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Child sex tourists

A review of the literature on the characteristics, motives, and methods of (Dutch) transnational child sex offenders

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PREFACE

This review of the research literature on the subject of Dutch transnational child sex offenders was commissioned by the Police and Science Research Programme (Politie en Wetenschap) in the Netherlands and carried out by Leiden University's Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology.

The authors would like to express our sincere thanks to those who have assisted us by tracking down relevant literature, by sharing information, and by commenting on draft versions. For providing confidential documents – or documents which were not (yet) publically available for other reasons –, we thank the staff of the Netherlands Police's National Program for Vice Cases, Child Sexual Abuse Images, and Transnational Child Sex Offences (*LPZKK*), Laura Moerenhout (Central Intelligence Division, Netherlands Police), and Kai Jonas (University of Amsterdam). Our thanks are due also to the members of the reading committee for their helpful contributions to a previous version of this report: Joanne van der Leun (Leiden University), Anton van Wijk (Bureau Beke), Ilana de Wild (*LPZKK*), Leonie Zweep (Dutch Public Prosecution Service), and Marta Dozy and Annemieke Venderbosch (Police and Science Research Programme).

We hope that this study provides a basis for an exchange of ideas on the fight against transnational child sex offences, and that it may inspire further research.

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SUMMARY

Transnational child sex offences, also known as child sex tourism, are a growing problem and a relatively new challenge for the Dutch police organization, which is involved in combating sexual abuse of children by Dutch citizens abroad. Little is known about transnational child sex offenders. In this literature review, we analyze information from both Dutch and international scientific research, Dutch policy reports, and other documents to investigate the characteristics, motives, and methods (*modi operandi*) of transnational child sex offenders, with a special focus on offenders from the Netherlands. We conclude that this offender group is not homogeneous, and that various motives (preferential/situational) and methods (short-stay, long-stay, online) can be discerned. The diversity of the offender group requires a variety of initiatives that are closely adapted to the different offender types. The scarcity of research on this topic highlights the necessity of gathering more intelligence and conducting follow-up research.

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INTRODUCTION

Transnational child sex offences, also known as child sex tourism,¹ are defined as committing (or assisting in) acts of sexual violence against children² abroad (National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children [NRM], 2013). This is a global problem which was first put on the international agenda in the 1990s, probably due to information and lobbying campaigns by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (O'Connell Davidson, 2004; Seabrook, 2000). It is a lucrative industry that thrives on the sexual exploitation of children, driven in part by the demand from foreign travelers. The typical image is that of a transnational child sex offender who travels from wealthier, developed countries (*countries of origin*) to poorer developing countries (*countries of destination*): the most common destination countries are situated in Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, and eastern Europe (Department of State USA, 2015). However, in recent years, it has become increasingly clear that destination countries can be situated anywhere, and that offenders also (or perhaps even mainly) travel within their home region or country (ECPAT, 2009; Hawke & Raphael, 2016). In addition, due to technological developments, new, online variants of the phenomenon have come into being such as webcam or livestream transnational child sex offences (see Terre des Hommes, 2013a), so offenders no longer need to physically cross a border to abuse a child.

Although it is practically impossible to ascertain the extent of the problem, most studies suggest that between one and two million children worldwide are victims of commercial sexual exploitation (Chemin & Mbiekop, 2015; Hall, 2011; Tanielian, 2013). Due in part to the emergence of online transnational child sex offences, NGOs suspect that this number is increasing rapidly (ECPAT, 2013; Terre des Hommes, 2013a).

Scientific research has shown that victimization of sexual abuse during childhood can have far-reaching physical, psychological, and social consequences. These consequences include physical injuries and sexually transmitted diseases (Rogstad, Wilkinson, & Robinson, 2016); various psychological (Chen et al., 2010; Nagtegaal, 2012), which can be aggravated by the shame and stigma associated with sexual abuse (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2014); behavioral problems, such as risky sexual behavior, substance abuse, and suicide attempts (Fergusson, McLeod, & Horwood, 2013); and a permanent impact on the quality of adult relationships, education, work, and income (Currie & Widom, 2010; de Jong, Alink, Bijleveld, Finkenauer, & Hendriks, 2015). In addition to the direct damage suffered by the victims, transnational child sex offences can also be an important source for the production of child sexual abuse images (O'Donnell & Milner, 2007). Given its lasting impact on victims and the fact that no region appears to be immune from transnational child sex offences, the phenomenon is

¹ Internationally, various terms are used for the phenomenon, in particular *child sex tourism* and *traveling/transnational child sex offences*. Recently, the term *sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism* (SECTT) has been put forward (see Hawke & Raphael, 2016). In this report we use the terms 'transnational child sex offences' and 'transnational child sex offender' or 'perpetrator', since these are the English terms most commonly used by law enforcement agencies in the Netherlands to refer to this phenomenon, in line with the Terminology Guidelines published by ECPAT (2016) on this topic.

² In this study, in line with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, the terms 'child/children' and 'minor/minors' have been used interchangeably in referring to persons under the age of 18. The statutory minimum age for a child to consent to have sexual contact (age of consent) differs per jurisdiction.

increasingly recognized as a widespread problem that destroys the lives of too many children (Svensson, 2006), and has even been described as "a global humanitarian crisis" (Fredette, 2009:1).

It is virtually impossible to identify a specific cause for this problem: there are many factors that may allow transnational child sex offences to thrive (in a specific region). In destination countries, sexual exploitation of children in the sex industry can result from social circumstances such as poverty, debts, limited access to education, unemployment, gender discrimination, or (domestic) violence (see e.g. Steinman, 2002; Todres, 1999; Tuovinen, 2014; United Nations Human Rights Council [UNHRC], 2012). In such circumstances children may be approached directly by the people who exploit them, but it is also sometimes the case that they are sold by their parents (O'Connell Davidson & Sanchez Taylor, 1995; Rafferty, 2013).

In addition, there are several factors that attract transnational child sex offenders to specific regions where sexual services from children are available and offenders can go their way unimpeded. Mass tourism creates opportunities and attracts an increased demand for sexual services, thus leading to an increased supply of children for the sex industry (Hodgson, 1994; Mekinc & Music, 2015). According to O'Donnell and Milner (2007), the rise in low-budget flights to countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines has also given a boost to the sex industry in these countries. Conversely, a moderate tourism policy and the absence of mass tourism may have a protective effect (Jonas, 2016).

Although researchers adduce different factors that contribute to the problem, they agree on one thing: sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is a complex phenomenon. The complexity of the issue is increased by the large number of areas of overlap (both conceptual and legal) between transnational child sex offences and related problems such as child trafficking and trafficking in human beings, consumption and production of child sexual abuse images, and child sexual abuse in general.

Nevertheless, there are striking gaps in our knowledge (including scientific knowledge) about this issue. In light of the complexity, secrecy, and the dynamic, international nature of the phenomenon, it is extremely difficult to obtain reliable information on the subject. Despite growing attention, a great deal remains unknown about transnational child sex offences as a criminological phenomenon, which makes it an extremely complex challenge for police and researchers.

Despite the lack of scientific knowledge about the phenomenon and the approach to it, it seems that "the information available to policymakers [...] has been sufficient to establish there is a problem" (Todres, 2010:11). It should not come as a surprise that authorities worldwide have taken measures in the fight against child sexual abuse and transnational child sex offences. At the international level, the principle that all children must be protected against sexual violence has been enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A similar trend can be observed at the national level: in the criminal law amendments that have been made all over the world over the past decades, legislation serving to protect children against sexual abuse has generally been extended (Frank, Camp, & Boutcher, 2010). Measures against transnational child sex offences vary per country: from travel restrictions for known sex offenders to information campaigns, and from making child sexual abuse by foreign travellers a criminal offence – although few countries have laid down specific statutory provisions against transnational child sex offences (Johnson, 2011)– to applying national criminal law

extraterritorially, particularly by countries of origin (see, for example Giordanella, 1998; Seabrook, 2000; Svensson, 2006).

In the Netherlands too there is growing political and societal attention for the subject of transnational child sex offences (Vogelvang, van den Braak, Meuwese & Wolthuis, 2002). For the Dutch authorities in general, and the police in particular, such offences are an important, but relatively new priority. Recent policy attention for the subject and the political consensus concerning the government's obligation to do its utmost to prevent transnational child sex offences by Dutch citizens resulted in the drawing up of the Action Plan on Transnational Child Sex Offences in 2013 (Ministry of Security and Justice, 2013). This plan highlights the extensive role of the police and judicial authorities with regard to prevention, investigation, and prosecution, as well as the importance of cooperation with partners at the national and international level. In the intervening years the approach to transnational child sex offences has been strengthened in several ways. For instance, thematic, flexibly deployable liaison officers have been employed by the police and stationed in countries suspected to be destination countries for Dutch citizens³: these liaison officers assist criminal investigations into suspects (especially Dutch suspects), build networks, and ensure the subject remains high on the agenda of the parties involved (Ministry of Security and Justice, 2016). Another important initiative is the awareness campaign '*Don't look away*', which calls on travelers to report any possible signs of transnational child sex offences. Depending on the information provided, a report may be used in a subject-focused investigation by the police and judicial authorities. These initiatives remain relevant in the new Action Plan of September 2016 (Ministry of Security and Justice, 2016).

One of the most important pillars of the Dutch policy is the criminal investigation of Dutch transnational child sex offenders. Our country is considered mainly as a country of origin of such offenders (NRM, 2013): Dutch citizens engage in the sexual abuse of the children abroad (Moerenhout, 2013; Vogelvang et al., 2002), and this must be combated. The focus on offenders of Dutch origin is a pragmatic one: this is the group that lies most within the sphere of influence of the Dutch authorities. Addressing the structural factors that lead to sexual exploitation of children in destination countries, for instance by means of poverty reduction, calls for a developmental perspective and is often simply not within the power of the Dutch authorities; this certainly lies beyond the scope of the Dutch police. Moreover, prevention programs that focus solely on the supply side appear not to be successful (Vogelvang et al., 2002). Interventions that focus on the demand side of the market, the offenders, have emerged as much more promising where the prevention of child sexual abuse is concerned (Jhappan, 2005).

Nevertheless, the criminal investigation of Dutch transnational child sex offenders seems to form an obstacle. Investigations are time-consuming and require high staffing levels, yet they seldom lead to satisfactory outcomes. This is also apparent from the small number of criminal investigations

³ In 2014 two liaison officers were appointed: in Rio de Janeiro (1 year) and in Manila (2 years, recently reappointed for a further 2 years). From 2017, a liaison officer will be based in Bangkok.

completed: there were just six in 2014, three of which were filed to the Public Prosecutions Service (House of Representatives, 2014-2015)⁴.

To improve the identification, investigation, and treatment of offenders (or possible offenders), it is crucial to find out more about who these offenders are and how they operate, as well as their motivation, the reasons why they commit transnational child sex offences. Only once we can distinguish between the different types of offenders will we be able to apply interventions that are tailored to more than one subsection of the offender population, thereby improving the effectiveness of investigations and the preventive effects of the measures taken. In other words: for as long as the picture on which it is based is incomplete, the fight against transnational child sex offences can never be completely effective.

With this in mind, the present study makes a start on improving the information position concerning this relatively unknown, yet extremely serious phenomenon. Combining information from the available research into transnational child sex offenders and information from policy documents is a crucial first step towards developing a more effective process for the identification, investigation, and treatment of offenders (or possible offenders), formulating effective prevention initiatives, and inspiring and paving the way for further research into transnational child sex offences.

OBJECTIVES AND CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the characteristics, motives, and methods of transnational child sex offenders who are resident in the Netherlands. With this in mind, the following research question is central in this study:

What are the characteristics, motives, and methods of Dutch transnational child sex offenders?

The study consists of the following subquestions:

- a. What are the demographical characteristics of Dutch transnational child sex offenders?
- b. To what extent do the motives of Dutch transnational child sex offenders fall within the typology of preferential and situational offenders, and what is the distribution between these groups?
- c. How do Dutch transnational child sex offenders operate?
- d. On the basis of the characteristics, motives, and methods observed, what interventions can be recommended for more targeted and more effective measures for the prevention and investigation of transnational child sex offences?

⁴ Confidential police records, seen by the authors, show similar results for 2015: five criminal investigations, one of which was filed to the Public Prosecution Service. The number of criminal investigations into Dutch transnational child sex offenders conducted by other countries is unknown.

Incidentally the Public Prosecution Service informed the authors that it had instituted proceedings in one of the three cases that had been filed in 2014. The other two cases have been dismissed by reason of insufficient evidence.

RESEARCH METHODS

The current study sets out to answer the research questions – as far as possible – by means of a literature review, in which the results found in the international research literature are linked with the findings in Dutch policy reports. Given the scarcity of research into the subject of transnational child sex offences, it is crucial to include as many available sources as possible in the survey. We therefore decided to conduct our search along two pathways:

- 1) We searched for international scientific literature in the customary databases for academic journals (Web of Science, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online). In addition, we applied a snowball technique by combing the bibliographies of the articles found for other studies that might be relevant.
- 2) In addition, information relevant for this study could be found in so-called 'gray' literature, such as policy documents and reports. These were located primarily in open-source settings, such as reports of NGOs (available on their websites), media communications, or parliamentary papers.

Moreover, in order to gain access to other sources of information that were perhaps protected or difficult to find, in the course of the research we approached relevant actors in the field of Dutch policy on transnational child sex offences. These experts referred us to relevant investigations or unpublished documents. The police made some reports and other policy documents about this subject available to us confidentially. Due to time, no interviews were held with experts in these organizations at this stage.

After this extensive search, we drew up a selection of literature relevant to the research questions. No exclusion criteria were determined in advance, given the scarcity of literature in this area. This meant we included both empirical and expository literature, of varying methodological quality. The literature found was subsequently subjected to a qualitative analysis and grouped into themes in relation to the subquestions. In total we studied 90 scientific source documents and 33 reports by NGOs and other organizations involved. In addition, we analyzed 18 police documents, including confidential reports and other policy documents.⁵

Each of the following chapters answers a subquestion based on international scientific (and other) literature; wherever possible, we link the discussion to the Dutch situation. Chapter 1 outlines the available information on the demographic characteristics of transnational sex offenders (particularly Dutch offenders) in order to build an image of *who* a 'typical' transnational child sex offender is. Chapter 2 considers the different motives of transnational child sex offenders, with a specific focus on preferential vs. situational offenders. Chapter 3 of the study examines *how* transnational child sex offences are committed and distinguishes various methods or *modi operandi* of transnational child sex offenders. The report ends with a conclusion and a discussion, as well as a number of recommendations for further research and for actual practice. The overall analysis of the implications

⁵ Not all literature on the subject of transnational child sex offences turned out to be relevant for the research question about offenders. For this reason, not all the sources studied are listed in the bibliography.

the findings may have for prevention and criminal investigations, presented in the final chapter, seeks to provide answers to the final subquestion.

I. CHARACTERISTICS

Before discussing the motives and methods of transnational child sex offenders in greater detail, will examine the demographic characteristics. What can we say, on the basis of the literature on the subject, about the characteristic features of transnational child sex offenders? What is their typical 'profile'?

The stereotype of a transnational child sex offender is that of a bald, white, pedophile, older man, unattractive in appearance and introvert in character (Modic, 2008:48, in Mekinc & Music, 2015; NRM, 2013; Hawke & Raphael, 2016). This stereotype turns out, on the basis of the scant literature available, to be only true in part.

The offender's sex is the most conspicuous feature: the image that emerges from the international literature is of virtually exclusively male offenders (see, for instance, Svensson, 2006; Hall, 2011; UNHRC, 2012). All 145 of the transnational child sex offenders investigated by NGO Action pour les Enfants (2014) in Cambodia between 2003 and 2013 and subsequently arrested were males.⁶ The description of the phenomenon provided by the Dutch police (Moerenhout, 2013) confirms this picture with regard to Dutch offenders: of the 92 possible suspects in 85 transnational child sex offence cases investigated between January 2009 and November 2012, 93.5% were male (versus 3.3% female and 3.2% unknown).

As far as *age* is concerned, it is often assumed that offenders are mainly middle-aged (UNHRC, 2012). Experts in the Gambia, for instance, estimate that the average transnational child sex offender who travels to their country is over 45 years of age (Bijnsdorp & Montgomery, 2003); in Costa Rica, offenders are said to be on average 25 to 40 years older than the victims they abuse, whose average age is 13 (ECPAT, 2009). According to ECPAT International (2008:6), however, the image of the middle-aged transnational child sex offender is a "frequent misconception": they argue that offenders can also be young tourists.⁷ A small-scale study carried out by the Brazilian NGO Promundo (Segundo, Nascimento, Araújo, & Moura, 2012) showed a significant difference between the average age of men who engaged in sexual relationships with adolescents (35 years of age) and that of men who did not engage in such relationships (41 years of age), which would suggest that transnational child sex offenders are on average younger than regular sex tourists and clients of prostitutes.

In the Netherlands too the stereotype of a transnational child sex offender as an older white male prevails (NRM, 2013:11). In a study conducted by Van Wijk, Nieuwenhuis, and Smeltink (2009), one respondent, who came across several pedophile sex tourists in the course of his profession, stated

⁶ The same investigation showed, on the other hand, that women were significantly more frequently involved as accomplices (69% females as opposed to 31% males, N = 78) (APLE, 2014). This analysis however, included both transnational child sex offenders and child sex offenders of Cambodian nationality; the findings regarding accomplices solely in transnational child sex offences are not known.

⁷ The Global Study (Hawke & Raphael, 2016), for instance, refers to a study conducted by ECPAT Italy that claims that most Italian sex tourists are between 20 and 30 years of age, the average being 27 years of age. The Italian study itself is not available.

that these were men of between 40 and 50 years of age. This picture is confirmed in the analysis of Dutch offenders: according to Moerenhout (2013) the average age of offenders is 56. It is important to note, however, that the age of these Dutch offenders ranged between 25 and 73. There thus seems to be a large variety in the ages of transnational child sex offenders; one could expect that differences exist in the methods and motives of offenders in different age groups.

Do transnational child sex offenders, when they travel abroad, have *previous convictions*? This information turns out to be difficult to find, also for researchers: for instance, in the case of 70% of the transnational child sex offenders investigated in Cambodia (N = 145), APLE (2014) was not able to establish whether they had previous convictions. Where this information was known (N = 44), 90.9% had at least one previous conviction. The majority of Dutch transnational child sex offenders, however, do not have previous convictions. Of the 92 possible suspects of transnational child sex offences, approximately one quarter were registered as having antecedents, such as a sex crime against children abroad (N = 2); possession of child sexual abuse images (N = 5); other antecedents in relation to child sexual abuse, such as rape, sexual assault, or incest (N = 13); or other, unspecified antecedents (N = 5) (Moerenhout, 2013).

In addition, the literature describes some *personal factors* that may lower the threshold towards having sex with a minor. The prevailing image is that transnational child sex offenders do not have an adult relationship: they are thought to be mainly single (Hawke & Raphael, 2016, who based their findings on data provided by the Norwegian police, see Dagbladet Nyheter, 2011), to have marital problems (Panko & George, 2012), or to lead an isolated social life (Van Wijk, Nieuwenhuis & Smeltink, 2009). Panko and George (2012) claim in their theoretical model that factors such as addiction-related problems and previously being a victim of sexual abuse⁸ may relate to sexually abusing children abroad. Robertiello and Terry (2007) add to this list the occurrence of negative feelings such as loneliness, stress, and isolation, which may result in a negative self-image. There are no indications that transnational child sex offenders have remarkable characteristics in terms of their appearance or character (Mekinc & Music, 2015). However, since none of the studies discussed here have collected data from offenders themselves, this representation should be considered as the prevailing perspective among experts.

Not much is known about offenders' *socio-economic background*. Some studies describe offenders as living in poverty or unemployed (Herseth, Monsen, & Johansen, 2011; Panko & George, 2012); according to others it is not possible to discover a pattern in the socio-economic background of transnational child sex offenders (Hall, 2011). As in the case of regular crime, there may be a selection effect in play here: it is possible that more prosperous offenders have more possibilities to keep their sexual abuse hidden, as a result of which less wealthy transnational child sex offenders appear relatively frequently in the statistics. In the study conducted by Moerenhout (2013), the occupation of only 12 Dutch suspects was known: this varied from offenders who worked with children professionally

⁸ The idea that being a victim of sexual abuse child relates to the commission of child sexual abuse later in life links in with a well-known criminological theory known as the *cycle of sexual abuse*.

(education and football clubs, for instance) to hotel-owners, driving instructors, and police officers. In the other instances it was not known whether the offender had an occupation.⁹

The transnational child sex offenders known to us are often from *countries of origin* situated in wealthier, industrialized parts of the world, such as the United States, western European countries, Australia, and Japan (Andrews, 2004; Hall, 2011). When asked about the nationalities of transnational child sex offenders, Gambian experts list only European nationalities, despite the fact that many Asians also stay in Gambia (Bijnsdorp & Montgomery, 2003). This might be an indication that the offenders are mainly from the 'traditional' countries of origin; or that white westerners are more conspicuous than transnational child sex offenders from other parts of the world.

However, the image of countries of origin is complex and dynamic. Some people view the terminology as outdated, as the distinctions between so-called countries of origin, destination countries, and transit countries have blurred over time¹⁰ (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Hawke and Raphael (2016) argue that sexual exploitation of children has now become mainly an interregional or even domestic crime; they claim that the majority of the offenders are from the same region as their victims.

It is an established fact that transnational child sex offences are also a Dutch problem: Dutch citizens commit sexual violence against children in other countries. In 2013 the Dutch police had 80 Dutch offenders in their sights, besides suspects from Indonesia, Italy, Sri Lanka, Suriname, and Brazil – although all of them were or had been resident in the Netherlands (Moerenhout, 2013). By early 2016 this number had increased to several hundred Dutch subjects¹¹ whom the Dutch investigative authorities linked with transnational child sex offences. Vogelvang and colleagues (2002) posit that there are no indications that Dutch citizens commit transnational child sex offences more or less than other nationalities. It is impossible to establish the proportion that Dutch offenders make up of the total.

Dutch perpetrators of transnational child sex offences abuse children in countries all over the world. Some *destination countries* occur more frequently than others in this respect. In 2002, Vogelvang, van den Braak, Meuwese and Wolthuis identified known destination countries mainly in Central and South

⁹ It can be noted that the personal and socio-economic factors described in this chapter have a great deal in common with the characteristics of child sexual abusers in general (see for instance, Van Wijk & Van Leiden, 2011).

¹⁰ The Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children has suggested, for instance, updating the terminology on the subject to 'country of demand' for the country the offender comes from; 'country of supply' for the country the victim comes from; and 'country of victimization' for the country where the child sexual abuse takes place (Kragten-Heerdink, Menenti, & Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, 2016).

¹¹ Subjects are persons who have attracted the attention of the investigative services and are therefore subjected to a further investigation. The reason may be a report or a history of sexual abuse combined with travels abroad (Defence for Children, 2016).

America¹², Africa¹³, and Southeast Asia¹⁴. In Romania and Brazil, Dutch offenders were thought to be in the top 5 of offenders at the time of the research, according to ECPAT officers (Vogelvang et al., 2002). Moerenhout (2013) also indicates that police sources and interviewed respondents have stated that Dutch transnational child sex offenders are active in various Asian countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand), as well as in Africa (Gambia, Ghana, Tunisia), South America (Brazil, Peru, Suriname), and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Turkey). Our analysis of police records shows that the vast majority of the Dutch subjects currently under investigation by the police are active in countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia (well over 80%), followed by countries in Eastern Europe (approximately 10%), Africa (5%), and South America (5%).

It seems, therefore, that countries in four regions of the world (South and Southeast Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and South America) are consistently mentioned as regions of destination for Dutch perpetrators. This does not necessarily mean, however, that most Dutch transnational child sex offenders visit these regions; it is also possible that investigative authorities and NGOs are more alert in these regions and have consequently identified more (Dutch) transnational child sex offenders.

If these are indeed the regions where Dutch transnational child sex offenders commit most offences, one might expect these countries to have the highest number of Dutch offenders in detention for sexual abuse offences with minor children. It is quite striking, however, that this is not the case. Information provided by the Consular Affairs and Migration Policy Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2013 shows that 22 of the 34 Dutch detainees known by the Ministry to have been arrested or convicted abroad for a sexual offence involving a minor are detained in western countries¹⁵, which would traditionally be regarded as countries of origin (NRM, 2013).¹⁶ Documents made available to us which relate to a similar overview by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show that in December 2014 too approximately two-thirds of these individuals were detained in western countries, with some minor shifts. In line with NRM (2013), this supports the conclusion that these figures may reveal more about the effectiveness of criminal investigations in various countries (and of international cooperation with those countries) than about the actual destinations of Dutch transnational child sex offenders.

¹² Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

¹³ Algeria, Benin, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia.

¹⁴ Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar/Burma, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam.

¹⁵ United States (10), Belgium (5), Germany (3), Spain (2), Australia, and Switzerland (1). The other offenders were detained in Suriname (3), Cambodia and Thailand (2), Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, Myanmar/Burma, and Nepal (1).

¹⁶ Dutch suspects are only included in this overview if they have given permission for the Dutch government to be informed of their detention. Dutch suspects who have not given permission for this are not known to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NRM, 2013).

II. MOTIVES

This chapter, which addresses the question of 'why' people commit such offences, expounds some of the more generally known theoretical perspectives. Various motives come to the fore in the literature in attempting to explain why offenders sexually abuse children abroad.

The literature on transnational child sex offences nearly always takes it as fact that certain people seek sexual contact with minor children, and subsequently reflects on why people travel to foreign countries to sexually abuse children there¹⁷. Theoretical answers to this question mostly focus on environmental factors that may explain why foreign countries are attractive for offenders. In line with opportunity theories¹⁸, consideration is therefore given to the opportunities the country of destination offers motivated offenders for sexually abusing children. It is suggested that the cross-border nature of the offence gives offenders anonymity (or a sense of anonymity) and reduced supervision (Ahlénius, 2010; Fredette, 2009; Hall, 2011; Johnson, 2011). This anonymity can be further increased by the low chance of prosecution due to the difficulties of gathering evidence and the (perception of) corruption and impunity in destination countries (Moerenhout, 2013; Hawke & Raphael, 2016).

In addition to opportunity structures, cultural and personal circumstances may play a role in the legitimization of sexual abuse by offenders. According to Staebler (1996), cultural differences in perspectives about sexuality or prejudices about the inferiority of the people in the destination country may provide an explanation. These cultural factors can become even more relevant in conjunction with the personal circumstances of the offender. Examples of this include the superstitious belief that sex with a minor child could cure HIV/AIDS or other diseases (Cotter, 2009; George & Panko, 2011; Montgomery, 2008), or that sex with a virgin will lead to a healthy, long, and sexually fulfilling life (Li, 1995; Thomas & Mathews, 2006).

In addition, the fact that minor children are widely available in the sex industry in some countries may, in the offender's view, legitimize sex with minors and normalize his behavior (Staebler, 1996). Legitimization of this kind can be explained through the concept of social distancing: offenders emotionally distance themselves from their minor victims (or from the population or population group as a whole) (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Certain neutralization techniques¹⁹ allow offenders to selectively deviate from their regular dominant values and justify the sexual abuse. In this way, transnational child sex offenders can convince themselves that no abuse is involved, because the child initiated the interaction or did not object to it (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Another example is the idea that the availability of children in the sex industry shows that sex with minor children is acceptable, or even part of the culture (Hawke & Raphael, 2016; Lim, 1998). Or the offender tells himself that he was only

¹⁷ The question of why some people seek to have sexual relationships with children in the first place goes beyond the scope of this report and is scarcely discussed in the literature that specifically addresses the subject of transnational child sex offences.

¹⁸ Criminological theories along these lines characteristically explain criminality by examining opportunistic structures (and the absence of obstacles) based on the conviction that 'opportunity makes the thief'.

¹⁹ Neutralization theory is a common criminological theory that holds that offenders mostly accept the dominant norms and values, but 'neutralize' them in specific contexts through neutralization techniques (or rationalizations), resulting in violation of the rules (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

trying to help the child: the interaction is a way for the child to earn a living (Panko & George, 2012; Staebler, 1996). Hawke and Raphael (2016) point out the perspective underlying these ideas which cause offenders to feel indifferent: that people (and especially children) in other countries are different and inferior, which makes their exploitation morally less objectionable than it would be in their home situation.

However, not everyone who has sex with a minor child in a foreign country sets out their journey with that goal in mind. Although for a long time the prevailing rhetoric has been that transnational child sex offenders are pedophiles, in recent decades more attention is being paid to the fact that not all transnational child sex offenders are deliberately looking for children to have sexual contact with. The offender group is therefore more varied than previously assumed.

In the literature, transnational child sex offenders are often divided into two groups, based on the motivation to sexually abuse children: 'preferential' and 'situational' offenders (e.g., Barnitz, Lobo, McVicker, & Gallagher, 1998; Newman, Holt, Rabun, Phillips, & Scott, 2011). In short, these two offender groups differ from each other in the motivation behind the sexual abuse. Where the preferential offender deliberately seeks to have sexual contact with a minor, the situational offender appears to commit this offence 'by chance' when the opportunity arises at the place of destination. These groups are discussed in more detail below; the origins of this typology are explained in more detail in Box III.

2.1 PREFERENTIAL OFFENDERS

A preferential offender's primary motive for travel is to have sexual contact with minor children (Vogelvang et al., 2002). The sexual interest of this type of offender is focused on children, and by travelling to places where children are available, this need can be fulfilled. Although not all offenders exclusively have sex with minor children, the preferential offender does have a preference for it (Moerenhout, 2013).

Preferential offenders are often looking for (emotional) relationships with minor children (Barnitz et al., 1998:18). The sexual contact is therefore not regarded as a harmful act, but as something that fits within the established relationship (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). There is a preference, however, for a specific age group and gender (Barnitz et al., 1998): Those who prefer adolescents are classified as 'regular' preferential offenders, while those who prefer children who are not sexually mature, i.e. prepubescent children, are classified as pedophile offenders (Fredette, 2009; Hall & Hall, 2009; Moerenhout, 2013).²⁰

²⁰ Pedophilia is a sexual preference for prepubescent children (up to thirteen years of age). In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM-V), the manual for psychiatric diagnosis, pedophilia is referred to as a paraphilic disorder (Gijs, 2013): i.e., a deviant sexual desire. In adults who have a sexual preference for minors over twelve years of age, a distinction is made between hebephiles (preferred age: 11-14 years of age) and ephebophiles (preferred age: 15-19 years of age) (Blanchard et al., 2009; Hall & Hall, 2009). Actual sexual activity with minor children is known as pedosexuality (Van Wijk & Van Leiden, 2011).

Offenders who have already been convicted of child sexual abuse have been known to travel abroad to reoffend and abuse children again (BNRM, 2013; Seabrook, 2000). Opportunity plays an important role: anonymity and a sense of impunity in the destination country underlie the offender's decision to go abroad (Ahlénius, 2010; Newman et al., 2011). While in the offender's own country his previous convictions are known, in the country of destination he can start again with a 'clean slate'. It is evident that the investigative authorities are aware of this *modus operandi*, as appears from the large number of measures taken by the authorities, including the Dutch authorities, to prevent Dutch sex offenders making victims in other countries.

Since preferential offenders travel with the aim of sexually abusing minors, it is not surprising that they prepare their trips. During the preparation stage they can make use of (online) networks in both the country of origin and the country of destination. Social networks on the internet can support and facilitate a pedophile subculture (Holt, Blevins, & Burkert, 2010; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2008). In addition, several facilitators in the country of destination play an important role in creating the preconditions for sexual abuse; ranging from actors in the tourist industry (such as travel agents and hotels) to specific parents, who – intentionally or not – have built up a relationship with an offender (Moerenhout, 2013).

In this way, preferential offenders maintain a constant demand for sexual 'services' provided by children. It is therefore with good reason that transnational child sexual abuse is considered by some as a demand-driven market, maintained by the interaction between supply and this constant demand (Bang, Baker, Carpinteri, & Van Hasselt, 2014; Vogelvang et al., 2002).

Box I: Building up relationships with the aim of abusing children

Gaining access to children is just the first step to sexual abuse: to increase the chances of sexual contact, a child is also mentally and physically prepared by the abuser. Building up relationships with children with the aim of having sexual contact with them or of increasing the chances of this taking place is known as 'grooming' (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014; Mekinc & Music, 2015; UNICEF, 2014). This process, during which a basis of trust and friendship is built (Moerenhout, 2013), may take anything from a few hours to several months. However, building a long-term relationship with a local child takes time; and this time is only available to transnational child abuse offenders who stay abroad for a longer period (ECPAT, 2008; Jonas, 2016).

An important feature of grooming is, according to Jonas (2016), that it focuses on exploring a child's limits and possibilities. Every interaction between a child and an offender is unique, meaning that offenders use different techniques to initiate the grooming process. Although the grooming process does not always follow the same pattern (Gillespie, 2004, in McAlinden, 2006), offenders do characteristically pass through a series of stages. First of all, an offender makes contact with the child and links in to the child's interests. This step is important to gain the child's trust. The second step is to create a special friendship, for instance by giving presents, undertaking activities and going on outings, and having meals together. Subsequently, the offender gradually introduces sexual aspects into the relationship: he shows the child pornographic images (Lanning, 2010) and talks about sex and sexual feelings. The aim is to normalize sexual relationships. The final stage is the actual sexual abuse.

It should be noted that the Dutch legal definition of grooming is stricter than the internationally accepted definition. Section 248e of the Dutch Penal Code stipulates that a person commits the offence of grooming

when he induces a child under the age of sixteen to have a meeting with the object of committing indecent acts. In addition, the offender must have taken action to make this meeting happen, such as drawing up a travel plan for the victim or travelling to the place where the meeting will take place.²¹

2.2 SITUATIONAL OFFENDERS

For the situational offender contextual factors play an important role in him proceeding to sexually abuse children. Prior to the trip he does not plan to have sex with minors, but once at his destination, either intentionally or unintentionally, he does not let the opportunity pass him by. The outcome (the sexual abuse of a child abroad) is the same as with the preferential offender; what differs is the intention.

The situational offender does not by nature have a specific preference for underage sexual partners (Moerenhout, 2013). It is therefore very likely that the situational offender will also have sexual contact with adults in the country of destination. (Newman et al., 2011).

Since the situational offender does not travel abroad with a demand for sex with minor children, one might say that he operates on a supply-oriented market (Vogelvang et al., 2002). In other words, whether a potential situational offender engages in the offence or not depends on the supply. He usually operates in places where the sex industry in general attracts international travelers and tourists, where child prostitution is common, or where children are available or traded in other ways. Such hotspots may be created by relatively constant factors in the country of destination, but may also be of a temporary nature: think for example of major (sporting) events, like the Olympic Games or the Soccer World Cup, where the circumstances (feeling of anonymity, substance use, group behavior, and high numbers of visitors) create a demand for sexual services, and minors may also fall victim to this.²² The situational offender is susceptible to all these contextual circumstances.

Explanations as to why the situational offender takes up the opportunity to have sex with a minor fall into two main categories: indifference and ignorance.

Indifference regarding the fact that the victim is a minor is evidenced by instances of offenders who engage with a child out of curiosity. Being confronted with the supply of available minors, possibly combined with the low price for their services, may spark this curiosity (Klain, 1999; Panko & George, 2012). Although sex with minors does indeed conflict with the morality of the situational offender, the standards and values of the home front may lose their hold on the offender due to the distance from home. Factors that play a role in this respect are anonymity and a feeling of impunity from being abroad (Beddoe, 1998; ECPAT, 2008; Steinman, 2002). The offender feels he can get away with it because of the absence or negligence of the investigative authorities (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). The above neutralization techniques play an extremely important role for the situational offender to rationalize the abuse prior to the actual sexual abuse – although similar techniques may also be used by preferential offenders.

²¹ See, for instance the judgment of the Dutch Supreme Council of 14 May 2013 (no. ECLI:NL:HR:2013:BZ9941).

²² Empirical information has not shown whether such events actually lead to an increase in child sexual abuse (Finkel & Finkel, 2015; Florence, Meier, & Ignacio, 2016; Van Blerk et al., 2014). There is consensus however, about the fact that such events are surrounded by criminogenic factors.

In addition to being indifferent, the situational offender can also be ignorant of the fact that he has had sexual contact with a minor. In the prostitution industry, for instance, the age of the victims is often hidden, also from clients (O'Connell Davidson, 2001). Minors often produce false identity documents, and consequently their real age is unknown to the offender. Moreover, particularly in the sex industry, children may be presented (or present themselves) as early-matured adults, thereby justifying sexual interaction with them (Jonas, 2016:14). In such cases it is not so much the case that offenders are indifferent to the victim's age; but rather that they are not aware that they are having sexual contact with a minor.

Finally, the definition of a situational offender was recently expanded with a new category: the situational repeat offender (Jonas & Guadamuz, 2016; Jonas, 2016). Jonas (2016) uses this term to distinguish a type of situational offender who does not develop into a preferential offender, but whose first sexual experience with a minor does lead to a pattern of repeat offences abroad. While this category does blur the distinction between a situational and a preferential offender, the manner of preparing for the trip still differs between the two types. The situational offender does not set out in advance to find a destination that is suitable for abusing a minor, and does not maintain a network for this purpose in his country of origin or destination.

Box II: Motives of female offenders

Although the vast majority of offenders are men, women (including Dutch women), too, have been linked with transnational child sex offences. Abuse of this kind by female offenders is often depicted as a quest for romance or attention, sometimes referred to as the "romance scenario" (Hawke & Raphael, 2016:54). There is anecdotal evidence in several regions of the world about women (usually European women) having sex with minors, sometimes for money: for instance in Venezuela, where women have approached teenage boys and young men for 'love' (O'Connell Davidson & Sanchez Taylor, 1995, in Hawke & Raphael, 2016). In the Netherlands, Moerenhout (2013) paints the picture of older Dutch women holidaying in tropical countries and looking for attention and affection, which sometimes leads them to have sex with a minor.

Despite the portrayal of this abuse by female offenders as a search for romance, it is important to note that the end result, sexual abuse of a minor, is the same. The characterization is in line with the traditional story line about gender differences in sex tourism in general, in which women were credited with emotional and romantic motives; but this image is increasingly contradicted in the relevant research literature (see Bauer, 2014).

2.3 RELATIVE PROPORTIONS OF SITUATIONAL AND PREFERENTIAL OFFENDERS

The above discussion illustrates that there are extensive differences between the motives of preferential and situational offenders. In order to be effective in tackling transnational child sex offences and to make it an investigative and policy priority, it is important to be able to estimate how these groups relate to one another in terms of numbers. In other words, are the majority of transnational child sex offenders preferential or situational offenders?

It is difficult to draw clear conclusions about this in light of the hidden nature of the phenomenon and the extremely limited information about offenders' motives. The literature studied frequently points out that it is assumed (by the investigative authorities or society at large) – incorrectly, according to

the researchers in question – that many offenders are pedophiles and belong in the preferential category (see, e.g., Panko & George, 2012). However, researchers state that there is reason to believe that preferential offenders are over-represented in the statistics concerning arrests (ECPAT, 2009), since it is more difficult to establish the offender's identity and origins in the case of situational transnational child sex offenders (Ahlénius, 2010).

Other sources– primarily NGOs – point out, on the basis of their experiences in practice or periodical reports, that they suspect that precisely situational offenders are in the majority (e.g., ECPAT, 2009; Thomas & Mathews, 2006). This assumption is supported in part by data from the UK, where only one in six British nationals suspected or convicted of sexual violence against children abroad was a registered sex offender (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, 2013). Among experts too the prevailing opinion in recent years is that situational offenders are in the majority among those who commit transnational child sex offences (Hawke & Raphael, 2016).

Box III: Background of the typology of preferential vs. situational offenders

From the early 1970s, attempts to gain insight into the reasons why people commit child abuse led to the introduction of various classifications. These classifications distinguish between types of offenders, such as those who commit rape or incest, for instance, but they focus above all on categorizing offenders on the basis of their intentions: what induces them to abuse children?

The most basic distinction between child abusers was drawn by Groth & Birnbaum (1978). They distinguish between 'fixed' and 'regressed' offenders. The characteristic feature of this typology is that it works on the assumption that there is a dichotomous distinction between offenders. These two separate groups of offenders are distinguished on the basis of two principles: the degree to which the deviant sexual behavior is rooted in the offender and his psychological needs (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). The fixed offender is an individual who feels a primary and exclusive sexual attraction to young children/minors. Sexual interaction with adult partners is not excluded, but it is less satisfying and can even give rise to feelings of inferiority (Howell, 1981). The regressed offender, on the other hand, has a primary sexual preference for partners of his own age, but may turn to abusing minors in certain circumstances (Groth, Hobson, & Gary, 1982; Terry & Tallon, 2004). However, since this act violates their behavioral norms, this group of offenders are highly susceptible to guilt, remorse, and depression (Howell, 1981). This distinction has many points in common with the division into preferential and situational offenders, and can be seen as a precursor of the current prevailing typology.

Dietz (1983) introduced different terms for the two groups. In his research into paraphilic disorders he draws a distinction between paraphilic and non-paraphilic offenders, i.e., those who proceed to act on the basis of a paraphilic disorder²³ and those whose motivation is not paraphilic. Offenders who have a paraphilic disorder and proceed to commit abuse he terms 'preferential offenders', and non-paraphilic offenders are termed 'situational offenders'. An important aspect is that this paraphilia is a determining factor for the intention to commit an offence, but not for whether this actually occurs (Dietz, 1983). After all, preferential offenders also depend on an opportunity to be able to commit abuse and have to decide to act.

²³ DSM-V identifies two criteria that must both be met for a diagnosis of a paraphilic disorder: 1) a persistent and intense atypical sexual arousal pattern that 2) causes the person involved or others clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Goethals & Cosyns, 2014).

Although over the years the division into two groups has been the guiding principle in describing the perpetrators of child abuse, gradually the consensus has shifted from this black-and-white image to one that admits more shades of grey. Simon, Sales, Kaszniak, and Kahn (1992), for instance, concluded on the basis of their study into 136 cases of abuse in Arizona (1984-1985) that it was impossible to arrive at a dichotomous division of the offenders. Given the impossibility of assigning specific characteristics exclusively to a certain type of offender, it makes more sense to speak of a continuum (Koeck, Van Beek, & De Doncker, 2002). Characteristics of offenders can shift within this continuum: a given preferential offender may have characteristics of a situational offender, and vice versa.

The idea of a continuum has also been recognized in police practice (by the FBI). To more accurately reflect the heterogeneity of sexual abusers, in the first instance the police supplemented Groth's subdivision by adding extra subtypes (Van Wijk, Nieuwenhuis & Smeltink, 2009). However, since case studies revealed otherwise, in 2001 these types and subtypes were replaced by a 'motivation continuum' (Lanning, 2010). Lanning (2010) points out that even if a preferential offender is primarily driven by his urge to have sexual contact with a child, the actual deed may be brought about by a non-sexual factor, such as the availability of a child in the offender's vicinity. So the offender's motivation is important, but it may be strengthened or weakened by the presence of other factors.

III. METHODS

The complexity of transnational child sex offences is also apparent from the variety of methods, or *modi operandi*, employed by the perpetrators of such offences. There are very many different ways for these offenders to gain access to a child: this depends partly on the length of their stay abroad, the physical accessibility of the child, and the intensity of the potential offender's contact with the child's community. Various characterizations have been introduced. Obtaining more knowledge about this question of 'how' transnational child sex offences are committed is crucial so as to devise measures that will constitute effective barriers to prevent this problem.

In the present chapter, the various methods are grouped according to the length of the offender's stay abroad. We distinguish between short-stay offenders (such as tourists and business people); long-stay offenders (such as expats or emigrants); and online offenders, who do not physically leave the country, but commit transnational child sex offences via the internet.

3.1 SHORT-STAY TRANSNATIONAL CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

Short-stay offenders are vacationing tourists or people whose work involves travel, such as business men, pilots, or lorry drivers. They often do not have time to build up long-term relationships with communities, parents, or a child, so they make use of other means to have sexual contact with a child (Thomas & Mathews, 2006). In this section a few of the methods employed by these short-stay offenders are described.

The most obvious and least labor-intensive way for individuals to come into contact with minors is through the existing child prostitution sector in the sex industry. Minors are approached on the street or in other places where children are made available for sexual contact (Moerenhout, 2013; UNHRC, 2012). A sex tourist may stumble on a child by chance in the course of his search for sexual contact, but he may also deliberately go in search of sexual contact with a minor. This deliberate search seems to apply particularly to (very) young children, a group that constitute a niche in the prostitution market (O'Connell Davidson, 2001).

If the regular prostitution sector is subjected to increased control, this sometimes leads to displacement from brothels to the street or slums. According to Atwell (2014), in Cambodia it has become less common to visit a brothel since control by the investigative authorities has increased. With brothels becoming a risky environment, child prostitution has largely moved to guesthouses or hotels (Thomas & Mathews, 2006), or to private houses (Atwell, 2014). The police documents we consulted suggest that the Dutch police too have the suspicion that in Brazil underage prostitutes have been moved from the boulevards and bars and restaurants in the center to the slum areas. Brazilian girls sometimes make contact with a tourist as soon as he arrives in the country, but also have many clients among local residents.

To become familiar with the places where prostitution (including child prostitution) takes place, transnational child sex offenders make use of the providers of local services, such as taxi-, motorcycle- or tuk-tuk-drivers (Atwell, 2014; Moerenhout, 2013). These logistical facilitators not only know the places where children are abused and the best way to get there; quite often they are also in contact with the people who prostitute and exploit these children, such as pimps or the child's parents (Terre

des Hommes, 2013a). The owners of hotels, hostels or other accommodation also sometimes serve as facilitators for the transnational child sex offender by showing him the lie of the land or by making rooms available for the abuse (Moerenhout, 2013). It is not clear to what extent organized crime networks²⁴ play a role in facilitating transnational child sex offences (Moerenhout, 2013).

Technological developments have simplified the process of bringing together supply and demand in many sectors, and sexual services from minors are no exception. There are various ways that transnational child sex offenders use ICT: for instance, to make contact with other transnational child sex offenders on forums and online networks, to exchange information about places where children are available, or to share reviews about prostitutes (Beech, Elliott, Birgden, & Findlater, 2008; Hawke & Raphael, 2016). The transnational child sex offender may also make direct contact with a victim, or maintain contact afterwards, or he may use marketplace environments to make arrangements with a pimp to gain access to a child (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Telephone applications with geospatial location functionality make it easy to match supply and demand and determine where they can best find and meet each other (Jonas & Guadamuz, 2016).

Incidentally, transnational child sex offenders do not always have to take the initiative themselves to actively seek sexual contact (with a minor or adult). In countries where there are a large number of underage prostitutes, children offer all kinds of services in the informal tourism sector as a way to earn their living. Several countries are familiar with the 'beach boy' phenomenon: boys who work in the informal tourist industry, selling commodities such as fish, cigarettes, and drugs (Jonas, 2016), initiating friendships with tourists, arranging guided tours, and offering sexual services throughout the tourist's stay (Brown, 1992; Miller, 2011). Jonas (2016:17) describes the example of a Dutch tourist in Sri Lanka who came into contact with a beach boy of about fourteen years of age on the beach; the boy sold him cigarettes, dived to bring up a shell for him, and performed oral sex on him for money. Although in cases like this the transnational child sex offender does not initiate contact, he does make use of the opportunity to have sexual contact with a minor by accepting the minor's services, which renders him guilty of a child sex offence.

3.2 LONG-STAY TRANSNATIONAL CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

Someone who stays abroad for a long time and engages in sexual contact with a child is also termed a transnational child sex offender.²⁵ Some can be classified as emigrants: they have moved abroad permanently, but have generally retained their Dutch nationality. Typical examples might include pensioners enjoying their old age, teachers working abroad, or people who marry partners from the local population (Moerenhout, 2013). Others maintain their address in the Netherlands and spend long periods abroad for another reason: as an expat employee, for instance, or a long-term volunteer. The length of their stay makes it possible for them to use different methods than someone who is only in the destination country for a short while. After all, they have time to build up relationships by living in the local community, working in a charitable institution, or making contact with facilitators or other

²⁴ Organized crime is defined by Dutch police as a structural collaboration that is targeted towards obtaining financial or material gains (Moerenhout, 2013).

²⁵ In the case of this type of offender the designation 'tourist' is considerably less applicable, which is one of the reasons behind recent calls for other terminology than 'child sex tourism' (see note 1).

abusers of children. The methods used by long-stay transnational child sex offenders are therefore more nuanced, because they often involve a long-term perspective (Jonas, 2016).

THE 'GOOD MAN'

There are several ways in which long-stay transnational child sex offenders gain the trust of the community and obtain access to children. The role of the local community is striking in this: it is not uncommon for stories to emerge of the local community defending an offender. Jonas (2016) observes that transnational child sex offenders generate trust within a poor local community by providing assistance, donating money, or by paying for a well or even a house. In this way, the offender achieves the status of a 'good man' (Jonas, 2016:41). The prosperity the transnational child sex offender brings to the community is sometimes so important that the child abuse, even if it becomes known, is simply accepted as part of the package.

This position enables the transnational child sex offender to abuse children for a longer period in one and the same place. He will only leave the community if he fears that an external party, such as an NGO, has him in their sights and there is an imminent risk of him being prosecuted (Jonas, 2016). In addition, the status he built up can have important consequences for the detection and prosecution of the offender. As a result of this status, sometimes evidence is withheld, victim statements are not given, or are retracted, possibly after bribery (Klain, 1999; ECPAT, 2009; Ahlénius, 2010). Sometimes the community has become dependent on the investments of the transnational child sex offender, which may lead them to protect him (Beddoe, 2006; Thomas & Mathews, 2006). All this forms an obstacle to prosecution.

THE MARRIED TRANSNATIONAL CHILD SEX OFFENDER

One of the methods used by long-stay transnational child sex offenders that emerge in the literature is gaining access to children by marrying their mother (Johnson, 2011; Moerenhout, 2013; O'Connell Davidson, 2001). This creates the basis for long-term abuse of her children or of the children they subsequently have together (Ahlénius, 2010). In some cases, the offender marries the child's mother after he has already abused the child, as this is thought to be a way of evading prosecution for the abuse. Jonas (2016:30), for instance, noted in the course of his fieldwork in Cambodia that it seemed to be common knowledge among transnational child sex offenders that an accusation of child abuse could be solved with police officers (in some cases corrupt) by marrying the child's mother, if she was unmarried, or by paying a sum of money.

Another variant of the married transnational child sex offender is the offender who marries his victim. Possibly in exchange for a sum of money (ECPAT, 2009), an offender can sometimes convince the child's parents to marry her to him when she has reached the legal age for marriage (Moerenhout, 2013). In some countries, moreover, the legal minimum age can be waived if the child's relatives or guardians give their permission.²⁶ This child marriage may be long-term or may endure for the length of the offender's stay abroad (Johnson, 2011). This not only enables the transnational child sex

²⁶ In Sri Lanka, for instance, it is possible for a child in a Muslim community to enter into marriage at the age of twelve if a family member or guardian gives permission (Jonas, 2016).

offender to lay lasting foundations for long-term sexual contact, but in some countries the marriage contract may prevent prosecution for the abuse (Johnson, 2011).

THE BENEFACTOR

A final category of transnational child sex offenders frequently encountered in the literature is the so-called 'benefactor'. This type of offender can abuse children relatively invisibly by way of a charitable organization or some other social institution. He may have a job as a teacher or a social worker, for instance; he may be the founder or owner of a children's home, a shelter for street children, or another child-focused organization; or he may be undertaking voluntary work abroad for an extended period (Atwell, 2014; Moerenhout, 2013). The police documents we analyzed show that the police believe a growing number of abusers are using the cover of being a benefactor. Children in institutionalized settings are known to be generally more at risk for all sorts of violence and abuse than children in a family setting (see Pinheiro, 2006; Tuovinen, 2014; Van Doore, Martin, & McKeon, 2016). Certainly given the growth in the number of international volunteers and the growing share of 'voluntourism' in the market (Wearing & Gard, 2013), NGOs and other organizations that run institutions of this kind therefore have an important role to play in preventing abuse by transnational child sex offenders in these settings.

Nevertheless, all too often when volunteers enlist to work in children's homes or orphanages their good intentions are taken at face value, including by the charitable organizations. Volunteers often have to make a financial contribution to carry out voluntary work abroad, either to the children's home or to the travel agency that arranges the contact between the parties (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Because the organization is grateful for the contribution (financial or otherwise) that these benefactors make, it does not always take the trouble to check references, request a certificate of good conduct, or to monitor the volunteer closely. This lack of supervision means that international volunteers can make use of their position to abuse children (Moerenhout, 2013; UNHRC, 2012).

3.3 ONLINE TRANSNATIONAL CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

The term transnational child sex offender primarily conjures up images of individuals who physically travel abroad to abuse children. However, transnational child sex offences may take place even when the offenders are not physically present (Moerenhout, 2013). Via the internet, an offender can make contact with minors abroad to persuade them (often but not always for payment) to engage in sexual acts, or he may be an online spectator as sexual abuse takes place to order; the offender may or may not have given the orders himself (Beech, Elliott, Birgden, & Findlater, 2008; Moerenhout, 2013; Webster et al., 2012). Given that this involves webcams and a live internet connection, such practices are sometimes known as *webcam child sex tourism* or *live stream child sex abuse*.

The initial contact between the offender and the child can be made through online dating sites, public chat rooms, social networking sites, or through the owners of internet dens (Terre des Hommes, 2013a). The abuse of the child may take place in the victim's own home (Moerenhout, 2013), but may also occur in what are known as 'internet dens': houses where children are locked up and exploited by taking part in webcam sex shows against their will (Terre des Hommes, 2013a). After paying, by PayPal or Western Union for instance, the offender can gain access to a live-stream video in which children carry out sexual acts in front of a webcam. The contents of the shows vary from children showing their genitalia, masturbating, or having sexual contact with other children or adults.

The webcam is a method that is being used more and more often in the abuse of children: it is “an emerging threat with the potential to involve large numbers of offenders” (UNHRC, 2014:11; see also Terre des Hommes, 2013a; ECPAT, 2014; Europol, 2015). It is estimated that at every moment of the day more than 750,000 people worldwide are on the internet in search of sex with children in over 40,000 public chat rooms (UNHRC, 2012; United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011; Terre des Hommes, 2013a). In the Sweetie project in 2013, in the course of ten weeks the Dutch NGO Terre des Hommes identified 1000 individuals who had approached the virtual ‘girl’, Sweetie, for sex (Terre des Hommes, 2013b).²⁷

It remains unclear whether online transnational child sex offenders operate exclusively online, or whether this method should be seen as a stage that may lead to (or follow on from) physical sexual abuse of children. Van Wijk and colleagues (2012), for instance, suspect that if an online transnational child sex offender has the means and opportunity to travel abroad, he will do so. Europol (2015) also notes that for several consumers of live online child sexual abuse their live-streaming activities are a precursor to ultimate physical child sexual abuse abroad.²⁸

It appears that live online child sexual abuse occurs all over the world. The country that has achieved the greatest notoriety as a key location for this form of abuse is the Philippines (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Many cases have come to light in this country due to the attention NGOs and the investigative authorities have devoted to the subject. It is unlikely, however, that the Philippines is the only country in which this phenomenon occurs (Moerenhout, 2013). Terre des Hommes (2013a) is also of this opinion, adding that it is inevitable that live online child sexual abuse will take place all over the world as long as nothing is done about the phenomenon and offenders can do as they please with impunity.

Tackling the problem, however, is a highly complex matter. The online method enables more users to experience the abuse and minimizes the risk of being caught (ECPAT, 2014). In the case of live streaming often no digital files are preserved, which makes it particularly difficult to gather evidence. Over and above the anonymity (or perception of anonymity) afforded by the internet, offenders also take additional measures to evade identification. The police report that offenders often make use of (untraceable) prepaid cards and changing IP-addresses. These are relatively easy measures to take and can form a serious obstacle for the investigative authorities.

²⁷ The files of all these individuals, who included 20 Dutch nationals, were passed on to Interpol. One of the Dutch offenders who was identified as a result of this project was arrested in September 2015 for the possession of child sexual abuse images (Terre des Hommes, 2015).

At the moment Terre des Hommes is working on a follow-on project: Sweetie 2.0. In collaboration with international specialists, they are developing chatbots that can be used to automatically monitor thousands of chat rooms and to approach, identify, and localize potential child abusers (see www.terredeshommes.nl/sweetie2).

²⁸ The hypothesis that hands-off (online) child sexual abuse could lead to, or go hand in hand with hands-on contact abuse has already been the subject of considerable research interest in the context of child sexual abuse images (see, e.g., Babchishin, Hanson, & VanZuylen, 2015; Houtepen, Sijtsema, & Bogaerts, 2014; Quayle & Taylor, 2003). An overly concise summary of the findings of these studies would fail to do justice to the complexity of the scholarly debate about this subject. It is clear, however, that the results of such studies are also highly relevant for research into transnational child sex offences, given the many parallels between child sexual abuse images (and the way they are used) and online transnational child sex offences.

Because offenders do not come into physical contact with the victim, and often are not even in the same country, this form of offence is characterized as a 'hands-off' offence, much like the consumption of child sexual abuse material (or 'child pornography'). From a legal perspective, then, it is logical that online transnational sex offences should be handled by prosecuting the offender for the possession of child sexual abuse material; after all, the images of transnational child sex offences, whether online or otherwise, fit within the category of child sexual abuse material, and they constitute tangible evidence in criminal proceedings.^{29,30} At the same time, however, it is important to bear in mind that classifying online transnational sex offences as child sexual abuse material does not entirely do justice to the nature and harmfulness of the phenomenon. The UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography notes that the perpetrators of online transnational sex offences are real-time participants in child abuse (UNHRC, 2014). For this reason, despite the overlap with child sexual abuse material, online transnational sex offences are viewed in the literature as a separate phenomenon.

²⁹ The strategy of investigating and prosecuting possible transnational child sex offenders for offences in relation to child sexual abuse material is not limited to live online child sexual abuse. At Amsterdam Airport Schiphol the Customs and Royal Netherlands Marechaussee carry out checks for child sexual abuse material in the luggage of passengers who fit the risk profile for transnational child sex offences (NRM, 2013).

³⁰ In the Netherlands it is also possible to prosecute the perpetrators of online transnational sex offences for indecent assault (at a distance). Since Section 246 of the Dutch Penal Code (indecent assault) does not require physical contact, nonconsensual webcam sex also falls within the description of the offence in this Section (NRM, 2013). See, for example, the judgment of the Court of The Hague on 19 February 2016 (ECLI:NL:RBDHA:2016:1611) and the judgment of the Supreme Court on 15 March 2016 (ECLI:NL:RBROT:2016:1928).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this final chapter we will first – as much as possible – answer the research questions and place them in context. In the second part we reflect on the state of the research on this subject. The final section consists of an answer to the final research question and recommendations for practice.

In the present study, which was based on the available literature on the subject, we investigated the characteristics, motives, and methods of Dutch perpetrators of transnational child sex offences. As the preceding chapters make clear, it is impossible to sketch a uniform picture on the basis of the existing body of international research. The findings are varied, and it is not possible to arrive at a single, unequivocal profile of ‘the’ transnational child sex offender. This in itself is not surprising: too few data are available to arrive at sound conclusions; moreover the results of the scant research available are varied, which suggests that we are not dealing with a homogenous group. On the other hand, this literature review does permit the conclusion that the researchers, policymakers, and other experts who write about this subject share certain conjectures about the characteristics, motives, and methods of transnational child sex offenders all over the world:

CHARACTERISTICS

In the vast majority of known cases, transnational child sex offenders are male. The image of transnational child sex offenders being primarily middle-aged is accepted among a large number of experts, but this cannot be confirmed on the basis of the available data. Various researchers conjecture that the perpetrators of transnational child sex offences – like other sex offenders – are subject to various risk factors, such as a negative self-image, addiction problems, a history as a victim of abuse, or marital problems. The connection with socio-economic characteristics is not yet clear.

MOTIVES

The idea that transnational child sex offenders travel with the express purpose of abusing children is losing support. Some offenders do indeed have a pronounced sexual preference for children and deliberately go in search of minors. Travelling abroad (or the online environment) provides them with the anonymity that blurs any possible barriers. Another group of offenders lack this focused motive: they are seduced by contextual factors that lead to them engaging in sexual acts with a child. Indifference and ignorance on the part of these travelers, as well as various neutralization techniques, play an important role. Whereas in the past attention was mainly paid to the former category (preferential offenders), recently there have been a growing number of appeals not to overlook the second category (situational offenders). Several organizations have surmised that situational offenders may make up the invisible majority of perpetrators of transnational child sex offences.

METHODS

Transnational child sex offenders employ many different methods to obtain access to children, depending on the length of their stay abroad, the physical accessibility of a given child, and the intensity of their contacts with the child’s community. Travelers who are only in their country of destination for a short time use different methods to procure sex with a child than do travelers

who are present for a longer period. Where long-stay transnational child sex offenders are more likely to attempt to secure long-term access to a victim by building up trust within the local community, short-stay offenders tend to obtain access to minors by turning to the established (unofficial) sex industry or nightlife scene, online information channels, or facilitators in the tourism sector.

Transnational child sex offences occur both offline (“hands-on”) and online (“hands-off”). Various authorities express concern about the increase in live online child sexual abuse, which enables offenders to abuse children all over the world by way of a webcam; this is expected to increase still further. In contrast with the perpetrators of offences involving child sexual abuse material (see, e.g., Houtepen, Sijtsema, & Bogaerts, 2014), no scientific research is available – to the best of our knowledge – about the perpetrators of online transnational sex offences.

DUTCH OFFENDERS

Although it is impossible to give an estimate of the proportion of child sexual abuse abroad that is carried out by Dutch transnational child sex offenders, it is evident that there are Dutch nationals who commit such offences. In general the sources studied in relation to Dutch offenders give no reason to believe that this group differs from transnational child sex offenders from other countries of origin.

Where the demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, age, and socio-economic background) of Dutch offenders are concerned, no differences are expected with respect to the image sketched of transnational child sex offenders all over the world. Differences can be expected on the other hand, and have been observed, in the destinations chosen by offenders from various countries. Although certain destination regions attract offenders of all nationalities and can be considered general hotspots for transnational child sex offences, the countries of destination of Dutch offenders – to the extent that these are known³¹ – probably do differ from the destinations of offenders from other countries. This can be explained by general patterns of travel and migration between countries, which are influenced by various factors, such as historical and socio-cultural links, ease of communication (e.g., due to language similarities), how well known a destination is, and the range of (reasonably priced) transport and air connections on offer.

Scarcely any empirical information is available concerning the motives specifically of Dutch offenders. However, the typology discussed in the research literature is frequently also adopted in Dutch reports and policy documents, which suggests that professionals work on the assumption that this classification also applies to Dutch transnational child sex offenders. Nevertheless, of the cultural differences pressed into service as justification techniques, as discussed in the literature, some are more likely than others to occur in Dutch offenders. Certain neutralization techniques can be expected, from a cultural perspective, to be more relevant than others: a Dutch transnational child sex offender is more likely to think in terms of a financial contribution helping to earn the child’s living than espouse a superstition about the healing effects of having sex with a minor and/or virgin.

To the extent to which this emerges in the literature, the methods used by Dutch offenders are similar to those recorded for offenders of other nationalities. In general we may surmise that the benefactor approach and the perpetration of online transnational sex offences are connected with the

³¹ See the reflections about this on page 14 of the current report.

offender's economic position and the levels of computer literacy and internet connectivity in a given country, but the research literature does not yet provide any answers in this area.

The present report provides an overview of the research available concerning the perpetrators of transnational child sex offences in general, with particular attention for Dutch offenders. This is a crucial first step towards developing effective methods for signaling, investigating, and treating offenders (or possible offenders), formulating effective prevention initiatives, and inspiring and conducting further research into transnational child sex offences. It is clear that this is a highly complex phenomenon: it is impossible to distil out just one type of offender, one sort of motive, or one *modus operandi*. In the recent literature we can see a move against what researchers view as stereotyping, simplistic perceptions about transnational child sex offenders; they call for a more nuanced view. This presents researchers with the difficult challenge of sketching a true picture of the phenomenon without this resulting in too many generic nuances that cannot serve as the basis for any practical recommendations.

STATE OF THE RESEARCH

This literature review gathered together the known information about the perpetrators of transnational child sex offences. Studying and analyzing as much relevant literature as possible provided us with a reasonably good picture of the knowledge available about transnational child sex offences in general, and the state of affairs of the scientific research on this subject in particular. A few observations and reflections can be made in that regard.

The knowledge gap noted in the introduction is indeed borne out: research into transnational child sex offences is scarce. Although there were a reasonable number of documents, reports, and articles for us to analyse, only a small proportion of these documents were based on empirical scientific research, i.e., based on data about the phenomenon collected by the authors in a thorough and reliable manner. Reservations are thus called for concerning the quality (particularly from a methodological point of view) of the literature found.

First of all, the greater part of the grey literature (such as periodical reports by NGOs) is entirely lacking any form of empirical data collection (or scientific justification). There is often no sign of a systematic approach, an explanation of the methods applied, or an empirical underpinning for the findings. This leads to a lack of clarity, which leaves the reader guessing about the basis for the conclusions drawn.

In addition, the scant information that is available seems to be reused strikingly often. It is by no means rare for a claim or a "fact" from one report – about the characteristics of transnational child sex offenders, for instance – to turn out to be based on another report, which in turn refers to another document that is not (or no longer) available and/or of mediocre quality (such as a newspaper article that does not give sources). Of course this does not necessarily mean the assertions are untrue, but we do need to ask questions about the ways in which such information is gathered, and the ease with which findings – in part unreliable ones – seem to be recycled. There is a danger here that 'urban legends' may evolve, disseminating stereotypical, possibly untrue perspectives. This not only damages the credibility of scientific research, but can also impede the effectiveness of the approach.

In addition, this field of research, like many other criminological studies, is plagued by the problem of dark numbers: to put it simply, what we do not see, we do not know. The information

presented in this report is incomplete, certainly where police data are concerned: it relates to the characteristics, motives, and methods of *known* transnational child sex offenders (or alleged offenders). We do not know to what extent this picture is representative for the transnational child sex offenders who succeed in evading detection.

A number of the documents analyzed that did collect empirical data attempt to overcome this methodological problem by using experts as the primary source of information (most recently, for example, ECPAT's Global Study by Hawke & Raphael, 2016). These experts are asked – by means of interviews, expert papers, or surveys – what they believe the phenomenon looks like. NGOs too, which can play an important role in the approach to gathering information about transnational child sex offences (see 'Recommendations for practice' below), report on the basis of the image that prevails among their staff. This method of data collection gives a good picture of the dominant viewpoints among experts on transnational child sex offences and of the latest developments. However, it is not clear to what extent it provides a correct representation of the actual characteristics, motives, and methods of transnational child sex offenders, certainly where they operate out of the sights of the official bodies. Have the experts actually got it right? And how reliable are the sources on which the experts' opinions are based?

We can thus point to several problems and areas for improvement for the researchers working on this subject. At the same time, it is important to remain critical about the limitations of the data found, without labelling them as 'worthless'. Transnational child sex offences are, by their very nature, a hidden and border-crossing phenomenon, so that they present a complex challenge for researchers. It is inevitable that this report too, by giving as complete an overview as possible of the literature on a subject about which so little empirical research exists, is guilty of reusing data that may be incomplete, limited, and/or unreliable. Where we saw reasons to do so, we weighed up the conclusions and nuanced them accordingly. What remains is the conviction that notwithstanding the limitations of the literature, any contribution to reducing the knowledge gap is better than nothing. The urgency of the problem is clear, and the more organizations and researchers become involved with the subject, the better.

In short: a great deal has been written about transnational child sex offences, but reliable research is thin on the ground. This is a sign that the subject is indeed on the agenda, but that researchers have yet to succeed in converting this attention into methodologically sound data collection and research publications.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The literature review brings to light a great many questions that could form the starting point for further research. In the following subsections we highlight a few of the deficiencies in more detail.

Delimitation of the phenomenon of transnational child sex offences

Although at first sight transnational child sex offences may seem simple to define, in practice this definition sometimes proves less clear-cut than one might expect. In the present study too we observed interfaces between transnational child sex offences and other criminal phenomena, such as child sexual abuse images, trafficking in children and other human beings, child marriages, and child

sexual abuse in general, as well as legal activities such as prostitution and sex tourism. This overlap – such as the fact, for instance, that perpetrators of live online transnational child sex offences can also be prosecuted for possession of child sexual abuse material – may prompt questions about the legitimacy of the term ‘transnational child sex offences’ as a separate phenomenon. In this connection, it is frequently argued that for the children themselves it does not make any difference what country their abuser comes from. Researchers and actors in the field must continue to view the phenomenon as part of the broader framework of sexual abuse of minors, in which the transnational child sex offender is investigated as a perpetrator of child sexual abuse who operates abroad.

Nevertheless, we do believe there is added value in the present specific focus on transnational child sex offences as a category of their own. For the time being, the anticipated differences between transnational child sex offences and other forms of child sexual abuse, including the differences in the offender population and the methods, and the implications of these differences for prevention and investigative policy, mean that transnational child sex offences warrant categorization as a separate priority.

Follow-up research will be needed to establish to what extent the current delimitation is fitting, relevant, and effective. What factors decide for instance why one preferential offender travels abroad to abuse a child, whereas another commits offences against a child in the Netherlands? Research into online transnational child sex offences could focus on the question of the extent to which these offenders can be seen as a separate group, in comparison with the perpetrators of (‘traditional’) offences in relation to child sexual abuse material and ‘hands-on’ transnational child sex offences. Research into transnational child sex offences could benefit, finally, from closer cooperation with researchers collecting data on child sexual abuse; it would be helpful, for instance, if those carrying out studies on the perpetrators of sexual offences against children in the Netherlands could ask about the travel behavior of these individuals and their fellow perpetrators.

Research into the extent of the phenomenon

The present research joins the long tradition of studies into transnational child sex offences that states that there is a serious lack of reliable figures about the extent of the phenomenon (see e.g., Vogelvang et al., 2002; Hawke & Raphael, 2016). Although many experts indicate that the phenomenon is a growing problem, the data (especially quantitative data) to underpin these suspicions are lacking. From a policy point of view, data about the size are important above all when it comes to setting priorities. Moreover, the absence of a base line makes it impossible to measure the effects of various initiatives. In short, although gaining an exact picture of the extent of transnational child sex offences is an extremely complex, perhaps even a utopian endeavor, there is a great need for studies that contribute to a better and more reliable overview.

Further research into the motives of various types of offenders

In this literature review, we presented several different types of offenders, distinguished on the basis of their differing methods and motives, which call for different measures. When it comes to policymaking and investigations, knowledge about characteristics and methods is sometimes valued more highly than knowledge about motives; Moerenhout (2013) for instance states that the offender’s motivation makes no difference for the authorities’ approach. In our view, this is over-simplified, because the whole approach can only ever be partially effective if a significant group of offenders

remains invisible. It is only once we can distinguish between the different types of offenders that we can implement interventions that are suited to more than just one group of the offender population, which benefits the effectiveness of the investigation and the preventive force of the measures taken.

Further research into the motives of transnational child sex offenders is thus essential. The preferential/situational typology is widespread in the research literature and has strong theoretical foundations, but as yet there is a lack of data about transnational child sex offenders to support it. It would be desirable to test, in a methodologically sound manner, whether this typology (which has been adopted from the literature about child sexual abuse in general) is equally applicable to transnational child sex offenders.

In addition, this literature review has not come up with a definitive answer to the question of how many of the perpetrators of transnational child sex offences in general, and the Dutch offenders in particular, are preferential, and how many situational. An indication of the proportions of the various types of offenders is crucial for determining the priorities for police and government policy, concerning matters such as the allocation of police and other resources and the initiation of various measures and campaigns. The question of the extent of the problem is thus also extremely relevant when it comes to the ratio between the various types of motives of transnational child sex offenders.

Links between characteristics, motives, and methods

In this literature review, the research questions regarding the characteristics, motives, and methods of transnational child sex offenders were each considered separately, in line with the literature found, in which these variables are seldom investigated in connection with one another. Future research should contribute to a more holistic picture of the characteristics, motives, and methods of transnational child sex offenders. Do situational offenders employ different methods than preferential offenders, for instance? And does the demographic profile of preferential offenders or long-stay transnational child sex offenders differ from that of situational offenders and short-stay or online transnational child sex offenders?

On the basis of the findings of this literature review, we can formulate various hypotheses about how these concepts might be connected with one another. In light of the characteristics of preferential offenders, for instance, one may expect them to be more likely to use a long-stay modus operandi than situational offenders who, as tourists or business travelers, might use the methods attributed to 'short-stay offenders'. However, the categories will not entirely dovetail: short-stay preferential offenders and long-stay situational offenders will also occur, we expect – though they will be in the minority.

Demographic characteristics such as age can also differ between offenders with different motives and methods. Given that young people are, on average, more impulsive than older people and more likely to undertake activities in which they may be confronted with opportunities for sex with a minor (in the sex industry, in nightlife, or as a tourist or a volunteer abroad), situational offenders may be expected to be younger on average than preferential offenders. Similarly, we can reason that online transnational child sex offenders will be younger on average than both short- and long-stay transnational child sex offenders; after all, young people tend to have more access to, and knowledge of computers than older people (see, e.g., Dijk, 2005), and young people consume significantly more pornographic material than older people (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016).

Empirical research into mutual connections of this kind can serve as an important step towards developing and improving coherent profiles of the various types of transnational child sex offenders; this may assist the police and judicial authorities in designing tailored interventions and effective barriers.

Collecting empirical data on online transnational child sex offences

Online transnational child sex offences are a new manifestation of the phenomenon which merits immediate research attention. Although a certain amount has been published on the offline or 'traditional' manifestations, scarcely any research has yet been conducted into online transnational child sex offences. The phenomenon is expected to grow rapidly, meaning that scientific research in this area is greatly needed. Even a preliminary description of the phenomenon would be a first step: who are the offenders? Who are the victims? What abuse takes place, and where? What is the modus operandi? What is the damage to victims? Subsequently, this kind of data can serve as a basis for research comparing online transnational child sex offences (and the perpetrators of these offences) with offences involving child sexual abuse images and hands-off child sexual abuse, as well as analysis of the legal dimensions, to evaluate how this manifestation of transnational child sex offences relates to other phenomena.

Empirical research of this kind might collect primary data via a multi-method study that makes use of police data (potentially also from abroad), online (undercover) surveillance of live-streaming operations, and surveillance in other online environments (on the Darkweb and the regular internet). This larger-scale research project should be preceded by an exploratory study or pilot, which maps out how and where researchers and the investigative services can acquire a better picture of online transnational child sex offences. After all, in order to carry out online surveillance in a systematic and representative manner, it is first necessary to establish what environments are suitable for surveillance and how best (from a practical, ethical, technical, and legal point of view) to approach them. Close cooperation between academic researchers and the police and judicial authorities is essential in this.

International comparative research

Obtaining a complete, correct, and reliable picture of the perpetrators (especially the Dutch perpetrators) of transnational child sex offences does not serve a merely academic purpose; the aim is above all to design an effective approach. Comparative research at the international level, comparing different policy approaches, will be needed to explore which measures are, or could be, effective for the prevention and investigation of the various types of offences and offenders. In other words: what works for whom? The answers to this question will enable policymakers to design barriers to fit the different routes that preferential and situational offenders take before actually proceeding with abuse.

Although given the current state of the research it is not yet possible to carry out quantitative effect studies of various measures to counter transnational child sex offences, it is nevertheless feasible and valuable to deploy qualitative research methods, such as international comparative law approaches, to inventorize what legislation and measures (policy or otherwise) other countries have adopted in the fight against this phenomenon. Follow-up research could also focus on more in-depth case studies of partner countries that are relevant for the Netherlands. An overview of this kind of the experiences from abroad may not only serve as an inspiration for the Dutch approach, but may also have practical benefits in the case of international police cooperation.

Countries of destination for transnational child sex offenders

In the research literature and other documents discussed here, a few regions are referred to relatively consistently as the destinations for Dutch transnational child sex offenders. However, reservations still hold regarding the data on which this overview is based, and information from various sources is sometimes contradictory. Moreover, the travel movements of Dutch transnational child sex offenders are no more a static given than those of other tourists: countries of destination fluctuate, and, depending on various push and pull factors, other countries may emerge as destinations (Hawke & Raphael, 2016).

For the effectiveness of investigations, however, it is extremely important to have an up-to-date overview of the countries that serve as destinations for Dutch transnational child sex offenders. After all, if the investigative authorities know what countries the perpetrators are travelling to, they can monitor high-risk travel movements in a targeted manner, invest in cooperative links with and within the most relevant countries of destination, and deploy policing capacity – always a scarce resource – in the most efficient way possible.

Given the hidden nature of the phenomenon involved, designing reliable research to obtain a good picture of these countries of destination is a methodologically complex task. A first promising research design would seem to be to develop a quantitatively predictive algorithm in which the travel movements of Dutch individuals are modelled in combination with variables of relevance to transnational child sex offences, such as the popularity of the tourist sector in destination countries, socio-economic factors, the level of development of the sex industry (especially that involving minors), and the presence of large-scale events. This methodology was already proposed by Vogelvang et al. in 2002, but the emergence of big data may mean that it becomes more attainable over the coming years. In addition, if the willingness of Dutch travel organizations, NGOs, expats, and others who have settled abroad to report incidents or suspicions could be increased, this too would provide valuable information. Information could also be obtained from offenders, particularly sex offenders, about their own travel movements and those of other perpetrators of child sexual abuse they know from their networks. Here one could think of interviews with those convicted of child sexual abuse in the Netherlands, but also with Dutch offenders imprisoned abroad – although it would be advisable to obtain a better overview of the latter group than is currently available from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Monitoring online flows of information, finally, such as online forums and websites (including closed access sites), can also provide information about the destination countries of preferential offenders (and the communication about them).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Without losing sight of the limitations of the literature, and of the present review of that literature, we can nevertheless derive several starting points for practical implementation. We start with some recommendations about how to improve the information position on transnational child sex offences. Then, in answer to the final subquestion, we present several recommendations about how to tackle transnational child sex offences, based on the picture of transnational child sex offenders (especially Dutch offenders) that emerges from this study.

A BETTER INFORMATION POSITION ON TRANSNATIONAL CHILD SEX OFFENCES

The reflections on the state of the research show clearly that the academic community still has a great deal of ground to make up in their investigations into transnational child sex offences (see ‘Suggestions for further research’ above). But the police and the judicial authorities too, obvious partners for research in this area, suffer from the limitations in the availability, registration, and accessibility of information on transnational child sex offences. This hampers not only the process of carrying out empirical research into transnational child sex offences and how to tackle this phenomenon, but also targeted steering on the basis of investigative results and the effects of other interventions. The striking lack of reliable data about transnational child sex offences illustrates the necessity **to improve the information position**.

How can the police gain better insight into transnational child sex offenders? A logical first step is to facilitate scientific research to build up a more reliable picture of the phenomenon. In addition, on the basis of the literature review carried out here, we emphasize a few general recommendations:

Continuing and further developing (international) cooperation with NGOs

The literature review shows clearly that NGOs are an extremely important partner, not only for operational matters in ongoing investigations, but also as a source of information. It is not without reason that a large proportion of the information used for the present literature review derives from reports by NGOs: several such organizations are very active in the field of transnational child sex offences. Given their sound knowledge of the local context, access to local communities, and international networks, continuing and expanding international cooperation with NGOs that are active in this area can form a valuable pillar for detecting transnational child sex offences. To this end, it will be necessary to invest in clear agreements about what is and is not possible as regards sharing information and communicating about how NGOs’ disclosures will be followed up.

Further developing international cooperation, especially police cooperation, in a country-specific context

The effective investigation of Dutch perpetrators of transnational child sex offences calls for more than just detection: for proper investigation and prosecution a network in the destination country is necessary. International police cooperation, through the Virtual Global Taskforce and Interpol, is a good start. Dutch embassies abroad, too, could serve as eyes and ears for the police, provided that embassy employees are made sufficiently aware of this subject.³²

Another promising development is to post specialized police liaison officers, with a thematic focus on transnational child sex offences in their portfolio, in countries that form popular destinations for Dutch transnational child sex offenders. These liaison officers have a thorough knowledge of

³² One initiative that may possibly contribute to this awareness is described in the most recent plan of approach (Ministry of Security and Justice, 2016): a ‘toolkit’ containing information material about the phenomenon of transnational child sex offences, types of offenders, and the possibilities for tackling these offenders, to be distributed to embassy and government employees, NGOs in countries of destination, and Dutch emigrants and expats. At the time of writing, a pilot study is underway in the Philippines.

investigative practice (in the Netherlands and elsewhere) and are also sufficiently at home in the local context and networks to be able to translate signs they pick up into investigative initiative. In this way, they can provide country-specific information that can be crucial for an investigation and for developing policy.

Caution is called for, however, when it comes to where to post liaison officers of this kind, or developing other international cooperation initiatives. Although it is inevitable that priorities must be determined in selecting countries of destination, this selection equally inevitably has a distorting effect on the statistics that determine the priorities. In other words: in those places where we search harder for a phenomenon, we are bound to see that phenomenon more. In response to signs that transnational child sex offenders frequently travel to Southeast Asia, police liaison officers have been posted in this region; it will not be surprising if more Dutch offenders are found in this region over the coming years. It is important to take care that when the authorities set priorities this does not lead to them shutting their eyes to other regions or new, upcoming destinations – in Africa or eastern Europe, for instance. For this reason, the police must constantly be on the alert for changes and new developments, so that international police cooperation remains effective in the long run.

Clear overview of cases of transnational child sex offences through uniform registration in police systems

To optimize the information position regarding transnational child sex offences, it is crucial that when information about relevant cases does make it into the police systems, this information should be visible and easy to find. This may seem obvious, but because of the similarities with other offences, it is not surprising that transnational child sex offence cases are registered under terms such as sexual abuse or child sexual abuse material; this means that the subject is less visible (see also Moerenhout, 2013). Clear registration of the valuable information that makes it into the police systems is important for acquiring a better overview, both for the purpose of investigations and strategic steering on the part of the police and as a source for research into the phenomenon. There are two fundamental prerequisites: first of all, the logistical provisions (e.g., ICT) of the police and the Public Prosecution Service need to facilitate a uniform registration system; and secondly, the individuals who operate these systems need to be able to recognize transnational child sex offences and register the data correctly. This requires an awareness of the phenomenon not only among those involved in the higher-level, strategic programmers, but above all among the primary users of the systems: front-line police officers in the regional units.

MORE TARGETED AND MORE EFFECTIVE PREVENTION AND INVESTIGATION

The profile of the Dutch transnational child sex offender as outlined in this research has several implications for the way in which such offences are tackled in practice. A thorough evaluation of Dutch policy regarding transnational child sex offences and the measures taken by the Dutch police for the prevention and investigation of the perpetrators is clearly beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, we can identify certain starting points on the basis of the profile sketched here.

The most important lesson is that **the diversity of the offender group calls for a diverse range of measures tailored to the different sorts of offenders.**

Both preferential offenders...

Both in the Netherlands and at the international level, various measures have been taken to target preferential offenders. Such measures include the international exchange of information about sex offenders with a high risk of reoffending, and especially about their travel movements, as well as imposing travel bans on and/or confiscating the passports of known sex offenders (see, e.g., NRM, 2013; Hall, 2011). The primary purpose of an approach of this kind seems to be to prevent reoffending. Tackling new preferential offenders, who are as yet unknown to the judicial authorities, is of course considerably more complex. There are only a few initiatives that specifically target this group; one of these is the Dutch helpline Stop It Now, which aims to help pedophiles (and their families) who are struggling with their sexual orientation. Other initiatives that focus on the prevention of child sexual abuse in general may also have an impact on preferential transnational child sex offenders. Such initiatives focus, for instance, on combating images and other material and online or offline exchanges that normalize and/or justify sexual contact with children.

It is not clear, finally, to what extent organized crime networks play a role in organizing and facilitating transnational child sex offences. It could be posited that organizations of this kind would focus particularly on facilitating preferential offenders. It is necessary to obtain a better overview of the (online and other) networks that profit from transnational child sex offences.³³

And situational offenders

Without wishing to detract from the necessity of investigating and prosecuting preferential offenders, it is no extravagance to state that more attention needs to be paid to tackling situational offenders. Given that these situational offenders are believed to constitute the invisible majority of transnational child sex offenders, it is worrying that most policy measures target the preferential offender group (see also Hawke & Raphael, 2016); this would mean that the police, judicial authorities, and policymakers are investing a great deal of time, trouble, and human and financial resources in measures that can only be effective for a small proportion of the offender population. Measures aimed at the situational offender group should focus on reducing the opportunities for sexual abuse of children abroad, and/or on countering neutralization techniques that can contribute to situational offenders' indifference; the latter could be achieved through information campaigns that appeal to each traveler's conscience, clarify the law, and increase awareness.

Short-stay...

Short-stay offenders obtain access to children in various ways: through facilitators in the tourism sector or online information channels, for instance, regular night life, or the established sex industry (whether official or unofficial). Measures to limit the opportunities for short-stay transnational child sex offenders include:

³³ Moerenhout (2013) has already pointed out that it is difficult to determine whether the networks and facilitators operate in organized groups. Expertise about this subject is highly relevant, since it has consequences for Dutch investigative powers in, and mutual legal assistance to other countries (NRM, 2013; see also the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime): after all, fighting organized crime networks may call for very different barriers than dealing with individual transnational child sex offenders.

- Obtaining an overview of the facilitators and tackling them. This is a realistic and promising approach: after all, without the temptation of facilitators, situational offenders would not actually proceed to committing abuse. There is an important role here for the private sector; whereas it would be difficult for the Dutch authorities to regulate a hotel in a destination country, Dutch travel agencies could collectively agree no longer to do business with accommodation providers that are suspected of facilitating child abuse. International cooperation and awareness among travel agencies, transport companies, and other companies in the tourist sector can be an important step for prevention. It is important for them to be made aware of their social responsibility.³⁴
- Monitoring the forums where offenders exchange information. These interactions do not take place exclusively on protected parts of the internet, which are more difficult for the investigative authorities to access, but also in open-access settings. The virtual girl used as a lure by Terre des Hommes was also approached in openly accessible chat rooms (Terre des Hommes, 2013b), for instance, and Jonas (2016) noted that valuable clues for investigations can be found in public social media profiles. Monitoring environments of this kind, within the applicable legal boundaries, is a logical first step for the police and could be especially effective for bringing to light situational offenders.

Where monitoring is not possible or is too labor-intensive, the police might consider possible ways to disrupt the existing online information channels. The heaviest version is to take down online environments entirely, but this may require international cooperation and extensive investigative powers. Lighter instruments include exercising influence by disseminating false information (about the location of brothels, for instance) with a view to undermining the trustworthiness of these environments, or by posting announcements that sex with children is prohibited and that the forum is being monitored by the police. Here too the private sector can play a role: internet service providers and the administrators of websites and forums can be requested to ban sex with minors (and advertising for such services) from their environments.

- Supporting development initiatives spearheaded by NGOs. Combating the sexual exploitation of children in the sex industry in a given country is, from the point of view of the Netherlands, a complex task. Promoting education, protecting children, and fighting poverty must be central, and can only be achieved through cooperation with the international community.

Long-stay...

Long-stay transnational child sex offenders, such as migrants, expats or volunteers, try to secure long-term access to a victim by winning the trust of the local community. Measures to tackle this group include:

- Increasing awareness among volunteer organizations and foundations abroad, especially small-scale ones, about the risks and stimulating them to adapt their application procedure

³⁴ One example of a private-sector initiative is The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. Companies in the travel and tourism sector who subscribe to The Code advocate sustainable and responsible tourism, in which child sexual abuse has no place (see www.thecode.org).

and recruitment communication accordingly. There is talk, for instance, of introducing an international Certificate of Good Conduct for people wishing to volunteer abroad.³⁵ Since this measure relies on a record of existing convictions, this primarily prevents abuse by repeat offenders (preferential offenders); however, clarifying the norms can also help to counter the neutralization techniques employed by situational offenders (see also Jonas, 2016).

- Increasing the likelihood of victims filing charges, for instance by improving operational cooperation and information sharing with NGOs that work with victims. This is crucial not only from the point of view of victim protection, but also because testimonies from victims constitute important evidence. Long-stay transnational child sex offenders often evade prosecution due to the trust they have built up in the local community, using bribery, child marriage, or other situations of dependence to convince their victims and their families not to file charges. In addition, an effective international campaign against child marriages could also serve as a barrier for long-stay, preferential transnational child sex offenders.

And online

Online transnational child sex offences are a growing phenomenon; they constitute a challenge not only to the technological investigative skills and powers of the police, but also to the traditional legal perception and interpretation of the offence. We know that the phenomenon exists and that Dutch nationals are among the perpetrators, but as yet the perpetrators' countries of origin have put forward virtually no measures to prevent their citizens from this abuse. Investigation is urgently needed to establish a basic overview: who are the offenders, who are the victims, where does the abuse take place, how does it come about, and how is it facilitated? Further research into this phenomenon is therefore one of the key recommendations of this exploratory study.

Although the investigative authorities can facilitate research of this kind, they cannot afford to sit back and wait for the results. Obvious first steps include cooperating and sharing information with other investigative bodies, tracing – and where possible disrupting – live-streaming environments, and working with destination countries to free victims from such situations. It is important, too, to consider manners of prevention: the initiatives undertaken by Terre des Hommes are an instructive and interesting experiment here. In organizational terms, tackling this new manifestation of the phenomenon calls for technological, financial, and cyber expertise, which must all be suitably embedded in the police organization.

³⁵ Interpol is currently working on an Interpol International Police Certificate (IIPC) project, which enables a volunteer to hand over a certificate of exemplary conduct to an employer abroad (Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice, 2016).

CLOSING REMARKS

Transnational child sex offences are a complex problem that can only be combated effectively through cooperation between countries of origin and countries of destination. That is not always easy: while industrialized countries accuse destination countries of laxity, corruption, and inaction, developing countries point the finger at countries of origin, whose citizens create the demand for the sexual exploitation of children (Jullien, 2003). In this study we have focused on these citizens: in this case inhabitants of the Netherlands who commit transnational child sex offences abroad. We chose this angle because it has the greatest relevance for the Dutch police and authorities, in light of their mission and sphere of influence. At the same time, it has been observed before that many factors play a role in the emergence of transnational child sex offences (in a given area). We must beware of allowing the social, political, economic, cultural, and historical contexts that make child sexual abuse possible to be reduced to a single narrative: the problem of the pedophile foreigner. An approach that focuses solely on either the supply or the demand side of the problem can only ever be of limited effectiveness. Both sides of the problem need to be addressed: to put a stop to transnational child sex offences it is crucial to invest both in building a reliable and well-founded information position and in cooperation – with NGOs, with researchers, and above all with international partners.

What is clear is that an effective approach to a wide-ranging offender group calls for a wide-ranging package of measures. But this integral approach comes at a price: considerable efforts are needed, on the part of policymakers, researchers, police officers, and the employees of NGOs and in the private sector, to put the various interventions into practice. Researchers have the noble, yet challenging task of providing more insight into, and a better overview of, the hidden phenomenon that is transnational child sex offences. Law enforcement agencies have the task of shaping the package of preventive and investigative measures in the most effective possible way. Political support and adequate funding are key prerequisites to design and implement the approach to transnational child sex offences. In light of the urgency, harmfulness, and widespread nature of the phenomenon, concerted action from every party involved is vital to the success of these efforts to bring transnational child sex offences to an end.

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