

Research paper

# Grooming and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts

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## About this paper

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### Project team

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commissioned and funded this research project. It was carried out by Professor Patrick O’Leary, Menzies Health Institute Queensland and School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University, in collaboration with Emma Koh and Andrew Dare, research officers at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

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# Executive summary

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Recent efforts to clarify definitions of grooming in research reflect an increased awareness of the diverse range of settings in which grooming may occur, as well as the diverse range of targets and purposes of grooming techniques. Grooming can be defined as:

*The use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques; with a vulnerable subject; in a range of inter-personal and social settings; in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour; with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure. (McAlinden, 2012, p.11)*

Grooming can involve a range of behaviours that seek to build trust with and increase access to a child, and cement the authority of the perpetrator and/or compliance of a child to perpetrate or continue to perpetrate child sexual abuse. Grooming and related techniques are difficult to identify and define. Grooming includes numerous techniques, many of which are not explicitly sexual or directly abusive in themselves (McAlinden, 2006). Some grooming techniques can co-exist with other regular behaviour or functions within an otherwise normal relationship with a child. Given this, a key difficulty in identifying grooming is that it consists of many discrete acts that, on their own, are not necessarily criminal or abusive (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014), and is distinguishable only by the perpetrator's motivation to facilitate and/or conceal child sexual abuse.

## Introduction

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### Purpose

This paper provides an overview of key conceptual issues in the definition and understanding of grooming. It takes a narrative review approach to synthesising key literature, drawing on an understanding of perpetrator modus operandi. It identifies and discusses what is known about grooming, particularly as it relates to institutional child sexual abuse.

### Literature reviewed

A three-step process to gathering relevant literature was employed in this narrative review. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) undertook an initial scoping exercise in 2014. Because of the paucity of research uncovered in this initial review, the corpus of literature from which this paper was drawn was expanded. This paper drew on studies on perpetrator modus operandi and broader institutional or situational child sexual abuse prevention literature, as well as other Royal Commission research. It is not an exhaustive review of literature, but draws on the authors' expertise and a targeted synthesis of key literature.

## Key findings

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### Core characteristics of grooming techniques

Grooming is recognised as a complex, commonly incremental process that can involve three main stages – from gaining access to the victim, initiating and maintaining the abuse and concealing the abuse (Colton, Roberts & Vanstone, 2012). Potential victims of child sexual abuse are not the only targets of grooming techniques. Grooming can target those involved in gaining access to the child's life, including parents and other caregivers, colleagues and other staff in an institutional setting. Grooming does not inevitably lead to sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also commence in the absence of grooming, particularly for situational or opportunistic offenders (McAlinden, 2012).

Different types of perpetrators apply different types of grooming techniques and behaviours which may be premeditated, planned or impulsive. While all children are at risk, vulnerable children are often targeted by perpetrators because perpetrators see them as easier to manipulate (Colton, Roberts & Vanstone, 2012; Leclerc, Proulx & McKibben, 2005).

Factors unique to the institution may facilitate grooming. However, a committed perpetrator may also try to manipulate the conditions of the institution in order to sexually abuse a child and avoid detection or disclosure (Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011). Organisational factors may play a role in facilitating or preventing child sexual abuse. These include the physical environment and organisational culture.

### Recognising and responding to grooming

The literature suggests that the best way to identify and prevent grooming and child sexual abuse may be through policies and procedures relating to organisational values and culture. These should be consistent with child safe principles, particularly policies that identify concerning or inappropriate behaviour towards children and identify strategies to report and address these concerns. The onus for identifying and reporting suspected grooming should be on all institutional members, to increase the likelihood that grooming behaviour can be identified and appropriately addressed (Erooga, 2012; McAlinden, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2011).

# 1 Introduction and Methodology

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## 1.1 Introduction

### The Royal Commission

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The Royal Commission's Letters Patent provide comprehensive terms of reference. Through private sessions and public hearings the Royal Commission must bear witness to the trauma inflicted on children who suffered sexual abuse in an institutional context. It must also focus on systemic issues.

The Royal Commission's final report must identify best practices and recommend laws, policies, practices and systems that will effectively prevent or, where it occurs, respond to the sexual abuse of children in institutions.

The Royal Commission is approaching this task in three ways:

<b>Private sessions</b>	These sessions enable survivors to speak directly with a Commissioner about their experiences in a private and supportive setting.
<b>Public hearings</b>	Public hearings are a formal process during which the Royal Commission receives evidence following investigation, research and preparation.
<b>Research and policy</b>	The extensive research program includes research reports, roundtables and issues papers.

### Extensive research program will support the final recommendations

To ensure the Royal Commission provides authoritative, relevant recommendations to government, institutions and regulators, it has developed a detailed research program. The program focuses on eight themes:

1. Why does child sexual abuse occur in institutions?
2. How can child sexual abuse in institutions be prevented?
3. How can child sexual abuse be better identified?
4. How should institutions respond where child sexual abuse has occurred?
5. How should government and statutory authorities respond?
6. What are the treatment and support needs of victims/survivors and their families?
7. What is the history of particular institutions of interest?
8. How do we ensure the Royal Commission has a positive impact?

The research program means the Royal Commission can:

- obtain relevant background information
- fill key evidence gaps
- explore what is known and what works
- develop recommendations that are informed by evidence, can be implemented and respond to contemporary issues.

This paper fits into themes two and three: How can child sexual abuse in institutions be prevented; and how can child sexual abuse be better identified?

For more on this program, please visit [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/research](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/research).

## Purpose

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This paper provides an overview of key conceptual issues in the definition and understanding of grooming. It takes a narrative review approach to synthesising key literature, drawing on an understanding of perpetrator modus operandi. It identifies and discusses what is known about grooming, particularly as it relates to institutional child sexual abuse.

Grooming can be defined as:

*The use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques; with a vulnerable subject; in a range of inter-personal and social settings; in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour; with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure. (McAlinden, 2012, p.11)*

Research into grooming behaviour provides an explanation of the scope and sometimes incremental stages of grooming. This research assists in identifying behaviours that might indicate an individual is currently, or intends to, sexually abuse a child. Besides intent, these individuals often appear otherwise 'unremarkable' (McAlinden, 2006). An understanding of grooming techniques can assist the development of preventive strategies and the identification of potential perpetrators.

This paper first considers definitions of grooming and the challenge of defining and identifying grooming behaviours. It then considers core characteristics of grooming and how they relate to perpetrators, victims and institutions. To conclude, the paper considers what is known about grooming and how this might inform efforts to prevent institutional child sexual abuse or assist in the identification of perpetrators.

## 1.2 Methodology

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This paper takes a narrative review approach to synthesising key literature to provide an overview of conceptual issues in the definition and understanding of grooming. It is not an exhaustive review of all literature on grooming and grooming behaviour, but instead combines an initial search strategy with the authors' expertise to synthesise key literature. The paper draws on grooming literature as well as research on institutional child sexual abuse and perpetrator modus operandi. A three-step process of gathering relevant literature was employed (described below).

### Step 1: Initial literature scoping

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This paper was informed by an initial scoping exercise conducted by the Royal Commission in 2014. The initial search strategy is discussed in Appendix A.

At the completion of the initial scoping exercise, the Royal Commission concluded that there was a dearth of research on grooming behaviour in all settings, including in institutional contexts. McAlinden (2012) confirms this position in her book *'Grooming' and the sexual abuse of children: institutional, internet and familial dimensions*, noting that the body of



literature regarding grooming behaviours as they relate to child sexual abuse is in its relative infancy.

## Step 2: Corpus of literature

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In addition to the modest body of literature identified in the Royal Commission's initial scoping exercise, a further corpus of literature based on the authors' expertise was used to broaden the scope of the paper. Additional targeted searches were undertaken on commonly occurring themes identified in the initial search, including:

- challenges in identifying grooming behaviour
- grooming as an incremental process
- grooming in institutions.

The researchers also drew on broader literature relating to perpetrator *modus operandi* – defined as the pattern of behaviours that perpetrators display in the periods prior to, during and following illicit sexual contact (Kaufman, Hilliker & Daleiden, 1996) – and broader institutional or situational child sexual abuse prevention literature. Additional searches included Google Scholar and SocINDEX.

Snowball searches based on the bibliographies of full-text articles were also undertaken to identify additional relevant publications. Relevant Royal Commission research was also added to the corpus, including work by Munro and Fish (2015) on understanding failures to identify child sexual abuse, Kaufman and Erooga (2016) on risk profiles for institutional child sexual abuse, and Palmer (2016) on the role of organisational culture in institutional child sexual abuse.

## Step 3: Selection

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Drawing on the broad corpus of literature identified above, the researchers conducted a narrative review. The authors identified and selected key sources from within the body of identified literature to inform a discussion of key conceptual issues in the definition and understanding of grooming, particularly in institutional child sexual abuse. The discussion presented is not exhaustive and as such, the findings presented should be interpreted with caution.

## Narrative versus systematic reviews

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A narrative review is a comprehensive synthesis of previously published information, guided by expert opinion (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006). It differs from a systematic review, which employs detailed and rigorous methods specifying inclusion and exclusion criteria, with the aim of answering a focused question or purpose.

The strength of a narrative review is its ability to synthesise a broad range of material into a useful and readable format. Narrative reviews help provide a broad understanding of a topic or issue and can be used to present philosophical or conceptual issues to facilitate scholarly discussion (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006). Authors of narrative reviews can be acknowledged experts and can be solicited to produce reviews to bring issues or concepts to light (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006).

Narrative reviews can be limited by their lack of systematic method; the number of sources from which the review is drawn may be limited, resulting in an *insignificant* knowledge base (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006). The lack of systematic review and selection of relevant literature can also lead to biased or inaccurate representation.

Despite these limitations, a narrative review approach was considered the most appropriate method for developing a broad conceptual understanding of the key issues in the definition and understanding of grooming. Based on the scoping review, which suggested that the evidence base for grooming was limited, the narrative review approach allowed the authors to expand the literature base from which the contents of this paper was drawn. The search strategy, and identification of a corpus of evidence from which key literature was selected, helped mitigate some of the limitations of a narrative review.

### 1.3 Extent and quality of evidence on grooming

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The literature base on which this discussion was drawn is in its relative infancy. While the focus of the paper is grooming associated with child sexual abuse in institutional contexts, much of the discussion is based on broader literature, particularly literature around perpetrator motivations and modus operandi. Given this, the following limitations should be considered.

First, almost all existing studies on perpetrators of child sexual abuse were conducted with known or convicted perpetrators. These perpetrators may have different characteristics, motivations and behaviours to those who have avoided detection. In addition, the literature on perpetrators used in this paper generally comes from single studies with small sample sizes. Caution should be taken in applying the findings of these studies to all perpetrators.

Second, the majority of research into perpetrators of child sexual abuse does not distinguish between settings. This should also be considered in reference to discussion of how child sexual abuse may be prevented in institutional contexts. Finally, while typologies are used in this paper and provide a useful means of classifying perpetrators in a population of considerable diversity, they cannot reliably predict who may perpetrate abuse, how this will occur or in what settings.

While much of the literature base relies on expert views that have not been empirically tested, the discussion presented is strengthened by the consistency with which key findings regarding grooming across sources. This also adds a level of confidence to the discussion presented as individual studies suffer from a number of limitations relating to study design and sample size.

## 2 Background

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### 2.1 Definitions of grooming

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The terms 'grooming', 'sexual grooming', 'grooming behaviour' and 'grooming techniques' have been used in many studies of child sexual abuse to refer to how individuals interact and engage with children and others in order to sexually abuse children. Craven et al. (2007) define grooming as:

*A process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions. (Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2007, p.63)*

The strength of this definition is the recognition that grooming techniques target not only the child but also other individuals around the child and the setting – each may need to be manipulated in order to facilitate pathways to sexual abuse. This is especially important in the context of child sexual abuse that occurs in institutional settings.

However, this definition is limited in its failure to recognise that grooming is not always about gaining access to a child (particularly in institutional contexts where a perpetrator and child may already know each other) and does not always proceed through a linear process.

McAlinden (2012) has proposed a newer definition of grooming which includes:

*The use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques; with a vulnerable subject; in a range of inter-personal and social settings; in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour; with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and/or prohibiting exposure. (McAlinden, 2012, p.11)*

This definition better acknowledges that a perpetrator may use grooming and its associated techniques not only to facilitate child sexual abuse, but also as a means of concealing abuse that has already commenced.

In this paper, 'grooming' is used as an umbrella term to refer to a range of techniques, behaviours and activities that are also known throughout literature as 'targeting and entrapment' (Gallagher, 2000), 'manipulation' (Sullivan & Quayle, 2012) and 'recruitment' (Conte, Wolf & Smith, 1989).

It should be noted that this paper does not deal directly with grooming as defined within existing Australian legislation. All Australian jurisdictions have offences in relation to grooming. They differ across jurisdictions, but in each case, culpability relates to the perpetrator's intent and it is not essential that the grooming techniques lead to a contact offence (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2016). The criminalisation of grooming can be complex. Grooming techniques can look like 'normal or legitimate' practices (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014; McAlinden, 2006), distinguishable only by the motivation to perpetrate or conceal child sexual abuse. This can lead to challenges in

using law enforcement strategies to identify sexual grooming techniques and successfully prosecute (Ost & Mooney, 2013).

## The challenge in identifying grooming and associated techniques

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Grooming and related techniques are difficult to explicitly define and identify. Empirical evidence tells us that grooming includes a range of techniques, many of which are not explicitly sexual or directly abusive in themselves (McAlinden, 2006). Grooming also does not inevitably lead to sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can also commence in the absence of grooming, particularly for situational or opportunistic offenders (McAlinden, 2012) (explained further in Section 4).

Some grooming techniques can be brief, with unclear start and end points (Gillespie, 2004, cited in Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014), but they frequently continue after sexual abuse has commenced. Some grooming techniques can co-exist with other regular behaviour or functions within an otherwise normal relationship with a child. Some techniques may be overt, but most are deceptive and covert and do not appear unusual or remarkable in isolation. Given this, a key difficulty in defining and identifying grooming is that it consists of many discrete acts that, on their own, are not necessarily criminal or abusive (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014).

Grooming usually involves a perpetrator establishing a trusting relationship with a child and those associated with the child's care and wellbeing, to create an environment in which abuse can occur (McAlinden, 2006). Grooming techniques aimed at building trust are purposefully undertaken by the perpetrator so that any interaction between the perpetrator and child is seen as legitimate activity, distinguishable only by the perpetrator's motivation to perpetrate or conceal child sexual abuse. In this way, grooming is sometimes only discernible after the abuse has been identified (Williams, 2015) because the perpetrator's intent or motivation is not immediately visible.

An example may include a perpetrator targeting children using age-appropriate games or toys. Potential warning signs include an adult within an institution taking an interest in child play and toys that appear to exceed his or her caregiving role (Babatsiko & Miles, 2015). Techniques used to keep a relationship between an adult and a child secret or an adult explicitly asking a child to keep a relationship secret might also be indicative of grooming (NSW Ombudsman, 2013). However, assessing this type of behaviour as grooming is difficult and subjective. It would likely need to be combined with the identification of a pattern of concerning behaviour (Lanning & Dietz, 2014) such as:

- inappropriately extending a relationship with a child beyond what would be expected or normal for the caregiving role
- testing personal boundaries such as encouraging inappropriate physical contact (NSW Ombudsman, 2013).

Perpetrators may also use grooming techniques to build a child's dependence or reliance on them and/or to isolate the child from his or her peers and create emotional coercion and dependence (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014).

Additional challenges to the recognition of grooming have been identified in research into individual and organisational psychology. Munro and Fish (2015) provide some examples of how grooming can be overlooked by individuals within institutions through errors in

individual reasoning. One of these is 'confirmation bias', where a person processes ambiguous information to confirm a pre-existing view. Confirmation bias among a perpetrator's colleagues may affect perceptions of the perpetrator's behaviour. For example, in the Royal Commission's Case Study 2, the perpetrator initially made a positive impression within the institution. The perpetrator's colleagues formed an opinion that he was nurturing and supportive of children, and overlooked later evidence that was inconsistent with this view. This resulted in them being slow to consider his behaviour as inappropriate or dangerous to children (Munro & Fish, 2015). By building an initially trusting relationship with colleagues, the perpetrator was able to behave in a way that appeared outwardly appropriate. The motivation behind the behaviour – to perpetrate or conceal child sexual abuse – was not outwardly visible and it was therefore difficult to recognise the behaviour as grooming.

As discussed in Section 4, perpetrator motivations are diverse, with some perpetrators more reactive to situational or environmental stressors (Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011). A motivation to sexually abuse children may emerge during employment in an organisation, and may not have been a precursor to seeking employment. For some types of offenders, abuse is more 'situation-specific' or is about taking advantage of a situation, often in the absence of an initially harmful motivation (McAlinden, 2013).

# 3 Core characteristics of grooming techniques

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## 3.1 Grooming as an incremental process

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A number of small-scale qualitative studies with convicted child sexual abuse offenders (Colton, Roberts & Vanstone, 2012; Leclerc, Proulx & McKibben, 2005) as well as case studies with over 300 offenders (van Dam, 2001) have explored perpetrator motivations and modus operandi. Through these studies, grooming is generally recognised as a complex, incremental process that involves three main stages:

- gaining access to a victim
- initiating and maintaining abuse
- concealing abuse (Colton, Roberts & Vanstone, 2012).

In the first instance, gaining unsupervised contact with a child is necessary to initiate a process of grooming (Colton, Roberts & Vanstone, 2012). Cense and Brackenridge (2001) identified similar stages of sexual grooming in sporting institutions. These included the perpetrator securing trust, friendship and loyalty prior to sexual abuse, to assert both control and secrecy. There are some variations on the three-stage model described here, including the work of Leclerc, Proulx and McKibben (2005) in their study of 23 sexual offenders. van Dam's (2001) case study review of interviews with over 300 sexual offenders identified a five-stage grooming process, which recognises isolation and victim-blaming as part of concealing the abuse. Broad agreement with both three and five-stage models is found in practice literature, including the Victorian Core Sex Offender Management and Intervention Program, which also includes a number of pre-abuse stages in the grooming process (Corrections Victoria, 2001).

Incremental acts of grooming usually increase in intensity. While the initial stages in the grooming process may appear innocent, later stages are more overt in the perpetrator's attempt to desensitise the child to sexual activity (Elliot, Browne & Kilcoyne, 1995). Some perpetrators may offer the child alcohol and/or drugs (Tyler & Cauce, 2002), while others will use pornography and/or sexually explicit dialogue (Erooga, Allnock & Telford, 2012), sometimes in conjunction with alcohol and/or drugs. It may be easier to detect grooming at this later stage, as these kinds of acts constitute observable professional misconduct and personal boundary transgressions. They may also point to an earlier pattern of unidentified grooming that may now be recognisable in hindsight.

Crime prevention theories also conceptualise grooming as an incremental process. Prospective perpetrators follow 'scripts', where grooming is viewed as a 'crime commissioning' process. Leclerc, Wortley and Smallbone (2011) proposed a 'protoscript', which includes incremental stages of grooming and abuse in institutional settings that proceed through a 'crime setup' phase to a 'crime achievement' phase.

Acts of grooming are often undertaken with the aim of making the prospective victim feel 'special' or 'privileged'. At the same time, the child knows he or she is engaging in activities

that contravene rules, and can therefore be made complicit in maintaining secrecy. This complicity can also serve to further isolate the child from others.

Despite some differences, these models generally present grooming behaviour as a progression from establishing trust to building familiarity that includes psychological and emotional manipulation. However, grooming may or may not have an explicit role to play in child sexual abuse depending on the type of perpetrator (McAlinden, 2012). Opportunistic and situational perpetrators may abuse a child where access occurs by chance (McAlinden, 2012). In these instances, grooming might be used to conceal the abuse and/or to create opportunities for further offending (McAlinden, 2012). In short, grooming and patterns of grooming are not always linear and do not always occur in identified sets of stages.

## 3.2 Grooming has multiple targets

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Perpetrators can also groom others to gain access to a child or groom those who could be manipulated to conceal abuse, such as parents and other caregivers. In institutional settings, targets can include children, parents and caregivers, colleagues and other individuals through which access to a child might be gained. In this way, grooming extends beyond the immediate social environment into institutions and their stakeholders (Williams, 2015).

Perpetrators groom individuals in institutional settings to build trust and gain access to potential victims to initiate and/or maintain abuse. Besides grooming the child through techniques such as giving gifts, providing inducements and establishing trust, the perpetrator may groom the child's caregivers by befriending them and positioning themselves as 'safe' (Sullivan & Beech, 2002). The caregivers may then accept the perpetrator as a trusted adult, and the perpetrator may participate in a range of activities with the child.

The key differentiating feature of grooming individuals in an institutional setting compared to other settings is the context of the institution itself. This includes factors such as the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and the wider power dynamics affecting relationships within the organisation, as well as the purpose of the institution (see Palmer (2016) on the culture of institutionalised organisations). This is discussed more in Section 4, which investigates both organisational and physical conditions, including the built environment.

### Grooming the institution

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The importance of grooming the institution or 'institutional grooming' – a term coined by McAlinden (2006) – has emerged in recent studies of child sexual abuse. Institutional grooming involves perpetrators using features unique to the organisational setting to sexually abuse a child (McAlinden, 2006). These features include opportunity, anonymity, secrecy, trust and power.

Some studies assert that grooming in institutional settings is more complex than grooming in other settings. Perpetrators within an institution need to be 'able to circumvent protective procedures or exploit system weaknesses to facilitate abuse and avoid exposure' (McAlinden, 2012). These protective policies and procedures are unique to the institution

and would not be present in instances of intra-familial abuse. Sullivan and Quayle (2012) conducted a number of studies into these 'professional perpetrators' – offenders who use their employment as a cover to target and sexually abuse children with whom they work – the most recent of which included in-depth interviews with 16 convicted serious sex offenders.<sup>1</sup> While not a representative sample, perpetrators who participated in the study had been successful at avoiding the suspicion of other staff members within institutions. Professional perpetrators may use grooming behaviours that appear more intricate and well-planned than grooming undertaken by other types of offenders (Sullivan & Quayle, 2012). Professional perpetrators are aware of changing environments, and adapt and change their behaviours as required (Sullivan & Quayle, 2012). They are also able to understand how these behaviours would be viewed by others within an institution (Sullivan & Beech, 2004; Sullivan & Quayle, 2012).

Grooming techniques in institutional settings are constellations of activity that create or manipulate institutional structures, norms and practices in order to integrate the perpetrator into the institution as an 'insider' (Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2006). Some characteristics of institutional settings are related to the culture of the institution – for example, having a closed or secretive culture (discussed further in Section 4). Other characteristics are related to the institution's physical environment, such as providing an opportunity to sexually abuse a child unobserved. Depending on the institution, a perpetrator may need to manipulate or simply exploit existing characteristics to create opportunities to perpetrate abuse.

Within an institution, a perpetrator can use their position as an insider to gain access to children. Their insider status might stem from being in a position of trust, and it is through this trusted position that they avoid detection (McAlinden, 2012). In addition, because of their role as an insider, if detection or disclosure does occur, it is less likely that concerns raised will be addressed in an appropriate manner, such as through a thorough and transparent investigation (Sullivan & Beech, 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> Participants in the study were recruited from a specialist residential treatment facility, usually attended by people convicted of serious sex offences.



# 4 Perpetrators, victims and institutions

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## 4.1 Grooming as it relates to perpetrators, victims and institutions

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The Royal Commission's work focuses on specific groups involved in and affected by child sexual abuse, including:

- perpetrators
- victims/survivors and their families
- institutions.

This section discusses grooming in relation to these two groups. Given there is very little research on grooming in institutional contexts, much of the research presented below is based on studies on perpetrator modus operandi and on child sexual abuse more generally.

### Perpetrators

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Research has found that child sexual abuse perpetrators are diverse and differ in their motivations and behaviour (Wortley & Smallbone, 2010; Proeve, Malvaso & DeFabbro, 2016). This diversity results in different types of grooming techniques, which may be premediated, planned or impulsive. Because of this diversity, researchers use broad categories to structure their understanding of the types and characteristics of grooming used by different types of perpetrators. These broad categories are called typologies. While caution is required when using typologies as causal or predictive, they are useful in understanding dynamic risk factors in particular environments (Ward & Fortune, 2015) and how this may affect grooming techniques.

The following typologies are based on research into perpetrator modus operandi and how these may affect grooming techniques. Typologies are important when considering the propensity and likelihood of an individual to perpetrate child sexual abuse and the conditions that need to be present to facilitate the abuse. The following typologies draw attention to how different types of perpetrators interact with particular settings. This includes information on both opportunities used by perpetrators to abuse children and the behavioural cues and environmental stressors that may precipitate a criminal response (Wortley & Smallbone, 2010).

**Typologies defined (Cornish & Clarke, 2003; Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011; Wortley & Smallbone, 2010)**

Predatory perpetrators:

Individuals in this category are most likely to have a diagnosis of paedophilia, in that they are persistently and exclusively sexually attracted to children. They actively seek out and manipulate environments in which to perpetrate sexual abuse. Individuals in this group are highly likely to persist in perpetration over time and in multiple settings, accumulating higher numbers of victims. They are also likely to take advantage of opportunities to

offend outside of any pre-meditated manipulation of the environment (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). Grooming techniques by perpetrators in this group are likely to be more elaborate, involving 'special' treatment of the child, gifts, enticements and bribery to initiate and continue the abuse (Elliot, Browne and Kilcoyne, 1995). They may normalise their 'close' relationships with children as part of grooming caregivers and the institution. Cognitive distortions may influence the way these perpetrators externalise responsibility for offending and justify their relationship with children. For example, post-offence justifications may be used by the perpetrator to suggest that the child initiated sexual contact or that the child conspired against them to make up false stories. These perpetrators are likely to be more sophisticated in their strategies to conceal their criminal behaviour, or may use threats and violence to silence victims.

#### Opportunistic perpetrators:

Perpetrators in this category are less likely than other types of perpetrators to be fixated on sexually abusing children. They are indiscriminate in their sexual and moral behaviour, engaging in criminal behaviour outside the sexual abuse of children. Opportunistic perpetrators do not prefer children over adults but tend to use children for their own sexual interests (Terry & Tallon, 2004). They are likely to have poor impulse control and are not always concerned about social conformity. This category consists of individuals who will take opportunities to perpetrate child sexual abuse, but are less likely to create those opportunities through manipulation of the environment. If grooming does occur, it is likely to be prompted by the vulnerability of a child, lack of supervision or cognitive distortion of perceived 'provocative' or 'seductive' child behaviour (Wortley & Smallbone, 2010).

#### Situational perpetrators:

Perpetrators in this group do not have a sexual preference towards children but may, for example, sexually abuse a child in the absence of adult relationships and/or due to a sense of inadequacy, often relating to social isolation, low self-esteem and poor coping skills. This group is reactive to the environment in their motivation to sexually abuse children, which is mediated by behavioural cues and environmental stressors, such as unexpected isolated access to a child. A perpetrator may see a child's playfulness, openness, timidity, physicality, nakedness or delinquency as a prompt or opportunity to abuse. These individuals are otherwise law-abiding and will generally have no other criminal involvement. Abuse may occur with or without prior grooming.

Perpetrator typologies have several limitations. Typologies are predominantly based on data collected from samples of convicted sex offenders, rather than community-based samples. Given it is assumed the majority of perpetrators do not come into contact with the criminal justice system, data from convicted offenders is not representative of all perpetrators.

Secondly, perpetrators may not neatly align with one type, sometimes making clear assessment difficult. Similarly, it is possible that a perpetrator may shift from one type to another over time (Lanning & Dietz, 2014).

Perhaps most contentiously, typologies cannot fully assess to what extent individuals who have perpetrated child sexual abuse sought out child-related employment and/or voluntary work with the specific intent of sexually abusing children (Wortley & Smallbone, 2010). In

the case of situational perpetrators, there is often no plan or intention to sexually abuse a child when they first come into contact with an institution.

Based on the typologies above, at least within convicted offender populations, opportunistic perpetrators are considered the most common type of perpetrator. In simple terms, perpetrators who fall into this category are understood as ‘opportunity-takers’ (Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011). Opportunistic perpetrators are unlikely to actively create opportunities to abuse, particularly if creating these opportunities requires any sustained effort (Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011). Given this, it is easy to see how an understanding of typologies and associated grooming techniques may be used to assist in the development of prevention and detection strategies. For example, particularly in an institutional context, implementing strategies aimed at reducing opportunities to offend or increasing the effort required to offend could deter opportunistic perpetrators. Examples include implementing policies to ensure staff are not left unsupervised with children, increasing natural surveillance and supervising access to isolated areas of buildings. This is discussed further below in relation to situational crime prevention.

### Children with harmful sexual behaviour

A number of recent government inquiries have reported on incidents of children sexually abusing other children in residential care (Shaw, 2007) and schools (the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009). Child-to-child sexual abuse remains an under-investigated topic within child protection policies. Child-to-child grooming does not feature strongly in research as, like grooming by adults, it has a modest empirical foundation (Leclerc & Felson, 2016; Leclerc, Beauregard & Proulx, 2008; Ashurst & McAlinden, 2015). Child-to-child grooming can occur in an institution where abusive practices are embedded within the broader organisational culture (McAlinden, 2012). Children with harmful sexual behaviours in non-family settings can use similar grooming techniques to adult offenders, including using alcohol and drugs to manipulate victims (McAlinden, 2012). Grooming techniques between peers can also include things like ‘sexting’, cyber-bullying and the distribution of indecent images (Ashurst & McAlinden, 2015).

### Children: vulnerability and risk

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Research has identified factors that increase a child’s vulnerability to being groomed with the intent of sexual abuse. While all children are at risk of sexual abuse, vulnerable children are more likely to be targeted by perpetrators (Colton, Roberts & Vanstone, 2012; Knoll, 2010; Leclerc, Wortley & Smallbone, 2011; Staller, 2012) because they are perceived as easier to manipulate and therefore less likely to disclose sexual abuse (Leclerc, Proulx & McKibben, 2005; Leclerc & Tremblay, 2007). Conversely, not all children who display a vulnerability will fall victim to child sexual abuse.

There is consensus in the research literature that children are more vulnerable to being sexually abused if they:

- are socially isolated
- have mental health or behavioural difficulties
- have low self-esteem
- have one parent who is continually absent

- have been a victim of bullying
- live in a situation of domestic violence
- identify as non-heterosexual or transgender
- have a history of physical, emotional or sexual abuse (Irenyi et al., 2006; Quadara et al., 2015).

Children with disability are considered at increased risk of child abuse and maltreatment, including sexual abuse. How this risk is conceptualised varies; disability itself can be seen as a risk factor for abuse and maltreatment, or the risk of abuse can be viewed more broadly as relating to the child and their interaction with the environment and their relationships (Llewellyn et al., 2016). Examples of this broader conceptualisation include risk relating to:

- children with disability who require assistance with intimate care activities (where potential abuse could occur under the guise of providing physical supports)
- children who live or spend a significant amount of time in settings where they are expected to be compliant and well behaved
- children with communication difficulties, speech difficulties or high behavioural support needs (Llewellyn et al., 2016).

A perpetrator may look to exploit a child's emotional vulnerability by positioning themselves as a supportive confidant (Erooga, Allnock & Telford, 2012). In this way, a child's perception of the relationship with the perpetrator can be manipulated (Sullivan & Quayle, 2012) leading to more opportunities for the perpetrator to spend time alone with the child. Part of the purpose of this grooming strategy is to create emotional dependence.

Developmental factors can influence the vulnerability of children to being groomed and sexually abused. As children grow older, the level of guardianship and supervision they receive also changes. This changes the dynamics of their surrounding environment (Finkelhor & Hashima, 2001). Age-related interests, routines and lifestyles change as children age. This influences the context of offending – the when, where and who (McKillop et al., 2015).

Risk factors for children can be circumstantial, behavioural and developmental. These factors can increase the level of access perpetrators have to children as well as the level of attention they might receive.

## Institutional grooming

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Institutional grooming focuses on the unique characteristics of institutions that facilitate grooming (McAlinden, 2006). The institutional setting includes the physical environment and organisational culture. Both play a role in facilitating or preventing child sexual abuse in institutions. These conditions overlap with and influence each other.

### Physical environment

Research has identified that physical factors can provide opportunities for the perpetration of child sexual abuse. The physical environment is particularly relevant for child sexual abuse in institutional settings because much of this abuse occurs in locations away from surveillance by third parties (Kaufman et al., 2012). Aspects of the physical environment that may pose a high risk for the perpetration of abuse are known as 'target locations' in Kaufman's situational prevention model (as cited in Kaufman et al., 2012). These locations

are isolated, difficult to supervise and/or have limited access. The risk may relate to the design and architecture of classrooms, bathrooms, change rooms and public areas. For example, buildings with a large number of exits, entrances, hallways and confined spaces increase the likelihood that actions can be concealed and perpetrators can avoid supervision.

Situational crime prevention techniques can be applied to reduce opportunities for offending within institutions, including by making changes to the physical environment. For example, identifying and modifying aspects of potential crime scenes that provide opportunity for types of behaviours can be used to eliminate or reduce inappropriate behaviour in targeted settings (Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011). The physical environment can be designed or redesigned to improve natural surveillance by, for example, ensuring rooms have glass viewing panels so that people outside can observe activities (Smallbone, Marshall & Wortley, 2011).

## Organisational culture

An organisation's culture can make an institution more or less vulnerable to grooming and child sexual abuse. Organisational and cultural conditions include a range of policies, procedures and values, including, for example, supervision policies and procedures and the organisation's level of commitment to safeguarding children and workers (Kaufman et al., 2012). Cultural conditions influence the way the institution prioritises child safety and its attitude towards child sexual abuse.

Recent research has investigated organisational and cultural conditions that may facilitate grooming and pathways to child sexual abuse in institutional settings. In a case study review of three well-publicised cases of child sexual abuse occurring in institutions, Staller (2012) identified five primary organisational and cultural barriers to identification and/or disclosure of grooming and abuse. These relate to the way a perpetrator builds a professional image within an organisation and therefore may appear 'beyond reproach'. The institution itself might also be held in high esteem by the community or parents, providing additional difficulties for children in disclosing abuse (McAlinden, 2006). Factors identified by Staller (2012) include:

- confidentiality and other codes of silence that impede information sharing
- confused lines of reporting where information can end up in the hands of those invested in non-disclosure
- mistrust of law enforcement and child protection agencies
- extreme power differences between victims, perpetrators, reporters and other institutional actors
- intense personal, professional and institutional loyalties (Staller, 2012).

In a study on the crime-commissioning process of child sexual offenders, Leclerc, Wortley and Smallbone (2011) undertook research with 221 incarcerated child sexual abuse offenders. Through their research, they developed and tested a crime-commission process model or 'protoscript' of common strategies used by perpetrators to sexually abuse children. The study identified several organisational factors that may be relevant to facilitating grooming, including:

- a lack of knowledge by staff members of perpetrator grooming techniques
- inadequate supervision of children

- an unwillingness to intervene in potentially inappropriate behaviours
- an absence of clear and formal rules/expectations
- an institution's trust in the perpetrator
- a lack of avenues to report concerns of child sexual abuse
- a lack of communication channels/opportunities to disclose child sexual abuse (Leclerc, Wortley & Smallbone, 2011).

Institutional settings can also create opportunities for grooming and abuse (McAlinden, 2006). Perpetrators may occupy a position of trust, authority and power within an institution. This position may provide a perpetrator with the ability not only to prevent identification and investigation, but also influence the broader organisational culture giving them the 'power to betray' (as cited in McAlinden, 2006). This may result in sustained structures that facilitate opportunities for grooming and abuse in the institution.

The prevention of child sexual abuse should be considered in the context of broader organisational and cultural conditions. For example, a school that offers little supervision of teachers could be an environment in which grooming could occur with less risk of detection (Erooga et al., 2012). Similarly, a perpetrator could exploit a school's ad hoc application of rules and processes about teacher–student contact and relationships. In these conditions, perpetrators are able to use their role and accompanying responsibilities to groom the child and others in the institution.

Institutional culture can increase vulnerability to grooming and child sexual abuse. One study found that some institutions have a tendency to discourage allegations or concerns about child sexual abuse due to the risk of criticism of management, employee competence or the institution's reputation (McAlinden, 2013). The study found that this was particularly the case for some self-protective and closed institutions, in which the culture was resistant to outside influences. In these situations, management and staff could be hesitant to openly discuss allegations or concerns of child sexual abuse (McAlinden, 2013).

Further review of the way in which organisational culture might influence child sexual abuse in institutions is discussed in research produced for the Royal Commission (See Palmer, 2016).

## 5 How an improved understanding of grooming might inform efforts to prevent institutional child sexual abuse

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Prevention of child sexual abuse within institutions cannot rely solely on combating grooming. However, an enhanced understanding of the types of grooming techniques employed by perpetrators combined with broader institutional and social responses could assist in preventing institutional child sexual abuse.

### Lack of understanding of grooming

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Grooming behaviour is not well understood in the community, given persistent stereotypes about child sexual abuse and perpetrators. Community misconceptions include that the majority of perpetrators are strangers to the victim (McAlinden, 2006), that the child can be a 'willing' actor in the abuse (Miller, Hefner & Leon, 2014) and that most grooming occurs online (Craven, Brown & Gilchrist, 2007). There may also be a perception that children are safe in institutions and that perpetrators can be easily identified (Sullivan & Beech, 2002).

Community misconceptions can lead to the vilification of parents as being inattentive or not adequately protective, based on the idea that attentive parents will instinctively detect grooming and know their child is in danger (Miller, Hefner & Leon, 2014). The hindsight bias can explain this misconception to a certain extent. The hindsight bias refers to the inclination of a person to perceive an event as being predictable 'after the fact'. In reality, it is difficult for people to process relevant information and reach accurate conclusions at the time of the event. In a recent study, participants were tested for hindsight bias using vignettes related to grooming and child sexual abuse. In cases where participants were given information about the outcome of the behaviour observed in a vignette – that is, that the behaviour described in the vignette was or was not followed by abuse – hindsight bias was observed (Winter & Jeglic, 2016). Participants greatly over-estimated the extent to which they would have identified grooming behaviour once provided with this outcome information (Winter & Jeglic, 2016).

This misconception also overlooks the fact that parents may have also been groomed and that grooming techniques are sometimes difficult to identify and distinguish from normal caregiving behaviours.

### 5.1 Identification of and responses to grooming in institutional settings

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Recent research on the prevention of child sexual abuse discusses the identification of risk factors for child sexual abuse in institutional settings. The research found that there are no specific or easily identifiable risk factors to enable the identification of potential perpetrators prior to their involvement with, or employment in, an institutional setting (Quadara et al.,

2015). Working with Children Checks (WWCC) and general criminal record screening may be limited in their effectiveness as preventive measures unless combined with other, more comprehensive screening techniques (South, Shlonsky & Mildon, 2014) because many offenders have no relevant prior criminal history (Wortley & Smallbone, 2010).

## Screening and recruitment

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Some research suggests that some screening and recruitment techniques have the potential to recruit candidates to an institution who have positive attitudes towards safeguarding children, and that this could have a positive effect on organisational culture and help prevent child sexual abuse in institutional settings.

One technique discussed in the literature is Value Based Interviewing (Kaufman & Erooga, 2016). Value Based Interviewing attempts to provide in-depth information about candidates' attitudes, character, and behaviour at work (Kaufman & Erooga, 2016). It has been used by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in the United Kingdom since the 1990s.

*[Value Based Interviewing] is intended to contribute to the culture of safety and vigilance in organisations that work with and for children. It does this by seeking to systematically assess the values, motives, attitudes and behaviours of those who apply for jobs in organisations ... against a clearly defined organisational framework. (Erooga, 2009)*

Value Based Interviewing aims to screen for positive attitudes towards safeguarding children, as it is probable that candidates who display these attitudes will be more likely to identify and address safeguarding issues at work and create a safer environment for children (Erooga, 2009).

While the technique has not been extensively evaluated, the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2013) and the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, 2015) have both reviewed the technique. Findings suggest that a properly implemented Value Based Interviewing process could be effective in recruiting staff who not only endorse, but also act on, the positive child safeguarding values of their institution. More empirical research is required to determine the efficacy of Value Based Interviewing in recruiting staff with positive attitudes towards safeguarding children and identifying potential perpetrators of child sexual abuse in institutions.

As noted by McAlinden (2006) and Kaufman, K, Tews, Schuett and Kaufman, B. (2012), effective institutional prevention relies on each staff member believing it is their responsibility to report concerning or inappropriate behaviour. Research suggests that Value Based Interviewing might assist in this by recruiting a workforce where employees are concerned with managing risks to children.



## Policy and procedural responses to prevent and identify grooming

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### Codes of conduct and training

In addition to pre-employment screening, it is important to identify at-risk or inappropriate behaviour by those currently working or volunteering in institutions. Research suggests that the onus for identifying and disclosing suspected grooming should be placed on all members of an institution rather than just those responsible for recruitment, as this should increase the likelihood of grooming being identified and appropriately addressed (Erooga, 2012; McAlinden, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2011).

To achieve this, research suggests that institutional policies and procedures should provide clear guidance on what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Higgins, Kaufman & Erooga, 2016), staff should be trained in the implementation of these policies and procedures, and implementation should be monitored within the organisation (Palmer, 2016). Codes of conduct or professional standards may be developed, with the purpose of communicating what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate relationships between staff and children, and the behaviours that are acceptable and unacceptable within the institution (Wurtele, 2009; Lanning & Dietz, 2014; Kauffman & Erooga, 2016). If behavioural expectations are clearly communicated and understood, staff will be better able to make an assessment about the motivation or intention of observed behaviours – the main reason grooming techniques are so difficult to detect.

Wurtele (2012) highlights the importance of training and supervising staff in implementing these codes of conduct, with particular attention paid to training on professional and personal boundaries, including sexual boundaries. The aim of training should be to make staff aware of problematic behaviours and boundary violations (Wurtele, 2012). Wurtele (2012) suggests that this type of training program helps to alert potential offenders to the fact that their behaviour is subject to scrutiny. The effectiveness of this type of training is currently unknown; however, it is advocated by the American Probation and Parole Association (Abner, Browning & Clark, 2009).

### Reporting breaches of professional standards

Hand in hand with policies that provide guidance on appropriate and inappropriate behaviour are policies that assist staff in reporting breaches of such policies. Several studies (Knoll, 2010; Leclerc, Wortley & Smallbone, 2011; Erooga, 2009) highlight the potential benefit of implementing processes to facilitate the reporting of suspected grooming behaviours and having appropriate measures in place to manage such reports. These measures and processes include:

- widely disseminated and visible policies regarding clear behavioural expectations
- avenues that facilitate staff reporting of inappropriate behaviour
- specific staff roles in institutions with the authority to investigate allegations
- consistent management responses to concerns raised by staff members and others.

Research suggests that institutions should evaluate their responses to reports of inappropriate conduct, particularly the way in which a staff member's ongoing access to children might be managed (Lanning & Dietz, 2014).

Research stressed that institutions need to adopt a balanced approach to ensure that blanket policies do not take away from the primary aim of the institution and that rules governing contact between children and adults in institutions still allow for the development of nurturing and constructive adult–child relationships (Munro & Fish, 2015).

## Organisational culture

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At a broader level, Palmer (2016) suggests that attention to institutional culture is critical. This extends to how open the institution is to challenging discriminatory behaviour and being transparent about its policies and processes to protect children. Erooga (2012) suggests that broad social dysfunction within an organisation, such as ‘corruption of care’<sup>2</sup>, can increase the risk that grooming may occur.

Research on organisational culture in the context of child sexual abuse suggests that organisation’s culture can inadvertently support, endorse or normalise grooming behaviours through implicit or explicit support for behaviours that would be difficult for staff to recognise as grooming techniques (Higgins, Kaufman & Erooga, 2016). Examples include cultures within sporting clubs where physical contact between staff and athletes is considered normal (Palmer, 2016). Authors suggest that setting behavioural expectations and training staff to understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviour can help to shift the institution’s culture (Palmer, 2016; Higgins, Kaufman & Erooga, 2016).

Leadership within institutions is also integral to conveying cultural norms (Palmer, 2016). Leaders set the standard regarding appropriate behaviour. If, for example, institutional leaders practise and exemplify their own code of conduct, particularly in adhering to the consequences for breaches of the code, this influences the message conveyed throughout the institution regarding inappropriate behaviour – that breaches of the code of conduct are considered serious (Palmer, 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> Corruption of care refers to the idea that without clearly defined organisational values and behaviours that are enforced, abuse can arise because the organisations values can be misinterpreted, purposefully betrayed or good practice principles neglected (Wardaugh & Wilding cited in Erooga, 2009).

## 6 Conclusion

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This paper provides an overview of key conceptual issues with the definition and understanding of grooming. It identifies and discusses what is known about grooming techniques and how grooming relates to institutional child sexual abuse. The themes discussed can inform strategies to prevent grooming and mitigate its effect.

The narrative review approach was informed by an initial scoping exercise conducted by the Royal Commission. Through this, it was determined that there was a dearth of research on grooming in all settings, including institutional contexts. This position was confirmed by McAlinden (2012) in her book *'Grooming' and the sexual abuse of children: institutional, internet and familial dimensions*, which noted that the body of literature regarding grooming as it relates to child sexual abuse is in its relative infancy.

Most of our knowledge of grooming comes from research on perpetrator modus operandi and on child sexual abuse generally. There is, however, an emerging body of knowledge on grooming that specifically occurs in institutions. Concepts such as 'professional perpetrators' – offenders who use their employment as a cover to target and sexually abuse children with whom they work (Sullivan & Quayle, 2012) – and 'institutional grooming' uniquely describe the way in which grooming occurs in institutions. Institutional grooming can be considered more complex than grooming occurring in other contexts. This is because perpetrators need to be 'able to circumvent protective procedures or exploit system weaknesses to facilitate abuse and avoid exposure' (McAlinden, 2012).

Grooming is characterised by a motivation to sexually abuse children. This makes grooming difficult to identify and explicitly define. Empirical evidence tells us that grooming includes a range of techniques, many of which are not explicitly sexual or directly abusive in themselves (McAlinden, 2006). They are only distinguishable by their motivation to sexually abuse or conceal sexual abuse.

Grooming does not always play an explicit role in child sexual abuse, and the degree to which techniques are used may depend on the motivations of the perpetrator (McAlinden, 2012). It is clear from the literature that perpetrators not only target potential victims with grooming techniques but also people who might be involved in gaining access to a child or who can be manipulated in order to conceal abuse, including parents and other caregivers. In an institutional context, targets can include other children, parents and caregivers, colleagues and other individuals who can provide access to a child.

Strategies to detect grooming and prevent child sexual abuse in institutions relate to policy and procedural responses. Institutional conditions that serve to reduce the likelihood of child sexual abuse and increase the likelihood of detection or reporting make it less likely that grooming will lead to abuse.

Child sexual abuse prevention literature discusses the need to identify risk factors for child sexual abuse in institutional settings. However, it has been suggested that there are no specific or easily identifiable risk factors that enable potential perpetrators to be identified prior to their involvement with institutions (Quadara et al., 2015). WWCCs and general criminal record screening may, therefore, be of limited effectiveness unless combined with other, more comprehensive, screening techniques (South, Shlonsky & Mildon, 2014).

Value Based Interviewing, a technique used by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), attempts to provide in-depth information about candidates' attitudes, character and behaviour during recruitment (Kaufman & Erooga, 2016). Candidates can be screened for positive attitudes towards safeguarding children. It is presumed that candidates who display positive attitudes will be more likely to identify and address safeguarding issues at work and create a safer environment for children (Erooga, 2009).

Processes that facilitate the reporting of suspected grooming, as well as appropriate measures to manage such reports, may also help organisations to identify and prevent grooming. These include:

- ensuring there are widely disseminated and visible policies setting out clear behavioural expectations
- providing avenues to help staff members report inappropriate behaviour
- giving specific staff members the authority to investigate allegations
- consistently responding to concerns raised by staff members and others (Erooga, 2012; Knoll, 2010; Leclerc et al., 2011).

Institutions should be open to challenging discriminatory behaviour and be transparent about policies and processes to protect children. Staff members within institutions should receive adequate training and supervision. Particular attention should be given to educating staff members about professional boundaries, including sexual boundaries. The aim of the training is to make staff members aware of problematic behaviours and boundary violations (Wurtele, 2012).

Given the relative infancy of research on grooming, it is clear that further research is needed into grooming techniques and how grooming relates to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. This area of research is gathering attention, however, as illustrated by the coining of the phrase 'institutional grooming' (McAlinden, 2006) and the increasing number of studies focused on professional perpetrators (Sullivan & Quayle, 2012).

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# Appendix A

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The following four online databases were searched using relevant truncated keywords and advanced search parameters:

- PsycINFO (EBSCOhost)
- MEDLINE (Web of Science)
- Scopus (Elsevier)
- CINCH (Informit).

Keywords included: child sexual abuse; offend\*; perpetrat\*; grooming; institution\*; organisation\*/organization\*; manipulat\*.

Searches were confined to publications with an English language abstract that were published during or after 1980. The initial scoping exercise was conducted in 2014.

The abstracts of items retrieved from the initial search were scanned for relevance and filtered depending on the extent to which they dealt with topics relating to institutional child sexual abuse. As relevant information and themes were identified, some articles were retrieved in full for further assessment.

The bibliographies of full-text articles were searched to identify additional relevant publications. These publications were also retrieved in full.

