

Online Grooming as a Manipulative Social Interaction: Insights from Textual Analysis

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Abstract: This study explores the manipulative techniques used by online groomers to build relationships with minors. The introductory part explores the processes of grooming from selected perspectives, including its scope and risk factors. The study is informed by the model of Social Exchange Theory (SET), notably Rusbult's Theory of Investments, which is applicable to abusive relationships. To detect the controlling patterns of the grooming relationship, a thematic analysis of an interview with a victim of grooming is conducted. The thematic analysis has identified the main themes and constructed a map that depicts coherent connections within the grooming system. The analysis shows that even if children do not perceive grooming as exploitative, it is a manipulative and controlling relationship due to secrecy and social stigma.

Key words: child grooming, manipulation, abusive relationship, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

This study aims to explore the nature of a digital crime known as child grooming. The term is often described as the process of befriending children with the intention of sexual interaction (cf. Davidson and Gottschalk 2011). It is a very subtle process conducted via psychological manipulations that establishes a strong emotional connection between a victim and a groomer. Consequently, groomers gain access to the children and can exploit them. The scope of the crime is challenging to estimate; however, Reuters reports that about 750,000 sexual predators worldwide are online at any given moment according

to the U.S.-based International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.² This gives a better understanding of how massive the problem is and, unlike other digital crimes, how difficult it is to detect (Maloney 2018). The bond formed by the offender allows them to have enormous control over the child's actions, including keeping the relationship secret; however, this relationship is often very harmful to the child's mental and physical health in the end.

Articles such as "Victims' Voices: The Impact of Online Grooming and Sexual Abuse" reveal what techniques are used by groomers, particularly how they are able to control and manipulate victims (Whittle et al. 2013). Psychological analyses, such as Whittle et al.'s (2013; 2014), show what effects grooming has on victims of crime and how it influences the future of a child. Communication scholars and linguists (e.g. O'Connell 2003) try to describe the patterns of conversations and how groomers adapt their language to the styles that teenage children use. Social scientists attempt to capture the scope of a problem and the risk factors of victimization. Subsequently, this article will supplement the topic and expand on the understanding of a victim's perspective in cases of such interactions. Statistics show that 85 percent of households had access to the Internet in 2016 in Europe only (Statista). This means that every minor in these households may potentially be targeted by groomers. This creates an urgent need for exploring the field, since understanding wrongdoers' behavior and their methods will help to prevent this crime.

It is essential to highlight that the paper is not trying to acquit the groomers of wrongdoings, but to indicate what children demand in their social lives and how these needs should be satisfied by relatives and peers, not by groomers. The various research studies indicate behavioral patterns of grooming on social media, mostly with an aim to indicate that the child is being victimized or present useful statistics. These results are used in the thesis, as they provide the necessary background. For example, Cano et al. (2014) present an approach for automatic classification of online grooming. The patterns and ways of analysis make it possible to scan chatrooms and detect grooming stages. This helped to look at the interactions from a different angle and detect the social needs of children and how these are used to gain their trust.

This study focuses on the presentation of the aspects of grooming process from a child's perspective. It stresses that a child is the victim in the situation

² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-trafficking-technology-youth/grooming-is-gateway-to-child-sex-trafficking-as-seducing-moves-online-idUSKBN1JD00I>.

and groomers in most cases choose their victims very carefully. Children usually come from poor backgrounds, lack support from their parents, have few people to communicate with, and these factors make them vulnerable to manipulations, since they all create a solid ground for the initially supportive conversation (NSPCC 2013). In the communication with their groomer, they may find care, sympathy and even financial support that they lack in real life. This narrows the study to the specific question: “What traces of bonding/romantic relationship does child grooming have?” It is interesting to study this relationship not only as a set of manipulative techniques, but also to look for intimate features. The present study can also provide a practical application, as it will raise awareness of the dangers of grooming and how to raise digital literacy among the underage, to prevent the possible crime.

2. Grooming as a Social Interaction

According to the NSPCC statistics, in 2017-2018 in the UK only, there were 3,096 cases of sexual communication with children, which is considered illegal in the UK since 2017. The same overview states “sexual grooming has increased by 16.8 per cent since 2015” (Bentley et al. 2018, 29-30). It is important to highlight that these numbers do not present the whole perspective, as child grooming is a subtle crime that goes unreported frequently. However, it is possible to trace the growing trend of children’s sexual victimization.

Child grooming is a very complex crime as it is difficult to detect; moreover, due to the diversity of techniques that are used to manipulate a child, it is problematic to analyze it. Therefore, for the sake of clarity it is useful to use a definition that was provided by Family and Community Development Committee in the Victorian Parliamentary *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Sexual Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organizations* (2013).³ According to this report, grooming is a process in which a child (victim) is befriended by a groomer (predator) for the purpose of establishing an emotional connection. This close relationship allows a predator to influence and force a victim into sexual activity, using psychological manipulations that are subtle, calculated and controlling. The substance of grooming is quite simple:

³ https://assets.justice.vic.gov.au/justice/resources/ea484f74-feb7-400e-ad68-9bd0be8e2a40/failure_to_disclose_betrayal_of_trust_factsheet_2017.pdf

an offender seeks sexual interaction with a minor, but the means that are used to achieve this result are based on building trust through a long-lasting interaction. A groomer finds out the interests of the child, their leisure time activities, their schedule, etc. These details are necessary to establish a connection, so that a victim will think that they are special friends or lovers. Later, using coercive techniques a groomer tricks a child into a sexual relationship. Also, the way of approaching a child depends on the background where the communication takes place.

Grooming occurs in two contexts: intra-familial and extra-familial. In the intra-familial context, a victim is approached by a person who is either a family member or at least a well-known person (Smallbone, Marshall and Wortley 2008). This scenario is described in the literature as “institutional grooming” and may occur in school, where the perpetrator often has a trustworthy position. This type commonly includes face-to-face interaction, which is the “off-line” mode of approach that occurs in real-life situations. In addition to the off-line mode, there is also an “online” one, which occurs on the Internet and limits the possibility of seeing the interlocutor to video-chat or photo or video exchange. On the Internet the term “peer-to-peer grooming” is also used with the rise of “sexting” (participants exchange sexual photos that later may be shared within a group of people without the consent of a person whose photos are shared). The extra-familial context is another case, when a groomer is a total stranger to a child from the beginning. It may be online, which means that the offender is unknown to the child and uses particular techniques to build trust in the Internet-based environment, which later will result in sexual abuse (McAlinden 2012, 28–31). This study will focus on the online context and how exactly groomers approach their targets. Moreover, this study intends to observe this whole process as a social interaction in which each side exchanges something and receives certain benefits in this form of communication, according to the classical tenets of Social Exchange Theory (e.g. Blau 1964).

It is possible to suggest that online medium gives more freedom in communication, which means that people’s self-representation may be drastically different from how they are perceived offline. Both participants of grooming may feel more relaxed, as they do not face the interlocutor. This may lead victims to sharing more personal details with the thought that it would not affect their real life. In addition to that, while texting, a person has more time to think about their answers, which allows a groomer to think ahead and calculate how their words could influence the victim. Also, groomers on the Internet

can look for new victims on social media and choose the ones who would be more prone to manipulation. Thus, the Internet is a “perfect” environment for groomers.

It is possible to find a person’s profile on a social network and find out much about him or her. It is a common practice that people post their personal data: marital status, photos, place of residence, places they have visited, their interests and hobbies – these are standard details that can be found, for example, on a Facebook profile (although the owner may limit access to it). What is more, such platforms as Instagram give one an insight into a person’s life, favorite places or leisure activities. In addition, the function ‘Story’ allows others to see where the observed person currently is and what he/she is doing. It is important to take account of how the social media have evolved to include user-generated content and how much people are willing to share. It is possible to harvest not only the basic personal information, but also find out about people’s problems and feelings, and how they relate to the reality that surrounds them.

Petter Gottschalk wrote: “Relationships are built using social software” (Davidson, Gottschalk 2011, 34). This statement represents the online reality, as the need for face-to-face contact loses its value rapidly. Internet users share their thoughts with the whole online community and receive feedback. As expressed by Cook, “the role people now play is not only in consuming information and conveying it to others, but also in creating and sharing content with them, be it textual, aural or visual” (Cook 2008, 7). Notwithstanding the granted amount of freedom that people have online, they often forget about the need of being cautious within any environment. This leads to the question about posting too much personal information or sharing too much with absolute strangers. This lack of concern may make a person more prone to being groomed, as sex offenders can use it to their advantage. As Julia Davidson states, grooming is a socialization process, within which groomers possibly share hobbies and interests with their victims, in order to prepare them for sexual abuse (Davidson and Gottschalk 2011, 82).

Moreover, the development of social networking sites has led to groomers creating communities of their own, where they discuss their interests, the ways of approaching children, new techniques of building relationships and many other topics. They commonly use forums that can be found on Tor Browser, which enables a person to change their IP-address and become almost untraceable. In addition to that, it gives access to websites that are commonly hidden and cannot be found via Google search engine. People with the help of Tor

can access Deep and Dark Webs, where they express themselves without being afraid of any punishment; they may also find illegal shops and services.⁴

Internet Child Abuse mentions that young adults are more engaged into risk-taking behaviors, which include: sharing personal data online, engaging into conversation with an unknown person, going on chatrooms or video chats (Davidson and Gottschalk 2011). The lack of education about Internet safety may lead to people being less cautious and more prone to manipulation. When groomers choose their victims, they use basic information to start an interaction where they forge an understanding whether they will proceed with the grooming. Perpetrators use specific manipulative techniques or a combination of them to gain full secretiveness and make sure that the victim would not tell anyone about their relationships. The research that was conducted by Helen Whittle and her colleagues studied grooming from the victim's perspective and, surprisingly, this interaction was considered "a relationship." The victims of grooming interviewed by researchers were both females and males: Whereas girls did consider their groomer to be their "boyfriend," boys did not treat him/her as an object of romantic relationships, but rather thought of the bond as either a sexual or a friendly relation. The interviewed victims also mentioned the techniques that were used by the groomers and they indicated that these were dominantly friendly or romantic ways of influence, but admitted that sometimes it was like a "roller-coaster," because the perpetrators could "get mad" at them for disobedience or not answering to messages (Whittle et al. 2014).

The information from extensive research presents several points that are crucial for this paper. Firstly, the female victims truly believed that they had a romantic relationship with a person on the other side of the screen. At the moment of their communication, the girls were 12-15 years old and their groomers did manage to establish romantic relationships, and at the same time they managed to keep it secret. Some of the parents knew about the relationship, although they did not know who was actually talking to their children. Secondly, there were also male victims (their number was lower than females), but it only highlights that belonging to one of the sexes does not guarantee safety, and boys should also be taught about on-line manipulation. Thirdly, adolescents tend to engage in risk-taking behaviors and this puts them at a higher

⁴ https://www.ted.com/talks/jamie_bartlett_how_the_mysterious_dark_net_is_going_mainstream/discussion?nolanguage=es%3Futm_source%3Dtedcomshare.

risk of being groomed. In combination with the information about the Internet as the medium for grooming and the behaviors of children online, it is possible now to outline the stages of grooming and describe them, following Whittle et al. (2014).

Conversation	Including normal, mutual interests, victim focused and confiding
Deception	Including lies about interests, lies about identity and webcam Trickery
Regular/intense contact	Including increasing methods of contact, talking through the night
Secrecy	Including techniques to keep it secret, encouraging victim secrecy, allowing victim to decide secrecy
Sexualization	Including sexual chat, sexual photos and videos, sexual compliments, sexual contact and overemphasis on sexual side of Relationship
Kindness and Flattery	Including generosity, good listener, genuine, fun, helping with homework, supportive, traditional and sexual compliments, promises about the future, personality and physical compliments
Erratic Temperament & Nastiness	Including blackmail, threats, bribery, possessiveness, anger, encouraging jealousy, fights, being contradictory
Grooming others	Including friends and family

Table 1: Subthemes of offender manipulation techniques (Whittle et al. 2014, 409-410).

It is almost impossible to outline a single approach that groomers tend to use, as their techniques are constantly evolving. One case may be drastically different from another; nevertheless, O’Connell (2008) presents five phases that could be used in an analysis. He describes each of them and gives strong arguments why they are used exactly in this sequence: Friendship-forming, Relationship-forming, Risk-assessment, Exclusivity and Sexual Contact. This line

gives a better understanding on how this type of abusive relationship is built. The length of these phases is never stable and sex offenders try to monitor the situation and decide whether their victims are ready for moving to the next stage. In fact, at the beginning it does look like a normal relationship where the participants are trying to find common ground, then share some details and at this point the child starts perceiving his/her new friend as someone with whom they can share and they bond. However, starting with the stage of Risk-assessment, a groomer checks whether a child is secretive about their communication. The Exclusivity phase changes the context of the interaction into more private one and sets a strong connection when interlocutors are sharing ever more personal information and secrets. The sexual phase is fully controlled by the adult and gradually the relationship gains more intimate and romantic features. It can develop to the point when a child perceives his/her 'friend' as a boyfriend/girlfriend and possible future lover.

The phases that were listed above refer to online grooming and perpetrators may continue this process for years until they either lose interest or get noticed. The long-term grooming can be effective if the techniques described by Whittle and phases by O'Connell (2008) are combined. For example, the manipulation called 'Conversation' may go with 'Friendship-forming' stage to build a strong basis for the relationship and 'Secrecy' with 'Risk-assessment' to achieve exclusivity of the contact. Obviously, groomers use their own resources of information or generate ideas by themselves, but it is easier to understand how the abuse is conducted by reading advice. It is one of the top priorities for a groomer to dominate the conversation in a subtle manner, so that a child will be willing to communicate and in due course will be ready for sexual acts. These may include not only a physical contact, but also sharing photos or videos with this sexual content. Groomers may keep these materials to themselves or share them online with others (Whittle et al. 2014).

In order to get to the core of factors that put people at higher risk of being groomed, it is necessary to define how their lives reflect onto their online behaviors. There are two groups of vulnerable underage people. The first group includes people who are vulnerable both offline and online and the second group is the people who are vulnerable to manipulation online exclusively (UKCCIS 2012). It is believed that people do not have identical behavioral patterns both in real life and virtual and the research that was provided by Whittle et al. (2013) illustrates this. Moreover, scholars have identified what aspects put children at higher risk, such as females, those questioning their

sexuality (female or male), at the stage of adolescence, with disabilities or psychological disturbances. While this may seem generalized, it can be well explained. At the stage of adolescence people are more curious and develop their personalities and, unfortunately, disabilities or mental health problems may marginalize people in real life, which forces them to seek communication online. These factors, indeed, make manipulation easier, as it would be enough for the groomer to raise a person's self-esteem, make them feel comfortable with themselves and give them a sense of belonging and love to start a relationship.

Additionally, researchers (e.g. Whittle et al. 2013) combined risk factors from other studies and found that, for example, extroversion in combination with extreme confidence and friendliness may as well make a person vulnerable to grooming, as much as low self-esteem and emotional disturbances. What is necessary to highlight is that higher socioeconomic status makes underage individuals more prone to being groomed online, while lower status increases chances of falling victims to offline predators (Whittle et al. 2013). As in the case with combining phases and relatable techniques, it is possible to suggest that the risk factors alone do not guarantee that a minor will be groomed online. Knowing what risk factors and risk-taking behaviors put children and teenagers in danger and make them more prone to manipulation is fundamental, but interlacing it with the social exchange theory will present a newer picture of the whole process. Susan Sprecher notes that "social behavior is a series of exchanges; individuals attempt to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs; and when individuals receive rewards from others, they feel obligated to reciprocate" (1998). Consequently, it is important to entangle the child grooming process with a theoretical basis.

2. Social Exchange Theory and Investments in Grooming

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) and its models are the key to the analysis and understanding the motives of both victims and groomers. They explain why children engage in this type of relationship and add more details to the manipulative side of grooming. The theoretical framework presented below considers the grooming process as an interaction between two human beings and how they benefit from the exchanged communications. SET has been primarily developed as psychological but was extremely well suited

to be applied to sociological studies within many contexts (interpersonal and institutional). George Homans introduced the theory following the basic economic principles of reward and cost (1961). He gained his inspiration from economic studies and adopted the formula of Profit = Reward - Cost. Thus, in his interpretation, behavior is considerably influenced by profits that one may get from the interaction. Reward is what a person gets for his actions and Cost is what has to be done to get the benefits (Rewards). Homans states that "when an action (or sentiment) emitted by one man is rewarded (or punished) by the action issued by another man, then, regardless of the type of emitted behavior, we say that these two people interact" (1961, 35). In his following research studies, Homans defined some more propositions that broaden the theory. These notions describe the psychological aspect of interactions and provide a better understanding of how Social Exchange works in cases that differ with one another (1974).

Homans' theory influenced Peter Michael Blau's model as he applied it to the sociological field and expanded it. Blau also stated that each interaction gave rewards to *both* participants, and then used this notion to describe how social structures were organized by explaining society's structures and how they are sculpted by people's interactions (1964). Thibaut and Kelly (1959) took the theory to a more interpersonal level, and their postulate was that people were constantly calculating (consciously or not) costs and rewards in their relationships. While such statement may seem mercantile, it is traceable in everyday lives. People in relationships do expect to receive some reward (i.e. a child did his/her homework and wants to play). This expectation is omnipresent, and Thibaut and Kelly described why it happens, using Social Exchange Theory as the basis. Nevertheless, the Investment Theory by Rusbult (1983) will be the best choice for the subject that is being investigated here, as this theory focuses on intimate relationships and their prevalence. Rusbult explained why people are dedicated to their intimate relationships and what factors ensure they last.

Rusbult's Investment Theory does not focus on one part of a romantic relationship (i.e. sexual), instead she observed human bonding as a whole. Rusbult expanded SET in a way to explain why some relationships are long-lasting and some are not. As it was mentioned above, child grooming process is a long-lasting relationship and the Investment Theory outlines reasons for that. It is important to indicate that from the child's perspective grooming is not treated as a wrongdoing, but rather a romantic involvement. Rusbult employs

Profit, Reward and Cost as a basis of the theory with variables of her own (See Figure 1). The Investment Theory outlines a general model of behavior for partners in romantic relationships. It describes partners' input, their exchange of tangible and intangible matters and how these factors make the relationship last. A formula summarizes the theory: $\text{Commitment} = \text{Satisfaction} - \text{Alternatives} + \text{Investments}$. Commitment in this context is seen as a decision whether a partner wants to stay or leave, Satisfaction stands for level of comfort and delight, Alternatives are the other candidates for the role of a possible partner and Investments are the things given to the partner.

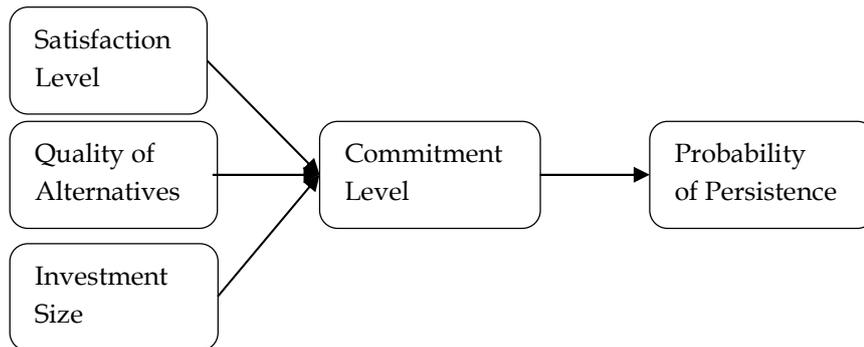


Figure 1: Diagram of Investment Model (Rusbult et al. 1998).

Since the investments represent the foundation of the theory, they deserve more scrupulous attention. As it was presented by Rusbult (1980), Investments are relatively similar to costs and rewards; however, these are rather non-materialistic resources and after the break-up these cannot be taken back. Intrinsic resources are put into the relationship directly; they are of an intangible nature, such as emotional work on the relationship, openness with the partner and time spent together. Extrinsic resources involve values, memories, hobbies, activities, friends and some materialistic possessions that are associated with the relationships but were happening outside of them. There is another similarity with the reward-cost model, because some Investments are rewarding (sharing memories) and some are costly (spending time or money on your partner). Consequently, Commitment is increased if the amount of Investment is on the decent level, as they make a person feeling attached to the partner, since ending these would mean losing all the Investments (Rusbult 1980).

The theory seemed abstract and even though people could relate to this, it lacked proof. Rusbult verified it based on test that was conducted in a form of a questionnaire administered to 17 males and 17 females, who were in heterosexual relationships. They had to evaluate their relationships in accordance with the theory's variables. Findings state that the higher the investments, the bigger the chance of holding onto the partners and not seeking alternatives (1983). However, the theory and the test received some criticism. It was stated that the findings could be biased by the participants, as they could evaluate some investments unconsciously. It was also suggested that the theory is dubious, because the high investment could be the result of high commitment. Despite the contradictory feelings about the results of the test, the theory took its niche in the psychological and sociological fields, because in 2006 Rhatigan and Axom used Investment Theory to explain the situation of women who were in abusive relationships and suffered from intimate violence. It was stated that women who have invested substantially in the relationships, despite the violence from partner's side, did not want to break up. This proved that Rusbult's Theory is applicable to the cases of abusive relationships (to which grooming belongs) among others.

Therefore, when it comes to child grooming, both participants still invest intrinsic and extrinsic means to make the relationship work. The manipulative techniques that were described in Table 1 represent how it occurs. The intrinsic resources, like time, emotional work and self-disclosure, remain the elements that make the victim feel attached and important to the groomer. Apart from that, children become very open and share everything that happens to them on daily basis: they may share secrets and matters that trouble them, while predators listen to them and may give a piece of advice. This example also shows the Cost-Reward model, as victim puts in time and personal details and receives understanding. It is possible to suggest that groomers have to be cautious and tell their victims exactly what they desire to hear.

The extrinsic means are related to the things that become associated with the partner, but happen outside of the relationship. The cases of online grooming do not typically include spending time together in real-life situations; however, the participants may still share a range of such investments. For a victim it may be a cellphone that they use as a tool for communication with a groomer. Moreover, groomers frequently fake their identities and adjust them to the needs of a victim, which means that they will share similar activities, hobbies, thoughts and preferences. All the investments, according to Rusbult's theory,

promote a deep commitment that leads to prolonging the relationships. At some points, the victim may doubt the groomer's motives, but after so many investments and deliberate manipulation his/her commitment is extremely high. Since the aim that is set by the predator – to make the victim open for sexual activities, Susan Sprecher's suggestion can elaborate on that: "it is likely that investment model variables (rewards, costs, comparison level, comparison level for alternatives, investments) should predict how sexually involved dating partners become" (1998). She proposes that the higher the variables of the theory, the higher the chances of a victim being sexually active, which means that the goal is achieved by the groomer if the manipulation and bonding are done properly.

Rusbult's theory provides a solid ground for the grooming perspective, but it does not explain sufficiently the aftermath of abusive relationships, apart from the fact that the victims find it difficult to move on, because of intense affection to their abusers. To extend the theoretical part of the research, it is useful to add the aspect of what happens after, and how the strong bond between a groomer and a child keeps the victim entangled and almost addicted to the connection. The term "trauma bonding" was invented by Patrick Carnes (1997) and it is rather an effect than a tool of the abusive relationships. He describes it as the misuse of fear, excitement, sexual feeling, sexual physiology to entangle another person. The term is applicable to long-term abusive relationships and despite the harm that is done to the victim, he/she firmly believes that that is what love and affection feel like. It is especially accurate when the cases that involve children are considered, since minors, because of the lack of experience and the influence from grooming tactics, start to believe this is a legitimate relationship. It does not matter if the abuser manipulates the child to perform sexual activities, the victims will not perceive it as a wrongdoing; by contrast, they will be committed to performing it again, because they may receive the rewards after. Trauma bonding also suggests that fear is the tool that forces victims to embrace the abuse without much resistance and the more the person passively responds to the abuse, the higher the chance of automatically following the pattern. Groomers do not constantly exploit fear to manipulate the victim. However, the victim may be fearful because of the consequences and what will happen if the relationship is revealed. Apart from fear, there are also the excitement and sexual feelings that could be considered as investments that also entangle the victim within the abusive relationship.

The repercussions of trauma bonding are difficult to overcome, as the child may not understand the relationship was wrong. Moreover, they were looking for comfort and sympathy from the groomer every time they demanded it and, after the bond was broken, they can no longer do so. Even if the abuse was systematic and made the victim feel miserable about it, they have learned to accept it and even like. According to Carnes (1997), no matter how the abuse was disclosed, it is crucial to be very tentative and careful with the feelings of the child, as what they have experienced for a lengthy period of time seems normal and desirable to them and it will take time and patience to explain the abuse. The PACE (Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation) states that it is important for the victim to be isolated from his/her abuser for a significant period of time, as it will help to rebuild the perception of what a healthy relationship should look like.

4. Analysis of Grooming Techniques

4.1. Material and Procedure

It is required to note here that the review of literature about grooming processes and theoretical frameworks that were presented above enable this research to be extended to textual analysis. The purpose of this section is to investigate and interpret the data from one victim's interview (see appendix) about a past experience of grooming. The findings present patterns of this grooming relationship and outline what manipulative techniques were used in the studied case. It will interpret them in the context of Investments Theory. The case study will not give the opportunity to generalize about all the relationships, as each case is unique, but it is important to identify what the consequences for this victim have been, and how the experience of being groomed affected her.

However, before proceeding there is a need to describe the background of the interview. The victim asked to not include personal data, such as name, dates and cities, but gave her permission to mentioning some factors. At the moment of the grooming process, she was 15-16 years old and lived in Ukraine. The situation is slightly more complicated with her groomer. She admitted that he initially presented a different personality, but then confessed

that he was around 40 years old, was married and lived in Spain. It is difficult to determine whether the information he gave her was truthful or not. At the moment when the interview was taken, the victim was 18 years old. The interview was conducted in early 2019 by the author of this article, via online voice call, and was originally in Russian before it was transcribed and translated (see Appendix).

A specific methodology helps to analyze data, interpret the information that was collected and these steps will help to verify a hypothesis, which later on can be used in theoretical or artistic fields. For this paper, a qualitative methodology has been chosen for a number of reasons. Foremost, the textual material requires a thorough interpretation and coding, as the dataset consists of an interview that was conducted with a victim of online grooming process. Secondly, the rather dynamic approach gives freedom to the researcher. It is necessary to look at the victim's answers and groomers' point of view from various perspectives, read between the lines and identify meaningful patterns from the transcript. Conclusively, there is a necessity to be objective and critical to explain why children fall for predators' manipulations and why adolescents treat that relationship as romantic. Moreover, the qualitative approach is widely employed by researchers who are investigating grooming, for example *Under His Spell* presents chunks of interviews with victims of grooming and interprets them accordingly (Whittle et al. 2014). This proves that this methodological choice is appropriate for this cause and can be exploited further on.

Taking into consideration the qualitative methodology and the fact that a thorough investigation of text will be performed, the most convenient way would be a thematic analysis. It allows one to identify significant sequences in the text, interpret and structure them. Braun and Clarke define it as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data" (2006, 79). The goal of a thematic analysis is to extract themes that are hidden in the text, while these themes are later on used to help answer research questions/hypothesis. The advantage is that it is very flexible and there is no specific pattern that must be followed to organize it; however, it may be treated as a negative feature as well. Yet, this possible confusion may be prevented if a researcher selects one of the well-recognized procedures. This paper will use Braun and Clarke's six-step model (2006) explained by Moira Maguire and Brid Delahunt, in their guide (2017). It will be implemented to assist in the research, as it is brief, describes the key points and provides exceptional examples that can be clearly followed:

- 1) become familiar with the data,
- 2) generate initial codes,
- 3) search for themes,
- 4) review themes,
- 5) define themes,
- 6) write-up.

When the text is being analyzed with a theory in mind, it is best to employ theoretical thematic analysis, which means that the researcher may start generating codes at the first step, since he/she approximately recognizes what he/she is looking for. The second step is "Generating initial codes." At this stage, it is essential to select the most significant parts of text, as there may not be a need to analyze every single line. There is a need to identify relevant chunks to the research question and briefly describe them, to help in the following step. Once the codes have been written, it is time for the subsequent move "Search for themes." After gathering the codes (that carry relevant question information), the analyst may start arranging them into themes aimed at helping to answer the research question. There is no strict rule how to divide them, so it merely depends on their relevance and importance. Later, comes the "Reviewing themes" step; here the investigator should look through themes and define which remain the main ones, and which are secondary. Such a division will help to concentrate on the critical findings from the analysis. The fifth step "Define themes" is the finishing touch. The researcher has to "identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 92). It consists in labelling themes, after the relation has been found between the themes and subthemes. In conclusion, the concluding part has to be concise and describe the findings, and it will help to answer the research question or prove the hypothesis.

4.2. Data Analysis

The interview was conducted and transcribed and the results allow us to reconstruct the whole process of grooming and define which themes emerge. The thematic analysis allowed us to identify significant patterns that were interpreted accordingly to the guide described above. Moreover, the themes make it possible to take a closer look at the manipulation and how a groomer maintained a long-lasting connection and was not caught. In addition, it is possible

to observe how the victim’s perception had been changing over time and what consequences it had on her life. Consequently, I identified four major themes and five subthemes that are listed below in the Table 2.

<p>Theme: Victim’s context Subtheme: Victim’s pre-grooming context Being an adolescent, Suffering from changing environments, Feeling pressure to perform well at school, Feeling melancholic, A tool to distract – computer. Subtheme: Context within grooming Intense contact affected the V’s life, Mother was concerned, Mother did not mind communication, V sent intimate photos first, Sharing photos became a routine for V.</p>	<p>Theme: Manipulation Subtheme: Grooming techniques G faked his photo, G lied about his identity, G used flattery, G applied intense contact, G was interested in V’s personality, G confessed about lying (installed credibility), G never showed himself during calls, G was supportive, shared interests with V, G confessed being in love with V, G pushed V to send more erotic content, G became aggressive when received ‘no’.</p>	<p>Theme: Victim’s emotions Subtheme: Emotional response to grooming V enjoyed receiving compliments, V liked G’s identity, V was insecure about continuing communication, V was afraid of losing contact, V forgave G for lying, was flattered V felt attracted to G’s personality, V used video during calls, V became confident, V did not feel like she loved him, V felt like she owned him, V got afraid of how he changed, V ended the relationship.</p>	<p>Theme: Post-grooming Subtheme: Recovery V has never told anyone about it, V believed in this relationship, V regrets, V is hurt, V is ashamed, V is afraid.</p>
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Table 2: Results of analysis: themes/subthemes (G = groomer; V = victim).

The first theme represents *Victim's context* and is divided into two subthemes: *Pre-grooming context* and *Context within grooming*. This depicts the circumstances and surroundings that the victims appeared to be in. As the interviewee said, she was mentally exhausted before the grooming occurred: "I felt (short pause) empty, like there was no point in all the hard work that I was doing at school" (2I).⁵ That, according to the previous research, makes victims more prone to manipulation (Whittle et al. 2013). Later, during the grooming she confessed feeling better and encouraged, but was physically exhausted, which was caused by the lack of sleep, because of the intense contact that was established by the groomer. The second theme is actual *Manipulation* and the subtheme is *Grooming techniques*. The groomer had been practicing already known manipulative techniques: establishing intense contact, flattery, faking the identity, being overly engaged with the victim's life, creating an illusion of a romantic relationship, etc. These techniques allowed the groomer to maintain a lasting connection and get to what he had wanted: erotic photos of the adolescent. It is a presumption, but it was impossible to interview the groomer to find out his true intentions. Given that, the manipulative techniques are vividly illustrated in this case and the victim has confessed that she did enjoy the communication until the groomer had started being aggressive. That intrusive and demanding reaction was caused by being rejected being given more erotic content.

The third theme is *Victim's Emotions*, and the subtheme is *Emotional response to grooming*. Emotions are imperative when child grooming is taken into account, and groomers try to regulate emotions of their victims in a way that children would behave and obey their will: "He made me feel understood [...] I was wishing that we would live in the same city. He made me feel confident, because he was complimenting me, how smart I was, how beautiful I was, that I had a beautiful smile" (12I). The words "made me feel" are repeated frequently by the interviewee through the interview. This indicates that the groomer had been carefully controlling his victim's emotions while their relationship developed and was made to last. It is possible to assume that if the groomer had not started to be so pressing to receive more content, their relationships would be even longer. Despite the fact that the victim had doubts about their connection, she felt pleased about the communication and the amount

⁵ 2I refers to the second reply of the interviewee in the interview in the appendix, the notation is used subsequently to refer to specific fragments of the interview.

of support that she had been receiving from the groomer. Moreover, he made her think she was in love with him: “I was still insecure about this whole thing, but a long story short, he made me feel at ease with this new form of relationship [...] I really felt like I was falling in love with him” (13I).

It is noteworthy that the range of emotions that the victim was feeling is certainly overwhelming for a teenager. She felt admired, which made her feel confident, but she was also insecure about the relationship but was not sure that she truly loved him. In brief, she was afraid of losing him; however, she also “felt addicted to him” (13I). This emotional rollercoaster ushered her to the point that she willingly sent him revealing photos of herself and he was very encouraging of that action. The victim then commented on how the communication looked later: “He was asking ‘to share myself’ with him and I felt like I had to. Not because he was forcing me, but because he had done me so much good, he had been supporting me and that made me feel like I owned him” (15I). The feeling of owning can be related to Rusbult’s theory and will be described later.

The last theme that was identified is the *Post-grooming*, with the subtheme called *Recovery*. It has little to do with manipulation, but it is important to recognize what the consequences of such experience are and how they have affected the victim’s life. The case that has been analyzed here belongs to one of many that was not reported to the police and that was unrevealed by the parents, and kept secret from the public for years. The victim cannot be judged for that, as she is traumatized by what happened to her. “It was nothing like the first love that teens are dreaming about. I regret giving so much of myself” (18I). The victim also admitted that she could not tell anyone, because she “just felt so ashamed and dirty” (18I). What is equally critical is she is still afraid that he may appear in her life again.

The following step of the analysis is the thematic map of the interview. It is important to bear in mind that attention should be paid to the text itself and the identified connections should be made to actual statements and not to presumed psychological states or intentions. The map’s role is to display how the themes and subthemes are connected within the data. In the case that was studied, the core element is *Manipulation*. Hence, that theme is the center of the analysis, and it is necessary to grasp how the *Manipulation* is conducted and what elements define the *Grooming techniques* that are going to be used. Besides, it is curious what role manipulation plays in establishing the romantic relationships between groomers and victims. The thematic map (Figure 2)

is depicted below. It is possible to see that *Manipulation* is the core and other components surround it and recreate a pattern according to which the groomer had been dominating the relationship. There were three fundamental factors: *Grooming techniques*, *Victim's emotions* and *Victim's context*. They shape the *Manipulation* itself, as the groomer had to operate the victim's emotions and circumstances and use the technique that would help him achieve the goal. The personal context within grooming also influenced the techniques, which later led to *Emotional response*. Apparently, *Victim's emotions* heavily relied on the *Pre-grooming* context, which proves there is a connection between these elements. As was mentioned before, the *Post-grooming* phase does not retain a direct connection to the *Manipulation*, as by that moment the relationship was already over (obviously, she keeps a memory of the relationship, but the interview does not evidence her experiencing a severe trauma). However, *Emotional response* did affect the victim to that point that she is presently at the stage of *Recovery*.

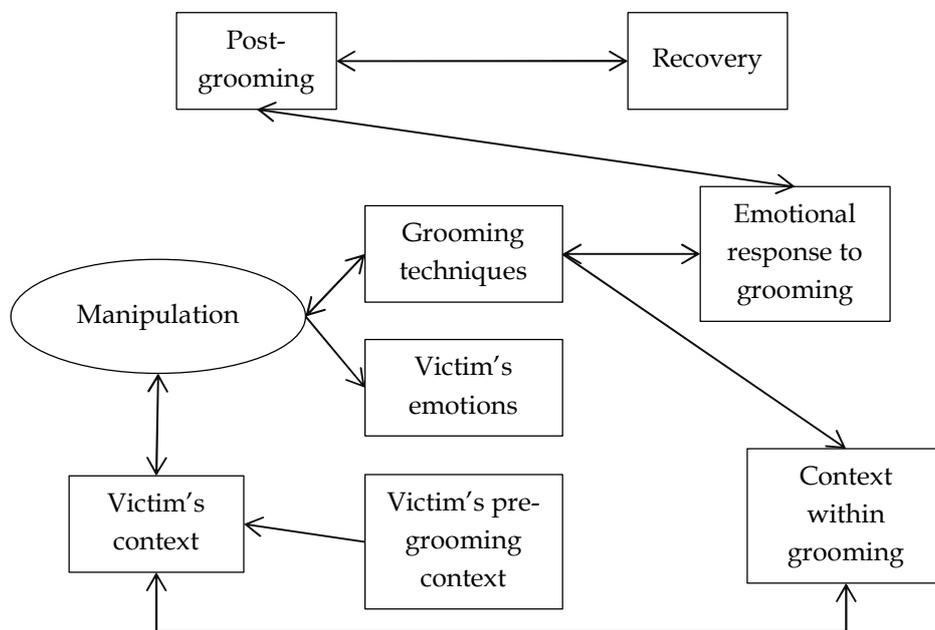


Figure 2: Thematic map of relations among identified themes/subthemes.

4.3. Explaining the Mechanisms of Investment

It is possible now to say that a thematic analysis of the interview had been conducted. The findings, including coded themes and the thematic map, allow us to look at grooming as a manipulation that is strategic and calculated. The interview transcript itself is unique and represents the real-life case of an adolescent being groomed. The question of how the manipulation is conducted was documented at length. However, there are still several elements that could complement the study and offer a different perspective of the grooming process. One of them is that the interview is an opportunity to trace Rusbult's Theory of Investments, in this case of grooming. The victim, during the interview said: "He had done me so much good, he had been supporting me and that made me feel like I owned him." That sentence clearly depicts how the theory works. The intrinsic methods that were used are all the communicational patterns. For example, following the Cost-Reward mode, the victim had put a significant amount of time, personal details and personal photos, and as the Reward she received comfort, understanding and confidence boost. Yet, another curious detail lies in between these lines: "I had to hide that part of me from everyone but him. He created that world of ours and it felt so great." It seems like there were not only the intrinsic Investments, but the whole intrinsic world of theirs. "I really felt like I was falling in love with him. It was exciting." The victim was genuinely committed to this relationship and despite some moments of hesitation, the groomer made her feel confident about herself and their communication. At the same time, the extrinsic aspect was her cellphone, as it was strongly associated with the feeling of their bond. Despite all the Investments and the dedication from the victim's side, the groomer overstepped and started forcing the victim when she was not mentally prepared, which led to a break-up. The result was that the victim did suffer from their connection, as she believed that the feelings were real and this could have been traumatic, as later on, she could adapt that model of abusive relationship in her future relationships. Another possible consequence is that now she may not be able to trust other people to the same degree. Also, the feeling of fear that their connection, even though it ended, may be revealed and greatly influence her present life.

5. Conclusion

All things considered, child grooming is a manipulative relationship. It affects the victim and may leave one in a state of post-trauma. This concluding statement is supported by a review of literature presented in the introductory sections. Rusbult's theory, which describes why people endure abusive relationships, was utilized here to obtain a more systematic reference system for the understanding of how groomers invest into their victims and how exactly this helps to maintain a long-lasting connection despite social stigma and suspicious secrecy. The thematic analysis in the practical section helped to effectively analyze an interview with a victim of online grooming. The findings from the data proved to be useful, as they gave an answer to the research question: "What traces of bonding/romantic relationship does child grooming have?".

Despite the fact that the results of the research matched initial expectations, there is still a lot to be studied. Further research studies could give more details from various victims, preferably from different backgrounds, as that might allow us to discover more risk factors. Additionally, there is very little research that would characterize groomers' motivations in detail in sociological and psychological terms. Naturally, it would be naïve to presume that groomers voice the same perception on this type of relationships. Having a better understanding of their social behaviors could also help to detect them online and in real life situations.

Taking everything into consideration, the data allow us to pose several recommendations for parents that could help them to protect their kids. Initially, grooming may occur because children are socially marginalized. This may occur when they move homes or cities, change schools or neighborhoods and lose long-time friends. It means that parents have to constantly remind their children that they can always have their support if they feel isolated or anxious. Adaptation should not be replaced by simply switching from physical contacts to the virtual world. Also, excessive secrecy about the online activities performed by the child should be brought to the parents' attention. It is a basic piece of advice, but it is frequently neglected, because if parents suspect anything, they merely limit the access to the Internet without going into the core of the problem of their child's seeking certain stimulations online. The child's sudden changes in moods and attitudes, evidence of stress and depressive states, even if natural in the period of growing up, should not be dismissed by parents or educators. These might be signs of conflicted

feelings that arise when a person is being manipulated to do something they subconsciously feel is against their best interest.

It is natural for young people to be curious and want to engage in new types of relationships and they should not be punished for trying to develop socially through social media, but they should be made aware by parents and educators of the possibilities of being manipulated. Training in assertiveness and in being able to refuse unwanted advances is crucial here. On the other hand, teenagers often feel peer pressure to be online, to be liked, to be engaged in the activities similar to their peers, so teaching them how to handle peer pressure would be useful, because it could prove equally handy when resisting a groomer's pressure.

Obviously, the problem of grooming is not restricted to the Internet, which may be a tool, but it is not the reason for groomers to gain access to victims. However, parents should implement certain software that prevent children from going on potentially dangerous web-sites. Child's safety heavily depends on parents and as difficult as it can be, parents should establish an atmosphere of trust and make sure that their kids are not afraid of speaking up and talking about their problems. Last but not least, parents should become educated about the scale and scope of grooming and about grooming techniques so that they can more easily detect them and prevent their children's falling victim to predators.

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Appendix

1R Researcher: What were you like when you met the groomer?

1I Interviewee: I had just turned 15 and was studying at school, obviously. It was a hard time for me as we just moved with my mum and new school did not start well for me.

2R: What do you mean by that?

2I: It was OK, in a sense that I made some friends, but I was stressed simply. I don't know. It is difficult to explain. We changed cities and I felt like something was lacking. My grades were OK too, but it was very difficult. I had to put twice as much effort to live up to my mums' expectations. I felt (short pause) empty, like there was no point in all the hard work that I was doing at school. Heh, that's what you call being a teenager, I guess.

3R: Did you try to fight the "emptiness"?

3I: Oh, I did! I was going out with a friend of mine. We did have a good time and were chatting. We still do, actually. The town was very small and I felt incredibly bored, there was a coffee shop, where we would usually hang out and a pizzeria. That is basically it, so you can imagine. It was boring, especially after living in a big city. We tried smoking ones. It was weird, so we stopped. But usually, we would spend time playing computer games, watching movies, the computer was our main source of entertainment.

4R: I suppose that is where you met your groomer?

4I: True, that's where we met.

5R: Could you tell me about it?

5I: Well, I will do my best. We were sitting at mine with that friend, who I mentioned. She proposed to go to some random chat room. You know these? Honestly, I did not expect anything good as I have heard that there

are perverts mainly, but it was something new! Not the perverts, but the chat with random person. So, we went there and after few chats we came across a man, who surprisingly did not ask for "sexting". So, the man started the conversation and he was good looking on the photo. I liked him, actually so did he. He said a few compliments and me with my friend thought it was so cute. We were 15, back then OK? Anyway, the man asked for my Skype, I was hesitating, but at the same time I enjoyed the communication so much, that I was willing to continue.

6R: What was the motivation to continue communication?

6I: It wasn't really a "motivation". He seemed very kind and educated, besides he was from Spain. I have always been attracted to different cultures and he just seemed like a window to a new world. I thought that since he is from abroad, he could be my pen friend, right? All these factors together convinced me to share my contacts and that's how it started. Trust me, from the bare beginning we have been talking non-stop!

7R: How intense the communication was, since you have mentioned 'non-stop'?

7I: I literally mean it. From the day one I have never put my phone further than one meter away. We were texting at first. Loads of messages every day. We were talking mainly about our culture differences, how our lives look like. Actually, he was mostly asking me about my life and that seemed very flattering. Like, he was interested in me and my boring routine, of course, I found it very pleasant. I have tried asking him about his life. He did share a bit about himself, he said that he was 23, was working part-time and studying. But! He went silent after. I started panicking. I thought I did something wrong or was pushing too hard to get any information from him. We have been talking for 2 or 3 days when that happened and as ridiculous as it sounds, I was afraid of losing him, as I already considered him a friend.

8R: I suppose the communication didn't end. How long have you been waiting for him to answer?

8I: He answered back one day later. He wrote extremely long text where he was explaining himself and honestly, he had quite a lot to say, since he lied to me. Everything that he told me about himself was a lie and he told me the truth. I don't know how honest he was, but he said that he was much older in reality, to be precise he was around 40, had a wife and was working in some office. I was shocked! Not really from the fact that he is an adult man, but from the fact that he lied, I saw no point in it. Though, he said that he was afraid that I wouldn't like to talk to him if I knew the truth and I found it reasonable and forgave him. Should have asked myself why an adult man pretended to be a 23-yo student, but I didn't! How genius of me! Anyway, from that point everything got back to normal and few weeks later I insisted on calling him. He asked if I was sure and actually, I was excited. We did not use video, but it was very comforting (?) to hear him talk. Soon he asked if I could turn on the video, coz he wanted see me "smiling" and ones again I fell for the flattery and my camera was always turned on and his "wasn't working", even though he promised to buy a new one, he never did.

9R: How did you feel about not seeing his face?

9I: It felt weird. On the one hand, it gave me freedom to imagine how does he look like and for some reason I really wanted him to look good. I felt attracted to his personality and I wanted to be just as attracted to his looks. I still feel bad about it, since he had a wife, but my 15-year old brain did not care about it. Still, I was sure that even if he hadn't looked attractive, he still was a nice person. Anyway, eventually he sent his photo and was ok

(laughs), but said that was an old photo and he had put on some weight since then. It was enough for me and my curiosity and I felt more comfortable, since I knew who I was talking to.

10R: What were the topics that you have talked about?

10I: It was something new for me. I could talk to him like I used to with my peers. Not in a bad sense. He was mature and I loved it. I liked his experience, the stories that he was telling me about his life and "youth". I shared everything with him. I shared my secrets, my fears, my troubles

and he has always been there for me 24/7. He has always been supportive and could make me laugh. Whenever I was telling about my hobbies and interests, he as if was sharing them too. "Oh, I like that band too!" "I loved that book!" "You have seen that movie, too?!" These were quite regular phrases from him that I was hearing/reading very often. I loved that we shared so many things in common and though that he really was my... Soulmate. I felt very confused, because somehow it felt wrong that I was talking to a grown man and shared every part of my life with him, but he always made me feel ok with it, and was saying that what we share is very special. But, here comes the big

"BUT". We were talking for at least 4 hours daily, constantly texting and of course it effected my life. I was sleepy quite often because we would talk a lot at night, I couldn't focus at school and soon one of teachers told about that to my mum. She was furious. She didn't mind me talking to a 40-yo man, but what she did mind is that he took over my life. It got to the point that she took my phone for a day. It was just one day, you understand, but for me it was a tragedy. I realized that I need him in my life, that without him it is not the same. The next day I felt so happy and relieved when I got the phone back.

11R: May I ask you how did you tell your mum about your new friend?

11I: Sure. My mother noticed that I was spending more time with my cellphone and of course she wanted to know what was going on. I asked him if I could tell my mum. He was very encouraging and said that I should have done it a long time ago. That was definitely a confidence boost and I told mum everything about him, well, at least what I knew about him. She just told me to be careful, but did not think that it was wrong, since I seemed happier.

12R: Even though you felt tired from the lack of sleep, you felt happy. Do you think he made you feel that or that was just the fact of communication?

12I: Looking back now... (Sighs) It's a complicated question! He made me feel understood. I hope, it makes sense. He was always there for me, always in my phone. I was wishing that we would live in the same city. He made

me feel confident, because he was complimenting me, how smart I was, how beautiful I was, that I had a beautiful smile. Every day I had been hearing that I am gorgeous. And it's difficult to say, but after half a year (pause) he had changed our relationship.

13R: How did he change it?

13I: For what it's worth, I wish he never did that. I was on a school trip and as usual I was texting him and he said, quote: "I have to confess you. It may change the way you see me." I was intrigued and scared, but agreed to call him when I would get a moment alone. He sounded nervous but right after saying "Hello", he said "I love you." I was speechless! What would be the right words? I hang the call. It took me a few hours and my ill brain decided that I loved him too. Maybe I was afraid of losing a friend like that, but I felt addicted to him. I was scared, because of the age difference and he had a wife, but I texted him back saying that I loved him too. I don't think that was love. I don't think that he ever loved me, but you know what is strange? He spent so much time talking to me. Would a sane person spend that much time on someone you don't love? That relationship wasn't normal. It was a mistake.

14R: I know it is difficult, but how did your romantic relationship look like?

14I: I can't say it was much difference at the beginning. We would still talk a lot, but we would also exchange "I love you"s quite often. It felt wrong and of course we had to keep it secret. It is not something you tell your mum. I was still insecure about this whole thing, but a long story short, he made me feel at ease with this new form of relationship. I don't know how he did that, but I really felt like I was falling in love with him. He never pushed me, well, not at least directly, but on my 16th birthday I decided that I am grown up enough and sent him a photo of myself, in underwear only. I hate myself for doing that. Back then it felt awesome, like "Hey, I am 16 and I have an adult boyfriend." That is so stupid, but yeah, it wasn't him who asked for it. It was me who sent it.

15R: What was his reaction? Did it have any consequence?

15I: His reaction was weird, to say the least. He called me immediately and started saying how beautiful I was, how much I grew up and that he wished that

he could be in the same room with me at that moment. Still, I loved it that he liked the photo. I loved hearing his compliments. Maybe it would be a normal situation, but I was 16! What was I thinking? Anyway, that's how it kept on going from that moment. He was asking "to share myself" with him and I felt like I had to. Not because he was forcing me, but because he had done me so much good, he had been supporting me and that made me feel like I owned him. Things were getting heated he was asking for more and I was ready to send him the photos... It got to the point that it felt like routine. I would get up, get ready, send nudes and go to school, same in the evening. Still, it was exciting. I had to hide that part of me from everyone but him. He created that world of ours and it felt so great.

16R: How long did it last? What was the reason that it stopped?

16I: After a few months he started asking for videos. You know, the ones that look like porn. I wasn't ready, but he wouldn't listen. He would get aggressive and lash out, then he would say that he was sorry and didn't mean to, but that was a vicious circle. I couldn't do that. He really changed a lot from caring to yelling. I couldn't recognize him anymore and started thinking about leaving him. That is what I did. I wrote him a long message, explained how I felt and that he had changed, that he started scarring me. (pause) We had been arguing for an hour. He wouldn't let me go, he was saying that he loved me, that I didn't understand, that what we had was love and all that. It hurt me a lot. I don't understand why it was so hard breaking up, even though I wanted to, there was a part of me who was saying that I had to be with him. He just got so deep in my head. Somehow, I got away; the last thing he said that I would have to keep on living in my "rotten" world all alone. Huh, whose world was rotten?

17R: I am very sorry that you had this experience in your life. Nevertheless, I am very grateful for this interview. Mind if I ask the last question?

17I: Thanks, but really, what doesn't kill us makes us stronger. Shoot your question! We have already got this far.

18R: Thank you. My question is how do you feel now about it?

18I: It's been years since it ended. It hurts, you know. It felt so real, as if it was love, but I know that it wasn't. He was so genuine, but I swear, I have no idea if there was a single word of truths in his words! He was so kind for only one purpose. I wish, I could turn back in time. It was nothing like the first love that teens are dreaming about. I regret giving so much of myself. The worst is that I know now that there are so many girls and boys are suffering from this. I know and I can do nothing, but talk to you. It is better now, but back then I had to deal with it myself, I couldn't tell my friends and my mum. I just felt so ashamed and dirty. How could I tell them about it? I regret that because of him I lost so much time that I could spend with my friends and family. I lost that time and can't take it back. I just hope that they will never find out. Can you imagine how they will see me? I am afraid that one day he may be back in my life. Still, it is getting better.

R: Trust me, your name will not be revealed. You already did a lot. At least, you helped this research, which means that the more people are aware of it, the safer children will be.