GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

**INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE**

**Uppkopplad mot världen**

**Om unga med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning och deras erfarenheter av sociala aktiviteter på internet**

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av

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II. Borgström, Å. (2023). Tensions between risk, coping and support: young people with intellectual disability in Sweden and internet-related support. *Disability & Society*, *38*(3), 460–482. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1946675

III. Borgström, Å. (2022). Unga kvinnor med intellektuell funktionsnedsättning: erfarenheter av självpresentationer på internet. *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift*, *29*(1), 91–110. https://socvet.se/issue/view/396/288

IV. Borgström, Å. (2023). Young people with intellectual disability and the Internet: Challenges and opportunities in qualitative research. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities, 27*(3), 598–612. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F17446295221095714

# ABSTRACT

Title: Connected to the world – young people with intellectual disability and their experiences of social activities on the internet
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The aim of this thesis is to explore the experiences of young people with intellectual disability on social media and the internet by reviewing previous research, analysing and interpreting experiences of social activities on the internet among young people with intellectual disability and discussing methodological challenges. The overall structure of this thesis is comprised of an introductory summary and four papers. The first paper is a literature review of previous research about young people with intellectual disability and social media. The second paper investigates negative experiences on the internet and internet-related support. The third paper investigates experiences of self-presentation on the internet among young women with intellectual disability. The fourth paper discusses challenges in qualitative research about young people with intellectual disability and the internet.

This thesis is based on two empirical studies, Study A and Study B. Study A is a literature review of studies about the experiences of young people with intellectual disability on social media. The sample consisted of twelve papers published in well-established and recognised journals between 2001 and 2017. The results were analysed thematically. Study B is a qualitative study combining individual interviews, pair interviews, focus groups and memo writing. The sample consisted of 17 young women and nine young men with intellectual disability aged 16-21 years. This study used both thematic analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Four broad themes emerged from the overall analysis of the results in the papers: 1) digitally competent, or exposed and vulnerable, 2) risk and opportunity, 3) online and offline – fluid boundaries and 4) standing on your own two feet or taking support from others. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this thesis is that young people with intellectual disability are digitally competent but also considered to be an exposed and vulnerable group on the internet. There are, however, differences among young people with intellectual disability. The second major finding was that young women with intellectual disability take on the role of observer rather than active participant due to the risks encountered on the internet. This thesis also shows that online and offline social settings seem to be intertwined. Finally, the thesis found that young people with intellectual disability used problem-focused coping to handle risky situations on the internet on their own and/or seek support from parents, however, they also rely on emotion-focused coping to withdraw and distance themselves instead of seeking support. This thesis contributes to our understanding of the complexity of the field as well as to the need to treat young people with intellectual disability as a heterogeneous group with different experiences and behaviours. The insights gained from this thesis have several important implications for future practice. First and foremost, they contribute new knowledge for social work practice, especially in school settings involving pupils with intellectual disability.