Child Sexual Abuse and Digital Media

Expert meeting on epidemiology prevalence and incidence of child sexual abuse and service utilization of abused persons in Germany

Berlin, December 11th, 2014
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Qualitative Studies

„Care and Treatment of child-victims of child-pornographic exploitation in Germany“ by Innocence in Danger 2004 – 2007 *

EU-Study: ROBERT 2011 – 2012 **

EU-Study: SPIRITO 2013 – 2015 ***

*www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552601003759990#.VI7rvcaaDrh
**www.childcentre.info/robert/new-and-publications/
***www.spirto.health.ed.ac.uk
Children going online 1999
Children going online 2013
The era of digital exhibitionism

- 634 million active websites
- 1 billion active Facebook members
- 1.1 billion smartphone-owners
- 2.4 billion online users worldwide
- 351 million new pictures are uploaded to Facebook every day
Digital Media changed the face of sexualized violence
Child Abusive Images

Operation Spade  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlNYzIu8tWI
Sweetie

Ich heiße Sweetie, ich bin zehn.

Terre des Hommes Niederlande: www.youtube.com/sweetie
Sextortion

Police in Philippines arrest 58 in global sexual blackmail case

updated 9:04 AM EDT, Fri May 2, 2014 Philippine police chief answers questions from the media at the police headquarters in Manila on May 2, 2014. (CNN) -- Police in the Philippines have arrested 58 people suspected of using sexual information or images to cyberblackmail hundreds of people in at least six countries, Interpol announced Friday. Among those arrested Wednesday and Thursday are three people accused of blackmailing a Scottish teenager who jumped to

http://www.chip.de/news/Interpol-Internationaler-Sex-Erpresserring-gefasst_69227702.html
„Care and Treatment of child-victims of child-pornographic exploitation in Germany“

Asked – among others – the following questions:

by Innocence in Danger 2004 – 2007
 supported by Aktion Mensch
What makes it difficult for victims to disclose that images were taken?

• “guilt”
• “fear of the threats of the abuser”
• Maybe the victim offered disclosure during therapy/counseling but was not understood by the therapist/counselor

(Study 2004)
What enables victims to disclose?

- if professionals let them know that THEY know about child abusive images
- a trusting relationship and patience

Disclosure was being accompanied by shame, hate, disgust/loathing for both girls and boys. Girls would also show fear and denial. Boys would show guilt and speechlessness.

(Study 2004)
Implications

• Digital distribution of a child abusive image may well be an added burden.

• All dimensions change: „Once digitally posted, always out there.“

• Fear: „Who has seen my abusive images?“

Question 2014: Does that also apply to sexting images? Always?
What is special about treating victims whose abuse has been documented?

Cases in which child abusive images were taken are cognitively as well as emotionally more challenging for the counselor/therapist, whereas for the victims the issues regarding the abuse rather than the filming or picture taking are of more relevance.

Study 2004 - 2007
How do you address the permanence of the images on www

• Counselors felt highly uncomfortable and powerlessness. They assumed that victims would be just as challenged by it as soon as they would grasp these implications.

• Some professionals would use trauma-therapeutic measures.

• Others believed coping as in healing not to be possible considering permanence.

Study 2004 - 2007
Taking child abusive images: a crime within close familial and social surroundings

- All reported cases in 2005 had been taken place as part of sexually abusing a child within close familial or social surroundings.

Question 2014: Does that still apply today?

Study 2004 - 2007
What about cell phones

- Sexualized assaults which are being photographed or filmed by peers using cell phones mean that victims are almost immediately being exposed as such within their close surroundings such as school or peer group.

- Quite often this enforces the victims feelings of shame and guilt. So far counseling centers have not developed coping and/or prevention strategies for this issue.

Study 2004 - 2007
What do we need?

Specialized training for professionals:

• information about magnitude, form + number of reports concerning child abusive images,

• information concerning diagnosis, symptoms of victims as well as how to help those victims,

• information on how to confront a client with the possibility abusive images taken within counseling/treatment,

• Information on how the fact that abusive images were taken affects victims,

• information about perpetrators/abusers.

Study 2004 - 2007
Partner

- University of Tartu, Estonia
- Linköping University, Sweden
- University of Edinburgh, UK
- Save the Children Denmark
- Save the Children Italia
- Innocence in Danger, Germany
- Stellit International, the Netherlands and Russia
- Kingston University, UK
• systematic literature review of European studies on child sexual abuse including online components.
• interviews with ‘online’ victims.
• interviews with ‘online’ perpetrators.
• focus groups with 'vulnerable' groups of youths
in order to

• get a better understanding of the phenomenon of online-grooming,
• learn about strategies youths use to stay safe,
• develop prevention measures addressing these issues
Victims believed to be in control and had to realize – they never were:

“It doesn’t feel... much fun knowing that someone can stumble across them. And neither do I know how much you can see... whether you can see that it’s me... ‘cause I don’t know how they are taken”.
Disclosure means further loss of control

“Well do you mean about the rape.... I didn’t tell anyone. My friend found me afterwards... but I said that I didn’t want to talk about it. But because of the pictures and the films the rumour spread quickly at school. I don’t know exactly who knew and who didn’t. I did go to a counsellor but didn’t say anything. I’m sure....she was a very good counsellor but I couldn’t say anything”
Victims need to feel empathically understood

“I felt relieved after I had said it. Uh, but at the same time I was very scared about how my parents would react. Uh, whether they would be angry at me and that kind of thing”.
Victims need professional carers who know

“I thought she didn’t even like me. It’s just that she never really understand the problem or see there was any problem because it wasn’t like a textbook problem, and no I don’t think she understood the internet things, or anything.....Yeah, she didn’t really understand anything, or want to understand it. Just doing her job”.

“She was strict by the pointer ... there was ... she didn’t understand ... I had to repeat myself several times ... and I thought it was really difficult”.
is a research programme funded by the European Safer Internet Programme:

- The University of Edinburgh (UK)
- Linköping University (Sweden)
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (UK)
- Innocence in Danger (Germany)
The goal

is to find out what risks adolescents take or encounter in a world of merged technologies.

Especially when using mobile or handheld devices.
Our focus is on risk related to the capacity to generate sexual content, often described as sexting.
Understanding sexting

Very little is known about why young people self produce sexual images.
The aim

- is to develop training materials for professionals working with young people and parents.
- to provide information, enable further discussion with young people about risks, and
- examine effective ways of sharing knowledge.
Do we expect our children to be superheroes?
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