BRIS

The children, BRIS and IT 2008

A study of young people's contacts with BRIS about the Internet, IT and mobile telephony.

The young Internet | Love and friend relationships
Humiliation, threats and abuse | Parents' IT

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BRIS is a children's rights NGO running the national helpline for children in Sweden. Our ten thousands of contacts with children yearly, not only attest to children's confidence in us, but also give the base for our role as a true children's organisation. BRIS is well-known and highly esteemed throughout all levels of Swedish society.

On an international level, BRIS is also an active member of the global network of child helplines, Child Helpline International (www.childhelplineinternational.org).

"The Children, BRIS and IT" is a result of BRIS' involvement in the Safer Internet Plus Programme and the "The Young Internet", a safer internet campaign run in Sweden by the Swedish Media Council at the Government Offices. As part of the campaign, we made this in-depth study of children's contacts with us (through e-mails and phone calls) concerning Internet and other ICT-related issues, and translated it into English. In Sweden, the report was first published in June, 2008.

For further information on our organisation and it's services, please see below and visit our website: www.bris.se/english.

STOCKHOLM, SEPTEMBER 2008
Peter Irgens

BRIS – Children's Rights in Society – is an NGO, a voluntary organisation with no party political or religious affiliation, which supports children and young people in distress and is a link between children, adults and the community. The core of BRIS' activities is comprised of the Children's Helpline and the BRIS-mail, to which children and young people up to the age of 18 can turn anonymously and free-of-charge when they need support from an adult. BRIS also works as an opinion maker and referral organisation to increase adults' respect for children as individuals. BRIS works for the full application of the principles established in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. BRIS uses its collective knowledge of the situation of children and young people to inform, influence and create opinion in children's rights issues at various levels. BRIS also accepts calls from adults who need someone to talk to about their own or other's children.

BRIS was founded in 1971 and is organised as one national and five regional associations. Offices are located in Malmö, Göteborg, Norrköping, Stockholm and Umeå. BRIS' activities are based on volunteer work and financial grants and donations from both private and public donors. BRIS has a total of about 500 volunteer workers who man the Children's Helpline and the BRIS-mail. These volunteers are recruited, trained and supervised by employed BRIS personnel. The BRIS Adult Helpline – about Children is usually manned by employed BRIS representatives and costs as much as a regular phone call.

The Children's Helpline
– for those up to age 18.
0200-230 230
Monday to Friday: 3:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Saturday, Sunday and holidays:
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm

BRIS Adult Helpline – about Children
077-150 50 50
Monday to Friday: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

The BRIS-mail
www.bris.se

The BRIS-mail provides personal answers within a few days. In the Discussion Forum, which is also on BRIS.se, children and young people can communicate with each other under the oversight of an adult moderator.

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“The Internet, computers and mobile phones are so commonplace in the everyday of young people, while they are not at all as much a part of the everyday of adults in their surroundings.

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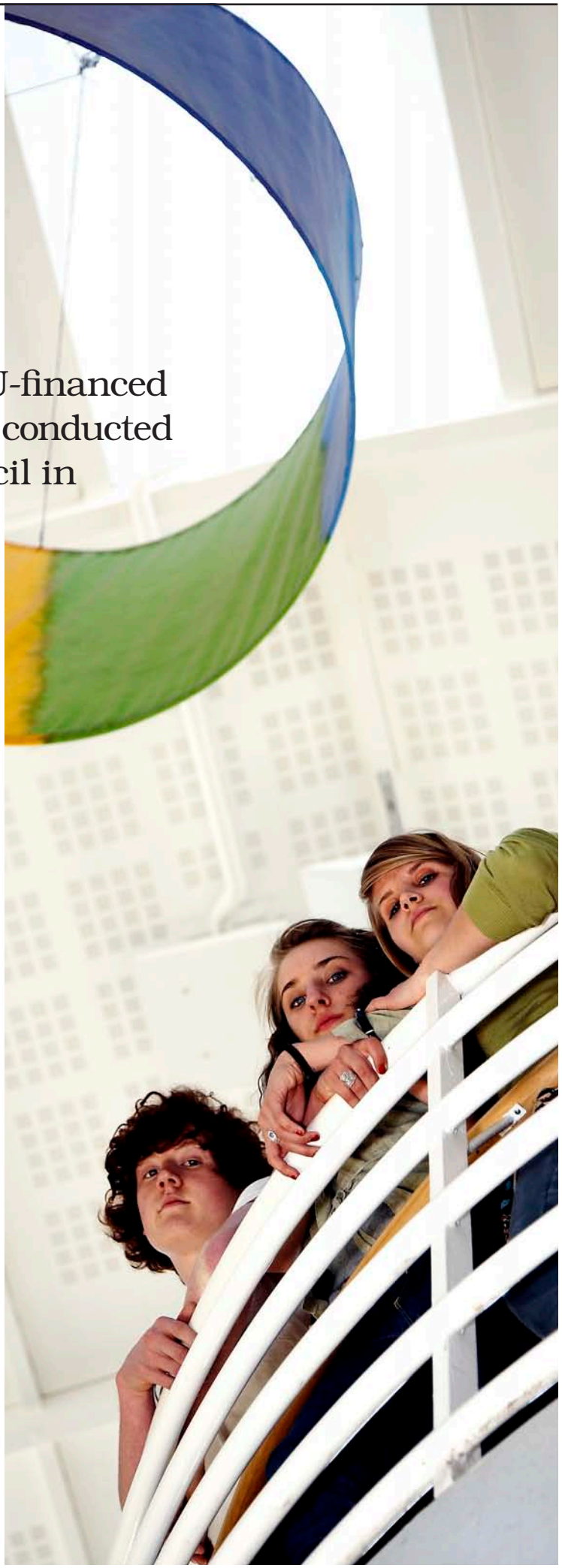
Summary

This report is a part of the EU-financed project, "The Young Internet", conducted by the Swedish Media Council in cooperation with BRIS.



BRIS IS ITSELF an important actor on the Internet, particularly through the BRIS-mail. For the second consecutive year, BRIS has compiled the supportive contacts with children from 2007 that were IT related, meaning they touched upon the Internet, computers or mobile phones in some way. Based on a search of a large number of IT related words, 1,895 were ultimately identified. This is considerably more IT-related contacts than last year.

After reading, these contacts were categorised based on a number of themes. Results and examples are presented in the report from each of the following categories: Love and friend relationships, Humiliation, threats and abuse, Sexually related, Poor mental health, Management and use of IT and Other. In addition, we further coded the contacts based on special themes we discovered during last year's study: Ties to violence In Real Life (IRL), Pictures and videos, Anonymity/distance, Security and protection.

The results are reported in a summary of each category, together with depersonalised examples from call descriptions and e-mails. Love and friend relationships comprised the absolute most common category.

In the Discussion, the material is summarised and interpreted based on three headings.

Under the heading The common everyday, the consequences are discussed of the Internet, computers and mobile phones being so commonplace in the everyday of young people while they are not at all as much a part of the everyday of adults in their surroundings.

The heading Handling of poor mental health focuses on the fact that young people are largely relegated to searching and receiving support from each other on the Internet when they are not doing well mentally.

Lastly, under the heading The roll of parents and other adults, there is a summary of the various ways that parents and other adults are a part of the young Internet. The conclusion is that adults are very rare in the online day-to-day of children and young people and when they are there, their presence mostly creates conflicts with the young people.

The conclusion establishes that the shortest route to gaining knowledge and becoming a present and responsible adult on the young Internet is to seek out the young people themselves as an adult, and ask about and participate in their virtual day-to-day. **B**

Background

Today, the Internet, IT and mobile phones are absolute givens in everyday life, especially for young people. This means that young people are often referred to as digital natives, while adults are referred to as digital immigrants. This difference can also be expressed by the claim that adults use IT in various ways, while young people live it. This difference creates alienation and obstacles. Obstacles to interaction and understanding. Consequently there is a great need for different ways of increasing adult knowledge about what the young Internet is about.

As an important children's rights organisation of today, BRIS sees it as its obligation to avoid being a digital immigrant as much as possible. Instead, BRIS strives to live in the middle of the virtual day-to-day of children and young people by being a resource for the children in exactly that part of their day. As well as by keeping ourselves up-to-date and especially by gathering experiences of the young Internet from the children themselves. Experiences to spread to the rest of society to increase understanding and knowledge about the young Internet.

"The young Internet" Project

This report is one of the results of BRIS seeking in-depth knowledge about its contacts with children and young people that are related to the Internet, IT and mobile telephony. This is the second consecutive year BRIS has compiled a similar report and the ambition is to continue over the next few years.

The report is a part of the project, "The young Internet". "The young Internet" is a project partially funded by the European Union and run by the Swedish Media Council in cooperation with BRIS about the safer use of the Internet among children and young people. The Swedish Media Council is a committee within the Government Offices with the aim of working with the media habits of young people.

Besides this report, the project means that BRIS and its employees and volunteers have and will continue to increase their knowledge in issues pertaining to the young Internet. This is so that children, young people and adults can readily contact BRIS to anonymously receive information about and discuss issues that concern the Internet of young people. This contact is made in particular through BRIS' regular support services, the BRIS-mail, the Children's Helpline and the BRIS Adult Helpline - About Children.

In cooperation with the Swedish Media Council, BRIS will also develop other strategies for reaching out with knowledge about the young Internet to children, young people and adults. This will take place through both traditional information brochures and IT-based activities.

This report describes how children and young people speak about their experiences of the Internet, IT and mobile telephony in different ways. Before then, it is worth pausing for a moment to contemplate the fact that BRIS is in itself an important actor in the area. BRIS' website and its various functions are an important part of children's and young people's use of the Internet, particularly when it concerns important and sensitive issues.

BRIS – an actor on the Internet

BRIS has been an actor on the Internet since 1998 when the bris.se website was launched. However, it was not actually until the BRIS-mail got underway in 2001 that the website was given a proper function for children and young people.

Children and young people can write to the BRIS-mail around the clock, and always receive a personal response from an adult at BRIS after a few days. Just like BRIS' other support services for children and young people, the child is always anonymous, contact is free-of-charge and all communication is made securely based on the child's log-in to the website.

I've written about 3-5 e-mails to Bris and have gotten an answer to all of them. Answers that have really helped and made me rethink things, made me turn to the light and try reaching it. You are probably the biggest reason that I can walk tall and have stopped cutting myself.
E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

During 2007, nearly 10,000 supportive e-mails were answered in the BRIS-mail. The subjects touched upon were about the same as on the Children's Helpline, except that matters of Poor mental health were significantly more common on the BRIS-mail.

BRIS' various forums on the website are functions used even more frequently than the BRIS-mail. The Discussion Forum began in 2004 and is consequently the oldest.

On the Discussion Forum, children and young people can share their experiences and discuss important and sensitive issues with contemporaries. Forums such as this one abound on the Internet, but what is unique about the BRIS Discussion Forum is that an adult at BRIS reads all of the submissions before they are posted. This way, the anonymity and a positive tone are maintained.

If the child's submission is denied publication, the child always receives an explanation sent to his/her BRIS-inbox. This way, BRIS provides an example of a unique and important adult presence on the Internet.

During 2007, more than 15,000 submissions were handled and published in the Discussion Forum, and during the first quarter of 2008, we noted an increase of 100% compared with the year before.

First, I just want to say that every time I click up your website, I feel so much more secure and safe and feel so much better. I think this is the 3rd time I've written to you.
E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

ANOTHER TWO FORUMS can currently be used by children and young people at bris.se. Poems and short stories, and the Source of Joy. On these fora, nearly 1,000 submissions were processed and published in 2007. Moreover, about another 1,000 submissions were published on the now discontinued Graffiti Board.

During 2007, BRIS launched an updated version of its website. Since then, continuous work has been underway to keep the website as user friendly as possible. BRIS also has ambitions of developing the site to meet the needs of children and young people for contact on important and sensitive issues in the best way.

In the past winter and spring, BRIS conducted a test of the new BRIS-chat function. At the time, children and young people had the possibility of individual contact with an adult at BRIS just like on the Children's Helpline, but in the form of a chat line instead. The test was met by a very positive response from both the young people and BRIS workers. The test is now concluded and evaluated. A decision has been made to reinstate the BRIS-chat in the autumn, and to successively make it an increasingly large part of BRIS' regular support services.

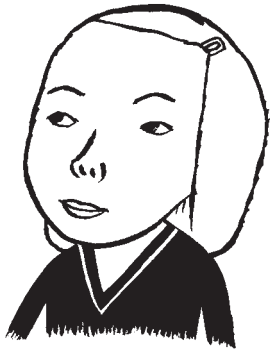
I think it's great that you're starting the bris-chat here. I've called you twice, but didn't dare say anything. It's easier to dare to talk when you're chatting.
E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

In addition to these services, young people and adults can find a large amount of knowledge and information on bris.se. Among other things, there are fact sheets for children and young people on themes such as Bullying and Suicidal Thoughts. Visitors can also stop by Regular e-mails and answers, where BRIS has gathered responses to e-mails that have been sent to the BRIS-mail under a number of headings. The e-mails have of course been re-written so that no child will be able to be recognised.

In total, BRIS had nearly 700,000 visits to its website in 2007.

There are also examples of how BRIS is an important actor on the Internet for children and young people outside BRIS' website.

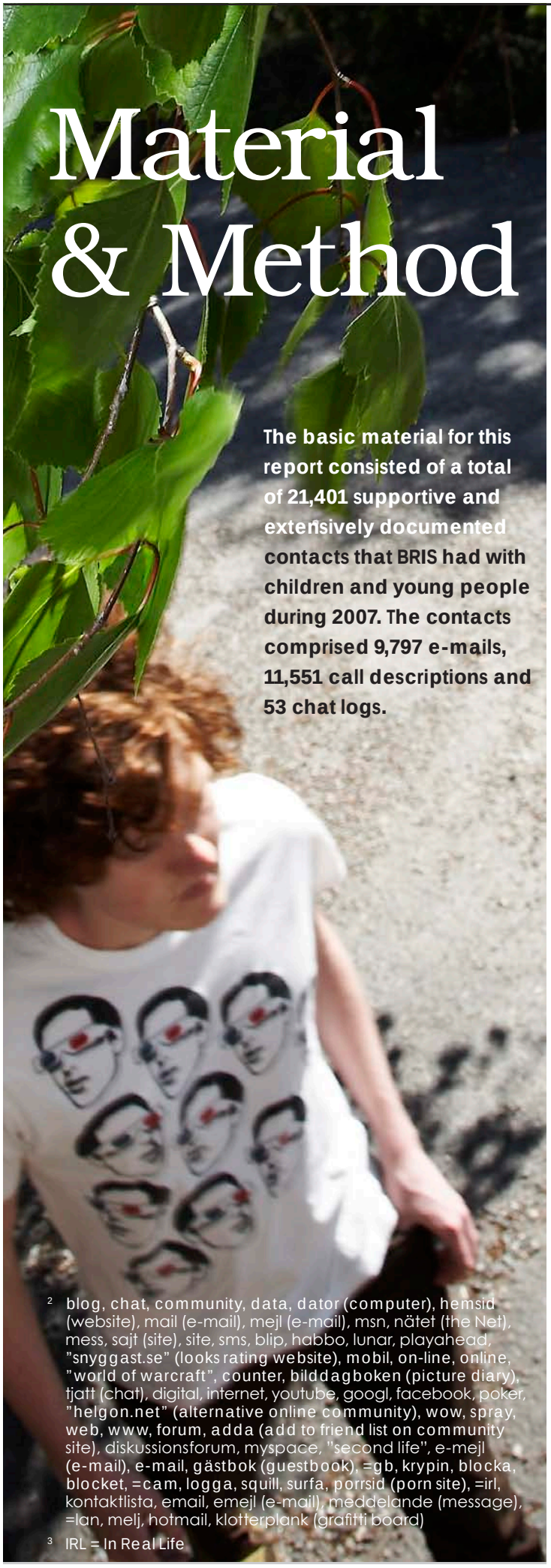
THE RED PAGES (www.rodasidorna.se) is a type of search tool, where children and young people can find out what kind of support and help is available for a specific problem in their specific city. At the beginning of 2008, the Red Pages were given an entirely new and more user-friendly layout and design.



SQUILL.SE is a tool that BRIS helped develop and now operates together with the company, Netclean. There, one can report if a person behind a certain username has behaved badly on the Internet. One can also check a username to see if, based on the reports of others, there is reason to not trust the person behind the username.

[1] The examples in the report are gathered from call descriptions on the Children's Helpline and the children's e-mails on the BRIS-mail. The examples are authentic, but certain information is altered to guarantee that no individual child can be identified.

Material & Method



The basic material for this report consisted of a total of 21,401 supportive and extensively documented contacts that BRIS had with children and young people during 2007. The contacts comprised 9,797 e-mails, 11,551 call descriptions and 53 chat logs.

TO FIND THE CONTACTS that were related to IT in some way - meaning that they in some way touched upon the Internet, computers or mobile phones - an extensive text search was conducted among e-mail responses and call descriptions. The search profile covered slightly more than 60 IT-related words, abbreviations or terms[2] . The search resulted in hits on 2,750 of the child contacts.

These 2,750 texts were then read and coded with special markers according to content. In coding, 89 pure mismatches were sifted out – for example the search word "wow" (abbreviation for World of Warcraft) resulted in hits on the exclamation "Wow!".

Furthermore, a cut was made of contacts where the search-word hits only very marginally touched on the actual arena, location or object that was IT related. The idea was to only include the search matches that had something to do with the problem or question that came out in the contact, or contacts that provided a more detailed picture of how young people handle the Internet, IT or mobile phones. The 766 contacts that were cut this way were deemed to be of marginal significance to contributing to increased understanding and knowledge about the young Internet.

There were then 1,895 child contacts left, accounting for about 9% of all supportive contacts with children and young people in 2007. It is these that comprise the material of this study. Of these 1,895, 1,344 (71%) were e-mails, 532 (28%) calls and 19 (1%) chats. This means a large overrepresentation for e-mails compared with all children contacts in 2007, where 46% were e-mails and 54% calls.

The 1,895 contacts are considerably more than the 1,130 contacts that comprised the basis of the corresponding study of 2006's contacts. Because the methodology and, above all, the number of search words differ somewhat between the years, the size of the material is not completely comparable, but one can nonetheless in all certainty say that the contacts in this area have grown significantly.

For every supportive contact in BRIS, a continuous categorisation is made of what the contact was about. There, it can be noted among other things whether the contact was IT-related. Such a notation was made for almost twice as many contacts in 2007; compare 0.9% for 2006 with 1.7% for 2007.

For this study, a specific categorisation was made of the 1,895 contacts resulting from the search. We noted if the IT-related part of the contact somehow dealt with one or more of a number of topics. These topics were Love and friend relationships, Sexually related, Poor mental health, Humiliation and threats, Handling and use of computers, the Internet and mobiles, Parents' IT and Other. In the results report below, we apply this categorisation.

In last year's IT report, BRIS highlighted several more comprehensive themes. To capture these themes even better in this year's report, a notation was made if the IT-related aspect of the contact could somehow be considered to concern any of these themes. These themes were: Ties to violence IRL[3] , Pictures and videos, Anonymity/distance, and Safety and protection. In addition, it was noted if the contact expressly described the presence or absence of parents or other important adults with regard to the IT-related aspect. The result of these notations will be used in various ways in Results and Discussion below.

[2] blog, chat, community, data, dator (computer), hemsid (website), mail (e-mail), mejl (e-mail), msn, nätet (the Net), mess, sajt (site), site, sms, blip, habbo, lunar, playahead, "snyggast.se" (looks rating website), mobil, on-line, online, "world of warcraft", counter, bilddagboken (picture diary), tjatt (chat), digital, internet, youtube, googl, facebook, poker, "helgon.net" (alternative online community), wow, spray, web, www, forum, adda (add to friend list on community site), diskussionsforum, myspace, "second life", e-mejl (e-mail), e-mail, gästbok (guestbook), =gb, krypin, blocka, blocket, =cam, logga, squill, surfa, porrsid (porn site), =irl, kontaktlista, email, emejl (e-mail), meddelande (message), =lan, melj, hotmail, klotterplank (grafitti board)

[3] IRL = In Real Life

Results

Background variables

The gender distribution in the 1,895 child contacts was 82% about girls and 18% about boys – which means a slight overrepresentation of girls compared with all of BRIS' supportive contacts (also refer to the BRIS Report, www.bris.se).

The average age of the children was 14.5 years, which means that this concerns children who are somewhat older than in all of BRIS' supportive contacts.

With regard to the children's living arrangements, the pattern is very similar to that for all of the supportive contacts. However, here in this material there is some overrepresentation of living with both parents alternately and living on one's own, while somewhat fewer live with a lone father or at an institution.

Contents

To get an initial overview, the table below outlines the results of the coding. The following presents the different categories, but not in the order of the table. The results from the notations of the overall themes mentioned above, such as Ties to violence IRL, are used slightly differently under the category headings.

Code	Number	Percentage
Love and friend relationships	899	47%
Handling and use of IT	747	39%
Humiliation, threats, abuse	293	15%
Poor mental health	234	12%
Sexually related	192	10%
Parents' IT	105	5,5%
Other	123	6,5%
Tied to violence IRL	76	4,0%
Pictures and videos	145	7,7%
Anonymity/distance	159	8,4%
Security and protection	134	7,1%
n =	1 895	

Adults	Number	Percentage
Missing/ignorance	42	2,20%
Presence	77	4,10%

Love and friend relationships

Love and friend relationships are something that is clearly very common to handle over the Internet and mobile phones. Almost half of all BRIS' IT-related contacts somehow concerned an aspect of love or friend relationships.

COMMON EVERYDAY HANDLING of IT was a theme of many of the contacts. This means that the young person described his/her handling and use of the Internet, computers or mobile phones in a very obvious way. And this way clearly showed how common an occurrence IT is for the young person; that he or she sort of lives in the middle of it. In these cases, what touches upon IT in the contact need not directly have anything to do with the children's questions or problems. It just happens to be so that it is all handled with these tools. It provides a good illustration of how common everyday the Internet is for children and young people today.

I just want him to see me. and I think I want to contact him...I want to have his msn, and my friend says that she'll ask her friend for the handsome guy's msn.. now the thing is... do I dare add him? and Christmas break is soon here and if I add him I'll do it over the holidays... but what if he thinks I'm a nerd? or what if I add him and he just ignores me in school! I'd die of embarrassment, seriously!!

E-mail from a 16-year-old girl

He began to hit on my step sister so I got really upset and angry. And I'm not like that, when I get angry I get really angry. So I blocked him and removed him from msn and from my picture diary and erased all of his text messages from my mobile. He called and was really upset, but I just hung up because I had after all removed him from the mobile so I didn't see that it was him who was calling.

E-mail from a 17-year-old girl

THE RELATIVE ANONYMITY and distance that prevails on the Internet and through text messaging creates special conditions for friend and love relationships. The following are some examples of this from our supportive contacts:

- Difficult and unnerving to meet IRL after contact solely by IT
- How to think about security in a meeting IRL after contact only through IT?
- Only have friends on the Internet, otherwise shy and bullied
- Falling in love with someone over the Internet often means that they live far apart
- Being together only through IT
- Using the Internet to test thoughts surrounding homosexuality and bisexuality
- Girls often meet older guys over the Internet
- Falling in love with a person over the Internet, who then turns out to be a fake

I've chatted with a girl for half a year, we've just become good friends. Have traded pictures of each other and share a lot of interests. But I'm actually not allowed to chat with unknown people according to mum and dad, and I know that there are a lot of very dangerous people on the Internet, but this girl isn't one of them. I don't know how to tell mum and dad that I want to meet her in real life...that's my problem, I don't want to make mum and dad upset, but I know they'll be if I ask. Should I meet her in secret and then just say that I've met a new friend?

E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

We've talked with each other a while over MSN and have also sent texts... But I've never dared talk to him over the phone. It feels as if my feelings live a double life - what I feel and what I show outwards. When he called, it all became so real that I didn't dare answer. We've thought about meeting, the problem is that I am not open about my sexual orientation for my parents and friends, and he lives a ways away, which would mean that I would be forced to come up with some white lie. When you can't meet someone in real life, it's easy to sort of idealise and patch together this person to be a super human, you can't check the facts one believes are true in the same way as in real life...

E-mail from an 18-year-old boy

PICTURES, VIDEOS AND WEBCAMS in many ways play a decisive part in many IT-related problems and questions. BRIS already called attention to this particular aspect in last year's report. This is especially true of love and friend relationships. The pictures/videos are often described as not playing a negative role at all, but rather the opposite, that it is an important and positive resource to use in love and friend relationships. But BRIS most often hears of how pictures and video have caused problems in relationships.

The following are some of the themes that turned up with regard to matters with ties between love/friend relationships and pictures/videos.

- The pictures/videos are a part of a daily getting-to-know people who were previously both known and unknown in real life.
- Webcams can be used to obtain confirmation that one is not being tricked by a friend/flirt on the Internet in terms of age, gender, etc.
- The site bilddagboken.se (picture diary site) has made a breakthrough among young people in the past year, and is used frequently in the handling of relationships – for good and bad.
- Many express concern and anxiety after having voluntarily sent pictures or shown themselves on a webcam for a friend or flirt, without anything actually having happened.
- Pictures, video and webcams are often used as tools of humiliation between friends and between partners.

And my dad will be furious if he finds out we're going to meet. Because we plan to. But I want to! He feels so good, he understands me and he is the way I want a guy to be! And he is actually only 14, and I've had the webcam on when we've chatted, so I'm 100% certain that it's not some sleazy 35 year-old on the other end.

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

A few months ago, I began to talk with a guy who seemed "fun". We were up almost a whole night, chatting. We wrote dirty things to each other and it was fun and exciting. One day I got a web camera and he wanted to see me on it, but I demanded to see him too. Finally he got to see me on the camera and me him. It was fun, but embarrassing. The last few weeks we've chatted about meeting this summer when he's coming here for the festival. I want to meet him and because there are a lot of people there I'm not worried that something will happen. Besides, I trust him. Although I know that's not what you're supposed to do.

E-mail from a 17-year-old girl

GETTING SUPPORT FROM AND GIVING SUPPORT TO FRIENDS ON THE INTERNET is something that is described a great deal in BRIS' contacts. It is most often about support concerning very serious matters, such as being physically abused at home or bullied in school. In the majority of cases, the support is somehow connected to problems related to poor mental health. Often it concerns such serious matters as suicide plans and self-destructive behaviour. Read more about this under the heading, *Poor mental health*, below.

FIGHTING, BULLYING AND HUMILIATION are for many young people a significant part of their day in terms of love and friend relationships. Consequently, it is not surprising that they also exist on the Internet and mobile phones to a considerable extent. For example, it is common that fairly normal arguments between friends are conducted in an intensive way over the Internet or by text messages. You can find more about humiliation under the heading, *Humiliation, threats and abuse*, below.

Humiliation, threats and abuse

Everything that concerns humiliation, threats and abuse, whether they occurred via IT or have some other form of connection to IT, are gathered under this heading. In terms of the young Internet, this may be the area most talked about. And many of BRIS' supportive contacts also touch on this, although this nonetheless "only" concerns about 15% of these contacts.

TIES TO REAL LIFE comprise a large part of these contacts. It is clear that humiliation via IT often goes hand-in-hand with humiliation in real life; if one is bullied in real life, one is also often bullied over the Internet. Sometimes, the connection is rather that the person has met someone over the Internet, but only when they meet in real life do humiliation and abuse occur. In one out of six IT-related contacts about humiliation, threats and abuse, real life violence or threats of violence have also occurred.

I don't want to go back to school after the holiday, because then I know there will be beatings again. I've gotten a text where it says they're going to kill me, with a knife. Last month they had knives and pushed me into the toilette and said that they would kill me soon and now I got a text.

E-mail from a 15-year-old boy

PICTURES, VIDEOS AND WEBCAMS are common tools to humiliate or threaten someone over the Internet or mobile phones. In 20% of the IT-related humiliation and threat cases, pictures, videos and webcams have played a crucial role. Again, it is worth emphasizing the significance the site bilddagboken.se has gained in terms of this. Of course, most common is that others have posted pictures/videos to humiliate, and the pictures or videos are often taken on the sly. Naturally, it is often perceived as offensive in itself that the pictures were posted, but the publication of pictures often also leads to further humiliation – and further publication – by other people.

Nor is it uncommon that the insults are based on a person having at one time chosen to send or publish pictures themselves, completely voluntarily and knowingly. Then the pictures are spread in a way that the person could not have imagined. A common way of being affected by this humiliation is through comments to usually fairly everyday pictures that the person has either published themselves in their own "kryp-in" ("corner" of the site) or the like, or that somebody else has published.

THE RELATIVE ANONYMITY AND DISTANCE that prevails on the Internet naturally also affects the form IT-related humiliation takes. An interpretation that BRIS made in the last IT Report was that the Internet's relative anonymity seems to make it easier to insult, and the insults also seem to be becoming harsher. This is true both when the perpetrator does not know the person in question at all, but just happen to meet over the Internet, and when they already know each other, but now are not standing eye to eye. Another side of this anonymity is that people can easily be pretend to be somebody else, and offend in this way.

SECURITY AND PROTECTION are often important aspects when children and young people describe how they handle IT-related humiliation, particularly offenses that concern the aforementioned side of the anonymity. Many insults are namely

I have some friends who bully a girl in school. On MSN, one of them made an anonymous address. They've now begun to chat with her from this address, and she doesn't know it's them! She thinks that they're two 13-year-olds who are complete outsiders, don't have any friends and are frozen out. They get her to say things that she wouldn't have said at all if she knew that it was them.

E-mail from an 11-year-old girl

due to an ill-intentioned person gaining access to the young person's username and password. With the help of this, they can for instance pretend to be the victimised child and write embarrassing things to a third person, or insult the third person in the name of the victimised child. Another method of humiliation can be using the stolen username to go in and publish pictures or texts in the victimised child's "private corner" or the like.

Due to this clear link between IT-related humiliation and security, many questions from young people are about topics such as these: How do I get rid of the pictures? How do you close accounts? How do you stop mobile calls? But perhaps even more so, the children and young people speak of how they themselves have addressed the issue; how they've blocked users, filed police reports, gathered evidence, copied pages, contacted those responsible for websites and so on.

When I logged in to my picture diary, someone had been in there and put up a picture of a girl's genitals and they had written "this is mine". then they had been into my msn and written fatso to my friend, so she was pretty upset: can they be traced? and is this Internet-bullying? but I've taken down the picture so nobody else would see it...

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

Two years ago, I had sex with a guy that had a girlfriend. Now she's found out about it. She's put me up on the Internet with my picture and name and harasses me and gets others to do the same. I've printed out everything from the Internet and I've spoken with my family, who think that I should report her to the police. What should I do? I would like to report her to the police. Should I contact school?

E-mail from a 17-year-old girl

Sexually related

Based on this category, BRIS has tried to capture all contacts that are sexually related in some way. Naturally, these are about both positive and negative experiences. And they concern very different types of experiences.

GENERAL TESTING is something both in real life and via IT that is often closely associated with matters that are sexually related, particularly in the teenage years. In our IT-related contacts, the young people often describe positive experiences of this testing. But the contacts are most often about when this testing did not really turn out as they had thought. And in some cases, about how it led to direct abuse.

More common testing can take the form of looking at pornography or reading sex novels. Or also telling intimate sexual details or showing equally intimate pictures for each other in a steady love relationship or blossoming flirt. In the contacts, the young people also speak about more advanced forms of testing such as various forms of IT-related sex roll-playing games. It is also clear that for the girls this testing often leads to meetings and sexual contacts with older guys. A teenage girl meeting a guy over the Internet who is around 25 years old is a story that stands out as not very uncommon in our contacts.

Once I happened to mistype on a website and came to an awful site with loads of porn and sex games. I was awfully disgusted and told mum about it and she thought it was terrible. But the problem is that I went back a few times and played. The games were awful and were about raping young girls. I felt bad afterwards and feel like an awful person for going into sites like this. The problem is that I almost can't stop going in there and I feel really bad afterwards. I don't want to tell mum because then she would get really angry and I would be forbidden to use the computer for like a month. Please help me!

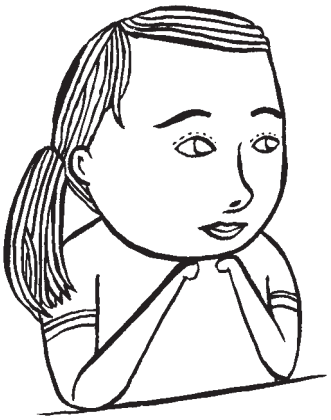
E-mail from an 11-year-old girl

I recently lost my virginity with a man who is 11 years older than me, he's 29. I met him over the Internet for about a year ago and have written off and on. Recently when I was going to Stockholm where he lives, I decided to take the step to meet for coffee in town. The week after that, I went there and slept at his place. He made food, we cuddled and it led to sex. I've never met anyone over the Internet before and am careful, but I wanted to give this guy a chance and it felt so good, relaxed. So we're going to meet again to see where it leads.

E-mail from an 18-year-old girl

PICTURES, VIDEO AND WEBCAMS play a pivotal role in nearly one third of the contacts that are sexually related. In most cases, it is a question of the young girl (seldom guys) more or less voluntarily sending pictures or showing themselves on a webcam, scantily clad or entirely naked. Although it most often was done as a part of a positive relationship, it has nonetheless often given rise to worry and regret afterwards. Based on other contacts, it is clear that this worry can also be justified. BRIS has received descriptions of several experiences where boyfriends have spread nude pictures/videos after the relationship ends as deliberate humiliation.

Another form of humiliation related to pictures, videos and webcams is when girls (seldom guys) happen to come across a guy of the same age



I've done something I'll probably regret for the rest of my life. almost exactly a year ago I was in a phase where I wasn't doing so well. I then met a guy on msn that I liked and we chatted almost every day. ultimately we started chatting about sex and it went so far that I "showed" myself/ stripped for the webcam. I don't even want to mention the things I did because I'm so unbelievably ashamed. now it was a good guy I was dealing with so he didn't publish the pictures or anything so others could see them. now that I've matured in terms of my behaviour I can't see a single reason for doing this? it is unbelievably hard going around and carrying this weight all on my own and not having anyone to talk with.

E-mail from a 16-year-old girl

or an older man who masturbates or just exposes himself without the girl having asked for it in any way. One variant of this experience is the example where a guy had just done that described and then can only look on in horror as the girl spreads the film to others.

I'm a guy who jerked off on camera for a girl and she recorded it and is sending it to everybody and now a guy has it in his gallery I want him to take it down but he doesn't want to. so everybody can see it, I think about it day and night can't even sleep at night, don't know what I should do, help please! I've learned a biiiig lesson to never do anything like it again but first I want this not to be shown anymore.

E-mail from a 15-year-old boy

HUMILIATION, THREATS AND ABUSE that are both IT-related and sexually related are nothing uncommon, and are not always connected with pictures, videos or webcams. Older men who seek contact with young girls over the Internet, which then results in sexual harassment or outright abuse in real life – so-called grooming – is perhaps what most people think about. About ten per cent of the sexually related contacts describe this type of experience, or twenty contacts in round figures. Looking instead at sexual abuse in real life in particular, after meeting on the Internet, regardless of the age of the perpetrator – it is a question of some ten of our contacts.

Girl who has been in touch with a 35-year-old man on the Internet for some time. They met once when he bought cigarettes for the girl. After that, they've had two meetings booked, but the girl cancelled the dates due to illness, and now the man has begun threatening the girl that he will rape her, etc. if she doesn't agree to meet.

Call from a 13-year-old girl

This past autumn I was forced to be photographed by a guy, and after the pictures he raped me. All 5 pictures came out on the Internet and I was bullied in school and everyone shouted things to me when I walked by in the hallways. I reported everything to the police, but nothing happened because there wasn't enough evidence it said in the letter I got. I felt really bad from it and now I feel even worse.

E-mail from a 17-year-old girl

She's come under the influence of a 51-year-old who uses her sexually because she's ended up in a dependent situation. There is not enough money and he pays and she expects that he wants sex, which she's allowed since she feels forced. He disgusts her and she does not know how to get out of the relationship. She met him on the Internet.

Call from a 16-year-old girl

Poor mental health

This area concerns contacts where children and young people have described how they use the Internet in particular to discuss, compare and otherwise handle their own poor mental health or that of others.

BEING THE ONE WHO SUPPORTS a friend over the Internet is the topic of many contacts. It is often a question of a relatively simple and everyday contact, but it is not seldom rather about being pulled into the serious mental problems of friends in very advance ways. There are examples where the young person is the only one who has received a suicide letter sent to them. Many describe how they cannot cope with being supportive any longer, and instead maybe give contact information to BRIS. But most are just looking for some help along the way to be able to continue to be a support for the friend who is doing poorly. Several describe how they have assumed a sort of counsellor role as the person who helps and supports online friends who feel bad.

I have a friend I know on the Internet. The thing is that she is really feeling bad. & I've got to bear her worries, I can't handle it, but I can't block her off & not bother either, because she writes that she'll kill herself & I live under huge pressure. I'm always there, but she's never there for me. I get so depressed around her. I've never met her in real life. I also want to help her before she kills herself. I simply don't know what to do :/ ?

E-mail from a 14-year-old girl

there's a girl I've chatted a bit with on msn, she just wrote that she's planning on killing herself on Friday. it was an offline message so I couldn't answer or ask more about it. all I know about her is her msn address, that she's 12 years old and her first name is x, last name y and lives in z1, is there anything you or the police can do? what can I do?

E-mail from a 15-year-old boy

1 Here, the name and city have been replaced by x, y and z.

The reason I went into your site at all was that my friend is having a tough time and I thought I'd recommend her to talk or e-mail you. That my friends have it tough and I can't do anything is really stressful I've noticed. I think I have a lot of empathy and sympathy. I conduct my own little free counselling thing on msn where I have my number that people can call if they want to talk. I've helped a few friends and they seem happy.

E-mail from a 16-year-old boy

GETTING HELP AND SUPPORT from a friend over the Internet is a topic of at least as many contacts. There are several examples of how these friends are described to have a directly decisive significance for the young person having continued to live. Others describe how it can become problematic when the person who should be a support is doing poorly mentally themselves, which is not uncommon.

I feel so bad And there's only one person who knows this. It's a girl I've only spoken with for two days on msn, we made contact through Child Psychiatry's website. Our contact is absolutely fantastic, we are so alike, we feel almost the same things about different things, and we can talk about everything. It's just that she's feeling worse than me right now, she's seriously thinking about committing suicide. I've terrified of losing her now. What would I do without her?

E-mail from a 17-year-old girl

there's a guy I have on msn... he's 17 years old and I'm 14.. and I think I'm in love with him.. but he and I will probably never meet anyway.. he lives in England. when I feel down he makes me happy. he gets me to handle living.

E-mail from a 14-year-old girl

Another way of getting support and help for poor mental health over the Internet is to search for facts and information. Several contacts relate to various descriptions of psychiatric diagnoses and problems that they have read about on more or less serious sites.

I think I suffer from depression. I've been wondering for a long time whether I have it. So I began searching around on the Internet for sites about depression in young people and found a lot of good sites. Every symptom matched me so frighteningly well! Really, everything matched! Since a year ago I've cut myself on my arms many times and have often thought about suicide. What should I do and do I suffer from depression?

E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

Contact with professionals over the Internet and text messages is another element the young people both describe experience of and ask for.

We have a counsellor at our school. I don't know if I dare go there. I would rather e-mail like I'm doing now. Otherwise I don't know what I would say. And I can't regret what I've said. But can rather choose what I want to say.

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

THE RELATIVE ANONYMITY AND DISTANCE that prevails over the Internet is of clear importance when it comes to poor mental health. Many describe that it is only on the Internet that they can open up and talk about how they are doing, or just have contact with someone at all. Especially since on the Internet they do not need to meet face to face, do not need to talk – but rather only need to write.

Everyone who knows me well knows how I'm doing, but they've never met me and we can just talk over the Internet, it makes everything a lot more difficult. I've never spoken about or even said that I want to die in real life, I've tried when I'm alone, but the words won't come out. So no one I know in real life knows about this, and I really don't want to tell.

E-mail from a 14-year-old girl

Here on BRIS' website, nobody knows who I am which makes it all easier. I don't have a problem with opening up for some invisible person this way. But I just can't handle talking about my feelings straight out. Everything's so much easier when you write, I love to write. That's why BRIS' website is so good and one doesn't even have to meet you.

E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

Handling and use of IT

Under this heading, BRIS has tried to capture those contacts that are about the handling and use of IT more specifically. These contacts are consequently seldom about very serious topics.

FOR THE COMPUTER, THE MOBILE AND THE INTERNET as an item, most of these contacts are about:

- not having access to a computer, the Internet or a mobile for various reasons.
- the mobile one has is ugly and/or bad.
- being forbidden by one's parents from using the computer or the Internet being turned off as a punishment.
- sitting in front of the computer a lot, and it perhaps even having become like an addiction and a problem for oneself.
- the computer having crashed and all pictures/music/texts one had saved not being available any more.

I'm addicted to the computer, I think. have to sit at the computer. have been like this since I was 10 years old or something. I sort of chat, go out on the Internet, listen to music. what should I do? maybe I should actually find some leisure activity, sports or something, but I don't have the energy... just get stressed out by things like that.

E-mail from a 14-year-old girl

What I'm good at is sitting at the computer and everything that comes with it. This can after all be both positive and negative. I've learned English and good spelling in Swedish on the Net, I've learned to design simple websites and write basic programs. For the past 3 years, I've imagined a future as a programmer, either in my own little company or in a larger firm. However, this means that I spend quite a bit of time at the computer which means that I fall behind in my homework.

E-mail from a 15-year-old boy.

When I come home, I hear how he is shouting at mum that I'm sick in the head and that I don't understand anything. I calmly go down and ask what the hell I've done to him and hear "you borrowed my bike", I asked "yeah, and?". I don't get to use my own computer in my room thanks to this, nor the Internet, so I have to borrow my mum's computer for 15min to write to you...

E-mail from a 17-year-old boy

Had a huge row with her dad, about facebook. He doesn't want her talking to guys on the Net either. Then she said to her father that under Swedish law she's now allowed to have sex. Her father got really angry and forbid her to use the computer for two weeks.

Call from a 15-year-old girl

EXTREME TYPES OF IT USE comprise another theme among these contacts. These examples are basically about very different things, but where the actual use of IT is extreme and intensive. Sometimes it is easy to get a feeling that everything really revolves around the computer, the Internet or the mobile phone. Among these extreme types of use, there is confirmation of the ingenuity that characterises many young people's use of IT; an ingenuity that can be used both constructively and destructively.

A friend and I didn't have anything to do so we googled on sex. Loads of pages came up and we thought the pictures were really gross but we continued. Then we went into hamsterpaj and made a page and wrote on the bulletin board that we had loads of pictures of us naked and then a lot of guys and girls wrote. We made a new msn and copied the pictures from the Internet and pasted them in and sent them to those others. They thought it was really fun, and they said they got horny and stuff. But we finally quit, we felt really bad from what we had done. I wonder if we sort of broke the law somehow when we did that?

E-mail from an 11-year-old girl

EXTREME EXPERIENCES FROM THE INTERNET is the topic of other contacts. Experiences one has had, but often with a fearful delight. Sometime just with abject terror, such as one who happened upon videos of gross animal abuse.

SECURITY AND PROTECTION is naturally related to use and handling. Examples of this can be found under several of the other headings. It is a question of the young people describing their own thoughts and experiences regarding protection and security as well as asking BRIS for advice. They may also describe their parents' different IT rules.

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS AND SPECULATION are also present. How the technology has outwitted them, or direct questions about how to set up this or that.

THE LAW WITH REGARD TO IT sometimes pop up among the questions asked. Such as the one from the guy who by mistake ended up on sites with child pornography and wondered if he had thereby committed a crime. Or the person who noted a close relationship between a 12 year-old and an older man, and wondered what legally applies.

BRIS is itself the topic of quite a few contacts. These involve questions and speculation regarding BRIS' website and its services. Examples of this are listed above under the heading BRIS as an actor.

Parents' IT

More than one hundred of BRIS' contacts were more about the parents' use of IT than the young people's, in other words that the parents' use of IT has in various ways given rise to problems or questions in the young person that contacted BRIS.

THE PARENTS' USE OF THE INTERNET is what is in focus in most of these cases. The child has by chance happened upon the parents' e-mail or sites that the parents have visited. The young people have then also often looked into it further to find out more. The most common is that it is about fathers having visited pornographic websites, in several cases even sites with child pornography. It may also be about the young person discovering that the father – despite an ongoing relationship with the mother – has contact with other women (or younger girls) through various sites. Or that the young person finds confirmation that one of his/her parents is simply unfaithful in real life. All of this most often causes worry, shame and questions in the young person.

It's about my dad. I've discovered that he surfs on websites containing child pornography, my big sister and I are the only ones who know about it, I don't want to tell mum because she would probably take it very hard. Because it's illegal, I'm gathering evidence for some type of report, but I don't know where to turn with it.....

E-mail from an 18-year-old boy

It seems like my dad is "unfaithful", I read his conversation log on msn. Because I was just curious. And then I saw that he chats with like young girls, and what's disgusting is that he's 53! And they chat about sex and that they are going to meet and everything, it makes me nauseous and I really feel bad from it. I don't know if I'll tell mum because I'm afraid that they would divorce. Please, what should I do?

E-mail from a 15-year-old boy

PARENTS SPENDING AN EXCESSIVE AMOUNT OF TIME AT THE COMPUTER is another theme. It becomes a problem for the child either because they then have far too little access to the computer and the Internet to do homework, for instance. Or that the parents through excessive use of gambling sites, for example, do not devote enough time and attention to the young person.

The girl calls and tells about her mother, who sits in front of the computer almost all the time. She feels humiliated and disappointed when her mother sits scantily clad and puts up pictures of herself instead of caring about the girl. She is constantly busy and has no time left over for her daughter.

Call from a 12-year-old girl

I know that it sounds silly, but my mum has begun playing WoW world of warcraft a computer game..and sits up all day and night now heading into the summer and she forgets the things that mean something to me.. and when she's not at the computer she's a lost spirit just sits staring into space and doesn't say anything.. I don't feel good at all..please, what should I do?

E-mail from a 13-year-old girl

THE PARENT AND THE YOUNG PERSON HAVING CONTACT VIA IT is also something that can cause concern such as only having contact via IT with one parent. Or that the one parent uses Internet or text messages to tell awful things about the other parent. There are also examples of when a parent that previously abused the child now terrorizes him/her by making contact with the child over the Internet or text messaging.

There are also positive examples of IT contact between parents and children, but they are very rare.

When I turned on the computer, mum had sent a long e-mail. In it she wrote, for instance, that dad had raped her and a lot of disgusting details. I was so disgusted by the e-mail. Disgusted that mum actually sent something like this to me, her child, disgusted by dad if it were true. Right now I'm totally confused.

E-mail from a 15-year-old girl

we agreed how we would act, she began sending texts instead of ringing, it felt a lot better, then it all got out of control and was a mess, if I didn't answer a text in 2 seconds she called and I've got such a short fuse that I got really angry and we begin fighting again

E-mail from a 16-year-old girl

Other

Contacts that could not naturally be noted under any other category end up under this heading. Here are a few examples:

- About wanting to study on the Internet
- About an IT focus in upper-secondary studies
- About recording or photographing with the mobile
- About buying or selling over the Internet. Ranging from using the Blocket advertising site to directly criminal actions
- About cheating in school through IT
- About publishing poetry on the Internet
- About games with money
- About playing with one's identity

My friend & I have kind of "started" a girl on the Internet. her name's Marie and she's 16 years old. we took the picture from a girl on snuttis.com and then began to write to a bunch of people, both those we knew and didn't know. first, it wasn't so serious, but then it got serious. but anyway we began chatting with my friend's big brother's friend, and he kind of fell in love with her. like for real.

E-mail from an 11-year-old girl

I cheat a lot in school, turn in a lot of false papers from the Internet, they can't be found through regular search engines so they probably have no idea, but I don't want to...

E-mail from a 13-year-old boy

Discussion

This discussion focuses on three themes that BRIS found to be of particular interest and significance while working on the report with regard to children and young people's IT-related world and day-to-day. These are *The common everyday, Handling poor mental health and The role of parents and adults.*

The common everyday

What struck BRIS most in the work on this study of children and young people's IT-related contacts with BRIS is just how common everyday most matters concerning IT are for children and young people. So common everyday that we almost wondered what the point actually was of a study such as this one.

In some way, it is a bit adult and outdated to try and separate out just the IT related aspects from everything else in daily life. For us adults, it may come natural. But trying to differentiate the IT-related aspects of the day-to-day in children's and young people's lives stumbles on its own absurdity, because they live in the middle of it to such a large extent. In the middle of a regular day where computers, the Internet and mobile phones are a completely natural and self-evident part of everything else. One cannot say whether one is doing something with this or that, but rather one does it all the entire time.

But BRIS has nonetheless chosen to do so. To struggle with this fairly unnatural differentiation of the IT-related experiences of children and young people, for the sake of you adults. One essential reason is just to try to capture that common everyday aspect. Because BRIS believes that a knowledge about and an understanding of the common everyday is a prerequisite to be able to be an important adult for the children and young people nearby. Moreover, of course it is so that although most of what concerns IT is just common everyday for children and young people, we adults see with our eyeglasses from before that it at the same time means new conditions. New conditions that mean partially new ways of handling one's life and relationships for the young people themselves and for us adults in their surroundings.

LOVE AND FRIEND RELATIONSHIPS are unmistakeably the absolutely most central factor in the common everyday for children and young people with regard to IT. One confirmation of this is that nearly half of all of our IT-related contacts concern love and friend relationships in particular. In many cases, it being related in particular to IT actually has no significance, especially not to the child him or herself. But rather the computer, the mobile and the Internet simply form the arena, or are simply the tools that just happened to be used. At the same time, it creates new preconditions for the relationships that are handled.

The consequences of the relative anonymity and the distance are examples of such new conditions. That the Internet and text messaging can make it easier to make contact and express oneself – both in terms of expressing a few lovable words and deliberate insults. This ease can in turn cause concern and obstacles for when one later meets in real life anyway. Moreover, this anonymity means that one cannot really have trust in the fact that someone is really the person he or she says they are.

BRIS believes that it is important that adults are aware of IT having such a central role in the relationships of young people. That they understand that relationships on the Internet can be just as important as those in school. And that relationships are managed just as much through IT as in real life.

STRIFE AND HUMILIATION through IT also belong to the common everyday of many. And this is after all not especially surprising. Strife and humiliation belong to the day-to-day, wherever one looks. Everyday life on the Internet or over mobile phones is no exception. It is even so that strife and humiliation through IT often goes hand in hand with the same in real life. If one is bullied in the schoolyard, one is often also bullied via text messages, on msn or in an online community. And of course it is important that adults act regardless of where these violations occur. Because the Internet is neither in the home, at school or at the place of leisure – but rather everywhere or nowhere – all of the adults who are around the young person must take joint responsibility for matters that deal with humiliation through IT.

SEXUAL TESTING also belongs to the common everyday in its own way. Testing what can be done, testing where one's own and other's limits are, testing who one is. The most common is probably surfing around on the Internet and running into and then getting stuck on various types of pornography. Others find sexual short stories or sex

games. Or some deliberately look for information and the experiences of others. BRIS' Discussion Forum is a striking example of this. Here, questions and speculation regarding sex may be the area that the submissions are most often about.

This sexual testing also naturally means sexual contacts and meetings, both through IT and in real life. In some ways, sexual testing can now be done in a safer and more secure way through IT than what was previously only possible face to face, body to body. When one finally meets, the risks are actually the same as they have always been. The difference is that it is possible to make that meeting happen so much faster and easier through IT. Sometimes it may go too quickly and easily. This may in some cases be an explanation for the abuse that happens in real life.

BRIS believes that it is important for adults in young people's lives to be able to accept this testing. But that one must of course be on the lookout, particularly when it happens to go a bit too quickly and easily. Then there may be reason to stop and reflect over what is happening together with the young person. But this requires that one is aware that testing is going on at all.

Just "being aware" is the keyword. As an adult, being aware of the common everyday aspects of IT in the lives of the children and young people nearby. BRIS believes that if one is aware of this, it is so much more likely that one will really be present when something uncommonly grave happens. Knowing about the common everyday is simply a prerequisite for being able to support and provide strength when the uncommonly grave occurs.

Handling of poor mental health

There seems to be something about the Internet that encourages young people to handle poor mental health on it. Of our IT-related contacts, 12% concerned poor mental health. At BRIS, we are hardly surprised by this. In the BRIS-mail, stories and questions regarding poor mental health in particular are much more common than on the Children's Helpline. It seems as if the people who suffer from or have questions about poor mental health are to a greater extent those who like to write instead of talk. It may also be that descriptions and questions regarding poor mental health are particularly more suited to write about rather than talk about on the phone, for instance.

It is clear that there is a great need among children and young people to handle their poor mental health through IT, and the Internet in particular. The only thing is that as yet children and young people generally only have each other to choose from. In BRIS' IT-related contacts, it is absolutely clear that the most common way of handling poor mental health is to either help other contemporaries oneself or to find support from contemporaries through IT. This is most often done via msn, but is also done through e-mail, text messaging and different online communities.

The contacts with contemporaries are in most cases of great help. These contemporaries play a very important role for those who are doing poorly, and most often they also appear to be able to assume this role in a sound and positive manner. It is something that of course those who help also feel good from and find strength in. At the same time, there is a downside. Sometimes the role to be managed is far too complex and difficult. Nor is it seldom the case that those who meet on the Internet to support each other are both feeling just as bad. In these cases, it is of course extra important that there be adults around who both know about what is happening and also act.

Unfortunately, the adult world proves to be almost invisible with regard to young people and poor mental health in the online world. Finished facts and information abound, which the young people also use to a certain extent. For good and bad. It is not always so easy to properly understand facts and information about something as complex as mental illness and poor mental health. Some sites also offer the opportunity of asking questions, but the answers are most often then given in public on the site. The possibility of personal responses and contacts is very rare.

However, there are a number of examples from BRIS' IT-related contacts where the child has been in touch with an individual adult through IT in connection with the child's poor mental health. The young person has then had the opportunity to e-mail or send text messages. This has involved different adults; pastors, counsellors, teachers, church assistants, school nurses, youth recreation leaders, etc. One can gather from these contacts that it can sometimes be tied to certain concerns, which most often seem to be based on the adult feeling uncertain and not really knowing how to handle this type of contact. But it is also clear that the young people most often appreciate being able to have contact in this manner. If nothing else, they ask for it.

With this, BRIS wants to say that adults who work with children and young people, not least those who are focused on helping and supporting, should think a bit extra about how they as individuals or as public services can be more accessible to young people through IT. In autumn 2008, the site ungdomsmottagningen.se (online counselling centre for young people) will be launched as a government initiative. A great deal speaks for this site being able to be a role model for meeting the needs of young people for counselling and medical support through IT.

In this context, we at BRIS believe that there is reason to come back to the BRIS-mail's important function. The BRIS-mail is one such service on the Internet where children and young people can receive personal responses from an adult regarding poor mental health. And it is also very common that the young people use the BRIS-mail for just this purpose. Of all of our supportive responses in 2007, 34% were about some form of Poor mental health and the majority of these e-mails were about such serious matters as thoughts of suicide or self-destructiveness.

Roll of parents and other adults

It is obvious that parents and other adults nearby are important to young people with regard to IT, just as when it comes to other important parts of their day-to-day. With this in mind, it may be surprising that only about 15% of BRIS' IT-related contacts touch upon or are somehow about parents

or other nearby adults. Of this 15%, only a fraction also describes a positive experience.

PARENTS' OWN USE OF IT was clearly presented in Results above. There, it was about young people having described problems and ideas that were tied to their parents' own use of IT. Finding any positive examples from there was unfortunately very difficult. Instead, there were many examples of how the parents' use of IT was a cause of shame, sorrow and anger among the children. BRIS is not alone in calling attention to this phenomenon. On Kamratposten's website – kpwebben.se – there was a theme on this during the spring, including a survey where the children were asked if they were worried about what their parents do on the Internet.

Consequently, there is reason for parents to think a bit extra about their own use of IT and how that use can affect their children. Thoughts that can deal with what one is actually doing through IT; what is appropriate and not, and how one can be a role model. At the same time, there must nonetheless be parts of parents' IT use that the children should have nothing to do with, and here it is rather a question of taking care of one's own integrity and not letting everything on the computer and the mobile be accessible to the children.

CONFLICTS WITH AND BETWEEN PARENTS is another theme BRIS noted in the IT-related contacts. Among all of our supportive contacts, it is very common that the children and young people tell about conflicts with or between their parents. Of our supportive contacts with children in 2007, 21% were about family conflicts. It is nonetheless still a bit surprising to BRIS that a significant part of our IT-related contacts also concern such conflicts. Hence, this is a question of conflicts that somehow revolve around the computer, the Internet or the mobile phone.

It is most commonly a conflict where the parent uses access to the Internet, computer or mobile as forcible means That is that the young person, based on a conflict, is punished by his/her mobile phone being confiscated, the Internet being turned off or the computer being placed off-limits. The punishment most often has no connection whatsoever to that which the young person is accused of. But sometimes, the punishment is just a result of the parents actually being aware of and in their way being present in the young person's online day-to-day. In which case, it may be the parents' way of acting, trying to prevent the young person from getting hurt or otherwise ruining things for themselves or others.

There can be many reasons for the IT-related conflicts. It most commonly is about the parents having views of how much the young person sits at the computer. It may be about rules that the parent decided on with regard to IT. From other contacts, it is apparent that a shared computer, especially in a small home, can lead to all kinds of conflicts. Sometimes it is rather the young person's mobile phone that causes conflicts; that it has been lost or too much money has been spent with it.

That there are so many conflicts revolving around the Internet, mobile phones and computers is surely due to this IT-related aspect being so fundamentally important to most young people. This means that something that threatens the use of it is perceived as threatening life itself, or at least a huge amount of different vital parts of it. A great deal speaks for this in particular being a reason that some parents apply limits to the access to IT-related matters as a punishment.

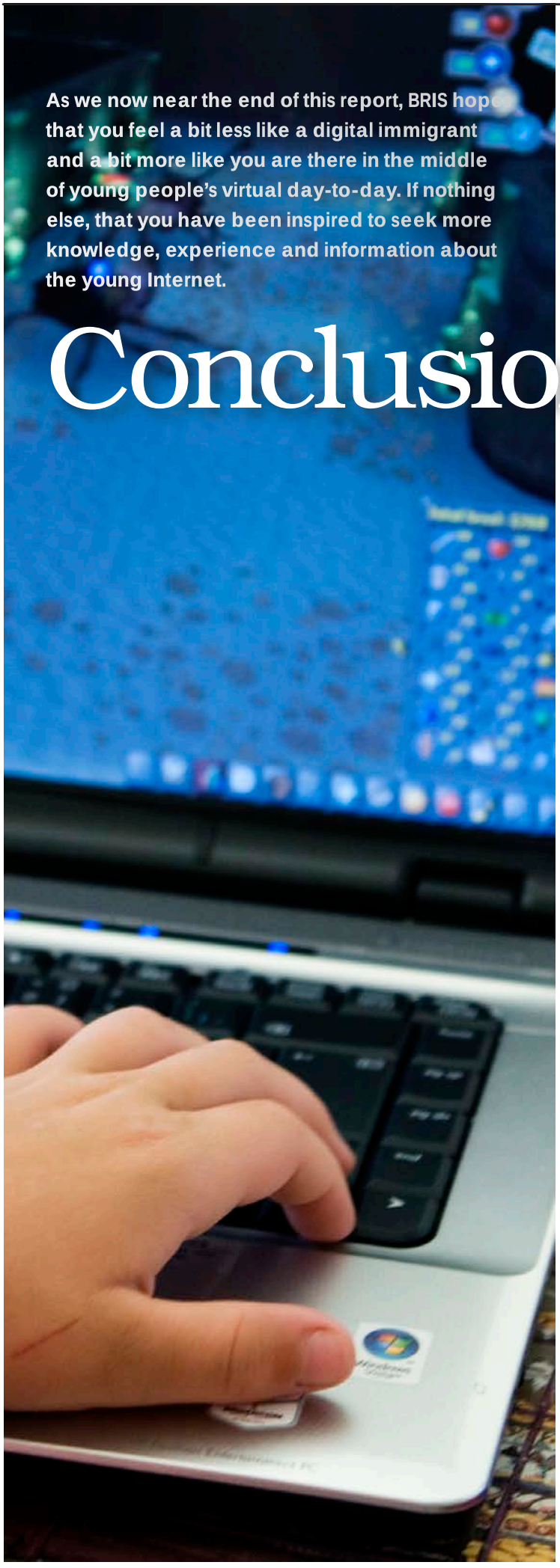
AN ADULT IT-RELATED PRESENCE was an aspect that last year's BRIS study made an extra effort to identify, since in working on the report BRIS found it striking how weak the presence of parents and other adults was in the young people's IT world. BRIS can confirm that this absence remains. And when the young people do describe a presence, it seldom seems to be particularly constructive.

BRIS often receives direct confirmation that parents are not present. This is clear in that the young person describes concern about whether he/she should tell his/her parents or not. This may, for example, be before a meeting in real life or simply the fact that they are inside some online communities at all. The obstacle to telling is most often a fear of the parents' reaction, the fear that the parents will only get angry and say no.

Some parents and other adults are actually present – at least in the sense that they have somehow found out something about what the young person is doing or has experienced through IT. The most common reaction that the young people tell us about is anger. There are certainly occasions when such anger may be justified, but the young person's reaction is after all most often not to tell.

Another way that adults can be present is to establish rules. This is not entirely easy. In our IT-related contacts, many describe how they were provoked by their parents' rules, while others nonetheless describe a form of gratitude. This gratitude for an adult presence becomes a bit clearer when they help to act against matters that the young person also perceived as wrong and humiliating. This may be that they help out in filing a police report, speaking with the school or contacting those responsible for online communities.

Of course it is both important and positive that adults, together with the young people, work out various rules and approaches regarding the Internet, computers and mobile phones, and then when necessary act on things that have gone wrong or matters of a criminal nature. Good guidance for such discussions and such action may be as an adult to read a bit about the law, technology and about other adults' experiences of the young Internet. BRIS collaborated with the Swedish Media Council and the author, Eva Thorslund, to prepare the book "Säker på nätet – en handbook för föräldrar och andra vuxna" (Safe on the Net – a handbook for parents and other adults), which can be a good basis for such guidance. Otherwise, the Swedish Media Council's website (www.mediaradet.se) offers a large amount of material on the topic for use by both adults and young people.



As we now near the end of this report, BRIS hopes that you feel a bit less like a digital immigrant and a bit more like you are there in the middle of young people's virtual day-to-day. If nothing else, that you have been inspired to seek more knowledge, experience and information about the young Internet.

Conclusion

In this report, you have been given tips on books and websites to visit. These tips are solely about adults who share their knowledge and experience. We would claim that the absolutely most effective way of learning more about the young Internet is to go to the young people themselves.

At BRIS.se, we can welcome all of you to look in on the Discussion Forum. There, you will be struck by the fantastic way children and young people discuss and provide support and advice to each other on the Internet. One learns an invaluable amount from this.

It is nonetheless most important and best that you go to the young people you yourself have around you. Ask with curiosity! Invite yourself! Asking with curiosity about what he/she last did on the Internet – who she met, what he talked about – is no stranger than asking about what he/she did in school and who was there. Making sure to sometimes be there with them directly at the computer and do things together with the child/young person you have close, is no stranger than sometime going along and watching a gymnastics presentation or sometimes going and watching football together.

Basically, it is simply about the matter of course of sharing the regular day-to-day with each other. As an adult, you can take care of two things at once – you will both learn a great deal of new things and will come closer to the child/young person you know. And this is itself probably the shortest route to becoming that present and responsible adult who we all want to be.

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Stockholm, June 2008

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The examples in the report are gathered from call descriptions on the Children's Helpline and the children's e-mails on the BRIS-mail. The examples are authentic, but certain information is altered to guarantee that no individual child can be identified.

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