific sexual behaviours (Billy & Udry, 1985; Smith, Udry, & Morris, 1985). During this time it is normative to have sexual intercourse. During late adolescence, young people engage in a great variety of sexual behaviours with an increasing frequency (Reece, Herbenick, Shick, Sanders, Dodge, & Fortenberry, 2010).

Sexual development can be described, as above, from a biological and psychological perspective, as well as from other perspectives. From a sociological viewpoint, human beings are moulded into sexual agents rather than being born as such (see e.g. Foucault, 2002). A well-established theory for understanding how a human being becomes sexual in relation to individuals and society is Gagnon and Simon´s concept of "scripting theory" (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). According to this theory, a human being becomes sexual by following a current sexual manuscript when interacting with other people. Sexual manuscripts are influenced by society, culture and religion as well as other factors. These also have situational as well as relational and individual aspects. Sexuality is not consistent but changes over time due to societal norms for sexual practices (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Simon & Gagnon, 1986).

Sexual behaviours

Sexual behaviours can be divided into those that are performed by a solitary individual, such as masturbation and sexual fantasies and those that are performed by at least two people. Sexual interactions with others may include touching, kissing and other forms of non-penetrative sex along with penetrative sex, which includes vaginal, oral and anal sex (Crocett, Raffaelli, & Moilanen, 2003).

In a Swedish study (Kastbom et al., 2015) including a representative sample of Swedish youth (*m*= 18.3 years) the age of first sexual intercourse was 15.4 years.

Girls had sexually debuted somewhat earlier than boys (*m*= 15.3 years vs. 15.5 years). By the age of 18, over 70% had sexually debuted. The sexual debut age in Sweden seem to have declined over the years (Tikkanen, Abelsson, & Forsberg, 2009; Tydén & Rogala, 2004; Tydén, Palmqvist, & Larsson, 2012). In 1996, for example, the average age of first intercourse was 16.5 years for women and 16.8 years for men (Forsberg, 2006).

When it comes to sexual activities, performed together with someone else, most common is having experience of vaginal intercourse (Häggström-Nordin, Hansson, & Tydén, 2005; Svedin & Priebe, 2009; Tikkanen et al., 2009). Oral sex is the second most common form. In the study by Svedin & Priebe (2009), 61.7% of the boys reported having had oral sex with girls or women and 2.6% with a boy or a man. Among the girls, 70% reported having had oral sex with a boy or a man and 4.8% had had oral sex with a girl or a woman. Anal sex was the least commonly reported with 20.8% of the boys reporting anal sex with a girl or a woman and 1.6% with a boy or a man. Among the girls 26.7% had had experiences of anal sex with a boy or a man and 0.4% reported having had anal sex with a girl or a woman (Svedin & Priebe, 2009). Even though there are great differences between countries, research from the US show similar trends as Sweden regarding a decline in debut age and that vaginal intercourse is the most common form of intercourse, followed by oral and anal (Martinez, Copen & Abma, 2011).

Recently, there has been a discussion emerging from research investigating late sexual debut. Some youth deliberately wait with their sexual debut and it has been discussed whether "virginity" also should be considered a sexual behaviour (Tolman & McCleeland, 2011).

Sex may occur with someone known or with strangers. These relations can be seen in different ways, from love relationships, buddy-sex or one-night stands. Several Swedish studies suggest that Swedish youth separate casual sexual relationships from traditional romantic relationships and in many cases they do not find it important to be in love with the person they are having sex with (Edgardh, 2002; Forsberg, 2006; Lewin, Fugl-Meyer, Helmius, Lalos, Månsson, 1998; Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005). There is a growing body of research investigating adolescent sex outside a romantic relationship (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). In a study by Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer (1996), the authors found that the youth cared less about a person that was a one-night stand compared to a person they had buddy sex with or were in a traditional romantic relationship with. International research suggests that the nature of the relationship is important also for the psychological outcome of sex (Shulman, Walsh, Weisman, & Schelyer, 2009). A strong romantic relationship also fosters better communica-

tion about sex and leads, for example, to higher rates of contraceptive use (Manning, Longmore, & Giordano, 2000: Widman, Welsh, McNulty, & Little, 2006).

Sexual risk taking behaviour

Adolescent sexuality has been the focus of extensive research directed at identifying unhealthy and risky sexual behaviours. Some research suggests that adolescents are not cognitively or emotionally mature enough to negotiate the challenges of sex (Reyna & Farley, 2006) and that young people are particularly vulnerable to poor sexual outcomes (Slater & Robinson, 2014).

Sexual risk taking is often defined as engaging in sexual activities that increase the risk of unintentional pregnancy or of contracting a sexual transmitted infection (STI: Taylor-Seehafer & Rew, 2000). Examples of sexual risk taking are, early age at first intercourse, unprotected sexual activity, high number of sexual partners and sex in exchange for money (Häggström- Nordin, Hansson, & Tydén, 2002; Tydén et al., 2012) Studies have also indicated that alcohol and drug use increase sexual risk behaviours (Fortenberry, Orr, Katz, Brizendine, & Blyth, 1997; Hutton, McCaul, Santora, Erbelding, 2008). When under the influence of drugs or alcohol, condom use is less likely. Alcohol use is also related to early sexual debut (Kastbom et al., 2015), STI and unplanned pregnancies (Royal College of Physicians, 2011). The UK has the highest rates of teen pregnancy in Europe and the US has the highest rates among developed countries. In Europe, chlamydia is the most frequently reported STI. Sweden and the UK report more than 300 cases per 100,000 citizens (Slater & Robinson, 2014). In the UK people under the age of 25 accounts for almost 50% of all STI cases (Slater & Robinson, 2014). There are differences among countries and studies, but in Sweden there seems to be an overall increase in sexual risk behaviours (Tydén et al., 2012).

Sexual risk behaviours have also been shown to be associated with other risk behaviours. For example in the study by Kastbom et al. (2015) early sexual debut (before the age of 14) was positively correlated with having more sexual partners; more smoking, drug and alcohol use; being violent, lying, stealing and running away (Kastbom et al., 2015). In the studies by Svedin and Priebe (2004; 2009) selling sex among youth has been associated with a more sexualised life in general, alcohol and drug use and different rule breaking behaviours.

In 1977, Jessor and Jessor developed the theory of problem behaviour syndrome, explaining that problematic behaviours interact with one another. Using data from a questionnaire, the researchers found that risk taking behaviours such as alcohol use, marijuana use and early sexual debut often occurred in clusters

(Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Jessor & Costa, 1988). The authors argued that risk taking behaviour during adolescence interacted with each other, but is normal and part of the adolescent lifestyle. Risk taking behaviour has also been shown to be most prevalent during adolescence (Arnett, 1992; Donovan, Jessor, & Costa, 1988). In a review study, Boyer (2006) found that studies related to the development of risk taking had been studied from different developmental perspectives such as psychobiological, cognitive, emotional and social. These perspectives have remained largely independent but most likely interact to influence the probability that a person will engage in risky activities (Boyer, 2006).

Sexual abuse

Many children and youth have experienced sexual abuse worldwide. In a meta-analysis of 217 international publications, 12.7% of all children (18.0% girls and 7.6% boys) had experience of being sexually abused (Stoltenborgh, van Ijzendoorn, Euser, & Bakerman-Kranenburg, 2011). In Sweden the experience of penetrative sexual abuse (oral, anal and genital sex) has shown to be 10-13% among girls and 3-5% among boys by the age of 18 years (Priebe & Svedin, 2009; Svedin & Priebe, 2009). Many studies have shown the short term (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993) and long term (Cutajar, Mullen, Ogloff, Thomas, Wells, & Spataro, 2010; Maniglio, 2009) impact of sexual abuse on mental health and psychosocial adaptation. Among these a sexual reactive pattern or sexualized behaviour also have been shown in the form of an increased rata of masturbation among younger children and promiscuity (prostitution or selling sex) among older children (Kendall-Tacket et al., 1993). The association between sexual abuse and Internet behaviour has scarcely been studied. However, Noll, Shenk, Barnes and Haralson (2013) found that maltreatment experiences (physical neglect, physical abuse, and/or sexual abuse), adolescent behaviour problems and low cognitive ability were uniquely associated with high-risk Internet behaviours**.**

Sexual health within the Swedish context

All human beings have the right to good sexual health. The World Health Organization [WHO] has defined it as:

"...a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled." (WHO, 2006*)*

This definition from the WHO gives some sense of how many complex and multifaceted factors contribute to acquiring and maintaining good sexual health. Sexual health is a public health matter as well as an individual concern. In a Swedish government bill (Proposition 2007/08:110), eleven goals were outlined promoting public health. One of them, point eight, "Safe Sexuality and Good Reproductive Health," works as a guide to promote good sexual health in Sweden. The work to promote better sexual health, among both adolescents and adults, addresses gender equality, sexual education programs, attention to inequalities, the right to contraceptives, safe abortions, prenatal care, medical care for new-borns, protection from STI, freedom from genital mutilation as well as sexual and other gender related violence (Prop, 2007/08:110). In Sweden it has for long been acceptable to talk with children about sex and also to do research on children and sexuality. Since 1955, sex education has been mandatory and is now incorporated in all subjects in the Swedish curriculum for primary schools (Skolverket, 2014).

The sexual health among Swedish youth seems good. A majority of youth have a positive attitude to sexuality, are happy about their sex life and most of the sexual experiences are positive (Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005; Rogala & Tydén, 2003; Tydén, & Rogala, 2004). Sweden and the Scandinavian countries are seen as one of the most gender equal countries in Europe along with fostering one of the most permissive sexual attitudes (Arnett & Balle-Jenssen, 1993; Baumgartner, Sumter, Peter, Valkenburg and Livingstone, 2014; Widmer, Treas, & Newcomb, 1998). The differences between Sweden and for example the US in terms of gender equality and attitudes toward sexuality are larger than between Sweden and other European countries. This should be kept in mind when comparing research results (e.g. Harden, 2014).

Technology use among youth

Internet/mobile phone accessibility and online activities

The Internet has been well established for the past two decades. However, the increased availability of broadband connections in most homes, the revolution in mobile connectivity through smartphones and the advent of social networking platforms has fundamentally and irrevocably altered the communication and social behaviour of youth. Youth of today are no longer passive consumers of information, culture and knowledge, but rather active agents. Youth are more inclined to try out new technology and are less concerned about their technology use than adults (Ofcom, 2014). Individuals born after 1980 have been defined as digital natives (versus digital immigrants). Digital natives were born in an era of electronic multi-tasking and the differences between their online and offline lives are small (Palfrey & Grasser, 2008; Prensky, 2001).

Most Swedish youth have access to the Internet, as is the case in the UK and in the US (Ofcom, 2014; PEW Research Centre, 201; Statens Medieråd, 2013). The media habits of children have been investigated on five occasions between 2005 and 2013 (Statens Medieråd, 2005; 2006; 2008; 2010; 2013). It was found that daily Internet use among 13-16 year olds rose from 62% in 2010 to 93% in 2013. Increased access to Internet and smart phones probably drives for this trend. In a study from 2013, mobile phone access was almost 100% among 13-16 year olds (Statens Medieråd, 2013). In addition to accessing the Internet more frequently, young people use their technical devices for longer periods of time daily (Statens Medieråd, 2013).

The boundaries between online and offline are not always clear. Adolescents often carry their smartphones or mobile devices with them at all times and some are online almost all day. According to Statens Medieråd (2005), high consumer use was defined as more than three hours a day. According to this 2005 definition, a majority of all youth today, over 14 years, would be considered high consumers of the Internet and more than half would be considered high consumers of mobile phone technology (Statens Medieråd, 2013). The increase in the amount of time spent connecting through electronic devices makes earlier definitions of high consumption obsolete.

Online and mobile phone activities may be social or solitary. Common activities without social interactions include doing schoolwork, playing Internet games and watching video clips (Lenhart, 2012; Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011; Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013; Statens Medieråd,

2013). Other solitary activities include reading blogs, viewing pornography, listening to music and reading news (Statens Medieråd, 2013). Among social activities, communicating via mobile phone is the most common and text messaging is often more common than calling (Lenhart, 2009; PEW Research Center, 2013; Statens Medieråd, 2013).

Social networking sites offer another way of staying in contact and making new friends. In Sweden, 86% of 13-16 year olds and 91% of 17-18 year olds were members of a social networking site (Statens Medieråd, 2013). Social networking allows young people to engage with each other with increasing efficiency. Sites to which texts, pictures and films can be uploaded are the most popular (Lenhart, 2012; Maddon et al., 2013). Among Swedish youth, Facebook is the most popular social networking site followed by Instagram and Twitter (Statens Medieråd, 2013).

Concerns have been raised that online social interaction is replacing face- to-face contact offline and that there is a risk of social isolation (Weiser, 2000). However, for most young people, socialising online does not replace offline contact. Instead, the vast majority of online interactions are with peers known from school, clubs, religious organisations, sports activities, other familiar settings (Ito et al., 2009). In addition, the ability to communicate online offers expanded possibilities for interaction without having to be concerned with the logistics of scheduling meeting times, determining locations, and/or arranging transportation (Harris, 2014). Increased networking possibilities have also expanded social opportunities that traditionally have been limited to familiar social settings such as school or family. Clearly, the Internet offers broader possibilities for meeting new people. Studies also show that social networking makes adolescents feel better about themselves, less shy, more outgoing, more confident, more popular, and more sympathetic to others (Common Sense Media, 2012).

Gender differences

Many studies have found that media usage varies by gender (Livingstone et al., 2011; Maddon et al., 2013; Statens Medieråd, 2013). Younger age groups show fewer gender differences than older age groups (Livingstone et al., 2011; Statens Mediråd, 2013). In the US study by Madden et al. (2013), 34% of girls aged 14-17 accessed the Internet using their mobile phone versus 24% of boys the same age. This is notable because girls and boys are equally likely to be smartphone users. The largest gender differences are related to social media, computer games and video games. Girls spend more time on social media and boys spend more time playing games (Swedish Media Council, 2013). Among Swedish 13-year-

olds, 20% of the girls used social media more than three hours a day compared to 4% of boys. In the same age group, 36% of boys played computer or video games more than three hours a day compared to 0% of girls (Statens Medieråd, 2013). Gender differences in online pornography consumption have also been noted in many studies. Specifically, usage increases with age and is far more common among boys than girls (see e.g. Livingstone et al., 2011; Svedin, Åkerman, & Priebe, 2011; Statens Mediråd, 2008; 2010; 2013). Maddon et al. (2013) found that girls and boys between the ages of 14 and 17 generally share personal information on social media profiles at the same rates, although there are differences in what types of information they share. For example, boys were more likely than girls to share their phone numbers (26% vs. 14%).

Forsman (2013) conducted workshops and individual interviews with 147 Swedish youth between the ages of 10 and 13 and found significant differences in the sorts of pictures girls and boys sent or posted online. The youth were keenly aware of which pictures might be considered girlish or boyish. Boys were careful when posting pictures they had taken of themselves so that they, under no circumstances, could be classified as girlish or even worse, gayish. Instead, the boys wanted to show themselves as energetic that they didn't care about how the picture looked. The ideal was a stoneface. The girls tended to manipulate and edit their pictures for aesthetic reasons. A picture that was considered girlish often showed a smiling face and may have been taken from a skewed angle to make a more dynamic composition. The girls also described the duckface (pout with the mouth towards the camera) that they described apologetically and explained that many posted them but that others could perceive them as ridiculous.

Online sexual behaviours among youth

Youth are at a stage of life in which sexual exploration and social relationships are important. Most activities youth do offline they also do online. The Internet is used for sexual purposes both by adults and youth (see e.g. Daneback & Månsson, 2009; Döring, 2009; Freeman-longo, 2000; Svedin & Priebe, 2009). An often referred theory, which attempts to explain the popularity of the Internet for sexual purposes, is the Triple A Engine Theory (Cooper, 1998). This theory cites easy accessibility, affordability and anonymity as explanations. Over the years, researchers and clinicians have further developed this theory. For example, Subrahmanyam and Smahel (2011) added disembodiedness (meaning lack of information about face and body), self-disclosure and disinhibition. Hertlein & Stevenson (2010) related the Internet's popularity and the Triple A Engine theory to intimacy problems in relationships and ended up with seven As, adding approximation, acceptability, ambiguity and accommodation to Cooper's original three.

The term online sexual behaviour, also known as online sexual activity, refer to Internet use for any activity that involves sexuality for the purposes of recreation, entertainment, exploration, support, education, commerce and/or seeking out sexual and romantic partners (Cooper & Griffin-Shelly, 2002). Other studies have used a narrower definition of online sexual activities that includes establishing and maintaining relationships, obtaining information about sexuality, experiencing sexual arousal and seeking entertainment (Boies, Knudson, & Young, 2004; Goodson, McCormick, & Evans, 2000). Online sexual behaviours among youth include activities in which the young person is an active agent (focus in this thesis), such as sending sexual messages in text or thorough pictures/films and meeting with people online for sex online or offline, as well as activities in which they are passive such as accessing sexual information, pornography consumption.

Accessing sexual information

Youth have a strong interest in sex and thirst for information about it. The Internet offers access to an almost infinite source of knowledge. In Sweden, www.UMO.se (2015), is a popular website for young people, with information about sexuality, health and relationships. On this website it is possible to ask questions anonymously. Professionals, such as nurses, midwives, counsellors, doctors, psychologists or dieticians answer the questions. The web site is popular among youth between 15 and 25 years of age, and has around 570,000 visitors every month. Even though sex education in Swedish schools has been mandatory

since the 1950s, there is still a need for other sources of information about sex. According to some studies, the Internet is preferred over school, peers and partners as a source of information about sex (Jones & Biddlecom, 2011; Suzuki & Calzo, 2004). The need for information has been especially important to groups of youth with special needs. For example, youth from sexual minorities have reported that visiting Internet-based sites made them feel less isolated and provided much needed advice and support. This helped them cope with the stress and potential stigma of their orientation (Mustanski, Lyons, & Garcia, 2011).

Pornography consumption

Most young people have come across sexual media or sexual material of some kind (Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). Some have come across it accidentally while others have actively searched for it. Sexual material may be consumed alone or together with a partner or peers (Peter & Valkenburg, 2006a). Even though boys and girls both have experiences of consuming pornography, more boys than girls are high consumers (see e.g. Häggström-Nordin et al., 2005; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006a; 2006b; Svedin, Åkerman, & Priebe, 2011). In a Swedish study including 2,015 young men, 10.5% reported watching pornography almost daily and were considered frequent users of pornography. They watched most of the material via the Internet and high frequency use of pornography consumption was associated with a positive attitude towards pornographic material, more sexual lust and more alcohol use, drug abuse and behavioural problems (Svedin et al., 2011).

There are indications that viewing pornography can sometimes cause habituation, leading to increased use over time. However, most youth decrease their use over time and instead seek out their own sexual experiences. Few men reported giving up watching pornography entirely (Hald, 2006). Many studies have shown associations between pornography and a range of sexual outcomes and behaviours (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009; Hald, Smolenski, & Rosser, 2013; Morgan, 2011). Studies have reached different conclusions regarding the influence of pornography on young people's sex lives. Peter and Valkenburg (2006b) found that adolescents with high levels of exposure to pornography thought that what they saw (anal sex, variations of oral sex, threesomes and moresomes) depicted typical sexual activities among their peers. However, in a recent study by Hald, Kuyper, Adam, and deWit (2013) consumption of sexually explicit material was only one factor among many that influenced the online sexual behaviour of youth.

Sending sexual messages in text, pictures and films

Definition and prevalence

One of the most studied online sexual behaviours among youth is the sexual communication that takes place through text messages, pictures and films. There are many terms used to describe this phenomenon. For example, in the US and the UK, the term sexting is used most often. Sexting includes sending, posting and receiving sexually suggestive text messages, pictures or films via mobile phone or over the Internet (for review see Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014). Some studies focus on specific aspects of sexting, such as the self-production of pictures and films. In addition to the term sexting, other terms such as self-produced sexual images (Quayle, Jonsson, Cooper, & Svedin, 2014) and self-produced child pornography are used (Leary, 2008). In Sweden, the term voluntary online sexual exposure has been used (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2009; 2012). The differences in terms and definitions makes it difficult to compare findings across studies (e.g. Drouin, Vogel, Surbey, & Stills, 2013; Klettke et al., 2014; Lounsbury, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2011). In a review study by Döring (2014) regarding sexting, the prevalence among studies ranged from 2.5% to 21%. According to the author, the wide range of findings could be explained by the differences in the age groups studied, different samples, different data collection methods and different sexting definitions.

In Sweden, there are only a few studies that focus on voluntary online sexual exposure. In a study by Svedin & Priebe (2009), 10% of the 18-year olds in the study had posted nude or semi-nude pictures or films of themselves on the Internet. In another study by Ungdomsstyrelsen (2009), 7.8% of youths between the ages of 16 and 25 had posted "sexy" pictures or films of themselves on the Internet. In 2012, Ungdomsstyrelsen repeated their study and found the frequency had decreased to 4.7% (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2012).

Socio-demography and psychosocial health

Although there is variation in methodology among researchers and in their definitions of sexting, some similar patterns can be seen with regard to results. For example, many studies show that older youths engage in more sexting than younger youths (e.g. Cox Communications, 2009; Dake, Price, Maziarz, & Ward, 2012; Lenhart, 2009; 2013; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones, & Wolak, 2012; Rice, et al., 2012). In addition, there are gender differences even though research results are mixed. Some researchers found similar rates of sexting for boys and girls (e.g. Dake, et al., 2012; Lenhart, 2009; Rice et al., 2014), while others found a higher frequency among boys (Dowdell, Burgess, & Flores, 2011) and vice versa (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Jones, 2012; National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy & CosmoGirl.com, 2008). Data from the EU Kids

Online Project showed that in Sweden boys sent and posted sexual pictures slightly more than girls, 12.9% vs. 10.2% (Baumgartner et al., 2014), while the studies from Ungdomsstyrelsen (2009; 2012) indicated that girls posted sexual pictures more often than boys (6.2 % vs. 4.0%).

Producing and sending sexual pictures and films are activities that take place in most countries and across both racial and ethnic borders (Peterson-Lyer, 2013). Differences have been found between ethnic groups (Dake et al., 2012), and the study by Benotsch, Snipes, Martin and Bull (2013) suggested that white participants sexted to a greater extent than non-white participants. Differences have also been found between countries. A study from the EU Kids Online Project (Baumgartner et al., 2014), including data from 20 European countries, found that traditionalism significantly predicted gender difference in sexting. In countries with more traditional male and female roles, boys sexted more than girls.

Studies focusing on psychosocial health and sexting are scarce (Klettke et al., 2014). Van Ouytsel, Walgrave, and Van Gool (2014) found a relationship between sexting and depression among Dutch youth. Dake et al. (2012) found a similar correlation. On the other hand, there are studies that have shown no correlations with depression (Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, Grodzinski, & Zimmerman, 2013; Temple et al., 2014). In the study by Temple, Le, van den Berg, Ling, Paul, and Temple (2014) associations were found between sexting and depression in their unadjusted models, but not when prior sexual behaviour, age, gender, race, ethnicity, and parental education were adjusted for. In a recent Swedish study by Sobring, Skoog, and Bohlin (2014), girls who were engaged in sexual or romantic activities online had poorer relationships with their mothers, fathers and peers. Boys similarly engaged reported a poorer relationship with their fathers. When it comes to personality and risk behaviour, youth who scored high on sensation seeking were more likely to be engaged in sexting (Temple et al., 2014; Van Ouytsel et al., 2014). Sexting has also been shown to be associated with alcohol and drug use (Benotsch et al., 2013; Dake et al., 2012; Dir, Coskunpinar, Steiner, & Cyders, 2013; Perkins, Becker, Tehee, & Mackelsprang, 2014; Temple et al., 2014).

Associations with sexual behaviours

The association between sexting and other sexual activities has been well established. Youth who are sexters are more sexually active (Dake et al., 2012; Dir et al., 2013; Houck, Barker, Rizzo, Hancock, Norton, & Brown, 2014; Rice et al., 2014; Sorbring et al., 2014) and became sexually active earlier in life (Englander, 2012; Rice et al., 2014; Perkins et al., 2014). In a recent six-year longitudinal study (Temple & Choi, 2014), data were used from wave 2 (spring 2011) and 3 (spring 2012). Participants included 964 adolescents with a mean age of 16. In

this study, sexting was found to precede sexual intercourse. The authors argue that sexting might serve as prelude or gateway behaviour to actual sexual behaviour, or as a way of indicating readiness to take intimacy to the next level. Temple and Choi (2014) did not find a relationship with sexual risk behaviour, contrary to the findings of other cross-sectional studies (Benotsch et al., 2013; Dake et al., 2012; Ferguson, 2010; Perkins et al., 2014; Rice et al., 2014) where sexting was associated with high-risk sexual behaviours (e.g. multiple partners and anal sex and unprotected sex).

Motivating factors

In a recent review study about sexting by Klettke et al. (2014), only five studies were identified which included motivating factors as to why youth sext, which suggests a gap of knowledge in this area. One commonly cited motivation was to be flirtatious or to feel sexy (Dir et al., 2013; Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Perkins et al., 2014; Weisskirch & Delvi, 2010). In addition, many youths send sexts as part of a romantic or sexual relationship. It can be a joke, or as an attempt to start a relationship (Cox Communications, 2009; Lenhart, 2009; Mitchell et al. 2012; National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com, 2008; Perkins et al., 2014). Moreover, sexting has been described as a form of self-expression or as a way of establishing identity by experimenting with sexuality (Dir et al., 2013; Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Lenhart, 2009). Beside the positive motivational factors, youth can also be more or less coerced to send sexual material (Associated Press & MTV, 2009; Handerson & Morgan, 2011).

Meeting with people online for online or offline sex

Online dating for romantic or sexual relationships

Using the Internet to communicate with known friends, find new ones or to find a partner is an everyday activity for many youths. The line between what should be seen as a dating behaviour or communication without that intent is not always clear. Making contacts online for sex talk online or sexual encounters offline has been studied, foremost from a risk perspective (e.g. Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010; Baumgartner, Sumter, Peter, & Valkenburg 2012; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2001). In a Swedish study by Svedin and Priebe (2009), 56.9% of youth had got to know someone online and then met them offline. More boys than girls had this experience. Most of the participants reported that the meetings had been fun or nothing special. In the same study 11.6% of the youths in this study said they had met someone on the Internet and then met for sex offline. Boys had this experience more often than girls, and boys had more often met someone who was younger or the same age. The girls had more experiences of

meeting someone the same age or older. However, only a few of the participants (6-8%) had met someone five or more years older than themselves.

Research describing online dating among youth is scarce. Most research focuses on the problematic side of online dating, such as the risk of dating violence and the risk of being sexually abused (Dick et al., 2014). However, research shows that sexual communication in text or through pictures or films is often seen as part of dating behaviour (e.g. Temple & Choi, 2014). In a recent Swedish study (Sorbring et al., 2014), online and offline sexual and romantic activities were investigated in relation to wellbeing. The study included 496 teenagers and all had experience of offline sexual/romantic activities and 54% had experience of online and offline sexual/romantic activities. The more the adolescent had engaged in sexual activities in one context, the more they engaged in sexual activities in the other. Engaging in online sexual/romantic activities were linked to early pubertal timing, older age in boys, low body esteem and risk and problem behaviours. For girls, engaging in these activities was associated with poor relationships with mothers, fathers and peers, and for boys with a poor relationship with fathers. The authors concluded that being sexually active online is linked to negative outcomes (Sorbring et al., 2014).

Selling sex online

Definition and prevalence

Young people selling sex online can be understood from different perspectives. In most jurisdictions and social settings, sex selling is seen as sexual exploitation of children and as such is both serious and harmful to the children involved (see Coy, 2009, 2012; United Nations (UN: 2000). Under Swedish law it is a crime to purchase sexual services from an individual of any age, but if the person is a child under the age of 15, it is considered rape (Svensk Författningssamling [SFS], 1962). This means that a child in the sex trade is always the victim of a crime, even if the child initiated the contact with the buyer.

In many areas of the world, such as North America and Sweden, the marketplace for sex selling has gradually shifted from being street-based to being online-based (Cunningham & Kendall, 2012; Priebe & Svedin, 2012). There has also been an increase in online-related sex selling among young people (Fredlund, Svensson, Svedin, Priebe, & Wadsby 2013). In a study by Svensson, Fredlund, Svedin, Priebe, & Wadsby, 2013), 1.5 % of Swedish youth (*m*= 18.3 years) reported that they had sold sexual services. Studies from other Western countries show similar results: 1% and 1.4% of youths in Denmark and Norway respectively had received payment for sex (Helweg-Larsen, 2003; Pedersen & Hegna,

2003). In a Canadian study that included 815 students between 15 and 18 years of age, 4% reported receiving money, drugs, alcohol, gifts or other compensation in exchange for sex (Lavoie, Thibodeau, Gagne, & Herbert, 2010). In Sweden, a majority of the connections between buyer and seller for all sex selling interactions among youth are made online. However, even though the Internet and mobile phones are convenient media to use for contacts, the number of Swedish youths with experiences of selling sex has not increased between 2004 and 2009 (Fredlund et al., 2013).

Socio-demographic and psychosocial health

There are no studies specifically describing young people selling sex online and if they differ from youth selling sex offline. However, most of the research on this subject, both qualitative and quantitative, suggests that young people involved in selling sex come from disadvantaged backgrounds constitutes a vulnerable group. For example, Svedin and Priebe (2007) found that the mental health of Swedish young people (*m*= 18.2 years) who sold sex was worse, especially among girls, than that of the reference group. Furthermore, studies show that young people involved in selling sex have more problematic relationships with their parents (Edwards, Iritani, & Hallfors, 2006; Fredlund et al., 2013; Johnson, Rew, & Sternglanz, 2006; Kidd & Kral, 2002; Roe-Sepowitz, 2012), less often live with both parents (Fredlund et al., 2013) and more often live in abusive families (Bagley & Young, 1987; Wilson & Widom, 2010).

Along with the overrepresentation of poor family-function, correlations have been found between selling sex and sexual abuse (Bagley & Young, 1987; Lavoie, Thibodeau, Gagné, & Hébert, 2010; Svedin & Priebe, 2007; Wilsom & Widom, 2010). In a study by Svensson et al. (2013) as many as 78.4% of the young people who had sold sex had been exposed to sexual abuse, and 51% had been exposed to penetrating sexual abuse. In a longitudinal study by Kaestle (2012), childhood sexual abuse and running away from home stood out as critical risk factors for adolescents who had sold sex. In a study by Roe-Sepowitz (2012), emotional abuse was found to increase girls' vulnerability to prostitution and also appeared more important than experiences of childhood physical or sexual abuse. Challenging background factors may help to explain why children or young people engage in risky behaviour such as running away from home (Kaestle, 2012; Pearce, 2003; Roe-Sepowitz, 2012; Roy et al., 2000; Tyler, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cauce, 2001), drug abuse (Nadon, Koverola, & Schludermann, 1998; Martin, Hearst, & Widome, 2010), earlier alcohol debut (Svedin & Priebe, 2007), antisocial behaviour (Svedin & Priebe, 2007), and self-harming behaviours (Svensson et al., 2013).

Motivating factors

Only few studies have focused on the factors that motivate youths to sell sex, and even fewer researchers have asked youths themselves to describe the functions of sex selling. In a Swedish study (Larsdotter et al., 2011) young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer (LGBTQ) persons were interviewed about their experiences of selling sex, including motivation factors. The authors concluded that the phenomenon of young people selling sex can not be understood as a problem that has only one cause and one solution. They also stressed that self-esteem and sexual vulnerability co-varied in that when the informant´s self-esteem increased the sexual vulnerability decreased.

As described above, young people may enter the sex trade because of challenging life situations. They may, for example, be in need of money, drugs or a place to stay. In a national survey from the US, children who do not live at home have been identified as the largest risk group for sexual exploitation (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Studies have also shown that for some, a third part, such as a pimp, a boyfriend or another adult introduces them to the sex trade and maintains their contacts with the buyers (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Finkelhor & Ormrod, 2004; Silbert & Pines, 1982) In some cases, young people are sold and transported between or within countries, often referred to as "trafficking for sexual purposes" (United Nations [UN], 2004).
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While practical needs or coercive situations may lead to sex selling, studies indicate that there are many factors that are important for young people who enter and stay in the sex trade. For example, some are motivated by curiosity and excitement. In a Dutch qualitative study (van den Walle, Picavet, van Berlo, & Verhoeff, 2012) 30 in depth interviews were conducted with young men and women aged 14 to 24 years who had experiences of trading sex. In some of the cases the participants reported that the curiosity, excitement and thrill of selling sex was central for them. Some were attracted to the sex partner or found the whole situation of having paid sex with a stranger exciting. Receiving money or gifts was important for some but not for others.

Differences between youth selling sex online and offline

There are only a few studies that focus on the special circumstances related to young people selling sex online. In their study of the online sex trade, Cunningham and Kendall (2010) found that most women who solicit online were relatively young, with 82% being in their teens or twenties. Wells, Mitchell, and Kai (2012) investigated juvenile prostitution (up to age 17) that included an online component and was known to law enforcement. They found that the Internet cases involved younger juveniles than the offline cases, and that almost 90% involved some type of third-party offender. Cunningham and Kendall (2011) argue that the development of online prostitution has changed the face of sex work, and

not necessarily for the worse. They found, for example, that sex selling adults on the streets took more risks than online sex sellers and that online sex sellers were behaviourally and demographically different from street-based sex workers. Based on the results of their study, the authors concluded that the online situation may attract new groups of sex sellers (Cunningham & Kendall, 2011).

One difference between online and offline sex selling is the way seller and buyer get in contact with each other. Most research on online sex selling has focused on adults advertising sex acts openly (e.g., Cunningham & Kendall, 2010; 2011). Several Swedish studies of online selling sex indicate that young people under the age of 18, seldom advertise explicitly about sex acts (Abelsson & Hulusjö, 2008; Johansson & Turesson, 2006; Olsson, 2007). Instead, it seems that young people use other ways to make contact that are not yet described in the literature. Quayle et al. (2012) described how contacts between adults and young people on Internet sites for youth could lead to sexual encounters online or offline. In some of these cases, monetary compensation was offered, while in others there were other forms of compensation, including an exchange of attention and affirmation.

Negative consequences of online sexual behaviours

Negative experiences online can happen when being passive (for example receiving unwanted sexual material) but the risks increases with certain behaviours online. It is no way straight ford which online sexual behaviours should be considered a risk or opportunity. Livingstone and Helsper (2010) stressed that there can be uncertainty as to which online activities should be restricted and which ones should be encouraged. Meeting a person online, for example, can be an opportunity to get to know someone. On the other hand, these social interactions increase the risks of facing negative consequences such as receiving unwanted sexual approaches (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007b). Baumgartner et al. (2010; 2012) defined online sexual risk behaviours as the exchange of intimate sexually insinuating information or material with someone exclusively known online. The authors included the following four behaviours: searching online for someone to talk to about sex; searching online for someone to have sex with; sending intimate photos or videos to someone online; disclosing personal information like telephone numbers and addresses to someone online. Some of the behaviours that could be included in the definition as being risky, are performed by a substantial part of youth. For example, in a study by Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Ybarra (2008), 49% of the youth, had communicated online with a stranger. In a Swedish study (Svedin & Priebe, 2009), 37.9 % have met a person offline that they only knew online.

Studies focusing on the caused harm of sexual risk behaviour online are few (Livingstone & Smith, 2014), why the knowledge about the children and youth who have been victimized in an online setting is limited. Some of the potential negative consequences may occur in relation to online sexual behaviours/online risk behaviours are elaborated on below:

Problematic use of Internet and mobile phones - The use of smartphones and the unlimited accessibility to Internet can make it hard for some youth to limit their time online. Spending too much time on the Internet and using the mobile phone is an increasing problem (Statens Medieråd, 2010; 2013). In the Swedish study (Statens Medieråd, 2013), 19% of the girls and 7% of the boys reported that they used the Internet more than they wished. It is however not only the time spent online that can be problematic. Pornography consumption, for example, can be associated with problems for some (Hald, 2006; Svedin et al., 2011). Some researchers have compared problematic Internet and mobile phone use to other types of addictive behaviours (Delmonico & Graffin, 2008). Today Internet addiction is not a diagnosis in DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and researchers are in disagreement whether it is possible to be addicted to Internet (see Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011).

Unwanted sexual approaches - One of the most studied consequences of online sexual victimisation are unwanted sexual approaches. In a study by Finkelhor, Mitchell and Wolak (2001), 19% of 10-17 years olds reported unwanted sexual solicitation over the Internet in the last year. The same study showed that almost 6% had been threatened or harassed and over 3% had received aggressive sexual solicitations (solicitors attempted or made offline contact with youth through regular mail, by telephone or in person) from someone met online. Although approximately on quarter of the participants had been distressed by these incidents, few reported them to authority. In another US study (Jones et al., 2012), youth aged 10-17 years, were asked if anyone on the Internet had asked for sexual information that they did not want to give. These types of solicitations were reported by 9% of the respondents and were more prevalent among older than younger youth. In a Swedish study (Brottsförebyggande rådet, 2007), almost 7,500 youth, aged 14-15 years, were asked if unknown adults had made contacts and suggestions of sexual nature. Among the youth 30% (48% girls and 18% boys) reported they had had contacts with sexual content through the Internet during the last year, and 25% (38% girls and 12% boys) had been given sexual suggestions or being asked for sexual services through the Internet over the same period. In the study by Mitchell et al. (2001), 25% of those being solicited online reported higher levels of distress after the solicitation incident. Risk of distress was more prevalent among the younger youth who had received aggressive solicitations (the solicitor attempted or made offline contact), and those who were solicited on

a computer away from home. Concerning unwanted sexual solicitation US figures show a trend of decrease (Jones et al., 2012).

Cyberbullying - Peer victimisation online, often referred to as cyberbullying, includes different aggressive acts by same age peers (see e.g. Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Smith & Slonje, 2010). Cyberbullying incorporates the same elements as bullying offline including such as aggression/aggressor, power imbalance/power differential. (see Olweus, 1993). Smith and Slonje (2010) identified seven types of cyber bullying. These were: mobile phone call bullying; text message bullying; picture/video clip bullying; email bullying; chat room bullying; bullying through instant messaging; bullying via websites. In a study by Rivers and Noret (2010) email bullying was found to include threats of physical violence, abusive or hate related, name calling (including homophobia), death threats, ending an platonic relationship(s), sexual acts, demands/instructions, threats to damage existing relationships, threats to home/family and menacing a chain message. The texts or other material sent in relation to cyber bullying can be directed threats as shown above but there is also a risk of material being spread within a peer group without the knowledge of the bullied person. In a study by Slonje, Smith, and Frisén (2013), 9% of the youth who had seen material intended to cyberbully someone else and forwarded the material to other friends and 6% showed or forwarded the material to the victims to bully him/her further.

Cyberdating violence - Even if a young person is communicating with someone they know or are in a relationship with, there is a risk that technology can be used to facilitate or propagate abuse (Associated press & MTV, 2009). Sending sexual images to a partner can be done after feeling pressured to do so (Associated Press & MTV, 2009; Handerson & Morgan, 2011). In a study by Dick et al. (2014), cyber dating abuse among youth (14-19 year olds) who had soughed care at school-based health centres were investigated. In the study 13% reported sexual cyber dating abuse. Some of the youth also reported that their partners had repeatedly contacted them to see where they were and whom they were with (31% of the girls and 21% of the boys). Those who reported sexual cyber dating abuse were also more likely to report sexual victimisation by someone they were going out with or were hooked up with as well as experience of non-partner sex violence.

Lured and groomed online - Child sex offenders have for long been known to use different strategies to gain access to children (Olson, Daggs, Ellevold, & Rogers, 2007; Sullivan & Beech, 2002). To "prepare" the child for sexual abuse is sometimes called grooming (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006) and can take place both in an offline and in an online environment (Kloess, Beech, & Harkins, 201). In the EU project Risk-taking, Online Behaviour, Empowerment through Re-

search and Training (ROBERT), interviews were conducted with 27 young victims of online grooming (Quayle et al., 2012). Five different themes were identified within the grooming process: feeling that something is missing from one´s life; the importance of being someone who is connected online; getting caught in a web and making choices; others involvement; closing the box and picking up the pieces. In another qualitative study, Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, and Beech (2014) interviewed children that were victims of online grooming. The grooming process online was identified to involve different techniques such as: conversation; deception, regular/intense contact; secrecy; sexualisation, kindness and flattery; erratic temperament; nastiness and grooming others. The authors concluded that the grooming process was not a linear or homogeneous process where the offenders did move through the grooming phases in any particular order, instead it was more of a cyclic process (Whittle et al., 2014).

Sexual abuse/exploitation online - Some contacts online might result in sexual harassments or abuse (see above descriptions). For those where the online contacts lead to sexual abuse, the consequences could be severe. Research on this group of youth is still scarce (see Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Among Swedish youth who had met a person offline, 2.5% felt pressured or forced to have sex and 2% had received money or gifts for sex (Svedin & Priebe, 2009). In Sweden there are currently criminal cases involving children who have been forced to have webcam sex including penetrating themselves. A majority of these youth have never met the perpetrator offline. Related to online sexual abuse are also different forms of sexual exploitations such as child prostitution and child pornography.

Described above are examples of different forms of problematic or abusive situations youth can face related to online sexual behaviours. Children victims of online sexual harassments, abuse and exploitation face the same consequences as children victims of offline related abuse do (Jonsson, Warfvinge, & Banck, 2009). The online situations, however, might involve some unique circumstances such as sexual material being produced spread (Svedin & Back, 2003).

Theoretical framework

Human ecology model

When studying young people's online sexual behaviours the theoretical framework needs to cover many areas of the young persons development and actual situation. One of the most referred models in order to understand and explain human development and behaviour is the human ecology model, put forward by Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979). Bronfenbrenners model is a system of different ecological levels where the lower included in the higher. A human being is regarded as constantly interacting with his or her environment and constantly evolving. The different environments interact with each other and the older the child becomes, the wider and more complex the child's social life becomes.

The four original ecological levels were microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. In addition a fifth system was added and called the chronosystem and is related to time. Originally the child's own biology had no prominent place in Bronfenbrenners theory but in his later work this became more important (2005) and he refined his model and called it the bioecological model. In the model below (Figure 1) the biology is included in the level named individual.
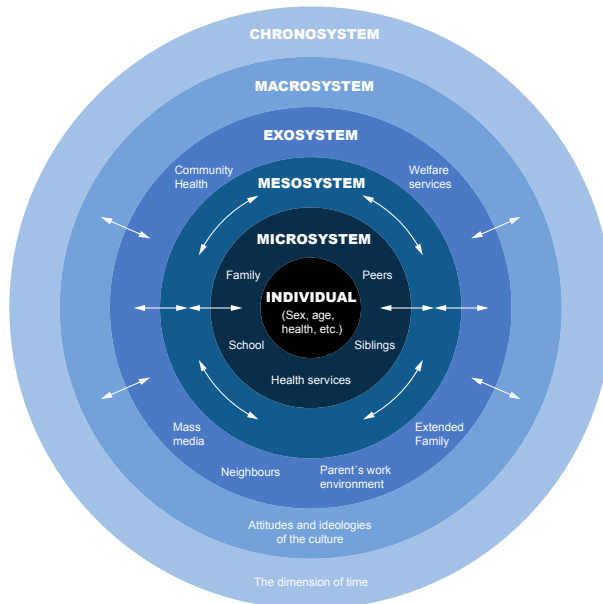

Figure 1. The Ecological Model

The *microsystem* relates to the child´s closest relations such as parents, siblings, close relatives, peers, nanny, day-care personal and teachers.

The *mesosystem* involves the interconnections between the microsystems. It can be relationships between the child's peers and the family and can include for example friends interacting with parents, parents interacting with teachers, teachers interacting with friends and so on.

The next level is the *exosystem*. This is the environmental setting that a child is not actively involved in, but is influenced by. An example could for example be a neighbourhood that is transformed by a large influx or exodus, which can affect the quality of teaching in school or peer network. Other factors of importance for a child could be the local availability of day care, culture and sport- and leisure activities in the community.

The *macrosystem* is next and serves as the overall definition of the child's culture on a societal level and includes economic, social, cultural, legal and political systems that come to concrete expression on the other levels. For example are legislative activities as the anti-spanking and anti-grooming law in Sweden and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), all legislations or conventions that could help the child to a better life in the family or society.

The final level is the *chronosystem*, which is defined by major life transitions, environmental events and historical events that occur during development. The specific incidents tend to change or transition how the child interacts with all the rest. Experiencing parental divorce or moving to another city could be rather common example of transitions that a child has to adapt to over a period of time.

The ecological model has been shown to be useful for understanding how different environments affect children´s and young people´s lives and wellbeing including the sexual development. Corcoran (2000) showed in a review study how all levels in the ecological model play part in the sexual development of adolescence. Also the sexological system theory by Jones, Meneses, and Soloski (2011) is developed bases on the theories of Bronfenbrenners ecological and the bio ecological models.

Attachment theory

Attachment theory was developed by Bowlby and describes the early interaction between the child and the parent, or another persons caring for the child (Bowlby, 1980). This interaction is not based on physiological needs but more of a psychological need for love and comfort. From six months of age the child looks for closeness and attachment to its caregiver for protection, care and security. The child seeks the caregiver when distressed for comfort and support, as a secure base (Bowlby, 1980). May Ainsworth further developed the theory by Bowlby and found three different attachment styles among children: secure, anxious- avoidant and anxious- ambivalent (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). A fourth attachment style, disorganised, were later added (Main & Salomon, 1990). As the child grows older the relationship develops, internalises and becomes internal working models that the child can use to learn and understand social interaction with others and in oneself. Disturbances in the attachment process can inhibit or harm the child (Broberg, 2008).

During adolescence the child focus more and more on relationships with peers but also starts to find romantic/sexual relationships. The attachment style between the caregiver and the child seem to mirror the way the child interacts with peers. Furman, Simon, Shaffer, and Bouchey (2002) found that friendships in late adolescence were related to those with parents and romantic partners. Interestingly, they also found significant differences in the attachment security status of adolescents to their parents and peers. For example, some adolescents who were classified as dismissing with their parents were classified as secure with their peers. One explanation for this was that at this point in development, some adolescents may not feel that their parents are responsive in times of need, and therefore seek this comfort from friends instead (Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002).

When it comes to sexual behaviours attachment theory has been used to understand for example different romantic/sexual relationships. Studies have shown that those high in attachment- anxiety are more motivated towards sex for emotional closeness and intimacy, and those high in attachment- avoidance tend to have more casual sex and have not motivations for emotional closeness and intimacy (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2004). Also when it comes to online sexual behaviours studies have shown different ways of behaving online depending on attachment style (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Drouin & Tobin, 2014).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Overall aims

The overall aims of the thesis were to investigate young people and their experiences of different online sexual behaviours with regard to characteristics, associations and consequences, by using data from a representative sample of 3,503 Swedish youth. In addition interviews were conducted with 16 young women who had experiences of selling sex before the age of 18. Focus of these interviews was in which ways contacts between buyer and seller was established and motivational factors.

Aims and hypothesis

Study I (Quantitative study)

The first study aimed to increase the knowledge of voluntary online sexual exposure among Swedish youth. It intended to estimate the extent to which Swedish youth have experienced voluntary online sexual exposure, and if there were any differences between girls and boys. More specifically the aims were:

- To study the social background of the youths.
- To study different aspects of the Internet behaviour
- To study associations between psychosocial health, experiences of parental care during childhood, and voluntary online sexual exposure.

Study II (Quantitative study)

The second study compared four different online sexual behaviours (met online for sex online; met online for sex offline; posted sexual pictures online; sold sex online) as an hierarchy in which meeting a person online for sex online was considered the least advanced and selling sex online was the most advanced. The hypothesis was that more advanced online sexual behaviours would be associated

with poorer psychosocial health, lower self-esteem, poorer relationship with their parents and an increased risk taking in general. The study aimed to investigate:

- The potential differences in background between those who had performed any of the four online sexual behaviours and those who had not.
- Whether performance of any of these behaviours was more related than others to decreased psychosocial well-being and a history of more risk-taking and more sexual experiences.

Study III (Qualitative study)

The third study aimed to examine the role the Internet plays for young women selling sex online, focusing on the methods of contact and the characteristics of the communication online between the buyer and the young women.

Study IV (Qualitative study)

The fourth study aimed to study young women selling sex online and their perceptions of their motivations for entering, staying in and exiting the sex trade.

Methods

The thesis included two sets of data. Study I & II, were based on data from a Swedish representative cross sectional study including 3,503 youth in their third year in high school (Svedin & Priebe, 2009) while study III & IV were based on qualitative interviews with 16 young women with experiences of selling sex online.

Study I & II (Quantitative studies)

Participants

A representative sample of Swedish high school seniors was selected by Statistics Sweden using information from the Swedish School Register. According to official statistics, 91% of Swedish 18 year olds were enrolled in high school, 2% were studying in other educational alternatives such as college while 7% were not studying in 2009 (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2009).

The sampling frame consisted of all students in the second year of Swedish high schools with at least 10 students. In total, there were 123,551 students at 754 schools in 2007. The sampling frame was stratified by number of students enrolled at each school (10–190, 191–360 and >360 students) and educational program (20 programs). A random sample that included one or two programs at 150 schools was selected (7,700 students) and 119 schools chose to participate (Figure 2). Of the 5,792 enrolled students at these schools, 3,503 participated in the study resulting in a response rate of 60.5%. Five students were excluded due to unserious or incomplete responses (*n*= 5). Participants who did not answer the question about gender (n=38) or who did not see themselves as male or females (*n*= 28) were excluded. The remaining students finally constituted the starting material for study I & II with 3,432 respondents, 1,594 (46.4%) boys and (53.6% girls), with a mean age of 18.3 (range 18-22) (Figure 2).

In the first study youth who did not answer the question about voluntary online sexual exposure (*n*= 144) was excluded. The final sample consisted of 3,288 respondents, 1507 (45.8%) boys and 1781 (54.2%), (Figure 2).

In the second study youth who did not answer questions about online sexual behaviours (164-207) were excluded. The final sample thus varied according with the four questions answered from 3,225 to 3268 with 1453-1494 boys and 1756-1774 girls (Figure 2).

Procedure

Statistiska Centralbyrån [Statistics Sweden] distributed and collected the questionnaires to all participating schools between January and April 2009. An information letter was sent to the principals of the selected schools, and two weeks later additional information and questionnaires were sent to the principals and teachers with a reminder by telephone a month later. Students received written information about the study and gave informed consent for participation when filling in the questionnaire. Teachers distributed the paper-and-pencil questionnaires that were completed anonymously in the classroom during school hours and placed in a sealed envelope by the students themselves. The schools returned the questionnaires to Statistics Sweden. Written information about where to get counselling in case of a need for support was given to all students.
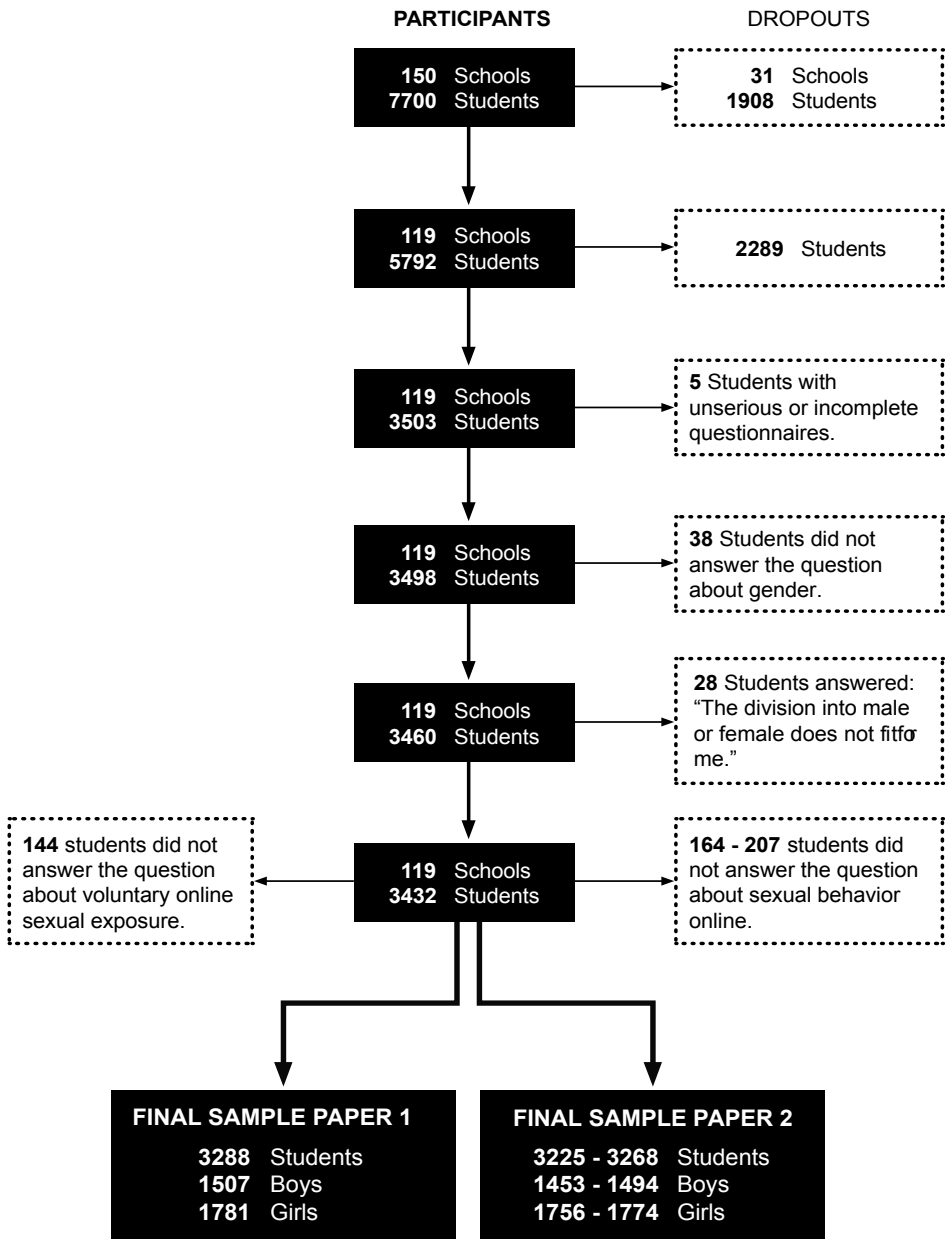
PARTICIPANTS   DROPOUTS

| **150** Schools
7700 Students | → | **31** Schools
1908 Students |

↓

| **119** Schools
5792 Students | → | **2289** Students |

↓

| **119** Schools
3503 Students | → | **5** Students with unserious or incomplete questionnaires. |

↓

| **119** Schools
3498 Students | → | **38** Students did not answer the question about gender. |

↓

| **119** Schools
3460 Students | → | **28** Students answered: "The division into male or female does not fit for me." |

↓

144 students did not answer the question about voluntary online sexual exposure. ← | **119** Schools
3432 Students | → **164 - 207** students did not answer the question about sexual behavior online.

↓   ↓

| **FINAL SAMPLE PAPER 1**

3288 Students
1507 Boys
1781 Girls | **FINAL SAMPLE PAPER 2**

3225 - 3268 Students
1453 - 1494 Boys
1756 - 1774 Girls |

Figure 2. Flowchart over themes and sub-themes, study I & II

Measures

The questionnaire used in the study was based on the questionnaire from the Baltic Sea Regional Study of Adolescents Sexuality (Mossige, Ainsaar, & Svedin, 2007) with the addition of questions about use of the Internet. The questionnaire consisted of 88 questions covering nine major areas: socio-demographic data and background; lifestyle and health; love and consensual sexual experiences including sending sexual messages; emotional, sexual, and physical abuse experiences; sexually coercive behaviour; use of the Internet and mobile phones and Internet-related harassments and sexual abuse; experiences of selling sex; use of pornography; seeking support.

The young people who participated in the study did their third year in high school where three programs are offered: higher education preparatory programs, typically including humanities, natural science, and social science; vocational programs, such as health and social care, building and construction, hotel management, and tourism; other programs, such as preparatory education, program-oriented individual options, vocational introduction, individual alternative, and introductory language (Skolverket, 2014).

To describe psychosocial health, self- esteem, sense of coherence, parental bonding and to study rape myths, different standardized instruments were used:

Symptom Checklist-25 (Study I & II)

The Symptom Checklist- 25 (SCL-25) is a self-administered widely used instrument and basically a shortened version of the SCL-90 (Derogatis, 1983) covering two symptom dimensions (anxiety and depression) out of the originally nine. It measures the prevalence of psychological symptoms, mainly depression and anxiety during the previous week. Every question consists of four possible responses, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The total value ranges between 25 and 100. High values indicate high occurrence of symptoms. The SCL-25 instrument has been used in several Nordic studies (e.g. Nettelbladt, Hansson, Stefansson, Borgquist, & Nordström, 1993; Strand, Dalgard, Tambs, & Rognerud, 2003) and has proved to have satisfactory validity and reliability as a measure of psychological distress (Glass, Allan, Uhlenhur, Kimball, Borinstein,1978; Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974). A cut-off of score above 80th percentile was set in study II as the level of a problematic symptom load. Cronbach's alpha was .96 in study I and .93 in study II.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Study I & II)

Self-esteem was measured using The Rosenberg Self- esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1989). The RSES is widely used both in clinical groups and non-clinical

populations as a self-report measure designed to assess the concept of global self-esteem. It consists of 10 questions measuring the self-esteem of the respondent. Every question has four possible answers, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 3 (completely right). Five of the items are positively valenced and the remaining five are negatively valenced and therefore reverse scored prior to summing. Consequently, the total score ranges between 0 and 30. High values correspond to strong self-esteem. The RSES has been found to correlate well with tests of self-concept (Beck, Steer, Epstein, & Brown, 1990) thus supporting the construct validity of the instrument. In a study by Schmitt and Allik (2005) across 53 nations Cronbach coefficient was substantial overall (*m*= 0.81) across nations supporting the internal coherence of the scale across cultural contexts. Cronbach's alpha was .85 in study I and .89 in study II.

Sense of Coherence (Study I & II)

To measure perception of coherence in life, the instrument Sense of Coherence (SOC) was used. The instrument is built on three components: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness (Antonovsky, 1987). A strong sense of coherence is expected to enhance a person's ability to handle stressful life situations and to be strongly related to perceived health, including psychological health (Eriksson & Lindström, 2006). Two versions of the SOC scale were created by Antonovsky, one with 29 questions (SOC-29) and later one with 13 questions (SOC-13). The version of the form used in this study (SOC-13 or KASAM-13) consists of 13 questions estimated on a seven-grade scale from 1 (very seldom or never) to 7 (very often). The total score varies between 13 and 91. High scores indicate a high sense of coherence. SOC-13 has been evaluated to be a reliable and valid cross-culturally applicable instrument (Eriksson & Lindström, 2005) and has been shown to be significantly associated with a wide variety of outcomes such as various measures of quality of life (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007) and perceived health (Eriksson & Lindström, 2006). Cronbach's alpha was .83 in study I and .85 in study II.

Parental Bonding Instrument (Study I & II)

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI: Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979; Parker, 1990) measures a youth's perceived relationship with his or her mother and father during childhood. PBI has been widely used since then and was evaluated as one of eleven attachment instruments with strong psychometric properties by Ravitz and co-workers in their review (Ravitz, Maunder, Hunter, Sthankiya, & Lancee, 2010). PBI consists of 25 questions divided into two fundamental parental dimensions: care (12 questions) and overprotection (13 questions). Each question has four possible answers, ranging from 0 (agree totally) to 3 (do not agree). Total score varies between 0 and 36 for care, and between 0 and 39 for overprotection. High care and low overprotection is considered to be optimal parental

bonding whereas low care and high overprotection (''affectionless control'') are considered to be the least optimal parental bonding (Parker et al., 1979). In their early work Parker et al. (1979) found test-retest reliability to be 0.761 (p<0.001) fore care and 0.628 (p<0.001) for overprotection and an inter-rater reliability of the care dimension of 0.851 (p<0.001) and 0.688 (p<0.001) of the overprotection dimension. Discriminant validity between clinical and nonclinical populations has been established with greater affectionless control in clinical participants and in more seriously disturbed patients (Manassis, Owens, Adam, West, & Sheldon-Keller, 1999). Manassis et al. (1999) also studied convergent validity of the Adult Attachment Interview [AAI] (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996) and the PBI and found that attachment information obtained from the PBI and the AAI was comparable in participants with optimal (secure) attachment histories, but not in participants showing idealization or anger towards their mothers. PBI has also been shown to be stable over a 20-year period in adults (Wilhelm, Niven, Parker, & Hadzi-Pavlovic, 2005).

In Study I and II, high scores indicated high care or overprotection. Values under the 20th percentile correspond to low care (≤25 for mother and ≤21for father) and values over the 80th percentile correspond to high overprotection (≥18 points for mother and ≥17 points for father). Cronbach's alpha in the samples was .84 for the mother and .85 for the father regarding care. Regarding control, Cronbach´ s alpha was .85 for the mother and .84 for the father in study I & II.

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Study II)
Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA: Payne & Fitzgerald, 1999) measures general rape myth acceptance. It includes myths about men's violence against women. In study II a shorter version of the test, IRMA-SF, was used. The 22 questions included five fillers and had seven possible answers ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). The total score for the 17 questions, not including the five fillers, varies between 17 and 119. High scores (>80) indicate more rape myth endorsement. Cronbach´s alpha was .87 in the sample.

Analysis
Different behaviours related to risk was measured in the studies. Youth who had drunk alcohol more than a few times per month were categorized as high risk alcohol users (study II). Antisocial behaviour included three or more of the following questions: Have you ever: (1) been away a whole night without your parents knowing where you were? (2) Threatened, harassed or bullied anyone? (3) Have had a violent settlement with a teacher? (4) Gotten into a fight, behaved bad or hurt others? (5) Hit or hurt an animal? (Study II). Youth who used the Internet more than three hours a day were categorized as high consumers of the Internet (Study I & II). Youth who watched pornography every week or every

day were categorized as high consumers of pornography (Study I & II). Those who had shared their email address or telephone number during the last 12 months with someone only known through the Internet were categorized as risk taking via the Internet (Study II). Concerning sexual behaviours the participants were asked six questions with the possible answers Yes and No; Have you ever had: oral sex with a boy/man, oral sex with a girl/woman, anal sex with a boy/man, anal sex with a girl/woman, vaginal intercourse with a boy/man and vaginal intercourse with a girl/woman? (Study II). Sexual abuse was defined as ever-experienced penetrating abuse (oral, vaginal or anal). Physical abuse was youth who answered that they had ever been pushed or shaken by an adult, if an adult had ever thrown something at them, hit them with their hands or fist, kicked or bitten them or hit them with an object or burnt or scalded them (Study II).

Study I

SPSS 18.0 was used for all analyses. The results were presented with frequencies and mean values. In order to analyse differences between groups, non-parametric tests (Chi^2-test, Fisher's Exact Test) as well as a parametric test (T-test) were used. Significance differences between the groups were set to a *p* value < .05 two sided.

A hierarchical multiple logistic regressions was performed with voluntary sexual exposure online as the dependent variable and all social background variables entered as predictors in the first block. The second block included, in addition to variables on social background, all variables on Internet and mobile phone be-haviour. In the third and final block, all variables measuring psychosocial health and parental relationships were entered into the model.

Study II

Using the four online sexual behaviours investigated by our study, we developed four index questions.

Question 1: Sex online with person met online: *"Have you got to know someone on the Internet during the last 12 months that you have had sex with online?"* [*n*= 149, 4.6% (boys 6.9%, girls 2.7%, *p*<0.001)].
Question 2: Sex offline with person met online: *"Have you got to know someone via the Internet during the last 12 months that you have met offline and have had sex with?"* [*n*= 374, 11.6% (boys 15.2%, girls 8.5%, *p*<0.001)].

Question 3: Posted sexual pictures online: *"Have you during the last 12 months posted sexual pictures of yourself on the Internet or via mobile phone?"* [*n*= 138, 4.3% (boys 4.5%, girls 4.1%, *p*= 0.617)].

Question 4: Sold sex online: *"Have you ever sold sexual services?"*. *Only those who answered that the contacts with the buyer was made online were included,* [*n*= 25, 0.7% (boys 0.9%, girls 0.6%, *p*= 0.336)].

Reference group: None of the assessed sexual behaviour online [*n*= 2,911, 84.8% (boys 81.6%, girls 87.6% *p*<0.001)].

Based on the responses to the four index questions, participants were divided into five groups: (a), (b), (c), (d) and the reference group (0). The groups were hierarchically ordered according to our estimation of more or less advanced sexual behaviours online based on the results from study III & IV, and from preliminary findings from an EU project, SPIRTO (Quayle, Jonsson, Cooper, & Svedin, 2015). In the study by Quayle et al. (2015) some of the interviewed youth (who had sent or posed sexual pictures/films of themselves) expressed that they found it more advanced to send a sexual picture than having webcam sex or dating people online. Based on the results from the interviews in study III & IV, the young women who sold sex often were exposed to extreme situations where they sometimes feared for their lives during the sexual encounter. Therefore this behaviour was considered as the most advanced in the hierarchy. In the constructed hierarchy the group (d) (sold sex online, *n*= 25, boys 0.9% and girls 0.6%, *p*=0.336) was rated as the most advanced behaviour and also expected to include the most vulnerable youth. The participants in this group could also have made acts that defined group a-c. Group (a), sex online, was limited to youth who had only had sex online with a person met online (*n*= 60, boys 2.3% and girls 1.3%, *p*= 0.017). Group (b), sex offline, had not performed acts within groups (c) and (d) but may have performed acts within group (a) (*n*= 311, boys 11.5% and girls 9.1%, p<0.001). Group (c), had not sold sex online but may have performed acts included in group (a) and (b) *(n*= 125, boys 3.6% and girls 3.6%, *p*= 0.992). Finally, group (0), the reference group, had no experience with online sexual behaviour according to the four questions (*n*= 2,911, boys 81.6,and girls 87.6%).

Bivariate relationships between the five groups and background variables (living situation, study program, parental employment, parental educational level, immigrant status and parental bonding index), health/health behaviour (including results from the SOC, Rosenberg and SCL-25; smoking; alcohol consumption; drug use; antisocial behaviour; high consumer of Internet and Internet risk), sexual behaviour (sexual debut age, number of intercourse partners, oral/anal/vaginal sex, sexual desire, high consumer of pornography, IRMA, sexual, physical abuse) were evaluated using Pearson's chi-square. Each variable was further evaluated using single multinomial logistic regression, where each

independent variable was entered into the model and each outcome modelled separately. Furthermore, each domain of predictors (background, health/health behaviour, sexual behaviour, and abuse) was modelled in multiple multinomial logistic regression models, each domain modelled separately. This action was performed in order to reduce the number of variables to be considered in the final models, since entering all variables into the models would cause saturation. All variables found to be statistically significant in these models were subsequently entered into the final model. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS version 22.0 (IBM Inc., Armonk, NY). All tests were two-sided and a *p*-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Studies III and IV (Qualitative studies)

Participants

The inclusion criteria for participation in studies III and IV were individuals be-tween the ages of 15 and 25 who had experience with selling sex online before the age of 18. The participants in the study had to have taken an active part in communication with the sex buyer. For example, youths who connected with the buyers through a third party or who were victims of trafficking were excluded. Purposive sampling method was used. Recruitment began in September 2010 and continued until June 2013. Based on similar studies (Abelson & Hulusjö, 2008) and clinical experiences (Jonsson et al., 2006), it was expected to be challenging to find participants, so a range of different channels to recruit participants were explored (Table 1):

- Letters, telephone calls or emails were sent to professionals working with young people (social services, school counsellors, school teachers among others). All child and adolescent psychiatric clinics included in the sexual abuse network at BUP Elefanten, were contacted through email, and the project was presented at their yearly network conference in 2013. These contacts resulted in two interviews.
- Contact was made with various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Sweden that work with young people, including Novahuset, Save the Children, Tusen Möjligheter, Tjejzonen, and RFSL Ungdom. These con-tacts resulted in three interviews.
- Contact was made with two Swedish freelance journalists, Caroline Engvall and Kristian Edblom, who write frequently about the issue of young people selling sex and other issues affecting youth. These contacts resulted in six interviews.
- An advertisement was placed on the Swedish homepage www.intetillsalu.se, resulting in three interviews.

Three participants contacted the project themselves. In addition, three online sex and dating sites were contacted and asked if they would be willing to publish a short notice regarding the project. None of the sites were interested in cooperation, and one was already involved in an on-going research project. Contacts were also made with two online sites for youth, which offer information regarding sex and related topics. They were not interested in taking part in the research project nor were they willing to publish the notice.

Through all of these channels, contacts were made with women and men who were interested in participating in the study. Of these, 17 women and three men met the inclusion criteria. Our goal was to include men as well as women in the study, but although three men had contacted the project, none of these contacts resulted in a face-to-face interview.

A total of 17 young women were interviewed. One of the participants was interviewed using her sex selling alias, a interview that was different from the others since she did not want to give any personal information or say anything about her motivations for selling sex online. This interview was excluded from the analysis. The remaining 16 interviews were transcribed and analysed and included in the thesis (Table 1). The interviewed young women lived in different parts of Sweden; some were from big cities and others lived in small villages in the Swedish countryside. Some were employed, others were unemployed, some attended school and others were on sick leave or maternity leave. All participants were between 15 and 25 years of age at the time of the interviews (m= 18.9). The mean age on the first occasion of selling sex was 14.1 years. When the material for study III was analysed, Bonnie had not been interviewed yet and was therefore not included in the analysis. The interview with Bibbi was excluded from the analysis of study IV since she had only sold sex once and the goal of the study was to shed light on the process of young women selling sex more frequently.

Participant	Age at time of interview	Interview contact channel	Age at first occasion of selling sex	Number of sex-selling occasions	Time since last sex-selling occasion
Anna	24	Journalist	14	>50	8 years
Bibbi[1]	15	Journalist	14	1	1 year
Bonnie[2]	16	Journalist	14	>50	1 year
Claudia	24	Journalist	13	>50	1 month
Holly	22	NGO	14	>50	1 week
Ella	19	Residential treatment clinic	15	20–30	6 months
Nikki	21	Journalist	15	20–30	6 months
Tracy	20	NGO	14	>50	2 months
Diana	21	Journalist	13	<20	4 years
Johanna	17	Web page	15	30–50	1 month
Linda	16	Participant herself	13	30–50	3 months
Erica	18	NGO	13	>50	2 years
Selma	16	Web page	15	10–20	2 months
Stella	17	Residential treatment clinic	13	>50	1 year
Mandy	16	Participant herself	15	10–20	6 months
Natalie	17	Web page	15	>50	6 months

Note: [1] participated only in study 3, [2] participated only in study 4

Table 1. Participant information, study III & IV

Procedure

All participants received an information letter about the project and made contact if they wanted more information or to participate. Before the interviews correspondence through email regarding practical issues took place. Some of the participants also wanted to have more detailed descriptions of what the interview situation would be like and what would be expected of them during the interview. All the young men and some of the young women wished to be interviewed online, through email or Skype, but due to the sensitive nature of the interview it was decided that only face-to-face interviews would be conducted. It was important to meet the participants to verify that they were real people, but more importantly, if the interviews were done in person it would be easier to observe the participants' body language signalling distress if the interview situation became difficult for them. At the time of the interview participants were given information about the project and told that they could withdraw from the interview at any time without explanation. Each participant signed a consent form.

After the interview the participants were given written information about where to go if they felt need for support. In six cases the researcher facilitated contact with the participant's parents and/or social services after discussion with the participant.

The interview

The interview method was inspired by the Teller-focused interview (TFI: Hydén, 2014), an interview model developed specifically for use in studies of sensitive topics such as interpersonal violence and for studies of vulnerable interviewees, including victims of sexual abuse (Hydén, 2014). The TFI is oriented towards narration. In order to support the teller and facilitate narratives, the practice of teller-focused interviewing is based on a dialectical approach to the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The TFI model includes a series of strategies for supporting the teller by establishing a relational safe space, bridging the gap between experiencing and knowing and dealing with the power imbalance between the interviewer and the interviewee. A relational safe space is established when the interviewee feels a sense of control within the interview while the interviewer takes responsibility for the safety of the interview by maintaining good boundaries, even being willing to interrupt if the situation becomes too emotionally painful or chaotic. It is also important for the interviewer to understand how the interviewee may express him or herself through a discourse of elusiveness for example by not answering a question directly or talking about generalities. Regarding the practical aspect of the interviews, the following special considerations were taken:

Location - According to the TFI guidelines, the location of the interview should be chosen by the participant. In the current study, the participants lived in various locations around the country, so it was usually necessary to travel to meet with them. In Linköping and Stockholm, counsellors' rooms in the child and psychiatric units were available for meetings, but this was only an option for participants living in these cities. Participants from outside these areas found other places to meet, such as public library meeting rooms, public cafes and, in some cases, their own homes. To meet in a public place might seem problematic when doing interviews on sensitive topics (see e.g. Hulusjö, 2014), however, sometimes the participants preferred this since it was a neutral environment where they did not feel locked in and could easily leave if they wanted to.

Time - The TFI method stresses the importance of not conducting interviews longer than 60 minutes and instead advocates multiple interviews. In the current study the intension was to conduct short multiple interviews, but for a few reasons this was not always possible. First, many of the informants lived far away

and it was complicated to coordinate travel and meeting times. Second, interviewees could be a bit hesitant during the first part of the interview, their narratives gradually becoming more fluent as the meeting went on; when this happened and they began telling very emotional stories, it was sometimes difficult to keep the interview to one hour. A time limit of two hours was set, and if a participant had more to say than could be conveyed in one interview, a follow-up interview was conducted. By the end of the study, seven informants had been interviewed once and nine informants were interviewed twice.

The TFI method advocates the use of an unstructured interview. The structure of the interview in the current studies consisted of one opening question, "Can you tell me about your experiences of selling sex online?" This question worked well for most of the participants. Many told rich stories and could talk continuously while others needed more encouragement, and questions such as "Can you tell me about the first time /a typical occasion / the last time you sold sex online?" were intended to support each woman's narration about her experience. The interview guide included some prompts of areas to cover such as life situation, how contacts were made between the buyer and seller, entry into sex selling, stop selling sex, experiences of support, need of professional support and future plans.

Analysis

All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Riessman (2008) argues that the interview is a social event that cannot be described in words, and that the process of analysis starts when doing the transcription. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, with every effort made to stay as close to what the participants said, while at the same time being aware of that transcription can never capture the entire social event. All words and sounds were typed out. Also, all fillers such as eh, okay, ah and so on, were typed. The following transcript symbols were used:

…-Pause
( )- Emotional expressions
[ ]- The interviewer's comments and clarifications

Emotional expressions were removed from the published papers since they were not commented on in the results section. The transcripts resulted in over 40 hours of audio and over 1,000 pages of transcribed material.

When analysing the material, thematic analysis was used, based on the principles of Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was used because it fitted the research questions well and since it is a flexible approach unrelated to special epistemolo-

gies. This form of analysis also fitted well with the inductive approach used in the analysis. This means the identified themes should be strongly linked to the data itself (Patton, 1990) and not driven by a theoretical interest in the area or topic. However, as Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, data cannot be coded in an "epistemological vacuum" since researchers can never free themselves from their theoretical and epistemological commitments. The analysis involves searching through a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis consists of six steps. The analysis is not a linear process, which moves from one phase to another, but more of a recursive process which involves constantly moving back and forth. The six steps are: familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. In the current study, all six steps were done carefully. All the interviews were read several times by myself (LJ) and my supervisors. Initial impressions were written down independently and later ideas were compared. Afterwards, the analysis was continued by LJ with support from the supervisors, who are both senior researchers in this field. The material was coded line by line and initial codes were written down and sorted into broader themes, which were reviewed and named. The excerpts, chosen to exemplify the final themes in the published articles, were translated from Swedish to English. The interviews resulted in two papers focusing on different perspectives of online sex selling. Paper III focused on the online contact between seller and buyer and resulted in two main themes and five subthemes. Paper IV, focused on the process of entering, immersion in and exiting online sex selling and three themes were identified along with eight subthemes (Figure 3).

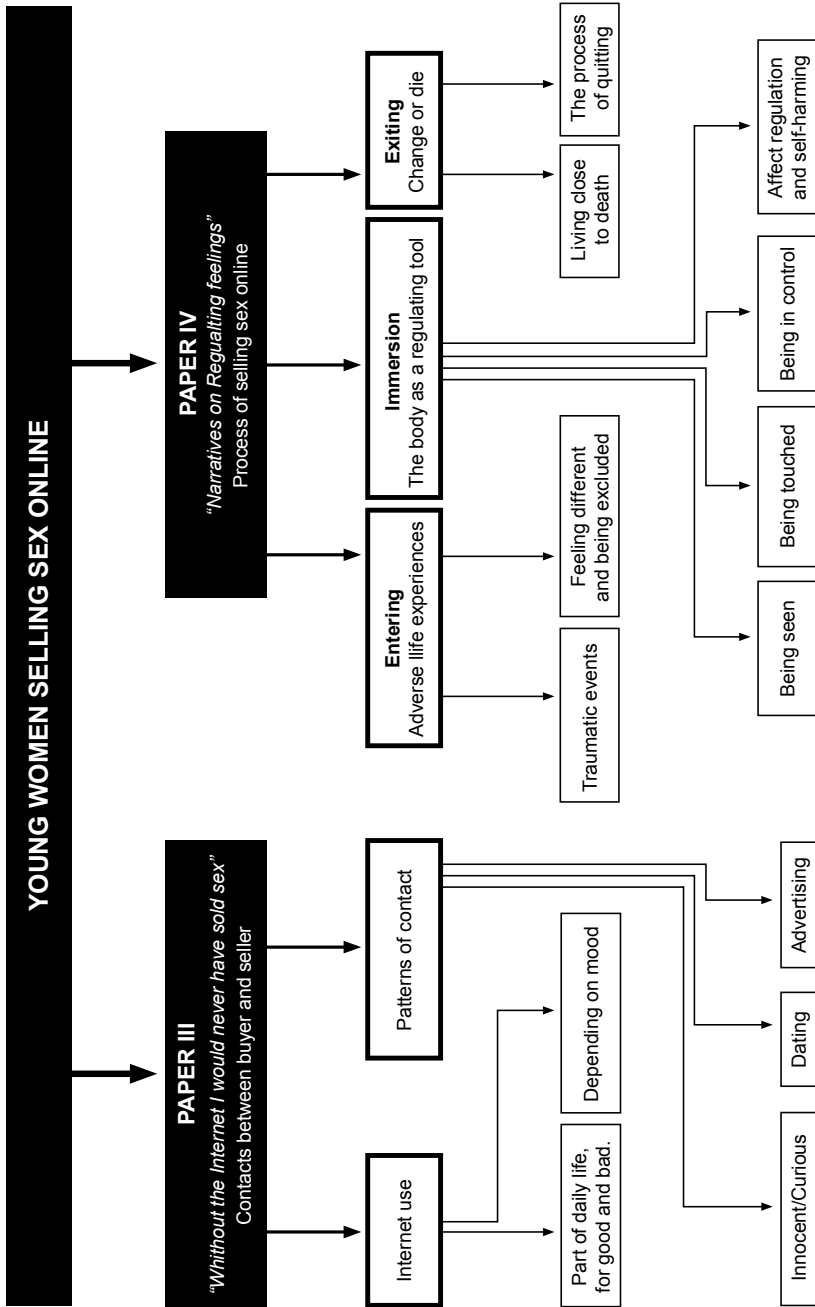**Flowchart over themes and sub-themes, study III & IV**

Figure 3.

YOUNG WOMEN SELLING SEX ONLINE

PAPER III
"Whithout the Internet I would never have sold sex"
Contacts between buyer and seller

- Internet use
  - Part of daily life, for good and bad.
    - Innocent/Curious
  - Depending on mood
    - Dating
- Patterns of contact
  - Advertising

PAPER IV
"Narratives on Regualting feelings"
Process of selling sex online

- Entering
  Adverse llife experiences
  - Traumatic events
  - Feeling different and being excluded
    - Being seen
- Immersion
  The body as a regulating tool
  - Being touched
  - Being in control
- Exiting
  Change or die
  - Living close to death
  - The process of quitting
  - Affect regulation and self-harming

Validity & Reliability

Among researchers there is a discussion about the assessment of quality in qualitative research. Some argue that typical quantitative terms not are suitable for the aims of qualitative studies, while others uses the same terms and having more of a parallel approaches (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Silverman (2010) uses the terms validity and reliability also in qualitative research, even if he stresses that the conditions are different. According to Silverman (2010) the most primary method of gaining validity in qualitative research is to describe all steps that have been taken in a study. To validate the result in the current studies, III & IV, a detailed description of the data collection (inclusion and exclusion criteria) and analysis was made (see method section: procedure, participants and analysis). Silverman (2010) stresses five interrelated ways of critically thinking in order to aim at more valid findings: The refutability principle; The constant comparative method; Comprehensive data treatment; Deviant case analysis; Using appropriate tabulations. In study III & IV all five principals were reflected upon. For example the risk of following a direction in the analysis that seems interesting instead of being critical and refute assumed relations. In the current studies all the 16 women's stories fitted in in any or many of the themes, what Silverman (2010) is called comprehensive data treatment. When doing the analysis several verbatim excerpts reinforced the interviews. The findings were also discussed and checked by experienced researchers, while one (Margareta Hydén) is specialised in qualitative method. Silverman (2010) also underline the importance of analysis the deviant cases. In the current studies all cases were analysed also those being slightly different (such as Bibbi, who was lured into sex selling by a older man who offered her a model contact). One of the principles that was not used to the full extent was tabulation. The focus of the analysis was not to determine the prevalence. The aim was instead to describe the variability on different ways of getting in contact with the buyers (study III) and motivational factors (study IV). Silverman's principals (2010) together with the 15-point checklist by Braun and Clarke (2006) on how to achieve a good thematic analysis and avoiding pitfalls, were all taken into consideration (Table 2).

Considerations in relations to reliability were also done. All but one of the interviewed women had (except for Bibbi) sold sex online repeatedly, and had good knowledge on how sex selling online could take its form. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed (see procedure). The interviews were done with respect and sensitivity to the informants and the interviewer had previous experiences of similar interviews.

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed - interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done - ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

Table 2. A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis. In: Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

Ethics, Study I-IV

Young people's sexuality, both when it is positive and pleasurable or coercive and abusive, is studied in order to gain an understanding of young people and their sexual health. Today, there is a shortage of this kind of research (see Harden, 2014; Klettke et al., 2014; Tolman & McClelland, 2011). However, doing research on online sexual behaviour among young people, some under the age of 18, requires a number of ethical considerations. In the current project, ethical considerations were observed prior to, during and after the studies. The most important ethical guideline stipulates that research should not cause any harm to the participants. Special attention is required when doing research on sensitive topics. For example, there is always the possibility of re-traumatisation as well as the risk that the participant may not be fully aware of what he or she is consenting to. Vetenskapsrådet (2008) requires adherence to four general ethical principles when doing research on human beings. These principles govern information, consent, confidentiality and use of data.

Information - In study I and II, the participating students received written information about the project and were informed that they could withdraw at any time, with no explanation required. After they filled out the questionnaire, they received written information about where to turn if they needed counselling.

In study III and IV, the participants received written information about the project as well the researchers' contact information in case they had further questions. At the time of the interview, the participants were informed verbally about the project and were told they could withdraw from the interview at any time, with no explanation required. After the study was completed, the researcher asked the participants if they wanted to get in contact with a counsellor. The participants also received written information about internet-based support sites, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other counselling options.

Consent - In study I and II, the participants gave informed consent when filling out the questionnaire. In studies III & IV the participants signed a consent form which stated that they had received information about the project, had been given the opportunity to ask further questions and that they voluntarily agreed to participate with the option to withdraw at any time. According to the Swedish Ethical Review Act, section 18, children over the age of 15 may participate in research without their parents' consent. "If the subject of the research is over 15 years of age, but has not attained the age of 18 and realizes what the research entails for him or her, he or she should personally be given information about the project and may consent to the research…" (Svensk författningssamling [SFS], 2003:460).

Confidentiality and use of data - In order to ensure the highest level of confidentiality, the following procedures were observed: Each participant in study I & II placed his or her own completed questionnaire into a sealed envelope before leaving it with the teacher, thereby ensuring their identity was unknown. In the qualitative study III & IV, the participants' interviews were anonymised (names, places and other information that could make an identification possible were removed or replaced with other information, such as fictitious names). The collected data was coded and locked in a safe deposit box. Each interview and tape recording was given a code number related to the participant who made it. The code lists were stored separately and will be saved for five years.

Results and discussion

Study I

Prevalence of voluntary online sexual exposure

In the study, 687 (20.9%) of the 3,288 adolescents answered that they had experienced at least one of the four different ways of voluntary sexual exposure online. Girls had significantly more often this experience than boys (22.3% vs. 19.2%, χ^2 = 4.59, df = 1, p = .032). The most common form of voluntary sexual exposure online was to have exposed sexually (flashed) via webcam or mobile phone. Out of the 476 youths (14.4%) who reported this experience, girls had done this significantly more often than boys (16.4% vs. 11.9%, χ^2 = 13.40, df = 1, p = < .001). Posting pictures or films of themselves when partially undressed (n = 324, 9.8%) was more common among boys than girls (11.0% vs 8.7%, χ^2 = 4.60, df = 1, p = .032). Less frequent was reporting masturbating and showing it via webcam or on a mobile phone (n = 180, 5.4%) and having sex with someone and showed it via webcam or a mobile phone (n = 72, 2.2%). Having had sex with someone and showed it via webcam and mobile phone was significantly more common among boys (3.4% vs. 1.2%, χ^2 = 18.44, df = 1, p < .001). Most of the youths, 60.7%, in the index group had exposed themselves in one of the different ways, 29% in two of the ways, 7.7% in three of the ways, and 2.6% in all four ways. The prevalence rates from this study are in the higher range compared to similar studies about e.g. sexting (Associated Press & MTV, 2009; Cox Communications, 2009; Dowdell et al., 2011; Döring, 2014; Lenhart, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2012). Since the definition, method and age of participants differ between similar studies, the results of the study were not fully comparable.

Social background and psychosocial health

The youth who had experience of voluntary online sexual exposure showed a similar socio-demographic background as the reference group. Among the boys it was significantly more common with an immigrant background. Among the girls significantly more experienced the financial situation in the family as problematic and significantly fewer lived with both their parents. With regard to psychosocial background the youth with experience of voluntary online sexual exposure reported poorer psychosocial health and more problematic relationships with their parents (low care and high overprotection) in the bivariate models, but only boys having had an overprotective/controlling father, remained significant in the multiple analysis. This indicates that both psychosocial health and parental bonding did not explain as much of the variance of voluntary online sexual exposure as other factors. The results thus support partially other studies that found that

youth with similar behaviours are less satisfied with their lives and come from less coherent families (Baumgartner et al., 2012).

Internet use, pornography consumption and harassments online

The group of youth who had exposed themselves online did significantly differ from the reference group concerning their Internet and mobile phone behaviour. They sent more text messages (both boys and girls), had shared personal information via e-mail and telephone more often during the last 12 months (both boys and girls), had shared their telephone number with someone only known online more often (both boys and girls), watched pornography more often (girls) and were more often high consumers of pornography (both boys and girls). They had also sent and received sexual messages more often (both boys and girls).

The youth with experience of voluntary online sexual exposure had significantly more often harassed others online during the last 3 months, for example, bullying others through the Internet or via mobile phone (boys), sending threats via mobile phone (both boys and girls), spreading sexual pictures/films of others against their will or without their knowledge (boys), and posting nasty things more often on other´s profiles (boys). The youths in the index group had also to a much greater extent been bullied via mobile phone and on the Internet (both boys and girls), received threats via mobile phone (both boys and girls), had experiences of others spreading sexual pictures or films of them (both boys and girls), and more often had been lured by a false profile on the Internet (both boys and girls). The results that the index youth are harassed and bullied online to a large extent correspond well with results from the Cox Communications (2009) in which the sexters (defined as youth who sent, received, or even forwarded sexual messages) were cyber-bullied more often. The high numbers of youths in the index group who were involved in harassment online indicate that this group of youths are victims of online abuses and crimes, even if boys in the bivariate analyses were found to also have harassed others. In this study, girls were more often high consumers of Internet, spending more than 3 h online per day. High Internet consumers have been shown in different studies to be at greater risk for sexual solicitation online (Baumgartner et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2001). It would make sense that high Internet consumers are more exposed to risky situations online just by virtue of the amount of time spent on the Internet. However, this is only one plausible explanation (regarding the girls in the bivariate analysis) in our study, since what youths do and how they profile themselves online are factors that probably contribute probably to an increased risk.

Study II

Prevalence of online sexual behaviours

The study showed that the vast majority of Swedish youth who identify themselves as traditionally male or female did not perform any of the assessed online sexual behaviours (met a person online for sex online; met a person online for sex offline; posted sexual pictures online; sold sex online). Out of the 15.2% per cent of the young people who performed online sexual behaviours, having sex offline with a person met online was most common. Second most common was having had sex online with a person met online, followed by experiences of posting sexual pictures. Boys had significantly more experiences of sexual behaviours online than girls. The results are in the higher range compared to similar studies for example about sexting (for review see Döring, 2014; Klettke et al., 2014) However, it is problematic to differentiate between different sexual behaviours online that can be closely related and maybe also overlapping. Most sexual behaviours online can be understood as a natural way to explore sexuality or to find potential romantic and sexual relationships (Benotsch et al., 2013; Boies et al., 2004; Freeman-longo, 2000; Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Daneback & Månsson, 2009). It may be problematic to consider some of the behaviours assessed in this study as just positive sexual exploration or dating. For example, selling sex that is defined as sexual exploitation according to the United Nations (2000).

Psychosocial health

The clearest pattern from the study was the difference between the participants with a history of online sexual behaviour and those without. In the bivariate analysis the youth who performed online sexual behaviour reported worse psychological health, including a lower sense of coherence and self-esteem. They also had a poorer relationship with their parents. These results are in line with a previous study by Baumgartner et al. (2012).

Relations to risk behaviours and sexual behaviours

In the area of Internet use, the participants with a history of online sexual behaviour reported more risky online behaviour. This result is supported by previous studies on youth and online sexual behaviour (Baumgartner et al., 2012). Some of the assessed online sexual behaviours entail sexual risk taking online or are closely related to each other. For example, a young person meeting a person online for sex offline might at some point (but not always) reveal their name, telephone number etc. to be able to meet someone offline. The line between what is a positive networking behaviour and what is risky behaviour is not always clear, but the risks seem to be small according to most studies (Wolak et al., 2008; Finkelhor, 2014; Livingstone & Smith, 2014). The study by Wolak et al. (2008) showed that for most youth the risk of being victimized online was small,

but the youth most at risk were those with depression, social problems and those who break rules. The results in the current study pointed in the same direction.

Most prominent were the associations between a sexual life online and a more sexual life in general. The youth study II who had engaged in online sexual behaviour had more experiences with different types of sex (oral-, vaginal- and anal sex). In the bivariate analyses early sexual debut and more partners were significantly more common among these individuals compared to other youth. Studies about sexting behaviours (sending and receiving sexual pictures and texts) have shown these behaviours to be associated with a more sexualized life, including more sexual risk taking (Baumgartner et al., 2012; Houck et al., 2014). Also, high consumption of pornography was associated with online sexual behaviours, indicating that high consumers of pornography, to some extent, might be inspired of the material they see (Svedin et al., 2011). Previous research suggests that consumption of pornography is associated with a range of sexual outcomes and behaviours (Braun-Courville, & Rojas, 2009; Svedin et al., 2011). However, Hald et al. (2013) found that consumption of sexually explicit material was only one among many factors that influenced online sexual behaviour.

Experiences of physical and sexual abuse

The young persons in the study who engaged in online sexual behaviours were more often victims of maltreatment in the form of physical or sexual abuse. Earlier studies point in the same direction when it comes to young persons selling sex (Svensson et al. 2013). Children who are victims of abuse have also been shown to be both more sexually active and more prone to risk taking in general (Meston, Heiman, & Trapnell, 1999).

Differences between different online sexual behaviours

In the bivariate analysis the youth who had sold sex online stood out compared to the other groups with different online sexual behaviours. This group reported a more problematic background, poorer health and more risk taking behaviours including sexual experiences compared to the other groups. Many previous studies describe youth selling sex as a vulnerable group with problematic relationships to their parents (Svensson et al., 2013; Edwards et al., 2006), more experience of both physical and sexual abuse as well as alcohol and drug abuse (Nadon, Koverlova, & Schludermann, 1998; Martin et al., 2010), anti-social behaviours (Svedin & Priebe, 2007) and self-harming behaviours (Svensson et al., 2013).

 Between the different online sexual behaviours (except for selling sex) the differences were not as clear and at times difficult to interpret. Youth who had had sex online or offline with a person met online had a less disadvantaged back-

ground with less risk taking behaviours than the youth who had posted sexual pictures online and sold sex online. However, the greatest differences in sexual experiences were shown between the youth who had met a person online for sex online and those who had met online for sex offline. The latter group had significantly more sexual experiences, including more sexual partners, than the former group.

Although differences were found between the groups, a clear pattern failed to emerge to confirm the suggested hierarchy. The studied behaviours seem to be performed by a group of youth with similar backgrounds with regard to health, risk taking and sexual behaviour, but which differed from youth who had not performed sex online. Parallels might be drawn to the results of a study by Ybarra et al. (2007) showing that no single specific online behaviour is more associated with online personal victimisation (such as unwanted sexual solicitation or harassment) than others. They found that engaging in a pattern of different kinds of online risk behaviours was more risky than engaging in one specific type of behaviour alone. In our study 23%, or 119 out of the 521 participants with a history of online sexual behaviour, had performed more than one of the assessed behaviours.

Study III

The study included interviews with 15 young women who presented narratives regarding their Internet use and the process of establishing contacts online for sex selling. Some of these narratives were developed with a beginning, middle and end, while some were briefer and not as elaborate. There were many overlapping experiences in the various interviews, but also differences related to both the contact channels and the communication processes. Two major themes were identified (Figure 3).

Internet use - Part of daily life, for good or bad and Depending on mood
Internet and mobile phone use were natural parts of every day life for all participants. Access to a smart phone was important and made the access to the Internet more convenient and easier to keep in contact. Being online was mostly described as something positive and fun, but was for some also problematic. The time spent online was hard to limit and some described it as an addiction.

The narratives clearly revealed different Internet use depending on mood. During periods of poorer psychological health the young women reported spending more hours online, accessing more destructive sites focusing on self- harm and eating

disorders, as well as different sex and dating sites. During these periods they also sold sex to a greater extent.

Notable in the narratives from the young women was the opinion that they would not have sold sex if the Internet did not exist. Cunningham and Kendall (2011) found, when comparing street and online prostitution, that online prostitution attracts new groups of sex sellers. Swedish studies have also shown that the Internet is rapidly becoming the main arena for contact between young sex sellers and buyers but at the same time theses studies did not show an increase in the number of youth selling sex (Svedin & Priebe, 2007; 2009). This indicates that the Internet at least among Swedish youth, has not attracted more youth selling sex but just changes the contact arena between buyer and seller. Whether the interviewed young women really would have sold sex if the Internet did not exist is impossible to answer. However, the Internet seems to have facilitated both their introduction to and their staying in the sex selling market since the young women described easy access and quick responses as being attractive, though it also made it more difficult to set boundaries.

Patterns of contacts - Innocent/Curious, Dating and Advertising

Three patterns of contacts were identified from the interviews. The first, relating more to the start of selling sex was often at sites directed to youth but not specialized in dating and sex. The contacts could for example start with some kind words from the buyer that was not alluding to sex. The communication was described as exciting, fun and some described feeling sexual arousal. Others described that they also felt disgusted. Secondly, and the most commonly described ways of meeting a buyer was through dating or sex sites. The participants described meeting with people for long lasting relationships or for selling sex. It was not always clear what the purpose of the contact was. When deciding to meet the communication was mostly held privately and also when discussing the compensation. The young women described their age as being important since most buyers wanted young girls, some under the age of 15. Finally the contacts could be made through advertising. This was mainly used for the young women who ha turned 18 and for them who sold sex on a more regular basis. In the advertisements, it was described in more or less detail what services were offered and for what cost. The communication after getting in contact was direct and more or less an negotiation regarding what services the encounters would include, where and when to meet, and type of compensation.

For some of the young women, the first sex selling occasion occurred after being approached on a youth site, while others were approached after posting semi-nude images looking for compliments. The communication that followed on the

youth sites might in some cases be compared to an online grooming process, with the sexual communication initially more implicit. Typically, the perpetrator systematically desensitizes the child to the point where there is an increased likelihood of engagement in sexual activity (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Beech, & Collings, 2013), meaning that some of the interviewed girls were more or less lured into selling sex. When the sex selling was more established, the communication seemed to be direct, that is, more explicit, about the sexual purpose. This took place primarily on dating or sex sites. Sevcikova and Daneback (2011) interviewed sex-seekers online who described how they developed strategies to recognize partners who would be willing to meet offline, instead of the contact staying online.

The young women in the study knew they were going to a sexual encounter, though they most of the time did not agree in advance on what particular sex acts would be involved and what the costs of those acts would be. The lack of prior detailed agreement and a violation to what was agreed might indicate a power imbalance where the young woman, who is a child, is actually negotiating with an adult. Frones (1995) described the communication between an adult and a child like a vertical relationship, as opposed to the horizontal relationships among children or among adults. Children need both these relationships in their social development. In the vertical relationships, the adults are often the teachers or trainers. In the case of adults negotiating with children about selling sex, one can argue that the adults are abusing their higher vertical position. Löfberg (2008) suggests that the vertical or horizontal nature of the relationship is somehow less clear or completely erased online, which can be confusing for the child. This may result in online communication in which children are made to feel more insecure and pressured into consenting to things they would never do in an offline environment.

Study IV

In most interviews, a specific storyline could be identified, capturing the process of beginning selling sex and the on-going struggle towards disengagement. In the analysis the participants described the entering, immersion and exiting of sex selling (Figure 3).

To talk about the experiences of selling sex was challenging for the young women. Some told detailed stories from their lives while others found it harder to put words on their experiences. The term "selling sex" was used in the information papers when recruiting the informants but the informants didn't seem comfortable with using that term. Often they hesitated when they started to tell and used

different words during different parts of the interview. The young women used words as having sex, selling sex, to whore, self harming sex, abuse or rape. Below is on example from the interview with Johanna who struggles to find a suitable term.

> *... well I would not say prostituted anyway....I don't know what to call it. I never think of it in that way. Do not think there are any good words for it.*

Even if there was a struggle in finding a common term, all the informants had gotten in contact with men or women online for sexual encounters offline where different kinds of compensations were given, such as money, telephone cards and more.

The following themes were identified in the interview:

Entering - Adverse life experiences: Traumatic events, Feeling different and being excluded

For all the young women, the beginning was associated with some kind of life-altering experience and with feelings of being different and excluded. The participants described both potentially traumatic events and severe traumatic experiences that had played a part in the process of starting to sell sex. The traumatic experiences were identified as life changing and could be seen as turning points in life, turning points with both positive and negative characteristics. They also described feeling different and excluded, some for as long as they could remember. These feelings affected their relationships with both family and friends. There were many stories of being bullied in school and not having close friends. Even if some had a social network including many people, these tend to be more acquaintances than close friends.

The traumatic experiences can be interpreted within the context of loss. The young women described being victims of different losses, of a sibling, their body, their childhood, or their ability to have close relationships without sex. In research on loss, Gringeri and Vogel-Ferguson (2012) identified six kinds of losses resulting from maltreatment (including sexual abuse) in childhood; relational, personal, material, learning, institutional failure, and loss of trust in social institutions. Relational loss means that the maltreatment results in a loss of trust in others, which makes relationships difficult and likely to be avoided. All of the young women interviewed reported feeling excluded and different, which could be seen as a 'relational loss' resulting from their traumatic experiences.

Immersion - The body, as a regulating tool: Being seen, Being touched, Being in control, Affect regulation and self harming

Another part of the interview focused on motivation factors and what function the sex selling filled. The sex selling was described as a way to feel more important and as a solution to loneliness. The participants told they sold sex to fill a need of being seen, appreciated and affirmed. For example the buyers sometimes told them they were beautiful and important, and for some being chosen among all other sex sellers online kind of a validation. Another described perspective was being touched and to have another person´s full physical attention. However this need was not fully met by selling sex. Instead, sex selling was described more as a substitute for being close to another human being as a partner. Some of the participants clearly recognized that the sex trade was abusive, and separated their own sexuality from the act of sex selling. Others had difficulties to distinguish their own sexuality from abuse. Many of the participant described using sex selling to gain a sense of control in their otherwise out of control lives. Finally the participants described that the sex selling could function as a way to ease anxiety. Some described that physical and psychological pain they felt during the sexual encounters made them feel alive and present, while others said they felt as though they disappeared and went into a state of not being truly present. Some of the young women described the sex selling as a self-harming behaviour, something they equated with cutting, burning the skin etc. The sex selling was as a kind of self-medication, and parallels might be drawn to theories regarding functions of self-harming behaviours that can serve to regulate affects (Klonsky, 2007; Lloyd-Richardson, Perrinne, Dierker, & Kelley, 2007). Studies have shown an association between young people's sex selling and self-harming behaviours (Svensson et al., 2013). The interviews in this study indicated that not only are sex selling and self-harming behaviours associated with each other, but according to the informants, sex selling can be considered a form of self-harm.

Exiting - Change or die: Living close to death, Process of quitting

Some of the young women had stopped selling sex many years ago and some were still struggling to quit. All of the young women were certain that they needed to stop selling sex. Some described that they needed to quit or they would die, either commit suicide or they were might get killed during one of sex selling meetings. However, quitting was a process that included turning points similar to those involved in entering the sex trade. The exit process began already in conjunction with the first sex selling occasion, and was described as challenging. They related both negative and positive experiences that had played part in their decision to stop selling sex. Negative experiences could be meeting a violent sex seller and positive that they started to tell and got support from family, friend or for example a counsellor. Researchers have investigated the exit process, particu-

larly for women in street-based prostitution (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010). Månsson and Hedin (1999) found that the pre-exit process included turning points such as eye-opening events, traumatic events and positive life events. The authors also outlined other strategies that were more gradual and undramatic for example phasing out sex selling by gradually limiting the range of sexual services provided, reducing their presence and exposure to sex work, or seeing only regular customers. There are similarities between the results of the Månsson and Hedin study (1999) and the narratives of the young women in our study, particularly regarding the challenging process of exiting.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

The goal of this thesis was to study the characteristics, associations and conse-
quences of online sexual behaviours among Swedish youth. In particular the the-
sis focused on young people who actively engaged in various online sexual be-
haviours, thus excluding those who are seeking information about sex and view-
ing pornography (e.g. so called passive consumers). Study I focused specifically
on young people with experiences of voluntary online sexual exposure in a ro-
mantic relationship; study II covered experiences of meeting a person online for
sex online or offline, sending sexual pictures or films and selling sex online; and
studies III and IV focused on young women selling sex online, how they made
contact with the buyers and their perceptions of their motivations for entering,
staying in and exiting the sex trade. Comparisons were made between youths
with and without experiences of sex online as well as comparisons among the
assessed different online sexual behaviours.

The following paragraphs collectively summarise and highlight the main find-
ings. The studies showed that most youth did not use the Internet for sexual pur-
poses, as displayed in figure 4. Among those who did, this behaviour was associ-
ated with increased associations in different areas, such as a more sexualised life,
poorer health, maltreatment, risk taking behaviour and online harassment and
abuse. The differences between different examined online behaviours were few,
except for the group of youth who sold sex online. Both in the quantitative (I-II)
and the qualitative studies (III- IV), these youth were especially burdened and
lived a more risk taking life in general (Figure 4).
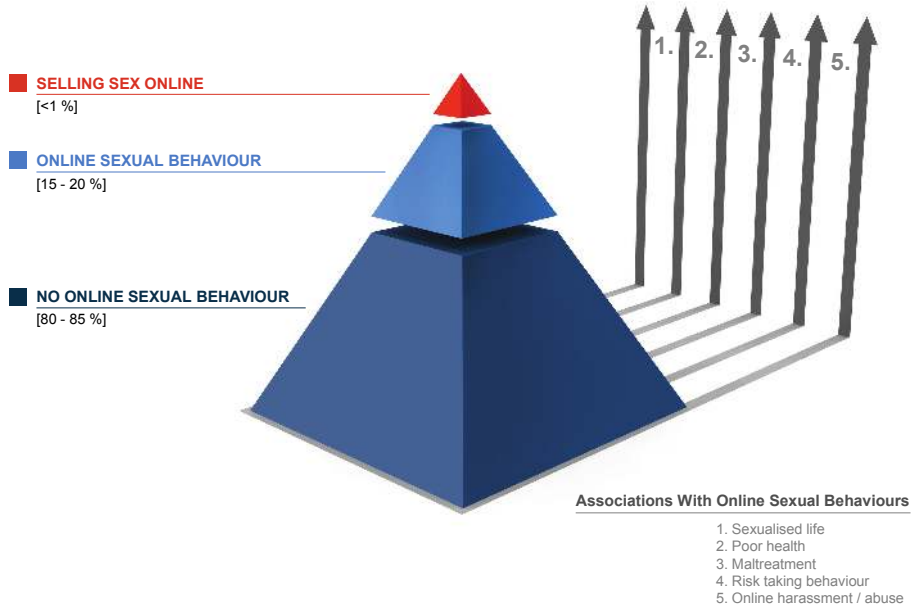
Fgure 4. Online sexual behaviours and associated factors

Prevalence

The results from the quantitative studies (study I & II) suggested that approximately one fifth of Swedish 18- year olds had experiences of online sexual behaviour. Since study (II) showed that 67.6% of Swedish youths have had their sexual debut by the age of 18, it seems likely that most young people meet their sexual partners outside the Internet, and also that most sexual activity happens offline.

The data from study I & II, revealed that 20.9% of the Swedish youth had experience of voluntary online sexual exposure and 15.2% experiences of other online sexual behaviours. These figures are in the higher range compared to similar studies for example about sexting (see e.g. Döring, 2014; Klettkle, 2014). While the majority of other studies have focused on one specific behaviour at the time, study I & II included different online sexual behaviours. This could be one explanation to the comparable high figures. Another explanation could be related to

age. The youth in the studies were around 18 years old when the study was conducted. In a recent review focusing on sexting behaviours, Döring (2014) found that older youth sexted to a greater extent than younger youth. Notably, although these figures are consistent with similar Swedish studies (Sorbring et al., 2014; Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2009; 2012) which suggests that the country context may play a role in explaining the variations in rates between studies. For example the permissive views on youths and sex in Sweden (see Baumgartner et al., 2014) might be mirrored with more prevalent sexual behaviours online among Swedish youth, than for example youths in the US (see Harden, 2014).

Associations with sexual behaviours offline – a sexualised life

The clearest pattern emerging from the studies (I-IV) was that online sexual behaviour was associated with an extensive sexual life in general (Figure 4). In study I & II, the youth with experience of online sexual behaviours had significantly more experiences of oral, vaginal and anal sex. This finding is consistent with studies on sexting behaviours (Ferguson, 2010; Gordon- Messer et al., 2013; Klettke et al., 2014), as well as studies on young people selling sex (Svedin & Priebe, 2009; Svensson et al., 2013). In their longitudinal study, Temple et al. (2014) found that sending a sext mediated the relationship between asking or being asked for sex and having sex over the subsequent several years. Sending a sext was positively associated with having sexual intercourse one year later, thus corroborating with theories that sexting may serve as a prelude or gateway behaviour to physical sexual behaviours or indicate that one is developmentally ready for having sex (see Temple et al., 2014). If online sexual behaviour should be seen as a complement or an alternative to offline sex among youth has not yet been examined. Experiences of online sexual behaviour has been linked to history of sexual risk behaviours, such as an early sexual debut and experiences of multiple partners. Study II indicated the same results. Youth with a sexual behaviour online in study I & II, also consumed more pornography and experienced their sexual desire as greater than youth without a sexual behaviour online.

Socio-demographics, relations with parents and friends and poor health

With regard to socio-demographic background, only minor differences were shown between youth with an online sexual behaviour and those without.

One finding from the bivariate analyses (study I & II), were the association between online sexual behaviour and poor parental relationship. Further multivariate analyses, however, did not support an association except for a correlation between sending a sexual picture and having a controlling and less caring mother (both genders) and experiences of voluntary online sexual exposure and having an overprotective/controlling father (boys). Our results only partially confirmed other studies which found young people with a online sexual behaviour come from less cohesive families than those who do not take such risks (Baumgartner et al., 2012). According to attachment theory, the relationship between parent and child is important since it affects all other close interpersonal relationships, such as relationships with romantic partners and peers (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Sorbring et al. (2014) found that youth with online romantic and sexual experiences, reported poorer relationships with their parents, but also with peers. In study III & IV, which concerned young women selling sex online, the participants described problematic relationships both with parents and peers. They also described they felt different from their peers and excluded from social relationships. To make up for the lack of close relationships in their offline lives, they had an active social life online. Some of the online contacts became sex-selling contacts. Unpublished data from the epidemiological studies (study I and II), indicated that the group of youth with an online sexual behaviour felt significantly lonelier than their counterparts without such experience (unpublished data). Their loneliness might lead them into a more social life online and where some contacts might results in sexual encounters, also sex selling.

Another clear pattern from the studies emerged in relation to psychological health, where those with a sexual behaviour online reported a poorer health than their counterparts (Figure 4). In accordance with the present results, some researchers have found association between sexting and for example depression (Van Ouytsel et al., 2014). A poor psychological health was also described by the young women with experiences of selling sex online in study III & IV and was also more prevalent for this group in study II. These results are in line with previous studies focusing on young people selling sex (Svedin & Priebe, 2007; 2009; Svensson et al., 2013).

Associations with maltreatment

The young people who engaged in online sexual behaviours in study I & II, had significantly more experiences of physical and sexual abuse than those who did not engage in online sexual behaviour. Previous studies have also shown a relationship between sexual abuse and sex selling (Kaestle, 2012; Svedin & Priebe 2007; Svensson et al., 2013), however no known studies have examined the relationship between traumatic experiences and other forms of online sexual behaviours. Nevertheless, children who are victims of abuse have been shown to be both more sexually active and more prone to risk taking in general (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993). This was further confirmed in the qualitative interviews with the young women (studies III & IV). All 16 participants included in the total sample recounted having had traumatic experiences, most frequently experiences of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse was an important feature of these young women's narratives and many related that the abuse started them in the direction of selling sex online (Figure 4).

Associations with risk taking behaviours

The youth in study I & II with experience of online sexual behaviours had more experiences of what could be considered as risk behaviours, such as sharing personal information online and meeting an online contact offline. In addition they had more experiences of smoking and drugs use. Along with this, the youth also exhibited antisocial behaviours along with more experiences of harassing others online. Also, sexual risks such as multiple sexual partners (>6) and an early sexual debut were associated with online sexual behaviours. There is a myriad of studies that have shown associations between different risk behaviours (e.g. Boyer, 2006; Tolman & McClelland, 2011; Forsberg, 2006; Kastbom et al., 2015) and according to the theories of Jessor and Jessor (1977; 1988) risk behaviours cluster together and are natural part of young peoples life (Figure 4).

Differences between different online sexual behaviours

Our hypothesis in study II was that some online sexual behaviours could be considered more advanced than others, and that more advanced behaviours might be associated with varying degrees of decreased psychosocial wellbeing, a history of more risk taking in general and more sexual experience. Meeting a person online for sex online was considered as the least advanced behaviour and selling sex online the most. After analysing the data, however, no clear pattern between the

different behaviours emerged and the study showed only minor differences among young people who engaged in various online sexual behaviours. Parallels may be drawn to the results of a study by Ybarra et al. (2007) showing that not one specific online behaviour has a greater association with online personal victimisation (such as unwanted sexual solicitation or harassment) than any other. They found that engaging in a pattern of different kinds of online sexual risk behaviours was more risky than engaging in any one specific type of online behaviour. In study II, 23%, or 119 out of the 521 participants with a history of online sexual behaviour, had performed more than one of the assessed behaviours and is a group that would have been interesting to study further.

However, among the youths with experience of online sexual behaviour there was one group that stood out: young people who sold sex online (Figure 4). They presented a more complex and troublesome picture, including poorer psychological health, more high-risk behaviours and more problematic relationships with parents. They were also much more experienced sexually compared to the other groups. Many previous studies have described youth who sell sex as a vulnerable group who are more likely to have problematic relationships with their parents (Svensson et al., 2013; Edwards et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2006), engage in antisocial behaviours (Svedin & Priebe, 2007), alcohol and drug abuse (Nadon et al., 1998); Martin et al., 2010) and self-harming behaviours (Svensson et al., 2013). The results from both the quantitative and the qualitative studies (I-IV) show that these youths are vulnerable as a result of their background, but also that they are at greater risk since their sex selling might put them into situations where they can be both psychologically and physically harmed.

Further, results from study (IV) indicated that some of the young people who sell sex online might be motivated to sell sex online for other reasons than sexual. For instance, selling sex might be a way to relieve anxiety, to gain a sense of control over one's life or as a way to punish oneself. Some of the young women interviewed during the qualitative studies (III & IV) described sexual arousal during sex selling occasions, that could be related to confusion about their own sexuality. In Sweden and in most other countries, sex selling among youth is considered a form of sexual exploitation why this behaviour is problematic to equalise with the other examined sexual behaviours in this thesis.

Consequences of online sexual behaviours – online harassment and abuse.

The results from study I revealed a clear association between voluntary online sexual exposure and being bullied, threatened or lured by a person using a false profile (Figure 4). Other negative consequences that were more prevalent among the youth with an online sexual behaviour was experiences of having sexual material spread. Among the youth with experience of voluntary online sexual exposure, 8% of the boys and 4.6% of the girls had experience of sexual pictures being spread. Another negative consequence from having a sexual behaviour online was described in study III, where the young women selling sex described men who had lured them into sexual situations both in the online and in the offline environment. The situations could be equalised to grooming situations online (Whittle et al., 2013; 2014). Finally the results from study IV, showed that the young women selling sex online got into violent and abusive situations during some of the sex selling encounters.

Positive side of online sexual behaviour

This thesis focused on risks and consequences related to online sexual behaviours rather than the positive sides it can bring. In study III and IV the interviewed young women described how the communication online was important for meeting people, being seen and receiving affirmation. Previous studies have pointed on the importance for minority groups such as for example LGBTQ youth who thanks to the Internet has better possibilities of meeting youth in the same situation and also finding a partner (e.g. Mustanski, Lyons, & Garcia, 2011). In addition to the increased possibilities of meeting new contacts, the interviewed young women described that their blogs, different Internet communities etc. had been important in the process of quitting sex selling. The implications are that there is need for support and health care interventions rather than to se the Internet as a hazardous arena for communication.

Conclusions

Adolescents are in an intense developmental phase characterised by major psychological, physiological and social changes and challenges. It is also the phase when they sexually mature and most have their sexual debut.

In the ecological model by Bronfenbrenner (1977; 1979) a persons is developed and formed through different systems on different levels (Figure 1). This thesis studied behaviours and relations foremost related to the microsystem. Even if the online sexual behaviours could be of positive nature, such as possibilities to express sexual desire and lust, it is unavoidable, based on the result of this thesis, not to underline the associations with poorer health and a more risk taking life in general. For the youth with an online sexual behaviour, the results indicated poorer relationships within the microsystem than other youth. Possibly this lead them to having a more extensive social life online instead, including having a sexual life. For the young women selling sex online (study III & IV) relations in the exosystem also was studied, such as the support from social workers or police, relationships that for some had played an important role in the process of quitting sex selling. The importance of professional's support and the lack of this, is better described in another report from the same set of interviews (Jonsson & Svedin, 2012). The relations to the macro system were not in focus, but were touched upon in the interview studies (III & IV). The young women who sold sex online found it hard to talk about both their experiences of sexual abuse and selling sex. They struggled to find a suitable term, and hesitated on what to tell. This could be interpreted as if they were unsure on how their stories would be received, since both sexual abuse and sex selling are sensitive topics to talk abut and associated with stigmatization (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Goffman, 2014).

The results in this thesis provide important information about Swedish youth and online sexual behaviours in relation to characteristics, associations and consequences. The results are based on a large sample of Swedish youth in combinations with interviews with young women selling sex online. There are however some methodological considerations and limitations that should be considered.

Methodological considerations and Limitation

One advantage with the design of this thesis was the combination of different types of studies and approaches. The four studies included in the thesis were based on two sets of materials. The first, a representative sample of over 3000 Swedish youth (Study I & II) provided an overall overview of the extent of young people´s online sexual behaviours. In order to further our understanding of the complexity of sexual behaviours online, 16 young women with experiences of selling sex online were interviewed (Study III & IV). Another strength in complementing the quantitative material with qualitative interviews were that the

group of youth with experiences of selling sex online was small and therefore statically problematic to analyse since it was hard to reach a reasonable power.

There are limitations that need to be kept in mind when interpreting the results from this thesis. In all four studies participants were asked questions about their past, study I & II in the format of a questionnaire and in Study III-IV in face-to-face interviews. In both designs, there is a risk of memory bias since the participants need to recall memories and describe experiences that sometimes happened many years ago.

Study I and II

In attempt to minimise misunderstandings and determine if the vocabulary was appropriate for use in a questionnaire a pilot study was performed. In the pilot study different expressions were tested and discussed with a school class. However, this does not exclude the possibility of misunderstanding since there were no explicit explanations or definitions of the different behaviours in the questionnaire (e.g., what was meant by bully, threats, sexual pictures etc.).

The dropout rate in the representative sample was high at 39.6%. However, on a typical day, at least 10% of the youths usually are absent from school (Uppsala Municipality, 2014). Although participation rate may be considered satisfactory given the nature of study, it is important to bear in mind that the absent group probably could have accentuated the results since people dropping out from research more often come from problematic families and are burdened with more psychosocial health issues and lower motivation to participate both in school and in surveys (e.g., Farrington, Gallagher, Morley, Ledger, & West, 1990). On the other hand, many studies have found little evidence for substantial bias as a result of nonparticipation (e.g., Gerrits, van den Oord, & Voogt, 2001). There could also be a risk of the youths magnifying or diminishing their answers, especially since the topic is sensitive. However, in other research regarding sensitive topics e.g., drug use or behaviour problems, acceptable validity or a tendency to underreport have been found (Rutter, Giller, & Hagnell, 1998).

In both studies, the group that did not feel that the customary gender division into male and female fitted them were excluded from further statistical analysis since the group was small (n=28) and the answer per se difficult to analyse. In an earlier descriptive report (Svedin & Priebe, 2007) it was found that this group had more problems in most areas compared to the participants who identified themselves as male or female. Including this group in the analyses would probably

marginally strengthen the results with a little bit higher endorsement of sexual behaviours online.

The different forms of examined sexual behaviours did not cover all possible forms of online sexual behaviours and there also can be overlaps between the categories. It was also a matter of interpretation for the participating youths what was meant by terms like, e.g., partially undressed. This means that the content of the pictures and films may possibly vary a lot and consist of material without any intention of being sexual in any way (see, e.g., Mitchell et al., 2012). Since the exact motive of the material and the degree of nudity in the photos and films were not investigated in the study, this must be considered as a limitation. However it is important to bear in mind that a nude picture that has been taken without sexual intentions, might be spread and used for sexual purposes, no matter what the original intention was.

Study I focused on voluntary experiences, meaning that the material was produced and distributed of one's own free will, but it is important to bear in mind that the reasons for disseminating sexual material was not explored in this study. Other studies indicate that pressure from a boyfriend/girlfriend or a friend is the most common reason for sending a sexual message (Cox Communications, 2009; Lenhart, 2009). This means that some material produced and sent voluntarily might be the result of a third party influence. In a study by Wolak and Finkelhor (2011), the authors found two main categories of youth-produced sexual images: aggravated (involving criminal or abusive elements) and experimental (made voluntarily to, for example, generate romantic interest). Study I aimed at investigate the latter group but the fact that some of the youth experiences might have been of the aggravated kind cannot be discount for.

In Study II, three out of the four questions focused on online sexual behaviours that occurred during the last 12 months (between 17-18 years of age), while the question of selling sex online pertained to lifetime experiences. The rationale for this was partly to capture the experiences of older adolescents who are relatively more experienced online users than their younger counterparts (Post och Telestyrelsen, 2013). The relatively uncommon experience of selling sex needed a longer time period to reach a reasonable power for the analyses. Even so, the power was not sufficient to enter the question of selling sex into the final multinomial logistic regression analysis. In the study the ages of the persons the participants had sex with online or offline were not investigated. It is unknown whether they were the same age or much older. This information could help to clarify whether these behaviours were more of a dating experience or a grooming situation (Whittle et al., 2013; 2014). Neither did the questions cover whether the participants' experiences were positive or negative or if any of the online contacts

led to an abusive situation. The question about posting sexual pictures online can be limiting in one way, since the answers did not differentiate whether they were sent to a friend, a stranger or if the pictures were posted on sites without knowing who would watch them. However, it was preferred to keep the question broad since the sender never know how the picture will be used in the future.

Study III and IV

There are also several limitations in the qualitative studies that need to be mentioned. It is possible that more interviews would have added more to the results. It is also likely that methods other than face-to-face interviews would have yielded additional knowledge, since more interviews could have been done. Talking about the experience of selling sex can be sensitive and some of the informants may have felt more confident if the interviews had been conducted online. Another approach could have been to analyse chat logs (see, e.g., Leander, Christianson, & Granhag, 2008).

The interviewed young women all lived in Sweden in relatively safe social circumstances, and their primary motivation for selling sex was not money, drugs, or alcohol. All of them also had a home and did not sell sex for a place to stay. Therefore our conclusions may not be applicable to all young women in the online sex trade who live in other parts of the world and who may have other motivations for selling sex. All of the interviewed young women had been exposed to different possible traumatic experiences and all except for one described sexual abuse prior to the sex selling. This possibly could have effect on the result, since it is well established in research that victims of sexual abuse can show a sexual reactive pattern that can result in sex selling (Keastle, 2012; Kendall-Tacket et al., 1993).

To date there are only few studies involving children selling sex online why the results from study III & IV, must be compared with caution to other similar qualitative studies. The results are based on interviews with 16 young women, which resulted in more than 1,000 pages of text to analyse. The optimal number of participants for a qualitative study depends on the subject of the study (Patton, 2002; Polit & Beck, 2008). Polit and Beck (2008) describe that qualitative researchers often use the principle of saturation to decide when no new informants need to be included in a study. Saturation occurs when themes and categories in the data become repetitive and redundant, and that further data collection will not add anything new. In the current study the material was considered to have reached data saturation after 16 interviews.

The TFI model worked well for this study and gave the interviews a solid framework that was an advantage for the informants. However, their contributions were not equally distributed. Some of the women, especially those who had been in therapy, talked quite articulately about their experiences. Others especially the youngest with no experience of therapy, were coaxed with difficulty to describe their experiences in response to open questions. They gave more brief and report-like answers to direct questions. Therefore, it is possible that the young women with the richer narratives received more attention in the analysis than did the others.

Ethical considerations

As highlighted previously (in section, Ethics, study I- IV) ethical approval was gained from the Human Research Ethics Committee and ethical practiced were adhered to in the design of the research studies.

It is important to consider and reflect on the ethical procedures and challenges in conducting research on vulnerable groups such as young people who are selling sex online. In the qualitative segment of the project (studies III and IV), participants were recruited, for instance, through networks of professionals who worked in child and adolescent psychiatric units and social services. This method proved to be time consuming and almost impossible. Most saw the research project as positive and were interested in being informed of the results. They said they would approach young people in their units, however, very few did. This may have been due to the sensitive nature of the topic of online sex selling which made the professionals uncertain about whether they were allowed to ask their clients about participation. There were also concerns that participation in an interview could affect ongoing therapy and that talking about sex selling would re-traumatize the young person. Most of the professionals contacted said they wanted to protect these very vulnerable youths from any further disturbances in their lives. These concerns are valid, however, the problem with this approach is that the young people were denied the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to participate or even to discuss the pros and cons of participation, since they were never asked the question.

More collaboration is needed between academic researchers and professionals who work in clinical practice with children and adolescents. A deeper understanding of the research process may help clinical professionals develop trust in research, lead to an appreciation for the need for research and contribute to their awareness of the conditions under which research may be conducted.

For ethical reasons, it is also important to consider the risk of harm to participants. During some of the interviews conducted for studies III & IV, several of the young women began to cry and some showed signs of dissociation. It became clear that the interviews were bringing up emotional experiences that had the potential to cause re-traumatization. Since many of the informants acknowledged that they were selling sex as a way to regulate negative feelings, there was a risk that if they became upset during or after the interviews they would make contact with buyers. To reduce this risk, when the interview was approaching its end the participant was asked talk about what would happened next and trying to focus on something positive. The intention of this step was to leave the participant in a

more positive state of mind. After the interview, participants were asked to re-flect on the interview situation and to let the researcher know if anything had caused distress. The possibility of receiving counselling support was also dis-cussed and each participant was emailed the same night or the next day to find out how she was doing. However, in most cases they had already emailed to clar-ify things they felt they had not explained clearly enough or to add something they had forgotten. Some participants said they had had a positive experience during the interview situation. All added that they thought it was important to do research on young people selling sex online. Below is an example from an email Natalie sent a few hours after the interview.

> Hi Linda,
>
> Thank you for listening today and thanks for the coffee. It is important what you are doing. It was fun but also tough telling about this shit… it made me realize that I need to sort things out in my life! ☺ Just wanted to add that yes, I remem-ber more women now when you asked. Strange that I keep forgetting about them, but they have all been in the shadow really. Did I say we are going to Greece next week, just mum and me? Can I have the email to Zandra that you mentioned? It would be really good talking to her a little bit.
>
> Thanks for today and sleep well,
>
> Natalie

Doing research on sensitive topics can also be challenging for the researchers involved. It can be difficult not to become emotionally involved when hearing narratives by informants who have been abused and sometimes almost killed. The informants might in some cases live in impoverished environments and may still be involved in situations of on-going abuse and self-destructiveness. Not every story has a happy ending which would allow the researcher to leave the room without worry. The researcher may experience tiredness, even exhaustion, and there is also a risk of secondary traumatisation. Other professionals who are involved with counselling individuals in vulnerable situations, such as social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists, often have the opportunity to receive external supervision, which is seldom available to the researcher. During the cur-rent research project discussions was held with other researchers in the same field as well as with two child psychologist specialised in working with vulnera-ble young persons, and where one of them also is researcher.

To conclude, doing research on sensitive topics affects everyone involved in the research project: the participants, professionals and other adults involved, as well as the researcher.

Clinical implications

Based on the results in this thesis some clinical implications can be extracted. These are all suggestions for professionals working with children and youth in health care, social services, police or schools.

Understanding
- A majority of young people spend considerable time online, and they may also have an online sexual behaviour. Professionals working with children and youth, need to understand what young people do online, also with regard to sexual activities.

- There is a group of young women who are selling sex online, who cannot easily be detected. Police and other authorities working to protect young women from being in the sex-selling market, need to gain a better understanding of the coded sexual communication that lies behind some of the sexual encounters in order to detect and protect them.

Prevention and education
- In the preventative work with children and youth there is a need to educate and inform about Internet safety and the necessity of being careful whom to trust with private conversations, pictures or films without exaggerating the risks. These are essential elements of a modernised sexuality and relationship education in schools.

- Another question for the sexuality and relationship education that is only briefly touched on in study I, is the responsibility to not spread sexual material without permission. Those spreading sexual pictures and films of others need to understand the possible harm this might cause and that a received sexual picture or film is shared in trust, which shouldn´t be misused.

Support and interventions
- Young people communicate online and use the Internet as an important source of information and for receiving support. Social welfare and the health care sector need to develop evidence based online services to young people. These should be available around the clock and comprise infor-

mation and possibilities to chat and receive professional support related to sex and sexual abuse.

- The results in study I- IV, indicated associations between online sexual behaviours and poor health. Young people´s online life might reveal important information about their overall wellbeing and offers an opportunity to draw attention to children and youth in vulnerable situations.

- The results indicated that young people that engage in online sexual behaviour more often have problems with close social relations. This is a reason for professionals to ask young people with online sexual behaviour about their relationship with family and peers.

- All online sexual behaviours were significantly associated with maltreatment including penetrative sexual abuse. This is a reason for professionals who encounter young people with online sexual behaviour, especially young people selling sex, to ask about earlier experiences of abuse or other traumatic experiences, and offer them support and treatment if needed.

- In some cases online sexual behaviours can function as a mood regulator, and could be the impetus behind some risk behaviour on the Internet and be connected with sexual exploitation/selling sex. It is therefore important that professionals ask about motivations for having sex online.

- Young people selling sex online might be in urgent need of professional attention, protection and support. The interviews with young women selling sex online showed that there are opportunities to intervene at every point in the sex selling process, since the participants wanted to stop from the very first time they sold sex.

Future work

- Children/youth and online sexual behaviours is a new research field. In future research there is a need to agree upon a more homogenous terminology, in order to increase the comparability between studies.

- To date few longitudinal studies have been conducted. These are important for our understanding how different background factors have impact on online sexual behaviours.

- Longitudinal studies are also needed in order to study what significance sexual online behaviour in adolescence has on the individual's future health and social life.

- Instead of focusing on one specific sexual behaviours online youth who are involved in many different sexual activities online (the poly active group) and spend a lot of time having sex online, needs to be studied further.

- One of the most important issues for future research is to examine the factors that motivate online sexual behaviours and to determine whether there is a group of young people who are having online sex not for their own benefit, but to please others or as a way of receiving affirmation, appreciation or for affect regulation. Some of these behaviours may be similar to, or could be equated with a self-destructive behaviour.

- The relationship between youths and their peers needs to be studied further to obtain a broader picture of young people´s motivations for having online sex. In some cases, online sexual contacts might fill gaps of loneliness and function as a substitute for offline relationships.

- Studies are needed to focus on situations where the young peoples online relations have lead to actual harm. What are the warning signs and can these be predicted?

- For those being victims of sexual harassments and sexual abuse both online and offline, there is a need for better methods of identification and therapeutic support.

- More qualitative studies are needed including especially young boys and youth from the LGBTQ group to get a better understanding how they use the Internet for sexual purposes, and especially selling sex online.

- Finally, there is a need to study the positive side of youths´ online sexual behaviours.

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