



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Criminology

Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice

No. 722 November 2025

Abstract | The risk-taking behaviours of children on adult-based platforms (dating apps, remunerative matchmaking services, subscription platforms, fetish communities) are largely unknown. This study interviewed 46 participants aged 18 to 21 years about their previous risk-taking experiences as children on adult-based platforms. The study found that children are exposed to risk both online and offline as a result of using these platforms—for example, inappropriate or illegal conversations involving sexting and activities such as drug use. However, in some instances, participants reported engaging in similar risk-taking experiences outside of adult-based platforms.

Underage use of adult-based platforms: Risks and experiences

Tahlia Hart

Introduction

A recent marketplace study suggests around 413 million individuals worldwide use dating apps (Market.us 2024). Dating apps and websites typically require users to be 18 years or over (Samuelson 2018). However, research suggests not all users are adults (Nagata et al. 2024; Thorn 2023). Recently, the Australian Institute of Criminology found 8.8 percent ($n=883$) of surveyed participants ($n=9,987$) had used a dating app while underage (Teunissen et al. 2024). Children as young as 11 have been found to use dating apps (Nagata et al. 2024). Adult users of these platforms engage in various activities with their matches, both online and offline; however, the experiences of children using these services are less well known. This article presents findings on the online and offline behaviours of young people who, as children, used an adult-based platform (ABP)—that is, dating apps or websites, remunerative matchmaking platforms (eg Seeking, Sugar Daddy), subscription-based content-sharing platforms (eg OnlyFans) and online fetish communities (eg FetLife).

Underage use of ABPs

Understanding children's use of ABPs will provide insight into how they use platforms intended for adults and the risk-taking opportunities, if any, that result from this. Cooper et al. (2023) suggest that children use dating apps as a playful social activity with friends, which may mean children use ABPs for enjoyment. Evidence shows that it is developmentally normal for children to enjoy risk-taking behaviours (Posick 2020). Accordingly, children may seek out, and engage in, risk-taking activities on ABPs (eg Mignault et al. 2022). It is recognised that individuals may take such risks on and off ABPs, given that these platforms provide online and offline connection opportunities (Phan, Seigfried-Spellar & Choo 2021; Sautter, Tippet & Morgan 2010). A summary of the existing literature about risk-taking on ABPs is below.

Online experiences

ABPs enable users to select and connect with matches through in-app features such as chats and video (Ward 2016). Studies suggest that adult users engage in risky online behaviours on these platforms, such as exchanging personal details (eg phone number, address) shortly after matching (Fansher & McCarns 2019). Children's communication with matches, either other children or adults, requires further exploration to determine whether it exposes children to risks.

The existing literature has minimally addressed the activities that children take part in on ABPs and with other users. Research suggests that children may communicate with multiple matches simultaneously (Mignault et al. 2022). Children's conversations on ABPs may include flirting (Lykens et al. 2019) or sexting (Baltz & Velten 2016). The Australian Institute of Criminology found that underage dating app users received requests from other users for sexual content such as videos or photos and, in some instances, were offered payment for the content (Teunissen et al. 2024). Another recent study suggests some underage dating app users were asked for nude content or to attend a hotel for sexual activity (Child Welfare League Foundation 2024). These studies provide minimal insight into underage experiences of ABPs.

Offline experiences

The existing literature about offline risk-taking behaviours among children using ABPs is also limited. The activities children may seek out, or engage in, offline as a result of using ABPs are largely unknown. Existing studies suggest adult users of these platforms engage in offline risk-taking behaviours, including meeting offline shortly after matching, having unprotected sex, or using illicit substances with their matches (Fansher & McCarns 2019; Phan, Seigfried-Spellar & Choo 2021).

Children also meet matches offline (Cooper et al. 2023; Jozsa et al. 2021); male-identifying children with same-sex preferences are significantly more likely to do so (Thunyalipat, In-iw & Manaboriboon 2023). The location where children, as opposed to adults, meet their matches is minimally understood. Sinno, Macapagal and Mustanski (2023) found that children who receive sexual education from their families are significantly more likely to meet users in public locations than those who did not receive it. Once a child meets a match offline, there is little understanding of the activities they engage in. Jozsa et al. (2021) found underage ABP users spend less time communicating on dating apps compared to social media platforms before meeting a match offline. Mignault et al. (2022) found about 20 percent of participants (children and young adults) met a match offline on the same day or the next day, often resulting in sex. Vandenbosch et al. (2016) found children's use of dating websites significantly predicted their sexual activity. Studies of children who use dating apps suggest that most who met matches offline 'hooked up' and engaged in sexual activities (Jozsa et al. 2021; Macapagal et al. 2019). Similarly, children who use remunerative matchmaking platforms may meet matches offline to fulfil a sexual and monetary agreement (Li 2015). These findings suggest that children may be engaging in risky sexual behaviours, possibly before the age of consent.

Macapagal et al. (2019) note that where children's online ABP matches became sexual partners, the matches were older than the child. This may constitute a criminal offence for an adult if a child is under the age of consent. Another study of 11- to 25-year-old participants found some (30.6%) had used substances (eg alcohol, vasodilator, methamphetamine, cannabis) during sexual intercourse with matches (Thunyalipat, In-iw & Manaboriboon 2023); however, it is unclear who provided the drugs. These findings indicate that children may be exposed to a myriad of behaviours that could be deemed criminal.

The above provides some insight into children's activities on ABPs. Yet little is known about how these children interact, the information they share, whether conversations move to other platforms or from online to offline, and the activities (criminal or otherwise) they engage in with their matches. The current study addresses these matters.

Method

Australian participants aged 18 to 21 years of age ($n=46$) who used at least one ABP as a child were interviewed about their underage use. Participants were recruited via Meta (Facebook and Instagram) advertisements between June and November 2021. This recruitment method allowed for advertising to be targeted at Australians aged 18 to 21 years old. Individual semi-structured audiovisual interviews (approximately 30 to 90 minutes) were conducted via Microsoft Teams. Ethics approval (2904) was obtained from Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Participants were located in New South Wales ($n=14$), Queensland ($n=12$), Victoria ($n=9$), South Australia ($n=4$), Western Australia ($n=2$), the Australian Capital Territory ($n=2$), the Northern Territory ($n=2$) and Tasmania ($n=1$). Participants self-identified as male ($n=22$), female ($n=16$) or another category (eg nonconforming, non-binary, genderfluid, unlabelled; $n=8$). Participants self-identified as heterosexual ($n=19$) or various LGBTQ+ categories ($n=27$).

Participants were asked questions about their use of ABPs in online and offline settings, including:

- Did you have a conversation with another user on an ABP?
- What types of conversations did you have?
- Did conversations ever move to another platform (eg SMS, Facebook)?
- Did you, or another user, request to meet offline?
- What was the purpose of meeting offline?
- Did you engage in activities that are illegal for a minor (eg alcohol/tobacco use) or generally (eg illicit substance use)?

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and uploaded to NVivo for analysis. The above questions are part of a broader study that considered a child's entire process of ABP use. An adaptive theory and crime script analysis approach was taken to code and analyse the data. Interview transcripts were individually reviewed, and the responses were initially coded into the broad categories of preparation, pre-activity, activity, and post-activity. The categories with participants' coded responses were then reviewed and further subcategorised into distinct themes. For example, the data in the activity category, which are relevant for underage experiences, were separated into experiences in online and offline environments before being subcategorised into similar experiences within those environments (eg alcohol use, conversation types). The similarities, differences and recurrent themes between the participants were noted down, as were the data similarities to existing theories and studies. The coded data were continually revisited to ensure appropriate coding. The responses are discussed below.

Limitations

Participants were adults as opposed to children, so current insights about underage use of ABPs were not obtained. Adults were recruited due to the perceived difficulties associated with interviewing children about sensitive topics such as sex. The participants may have still provided socially desirable responses about sensitive topics or their transgressive behaviour (see Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2013). Evidence shows that participants may engage in sensitive research online if they remain anonymous (Mendelson 2007). In this study, participants were interviewed online and could disable their camera, which may ensure trust and comfort while alleviating anxiety (Deakin & Wakefield 2013). Participants in the present study appeared to freely discuss sensitive topics without hesitation.

The authenticity of participant perceptions may be affected if their perceptions at the time of interview differed from when they were underage on ABPs, possibly due to changes in their maturity (see Wood & Wheatcroft 2020). Further, adult recollections about their underage behaviour may be unreliable given the time that had passed; however, participants were asked to clarify inconsistent responses to minimise possible recall or self-report biases.

Results

This study found that the participants, as children, engaged in a range of risk-taking activities in both online and offline environments arising from their use of ABPs. A summary of these findings is provided below.

Online experiences

Communication with matches

Almost all participants ($n=45$) as children conversed with one or more match(es) via messaging features built into ABPs or on other platforms. Many participants ($n=38$) shared their social media details with a match and moved their conversation to another online platform (eg Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Skype, Kik) or mode of communication such as SMS. Some participants ($n=12$) moved conversations restricted on ABPs (eg photo or video sharing) to another platform (eg Snapchat, Kik). Some participants, such as Participant 44 (trans woman, bisexual), identified that some platforms, like Snapchat, afforded additional privacy compared to ABPs: 'Snapchat is just the go-to app on Grindr for nudes because [the photo] obviously doesn't save.'

Types of communication

Participants reported that as children they engaged in various types of conversations depending on their 'goal' with a match (eg casual or friendly ($n=30$), 'deep' ($n=4$), flirty ($n=20$), sexual ($n=15$)). It is expected that these conversation goals were fluid, given that some participants ($n=7$) identified flirting could be used to progress to sexual conversations.

Participants identified that sexual conversations included discussions about their past experiences or possible future encounters. About half of the participants ($n=24$) as children either shared or received sexually explicit photos or videos with a match via messages; however, most of the participants ($n=29$) had experienced sexual conversations or sending/receiving sexual content before using ABPs underage. Almost half of the participants ($n=20$) were comfortable sexting with their matches, and some ($n=6$) stated prior experiences made them confident to do so. Some participants refused to engage in sexting ($n=17$), whereas some did so reluctantly ($n=6$). Most participants ($n=31$) suggested that their prior experience of online conversations outside of ABPs assisted them with these conversations. For example, Participant 35 (female, bisexual) stated that a conversation on an ABP:

... was no different than if someone messaged me on Facebook ... The set-up for messages is basically the exact same, the only difference is ... 'Oh, look, he's matched, you both think each other are cute'.

Children may not, therefore, be learning new communication skills on ABPs; however, some participants ($n=4$) used these platforms to learn how to flirt in both online and offline environments. Some participants ($n=10$) reported lacking the knowledge to take part in sexual conversations—for example, Participant 34 (non-binary, gay):

I would try and act like I knew what they were talking about, and what I was talking about, so it was very much going along with what they were saying.

A small number of participants ($n=6$) also identified receiving validation from their matches, as well as from swiping and matching. Participant 15 (female, bisexual) explained:

It's like, 'Mm yes, people want to flirt with me, people were giving me attention, look at me!' You just felt like you were on top of the world ... it was just an endorphin rush.

Participant 34 (female, bisexual) expanded on this:

The sheer volume of men trying to get your attention ... you'll never ever get someone just coming up to you being like, 'I need your phone number, you are the most beautiful person I've ever seen', but on Tinder that was a daily thing.

Participants experienced validation when their matches initiated or had flirty/sexual conversations or sent compliments. Some participants ($n=5$) retrospectively recognised the validation they received was not what they wanted or that it was short-lived with ultimately negative connotations, as explained by Participant 15 (female, bisexual):

I want to feel good about myself, you've had a shit day, and just getting complimented, especially by guys that you found attractive ... It just was a rush ... but then after five seconds you were like, 'Ew no'.

Participant 15 identified how thrills elicited through online environments could quickly turn into negative experiences while underage. Participant 31 (non-binary, queer) similarly explored this:

I think part of what I wanted from [ABPs] was validation and a bit of self-worth at times. It's kind of hard to say if I actually got that or if it was just a quick gratification, but ultimately doing more harm.

Offline experiences

Meeting offline

Half of the participants ($n=23$) met an ABP match offline as children. Among those for whom information was available, some met with one match ($n=7$) and others with multiple matches (eg between two and 40; $n=13$). Participants reported various reasons for meeting offline (eg 'catching-up' $n=9$; sex $n=13$; dating $n=10$). Some participants met someone offline once ($n=6$) or multiple times ($n=13$); the latter was associated with relationships ($n=10$) or ongoing casual sex ($n=3$). Some participants ($n=10$) reported that, as children, they had previously met people offline from other platforms (eg Yubo, Whisper, Omegle, Kik) for similar reasons (eg friendship, sex, dating).

A participant's motivation appeared to influence where they met an ABP match offline. Participants tended to report meeting a match in a public place (eg restaurant, campus, mall, party, park, beach; $n=17$) rather than in a private place such as a house ($n=6$). Participants suggested they met publicly for safety ($n=4$). For example, Participant 35 (female, bisexual) stated, 'I never meet anyone off the internet in private, I think that's one sure-fire way to be murdered'. Participants who met in private reported sexual activity ($n=6$). Some participants ($n=6$) transitioned from public meet-ups to private, as explained by Participant 8 (female, queer): 'Publicly first, just to be like, "This is who we are" and then we went back to their place.'

While some participants reported meeting with other underage users ($n=4$), others reported meeting up with adult matches, aged between 18 and 40 years of age, when they were children ($n=17$).

Participant 36 (male, gay) explained this:

He was in his early forties and we ended up meeting up off the app and I was 14 years old, and he knew that.

Some participants ($n=8$) told their match their true age before meeting offline. Only a couple ($n=2$) reported that their disclosure prevented the meet-up from happening. Participant 8 (female, queer) explains this was uncommon: 'There might have been a couple that were cancelled because they found out that I wasn't 18, but it wouldn't have been too many.'

A few participants ($n=3$) were queried by matches about their age when meeting offline, including Participant 25 (male, heterosexual):

... I still had quite bad acne across my forehead. They kind of said, 'Oh, you look like you're still in high school' ...

Sexual behaviours

Some participants ($n=13$) identified that they had sex with either an underage or adult match as a child. Participant 23 (male, heterosexual) explained that this was his intention:

People who you didn't know rocked up [to a party] and you met new people ... There were various sexual encounters and whatnot: the majority of the time I guess the goal of [my ABP use] was a success.

The participants ($n=7$) rarely identified sexual activities with adults to be risky. Only one participant, who used a remunerative matchmaking platform underage ($n=9$), engaged in sexual activities offline for money. Participant 37 (female, heterosexual) was 14 years of age and now regrets it:

There were three different times that I met up with someone ... he wanted to meet up and offer me \$700 each time and we actually did have sex ... Pretty much being a prostitute, pretty nasty.

Criminal activity

Some participants ($n=13$) reported engaging in criminal activities with a match offline while underage (eg alcohol use $n=10$; drug use $n=5$; tobacco use $n=1$; breaking into private premises $n=1$). Participants suggested the match supplied the drugs ($n=3$) or alcohol ($n=6$). Some participants, like Participant 2 (nonconforming, queer), were intentional in this:

It was my friend's birthday, and we were both underage and I wanted to get alcohol for her ... So I went out with that person with the promise of sexual activity in exchange for them purchasing alcohol for me.

Many of the participants were already engaging in these activities outside of ABPs while underage. Some participants ($n=9$) identified that they used a fake ID to access age-restricted services; however, a larger number ($n=32$) suggested they were able to access these services without a fake ID by lying about their age, appearing older or asking peers, or because ID requirements were ignored (eg licensed venues, tobacco, alcohol, tattoos, piercings, R18+ games).

Discussion

Online experiences

Communication with matches

As noted above, participants engaged in various types of conversations on and off ABPs with their matches while underage. Participants were found to communicate with numerous matches concurrently (Newett, Churchill & Robards 2018). Accordingly, these connections may provide opportunities for children to take risks.

Participants were also found to move their conversations from ABPs which restricted communication (eg not allowing photos or videos to be shared) to other online platforms that allowed those features (Licoppe 2020). Participants may have moved from ABPs to Snapchat to engage in sexting because it is a popular platform for this activity (Flannery 2016). As noted above by Participant 44, there is a misconception that Snapchat content is not risky because images are deleted; however, users can save, screenshot or record content with a device (Mehan 2022). Sexting between children and adults can be illegal given the age of sexual consent (Baltz & Velten 2016; Macapagal et al. 2018). Children may experience feelings of validation and status by sexting (Giambonini 2021). Adults using ABPs may also knowingly groom children through sexting; this practice may elicit feelings of excitement and fear from a child (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis & Beech 2014).

Types of communication

The types of communication used by participants on ABPs were diverse, which is unsurprising given that interactions are generally dynamic (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz 2018). However, it is also noted that grooming techniques can resemble all conversation types (eg casual, secret, flattery, sexual, kind, nasty, erratic, familiar, trusting; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis & Beech 2014). Further, underage ABP users may be groomed without their knowledge, given that children may not understand who they are communicating with and the associated risks (Karklins & Dalton 2012; Wood & Wheatcroft 2020). In this study, underage users appeared to communicate based on their intentions (eg 'deep' conversations were often associated with developing a further connection for dating; Ward 2016). Accordingly, not all of children's communications on ABPs are 'risky'; however, there are instances of risk-taking behaviour arising from conversations (see further below). Posick (2020) suggests a child's prefrontal cortex, which assists in making careful decisions, is not fully developed until they reach their twenties. Children are therefore more likely than adults to seek out instant rewards and underestimate the possible risks (Posick 2020). Children on ABPs, while focusing on rewards, may unknowingly engage with adult users who intend to groom them either online or offline.

This study found that children may take part in flirty and sexual conversations with matches; however, they were sometimes having similar conversations on child-based platforms before using ABPs. It is suggested in the literature that children enjoy sexting if they remain comfortable with their actions (Hart 2017). Lykens et al. (2019) suggest children will confidently initiate conversations in online environments by flirting. Young people may regret sexting with older people because of the retrospective feelings of guilt or shame (Bloom et al. 2022). Accordingly, while the findings suggest that ABPs are unlikely to be the initial instigators of childhood risk-taking behaviour, these platforms allow children to engage in risky communications.

The findings also suggest that children already had the communication skills needed to engage in conversations on ABPs; however, children can also use ABPs to learn or to enhance their communication skills in areas they are unsure about or inexperienced in (eg flirting, sexual conversations). Children may be exposed to risk when engaging in these types of conversations, especially if they communicate with adults intentionally seeking children for sexual activities.

As noted above, children's experiences of excitement are not always rewarding, particularly when the excitement develops into anxiety or fear (Pimentel & Steinmetz 2022). Some participants noted feeling validated through their underage use of ABPs; however, their enjoyment was short-lived if they later experienced guilt or felt sexually objectified in the process (Baltz & Velten 2016). Another study of adolescent male-seeking-male ABP users found that underage users felt sexualised and objectified when they encountered another user who was older or 'creepy', who requested sexual content or who outright rejected the concept of a relationship (Owens et al. 2021).

Offline experiences

Meeting offline and sexual behaviours

Underage ABP users met matches offline; however, the participants in this study appeared to have met with fewer matches on average than those in other studies (Macapagal et al. 2019). This finding confirms that children do not restrict their ABP matches to online conversations but also extend their connections to offline environments, which increases their chances of engaging in risk-taking behaviours. The purpose of meeting a match offline differed (eg 'catching up', 'hooking up'). This is unsurprising given adolescence involves the exploration and commencement of sexual relationships (Valkenburg & Piotrowski 2017). Therefore, children may also be using ABPs to form legitimate connections.

Adolescents have been previously found to use 'common sense' approaches to protecting themselves (Torrijos-Fincias et al. 2021). Children may experience risks at any stage of their ABP use; however, research suggests that risky experiences typically occur within the initial communication stages and primarily to female-identifying users (Adeyinka-Skold 2020). The present study found underage ABP users learned or applied previously learned skills to protect themselves in online and offline environments. Participants' chosen locations for offline meetings appeared to be influenced by their purpose. Offline environments offer none of the protections or safety features of online environments such as blocking (Fitzpatrick & Birnholtz 2018). Underage ABP users in this study appeared to implement safety techniques such as meeting matches publicly, which they believed mitigated potential risks. Individuals may experience a fear of the unknown, risk of being deceived, or risk to their safety when meeting someone offline that they originally met online (Chambers 2021). Despite a child's attempt to be safe, it may be an inadequate response to the situation and may put them at risk of harm. Children's feelings of invincibility may also increase their tendency to engage in risk-taking behaviours (Valkenburg & Piotrowski 2017).

The age of an underage ABP user's match was unable to be independently verified from the interviews. Some participants reported they met with adults aged between 18 and 40 years, sometimes when they were under the age of consent. Previous studies found an underage user's matches were typically older than them by two or more years, which is unsurprising because ABPs are intended for adult audiences (Macapagal et al. 2019; Macapagal et al. 2021). Sexual activities between adults and children under the age of consent are illegal regardless of whether the parties express consent or conceal their age (Kuate-Defo 2004). Lippert et al. (2020) found adolescents experience an increased risk of coercion when communicating with people aged 21 years or older, possibly because adolescent minds are easy to manipulate (Olugbenga 2011). Previous research suggests underage ABP users who willingly engage sexually with adults may not consider themselves victims, but their perceived 'consent' does not discount the developmental differences that exist between adults and children (Macapagal et al. 2019). This study suggests underage users of ABPs are at risk of sexual predation, regardless of whether they can and do 'consent' to sexual activities. In addition to this, some participants used remunerative matchmaking platforms, which may create opportunities for child exploitation (Kuate-Defo 2004) and child sex trafficking (McKim 2021).

Participants reported that their adult matches did not readily query their true age. In the few instances when an adult was aware, they continued to meet offline, which suggests age may not be important to these matches or that they intentionally sought underage users. In the few instances that a child's age was queried, it was unlikely to prevent the offline meeting from happening. These findings are concerning; however, further insight into adult users of these platforms is required.

Criminal activity

Adult users of ABPs who did not query a child's age when meeting offline could be linked to criminal behaviour. As explained above, sexual activities between an adult and child (under the age of consent) are illegal (Kuate-Defo 2004). This study's findings suggest that some participants may have been victims of statutory rape, depending on their age and jurisdiction.

This study found that some underage ABP users engage in criminal behaviour as a result of using these platforms, which is supported by Bocheński (2022), who found children and adults meet offline to consume alcohol. Adults who commit crimes against children may use alcohol as a way to encourage their victims to accept the abuse (Ringenberg et al. 2022). Another study about underage male-seeking-male ABP users found that most participants did not use alcohol (83%), marijuana (79%), or other drugs (92%) before having sex with their matches (Macapagal et al. 2021). The current study is unable to state whether drugs and/or alcohol were used by adult matches as either a prerequisite for inappropriate sexual activity with a child or as a leisure activity during their meet-up. Regardless, the present study suggests that ABPs allow underage users to engage in criminal activities; however, children can take part in these activities regardless. Similarly, Kypri et al. (2005) suggest adolescents access age-restricted products through illegitimate purchasing attempts or their peers.

Future research

Future studies could include child participants to determine the risk-taking behaviours they currently engage in on ABPs. A study could assess the in-app features of ABPs that children are currently exposed to and the risk-taking opportunities they provide. Studies should consider surveying Australian children to discover the frequency of underage ABP use, as well as the age of onset. This may inform the prevalence of risk and at what age to target policy initiatives. Research addressing harm mitigation and preventative measures could assist in lessening children's access to these platforms.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the various ways adults have reported engaging in risk-taking behaviours as children as a result of their using ABPs. This study has found that underage use of ABPs exposes children to risk not only in online environments but also in offline environments. The findings suggest that many of the activities participants engaged in while underage were activities they had previously experienced before or during their ABP use. Accordingly, ABPs are unlikely to be a cause of risk-taking behaviours but rather give adolescents the opportunity to continue to engage in these behaviours.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the participants involved in this research and appreciates their knowledgeable insight and time. This research was part of a PhD thesis for the Australian Research Council Discovery Project 'Becoming Delinquent Online: A Longitudinal Adolescent Study' (Project ID: DP170103538). The author thanks the PhD supervisors Emeritus Professor Andrew Goldsmith, Associate Professor Russell Brewer and Dr Melissa de Vel-Palumbo, as well as the independent reviewer Dr Russell Smith and Associate Professor Caitlin Hughes, for their ongoing support and feedback.

References

URLs correct as at May 2025

- Adeyinka-Skold S 2020. Barriers in women's romantic partner search in the digital age. In R Kalish (ed), *Young adult sexuality in the digital age*. Hershey PA: IGI Global: 113–137. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3187-7.ch007>
- Baltz H & Velten JC 2016. The influence of online dating on female adolescent maturation. *Journal of Education & Social Policy* 3(2): 15–22
- Bloom BE, Kieu TK, Wagman JA, Ulloa EC & Reed E 2022. Responsiveness of sex education to the needs of LGBTQ+ undergraduate students and its influence on sexual violence and harassment experiences. *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 17(3): 368–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15546128.2022.2033662>
- Bocheński M 2022. Is it pedophilia or not? Observations on child sexual abuse in Poland from a criminological perspective. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety* 24: 132–151. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41300-022-00141-5>
- Chambers D 2021. Dating app logic and geo-enabled mobile socialities. In A Hill, M Andersson & M Hartmann (eds), *The Routledge handbook of mobile socialities*. New York NY: Taylor & Francis: 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003089872>
- Child Welfare League Foundation 2024. *2018 Survey on dating apps for children and teenagers and current situation of online dating leaving home*. https://www.children.org.tw/publication_research/research_report/2232
- Cooper SC et al. 2023. A qualitative exploration of young australians' lived experiences of social media use and sexual agency. *Sexuality & Culture* 28: 534–553. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10131-w>
- Deakin H & Wakefield K 2013. Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research* 14(5): 603–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488126>
- Fansher AK & McCarns K 2019. Risky online dating behaviors and their potential for victimization. *Crime Victims' Institute* 4. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24083.84007>

- Fitzpatrick C & Birnholtz J 2018. "I shut the door": Interactions, tensions, and negotiations from a location-based social app. *New Media & Society* 20(7): 2469–2488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817725064>
- Flannery M 2016. 'Tinder for teenagers' dating app being used by schoolchildren 'to send nude photographs'. *Mirror*, 30 September. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/tinder-teenagers-dating-app-being-8946294>
- Giambonini C 2021. *The meaning of sexting for teenagers: A social representational, post-Jungian investigation* (Doctoral thesis). Colchester: University of Essex
- Guest G, Bunce A & Johnson L 2016. How many interviews are enough? *Field Methods* 18(1): 59–82 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x05279903>
- Hart M 2017. Being naked on the internet: Young people's selfies as intimate edgework. *Journal of Youth Studies* 20(3): 301–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1212164>
- Jozsa K et al. 2021. "Safe behind my screen": Adolescent sexual minority males' perceptions of safety and trustworthiness on geosocial and social networking apps. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 50: 2965–2980. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-01962-5>
- Karklins L & Dalton D 2012. Social networking sites and the dangers they pose to youth: Some Australian findings. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 24(2): 205–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2012.12035955>
- Kuate-Defo B 2004. Young people's relationships with sugar daddies and sugar mummies: What do we know and what do we need to know? *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 8(2): 13–37. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3583175>
- Kypri K, Dean J, Kirby S, Harris J & Kake T 2005. 'Think before you buy under-18s drink': Evaluation of a community alcohol intervention. *Drug and Alcohol Review* 24(1): 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09595230500102731>
- Li JCM 2015. Adolescent compensated dating in Hong Kong: Choice, script, and dynamics. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 59(6): 588–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X13516285>
- Licoppe C 2020. Liquidity and attachment in the mobile hookup culture. A comparative study of contrasted interactional patterns in the main uses of Grindr and Tinder. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 13(1): 73–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2019.1607530>
- Lippert T, Clary M, Bleoaja C, Walsh WA & Jones LM 2020. Statutory rape: Case characteristics when offenders are younger than 21 years of age versus older. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37(9–10): NP7984–NP8005. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520975807>
- Lykens J et al. 2019. Google for sexual relationships: Mixed-methods study on digital flirting and online dating among adolescent youth and young adults. *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance* 5(2): e10695. <https://doi.org/10.2196/10695>

- Macapagal K et al. 2021. Patterns of online and offline partnering, partnership characteristics, and condomless sex among adolescent sexual minority males in the USA. *AIDS and Behavior* 25(7): 2033–2045. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-020-03133-4>
- Macapagal K et al. 2018. Hookup app use, sexual behavior, and sexual health among adolescent men who have sex with men in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 62(6): 708–715. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.01.001>
- Macapagal K, Kraus A, Moskowitz DA & Birnholtz J 2019. Geosocial networking application use, characteristics of app-met sexual partners, and sexual behavior among sexual and gender minority adolescents assigned male at birth. *Journal of Sex Research* 57(8): 1078–1087. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1698004>
- Market.us 2024. *Global online dating market, by platform (application, and web portals), by services (social dating, niche dating, matchmaking, and adult dating), by user (non-paying users, and paying users), by revenue generation, by region and companies: Industry segment outlook, market assessment, competition scenario, trends, and forecast 2023–2032*. United States: Market.us. <https://market.us/report/online-dating-market/>
- McKim J 2021. How Grindr, a popular gay dating app, poses exploitation risk to minors. <https://www.npr.org/2021/08/03/1024108203/how-grindr-a-popular-gay-dating-app-poses-exploitation-risk-to-minors>
- Mehan J 2022. *Artificial intelligence: Ethical, social and security impacts for the present and the future*. Cambridgeshire: IT Governance Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2k93td7>
- Mendelson C 2007. Recruiting participants for research from online communities. *Computers, Informatics, Nursing* 25(6): 317–323. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NCN.0000299653.13777.51>
- Mignault L, Vaillancourt-Morel M, Ramos B, Brassard A & Daspe M 2022. Is swiping right risky? Dating app use, sexual satisfaction, and risky sexual behavior among adolescents and young adults. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 39(3): 819–842. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2022.2078804>
- Nagata JM et al. 2024. Social epidemiology of online dating in U.S. early adolescents. *BMC Research Notes* 17(1): 145. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-024-06777-w>
- Newett L, Churchill B & Robards B 2018. Forming connections in the digital era: Tinder, a new tool in young Australian intimate life. *Journal of Sociology* 54(3): 346–361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783317728584>
- Olugbenga DO 2011. Adolescents and online dating attitudes. In E Dunkels, G Franberg & C Hallgren (eds), *Youth culture and net culture: Online social practices*. Hershey PA: IGI Global: 207–221. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60960-209-3.ch012>
- Owens C et al. 2021. Motivations to start and stop using sexual networking applications among adolescent sexual minority men. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 20: 329–339 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00641-3>

- Phan A, Seigfried-Spellar K & Choo KKR 2021. Threaten me softly: A review of potential dating app risks. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports* 3: 100055. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2021.100055>
- Pimentel A & Steinmetz KF 2022. Enacting social engineering: The emotional experience of information security deception. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 77: 341–361. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-021-09993-8>
- Posick C 2020. Biosocial theories. In TJ Holt & AM Bossler (eds), *The Palgrave handbook of international cybercrime and cyberdeviance*. Cham: Springer: 705–721. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_29
- Ringenberg TR, Seigfried-Spellar KC, Rayz JM & Rogers MK 2022. A scoping review of child grooming strategies: Pre- and post-internet. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 123: 105392. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105392>
- Samuelson K 2018. Gay male teens use adult hookup apps to find friends, partners. <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2018/may/gay-male-teens-use-adult-hookup-apps-to-find-friends-partners/>
- Sautter JM, Tippet RM & Morgan SP 2010. The social demography of internet dating in the United States. *Social Science Quarterly* 91(2): 554–575. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00707.x>
- Sinno J, Macapagal K & Mustanski B 2023. Social media and online dating safety practices by adolescent sexual and gender diverse men: Mixed-methods findings from the SMART study. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 74(1): 113–122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.07.030>
- Teunissen C, Cahill M, Napier S, Cubitt T, Boxall H & Brown R 2024. Sexual exploitation of children on dating platforms and experiences of revictimisation as an adult. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no. 697. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://doi.org/10.52922/ti77482>
- Thorn 2023. *LGBTQ+ youth perspectives: How LGBTQ+ youth are navigating exploration and risks of sexual exploitation online*. <https://www.thorn.org/research/library/lgbtq-teens-are-at-a-greater-risk-for-exploitation-online/>
- Thunyalipat C, In-iw S & Manaboriboon B 2023. Influence of online dating apps on sexual risk behaviors among homosexual and bisexual adolescents and youths in Thailand: An online cross-sectional survey. *Siriraj Medical Journal* 75(9): 612–621. <https://doi.org/10.33192/smj.v75i9.264171>
- Torrijos-Fincias P, Serrate-González S, Martín-Lucas J & Muñoz-Rodríguez JM 2021. Perception of risk in the use of technologies and social media: Implications for identity building during adolescence. *Education Sciences* 11(9): 523–534. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090523>
- Valkenburg PM & Piotrowski JT 2017. *Plugged in: How media attract and affect youth*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300218879.001.0001>
- Vandenbosch L, Beyens I, Vangeel L & Eggermont S 2016. Online communication predicts Belgian adolescents' initiation of romantic and sexual activity. *European Journal of Pediatrics* 175(4): 509–516. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00431-015-2666-6>

Ward J 2016. Swiping, matching, chatting: Self-presentation and self-disclosure on mobile dating apps. *Human IT: Journal for Information Technology Studies as a Human Science* 13(2): 81–95

Whittle HC, Hamilton-Giachritsis CE & Beech AR 2014. “Under his spell”: Victims’ perspectives of being groomed online. *Social Sciences* 3(3): 404–426. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci3030404>

Wood A & Wheatcroft JM 2020. Young adult perceptions of internet communications and the grooming concept. *SAGE Open* 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/215824402091457>

**Dr Tahlia Hart is a Lecturer and lawyer at Flinders University.
Her research interests include juvenile delinquency
and cybercrime.**

General editor, *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* series: Dr Rick Brown, Deputy Director, Australian Institute of Criminology. Note: *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* papers are peer reviewed. For a complete list and the full text of the papers in the *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* series, visit the AIC website: www.aic.gov.au

ISSN 1836-2206 (Online) ISBN 978 1 922878 02 1 (Online)
<https://doi.org/10.52922/ti78021>

©Australian Institute of Criminology 2025

GPO Box 1936
Canberra ACT 2601, Australia
Tel: 02 6268 7166

*Disclaimer: This research paper does not necessarily
reflect the policy position of the Australian Government*

www.aic.gov.au