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Child Sexual Abuse and the Media

Nomos
Edition Reinhard Fischer

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Preface

For a long time, child sexual abuse (CSA)[1] received little attention in public reporting and was considered a taboo subject that neither the public nor journalists liked to address. Thanks to the persistence of many people who have repeatedly drawn attention to the issue, this attitude has changed. Above all, the strength and courage of those affected who have broken their silence in recent decades and spoken publicly about what was done to them have succeeded in bringing the topic to the public's attention. With the so-called "child sex abuse scandal 2010", in the course of which the mass abuse in renowned educational institutions (Canisius College, Ettal Monastery, Odenwald School) was exposed, the topic of CSA gained importance for the media in Germany and was reported more and, above all, in a more differentiated way. Now the general public and politicians were talking not only about tragic individual cases but also about structures of power and dependency that foster abuse and the supposedly trusted people that exploit the children's trust in institutions as well as in families. This view of CSA was a significant step forward in the way the media approached the topic. Nevertheless, reporting is still often characterized by misconceptions about sexual violence, adopts a victim-stigmatizing perspective, and sometimes exhibits a relatively low degree of professionalization.

I am therefore delighted that this volume compiles profound expertise on media coverage of sexual violence. In 2017, we commissioned the research project "Media coverage of child sexual abuse: A model of topic-specific quality criteria" from Professor Dr. Nicola Döring, Institute for Media and Communication Studies at Ilmenau University of Technology. It should serve to prepare larger-scale scientific studies on the quality, and the practical measures to improve the quality, of media coverage of CSA. We are pleased that this expertise has been incorporated into the present volume.

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1 CSA in this context refers to sexual violence against both children and adolescents.

Johannes-Wilhelm Rörig

Bringing a topic out of the taboo

For me, as the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues, media attention to the topic of CSA is, of course, essential. After all, it is part of my mandate to make sexual violence public, to bring the topic out of the taboo zone, to convey the views of those affected, and to sensitize politicians and the public so that more is invested in protection and help. For all of this, reporting is absolutely essential, helpful, and welcome. In addition, in recent years there has also been tremendous progress in terms of the quality of journalistic work. Increasingly, sexual violence is no longer located in obscure, dark corners of society but communicated as a problem for society as a whole. It is becoming increasingly clear that abuse occurs in all social layers and often over long periods. Journalists today are also asking questions about the responsibility of the so-called "bystanders", who might have been able to prevent abuse, and are asking what needs to be done to better recognize and contain sexual violence.

All of these crucial issues were rarely part of the reporting ten years ago. In 2010, offers of help could not be found printed anywhere and no references to counseling services were given at the end of any article. A lot has happened there as well.

Exploiting sensational content in the media

However, the journalistic approach to the topic is still not always sufficient. Too often only the sensational content of the topic is exploited by the media, and scandalization is sought to satisfy a presumed voyeuristic public interest. The "child molester" still appears in headlines, any sexual violence against children is grossly simplified as pedophilia, and in many cases there is a misinterpretation of why children become victims of sexual violence and how they could be protected from it.

Thankfully, this book focuses both on the difficulties in communicating and the public perception of the issue; on how reporting influences the public's perception of sexual violence against children and adolescents; how it is possible to bring a taboo subject into the public consciousness; how media presence can help those affected to articulate their concerns and promote their implementation; and how journalistic work can function in the area of conflict between the expectations of those affected, the need for balance and the public's interest in information.

After all, media attention is not always helpful in raising public awareness of the issue of sexual violence. As before, extreme cases, in particular,

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attract attention. Staufen, Lügde, Bergisch Gladbach, and Münster have become synonyms for sexual abuse, and it is precisely this localization that is problematic. Focusing on a few cases that can be scandalized allows the public to continue to ignore the real dangers and, above all, the everyday nature of sexual abuse.

Narrative of the Singularity

That is why I remain ambivalent every time a new abuse scandal is made public: According to the laws of attention economics, media interest can be used to place the concerns of those affected, to raise sensitivity for the issue, to make political demands, and to appeal to society to do more to protect children and young people from sexual violence. On the other hand, every "scandal" simultaneously manifests the misleading narrative of the singularity of sexual violence: Case-fixated reporting continues to make CSA appear as an exception, a scandalous event that takes place somewhere on the outskirts but certainly not in the middle of society.

CSA as a problem for society as a whole, a problem on a scale that makes it statistically likely that everyone knows someone who has been exposed to sexual violence (and presumably perpetrators as well) – all of this is rarely reflected in the narratives of reporting. That the cases that attract attention are only the tip of the iceberg, that the everyday abuse which goes unnoticed and everywhere is the real monstrosity; however, for the public this hardly gets comprehensible through the predominantly case-centered reporting.

Authentic perspectives

I am therefore very grateful that, against this background, this book has decided to focus on the perspective of those affected by the topic of "media and child sexual abuse". After all, reporting on and dealing with those damaged is still often problematic in everyday journalistic life. Media professionals often look for people affected by sexual violence for their reporting in order to be able to include authentic perspectives. This is perfectly understandable: a "personal" narrative conveys closeness to the audience and awakens a willingness to engage with a topic. For many of those affected, however, it is challenging to talk about experiences of violence. All too often they feel themselves exploited, especially if the

finished report presents their personal story in a truncated way from their point of view or merely uses it as an illustrative example to shed light on a more prominent topic.

"Trauma-sensitive interviewing" is the keyword here, yet, unfortunately, journalists are not prepared for it, neither in their daily work nor in their training. This may have to do with the fact that journalistic distance and independence are rightfully given a very high priority. However, as I understand it, this part of journalistic professionalism should not exclude a certain empathy for those who willingly answer questions on a personally difficult topic. On the contrary, journalists should bear in mind that insensitive behavior can sometimes trigger re-traumatization in interviewees. Trauma-sensitive interaction with those affected should be part of the tools of the trade for journalists who may encounter traumatized interviewees in this field or other contexts. Just as sports reporters know the rules of the game in various sports or court reporters are familiar with the basic rules of a trial, journalists should also acquire and apply specialist knowledge in the field of sexual violence.

It should not be forgotten at this point that the increased media interest can have positive effects for those affected. Those affected can be strengthened as they learn that they are not alone in what they have experienced. Besides, the media sometimes provide them with information on where and how to find help. Some are encouraged by reporting to seek help, and many specialized counseling centers register increased interest with greater media attention.

Socially relevant education

In this context, it is also important to take a closer look at the focus of many reports on CSA. The course of events is reconstructed, details are described in elaboration, and there are speculations about the presumed motives of the perpetrators. Persons affected are often portrayed only in their status as victims and reporting that goes beyond a case-by-case analysis is still the exception. But I am sure that the public is also interested in how children can be protected from sexual violence and how affected persons can integrate experiences of violence into their lives. A deeper media engagement with the question of what can be done against sexual violence against children and young people would therefore not only be a great support for the commitment of many people dedicated to prevention, protection, help, research, and education; it would also be socially relevant in the best educational sense.

I am therefore very grateful that this publication draws attention to the status quo. The international and interdisciplinary orientation of the book is worth emphasizing: From the perspectives of the affected groups to possible risks and opportunities of media coverage to ideas for improvement, the topic of "Child Sexual Abuse and the Media" is examined in great variety.

Also noteworthy is the consideration of the question of how aspects of the topic of CSA are taken up and dealt with in the so-called "new media". Given the current atomization of the media world and the fragmentation into an infinite number of communication channels, the approaches outlined here, which attempt to deal with a topic of great sensitivity in social media, are of great interest for a further examination of the question of what perspectives and risks the internet offers as a communication space.

With its comprehensive examination of the topic, a volume is now available that leads the way in the current discussion about how CSA should be addressed in the media. The book points out difficulties but also gives suggestions on how the media could deal with the topic of CSA. In this respect, this publication can also be read as a guidebook for journalistic work.

The intensive engagement of many authors with the topic of CSA, whose contributions are now collected in this volume, makes me hopeful that it may be possible to anchor the media discussion of sexual violence as a permanent topic beyond isolated reporting and to evoke public interest without the case-fixated scandalization. This book is an important contribution to an urgently needed social debate that can raise awareness of sexual violence taking place in our midst and not hidden away.

Johannes-Wilhelm Rörig

Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues (2011-2022), Germany

Content

Content

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Introduction

Daniela Stelzmann & Josephine Ischebeck

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is "a complex phenomenon occurring for multiple reasons, in various ways, and in different relationships within families, peer groups, institutions, and communities" (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019, p. 131). It encompasses various forms of sexual behaviors towards children, which may include a wide range of behaviors like consuming CSA exploitation material (CSEM, colloquially known as child pornography), sexualized conversations, unwanted physical contact up to sexual violence (Gottfried et al., 2020; Ioannou et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 1999). CSA is likely to cause devastating short- and long-term consequences for affected persons (Barth et al., 2013). For instance, some of them may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Briggs & Joyce, 1997; Filipas & Ullman, 2006; Rowan & Foy, 1993), major depressive disorder (Lindert et al., 2014), or anxiety disorder (Lindert et al., 2014; Maniglio, 2013) while others tend to show self-injurious behavior (Liu et al., 2018), substance abuse (Lown et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2014), or problems in forming functional relationships (Davis & Petretic-Jackson, 2000; Mullen et al., 1994). Those consequences depend on factors like severity, frequency, relationship to the offender, reaction when confiding the incident, and feelings of guilt and shame (Zimmermann et al., 2011).

Based on the diversity of the phenomenon and its consequences, it is not surprising that there is still no uniform definition of CSA. Even though there exists no agreement about the definition of CSA, there exists an awareness of CSA as a "preventable public health problem" (Fix et al., 2021, p. 1). Depending on its definition, approximately 3 % to 31 % of children are affected worldwide (Barth et al., 2013). Around 16,000 cases of CSA were registered by the police in Germany in 2019 (Deutscher Kinderverein, 2020). Even if this number of registered cases appears to be very large, experts assume that the number of unreported cases is many times higher (London et al., 2005). Comparing the prevalence in Germany (approx. 13.9 %; Witt et al., 2017) with the cases registered to the police mentioned above, it is evident that there is a discrepancy between prevalence and reported cases.

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Given the severe consequences for those affected and the significant difference between prevalence and police-reported cases, the primary goal in society should be to protect children from CSA by raising awareness of CSA as a preventable public health problem and establishing prevention services. Nevertheless, CSA remains a socially tabooed topic that is reluctant to be discussed (e.g., Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Nielsen, 2016) and loaded with myths as well as stereotypes: For instance, many assume that CSA offenders are exclusively stranger males with a pedophilic preference, while, in fact, in most CSA cases the offenders and victims know each other very well (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2005), which additionally increases the barrier for affected children and adolescents to confide in someone (Schaeffer et al., 2011). Furthermore, not all offenders have a sexual preference for children. Studies indicate that in a substantial number of cases, the offender does not have a pedophilic preference (Seto, 2008, 2009, 2017), and it can be assumed that a considerable part of persons with pedophilia do not sexually act out towards children (Cantor & McPhail, 2016). Moreover, even though most offenders are male adults, female offenders (Darling & Christensen, 2020) and peer/juvenile offenders are also prevalent (Keelan & Fremouw, 2013). Besides all these offender misconceptions, many are not aware of the dangers that exist for children in new media. For instance, internet-based technologies like social media offer various opportunities for the sexual exploitation of children (Babchishin et al., 2011). Studies indicate that these mostly anonymous and unregulated online environments are increasingly used to collect and distribute images or videos of child sexual abuse or to lure potential victims (e.g., Gottfried et al., 2020; Kloess et al., 2014; Whittle et al., 2013; Wolak et al., 2008).

The described misconceptions and knowledge gaps indicate that within society there is a perception of CSA that cannot be traced back to one's own experiences or substantiated through empirical results. At the same time, media coverage is often cited as a reason for the many misconceptions about the topic (e.g., Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010; Kitzinger, 2004; Popović, 2018; Döring & Walter, 2020) while providing a central source for the public (e.g., Babatsikos, 2010; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015; Kitzinger, 2004). By consuming media coverage about CSA, especially people who did not experience CSA gain second-hand experiences. Unfortunately, several content analyses demonstrated that media coverage about CSA is biased by focusing on spectacular cases, while news on prevention strategies are rare (e.g., Kitzinger, 2004; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; McCartan, 2004; Mejia et al., 2012). Moreover, by focusing media coverage on spectacular cases, media coverage perpetuates existing myths and spreads incorrect

beliefs about the characteristics of victims and offenders (e.g., Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Additionally, it may reinforce stigmata (e.g., Jones et al., 2010) and cause distress through insensitive treatment of those affected (Jones et al., 2010; Maercker & Mehr, 2006).

However, media production also depends on various circumstances like journalists' working conditions or recipients' needs, which also impact the way of reporting (e.g., Loosen et al., 2020; Loosen & Schmidt, 2012). Thus, it is essential to mention that insensitive or stigmatizing media coverage like the conflation of pedophilia and pedosexual behavior also results due to a lack of expert knowledge and the fact that such complex topics as paraphilias are hard to comprehend within a short news article (Ischebeck et al., 2021; Stelzmann et al., 2020). Furthermore, media reporting is usually directed at an audience (e.g., Couldry, 2011). It is evident that sensitive reporting needs recipients just as much as sensational articles do. Media agendas and audience agendas create mutually reinforcing dynamics (Maurer, 2016). This demonstrates that more is needed than just improved newspaper articles: There has to be an education of society, which can be supported by media reporting.

In sum, media coverage about CSA which is balanced and does not focus on extreme cases but also reports about prevention has the potential to provide the public with essential information and thereby educate about CSA (Dewi et al., 2021). In addition, it can exert pressure on political actors or institutions to take action (e.g., Donnelly & Inglis, 2010). Affected children need help in drawing public attention to their suffering and experiences. Here, media have the potential to support them, to act as communicators of prevention and drivers of social discourse.

Aims of the book

What is missing from our point of view is an overview of the current state of research on media coverage of CSA. Therefore, the book aims to create an initial framework for this, compile internationally and interdisciplinary relevant research findings, and derive initial conclusions and recommendations for a diverse and interdisciplinary audience. Due to the complexity of the topic itself, this book cannot cover all facets. Nevertheless, we see it as an attempt to anchor an intersection between scientific evidence and media production as well as to smooth the way for collaborations, which are needed for effective prevention and intervention in this public health issue. After all, an easily accessible, evidence-based body of information is needed so that parties from politics, media, science, and related areas

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can work together to address CSA. We hope that this book will help generate further research contributions on the topic and advance the linkage between journalism and science. For this reason, it is explicitly addressed not only to scientists but also to journalists, politicians, and further related stakeholders, who all can use their potential to initiate decisive changes. With this book about CSA and the media we want to draw attention to the perspectives of significant parties, to possible risks and opportunities of media coverage, and to ideas for improvement.

Findings of the contributions in the book

In this book we intend to address the role of traditional media (e.g., newspaper) as well as new media (e.g., social media platforms) in the context of the complex phenomenon of CSA. Since the chapters focus on CSA from different perspectives, it is divided into two thematic parts.

The first part of the book focuses on the **media as communicator**, starting with reflecting the media coverage of CSA. It begins with the chapter by Nicola Döring, who presents findings on CSA representations in several media channels. Besides investigating quality criteria for traditional media articles, Nicola Döring also examines how CSA is covered in stock photos and on YouTube. Since CSA is often linked to the Catholic Church, Tereza Zavadilová explores how church-related newspapers report on CSA by comparing the Vatican's official media channel with an independent church publisher.

Furthermore, this book focuses on media effects evoked by media coverage on affected persons like victims, survivors, and their close contacts. The chapter by Adrian Etzel and colleagues presents reactions of victims/survivors on the media campaign "Those who break the silence break the power of the perpetrators", which encouraged affected persons to tell their stories and make political demands. By addressing the perspectives, experiences, and expectations of victims, respectively survivors, of the media coverage of CSA, Bianca Nagel and Barbara Kavemann present results of a mixed-method approach. Fatma Çelik and Beyza Karabaş investigate the knowledge and thematic media consumption of social workers in training who are professionals working with at-risk groups (Bange, 2015).

Moreover, this book addresses on the media effects on other involved groups. By presenting results of a content analysis on the media coverage of offenders, Stjepka Popović discusses their potential consequences. As journalists play a key role in media reporting of CSA, we provide insights

on how journalists deal with CSA in their daily work based on a qualitative survey.

To give insight into the topic from a practitioner's point of view, in addition to the empirical findings and to provide concrete handouts, the book contains a journalistic guideline, an interview with public relations practitioners, and an essay of a journalist. In detail, due to the sensitivity of the topic, Stjepka Popović proposes comprehensive guidelines for media handling of CSA in order to provide a more ethical and realistic media coverage without perpetuating myths and stereotypes. Given the fact that media coverage often conflated CSA offender and pedophilia, we interviewed Jens Wagner and Maximilian von Heyden, who work(ed) for the public relation section of the German prevention network "Kein Täter werden" (translation: "Don't Offend"), which offers anonymously therapeutic help for persons who are sexually attracted to children. As journalists are key actors while reporting about CSA, we also wish to highlight the media's handling of CSA from the journalist's point of view. Nina Apin, a long-time reporter in forensic contexts, writes about her experiences and addresses the opportunities and difficulties journalists may face.

As the first part of the book mainly focuses on the links between traditional media and CSA, the **second part of the book** addresses new media and their connection to CSA. Thereby it focuses on **new media as a possibility to prevention and supportive measures as well as a platform for CSA**. As a starting point, Edith Huber gives comprehensive insights into the development of "child pornography" (Child sexual exploitation material; CSEM) on the Internet. Besides the distribution of CSEM, the digital transformation also brings new opportunities for offenders to contact potential children directly. For this reason, Jimmy Sanderson and Melinda Weathers describe in their review the intersection of CSA in sport through digital technology. Next to the negative consequences, new media also raises the opportunity for people who experienced CSA to seek support and like-minded people. In their chapter, Simone Eelmaa and Maria Murumaa-Mengel investigate the conditions under which victims, who disclose their CSA experiences to the online community, do or do not receive support in unmoderated forums by identifying specific characteristics and social constructions. At the same time, new media also serve as platform for persons with pedophilia to exchange with like-minded. Therefore, the book concludes with the chapter by Mikkel Rask Pedersen, who observed interaction dynamics within forums for minor-attracted persons (persons with pedophilia) and discusses the function of forums as a

platform to facilitate coping strategies as well as a place where unfavorable dynamics can also create circles of justification.

Conclusions and future directions

This book attempts to shed light on the connections between CSA and the media in different ways by involving various studies and perspectives from practitioners. However, the book does not claim to cover all topics. There are still many research desiderata in this area that currently receive little or no attention (e.g., darknet, misuse of children's images from social media, media portrayal of female offenders, re-traumatization due to journalistic interviews). Nevertheless, the book offers a comprehensive overview of relevant aspects that are addressed in connection with CSA and the media. For this reason, we would like to thank persons and institutions that provided the realization of this book in various ways. First of all, we would like to express our thanks to the authors, whose work highlight different aspects of the topic and thus help the book to reflect the diversity of the subject matter. We would also like to thank Mr. Rörig, who wrote the preface and thus provided an insight into his work as Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues. Furthermore, we are indebted to the Freie Universität Berlin for the financial support and Sandra Frey as well as Eva Lang from NOMOS, who provided us with advice and support at all times during the preparation of the book. Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues, families, and friends who have supported this book project from the beginning and who were, despite the sensitive subject, always willing to talk with us about the different aspects of CSA and media.

CSA remains an intra-societal phenomenon that needs to be further raised in people's awareness. Prevention can only succeed if we manage to establish evidence-based knowledge at both the individual and societal level and treat those affected by CSA with respect and openness. Media coverage has the potential to make a significant contribution to this. This requires better networking between journalists, the scientific community, and related areas. It is not enough to expect journalists to inform themselves comprehensively about CSA and report adequately. It is also the duty of science, politics, and stakeholders to support journalists in this endeavor.

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1. Media as communicator

1.1. Media coverage about child sexual abuse

Quality issues in media representations of child sexual abuse: Newspaper articles, stock photos, and YouTube videos

Nicola Döring

Media representations of child sexual abuse (CSA) put the issue on the public and political agenda and shape our understanding of it. While media representations can be helpful in giving survivors a voice and sensitizing and informing the public, they can also disseminate misleading and harmful messages. The present chapter focuses on the representations of CSA in three types of media: newspaper articles, stock photographs, and YouTube videos. Hence, for the first time in this research field, three representation modes (textual, photographic, videographic) and two media systems (mass media, social media) are covered. A sample of media contributions was drawn from each media type and submitted to quantitative media content analysis. Results show that newspaper articles, stock photos, and YouTube videos often rely on stereotypes and myths. Quality issues in CSA representations are discussed in light of the presented data and previous findings. Practical suggestions for quality improvements are provided.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, media reporting, media framing, media content analysis, media quality analysis

How societies deal with the problem of child sexual abuse (CSA) depends on many factors. The legal, educational, healthcare, and, last but not least, media systems all play an important role. The media system is particularly relevant as, by constructing and disseminating representations of CSA, it raises the problem on the public and political agenda. In accordance with the so-called framing theory, which leads in this field of research, media representations shape our assumptions about the typical perpetrators, victims, and circumstances of child sexual abuse, its causes and effects, and prevention and intervention approaches (Dorfman et al., 2011; Kitzinger, 2004). Fictional CSA representations found in novels, movies, and television series are important; however, non-fictional representations disseminated via press, radio, television as well as online and social media are even more influential as they outnumber fictional representations by far.

Previous research on media portrayals of CSA paints a mixed picture of the content, quality, and impact of reporting. On the one hand, it has been shown that the media contribute to breaking the taboo around the problem of CSA, that media reports encourage and give a voice to those affected, and that investigative journalism can make a significant contribution to clarifying abuse in institutions such as schools and churches (e.g.,

Donnelly, 2016). On the other hand, media content analyses have shown that press and TV reporting of CSA is often lurid, uses the wrong terms, picks out spectacular individual cases, and privileges sensationalism over accuracy and the public interest (e.g., DiBennardo, 2018). Often, journalists do not sufficiently respect the interests, personal rights, and dignity of CSA survivors, up to and including re-traumatization, for example through voyeuristic interview questions on the sexual details of the assaults (e.g., Jones et al., 2011).

Various institutions of journalism (e.g., DART Centre Europe, 2016) and violence prevention (e.g., MECASA, 2016) have therefore developed guidelines to improve the quality of reporting on sexual violence in general and CSA in particular. The characteristics and quality of public CSA communication continue to be critically discussed.

The present chapter aims to contribute to this debate by looking at CSA representations and related quality issues in three different types of media, namely newspaper articles, stock photographs, and YouTube videos. Thus, consideration will be given to textual, photographic, and videographic representations of CSA which originate from professional actors in the media industry as well as from social media users. The chapter summarizes the state of research on representations of CSA in the three media types mentioned and specifies the research questions. It then describes the methodological approach and presents the main results, with a focus on illustrative examples. A discussion of the findings, limitations, and implications in terms of suggestions for quality improvements completes the chapter.

Theoretical background and state of research

When it comes to the theoretical conceptualization of media representations of the problem of CSA, the framing approach of communication science is the central theory model (Weatherred, 2015; Popović, 2018). The framing theory emphasizes that media representations do not simply depict real facts such as CSA in text or visual form but, rather, process and shape them in a specific meaning-making way in the course of reporting (Entman, 1993). Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Media *content* analysis examines how CSA is framed in different media in different countries and historical periods. Typically, quantitative media content analysis is used to determine which types of sexual abuse (e.g., domestic versus institutional) or victims (e.g., girls versus boys) are depicted and in what way this is done (e.g., DiBennardo, 2018).

Media *quality* analysis addresses the question of the extent to which media framing is factually appropriate and of high quality, or whether quality deficiencies in CSA reporting occur. Quality deficiencies can, for example, consist in the fact that media framing particularly emphasizes certain features of the abuse problem which, according to the current state of research, can be classified as myths (e.g., that abuse perpetrators are always "pedophiles"), or that media reporting neglects scientifically recognized prevention measures (e.g., the need to de-stigmatize pedophilia in order to promote the primary prevention of CSA; Stelzmann et al., 2020).

Limited CSA-related media content and media quality analyses of various types of media are available to date and mostly relate to the Anglo-American region.

State of research on newspaper articles

Two peer-reviewed research reviews on content and quality analyses of mass media coverage (especially press coverage) of CSA have been published. A literature review undertaken by communication scientist Jane Weatherred (University of Southern Indiana, United States) included 16 studies and shows that research on mass media reporting on CSA has focused primarily on newspaper articles (Weatherred, 2015). According to research results, CSA-related reporting in recent decades can be divided into five stages, each of which has its own typical stories and effects on society (see table 1).

Table 1

Mass media coverage of CSA over the last 50 years (Source: modified and based on Weatherred, 2015, p. 19)

Five stages of CSA media coverage	Prominent stories and effects on society
Early history (1960–1979)	Growing media attention paid to CSA as a hidden and widespread societal problem started to sensitize both the broader public and professionals such as pediatricians and teachers.
Backlash (1980–1989)	Accusations of high-profile abuse cases in day-care centers widely covered by the press proved false, fostering public suspicion of child protection measures.
Sex offender legislation (United States) (1990–1999)	News coverage of horrific child abduction cases pushed the idea of "stranger danger" and prompted a call for more punitive measures against CSA offenders. In the United States in particular, several new sex offender laws were passed.
Religious institutions (2000–2009)	The unveiling and intense media coverage of decades of abuse and its cover-up in religious institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church affected trust in the church.
High-profile cases involving non-religious institutions (2010–present)	High-profile CSA cases involving non-religious institutions such as schools, universities, and sports associations gained significant media attention. Media predominantly focused on individual perpetrators and their punishment.

In her conclusion, Jane Weatherred (2015) observes critically that, according to available studies, the media coverage of CSA to date is characterized by *episodic framing*, which picks out sensational individual cases and neglects *thematic framing*, that is, looking at the social context of, and responsibilities for, the sexual abuse problem. At the same time, on the basis of the current state of research, she criticizes the fact that the media, which are supposed to contribute to solving the CSA problem, usually only refer to the punishment of the perpetrator and hardly address prevention approaches at all.

The sociologist Stjeka Popović (University of Zagreb, Croatia) has presented a second systematic review of all content analytical studies on media representations of CSA (Popović, 2018). This literature review includes 24 studies. Once again, these are mainly analyses of newspaper articles, with 15 of the 24 being from the period 2010–2017. The new review emphasizes again that many of these studies analyze CSA press coverage on

the basis of framing theory. One aspect of framing is whether a pro-victim or a pro-accused perspective is taken. Here, it was shown that a clear *pro-victim perspective* prevails in CSA reporting on the Catholic Church, whereas a *pro-accused perspective* was found in reporting if the alleged perpetrator was a celebrity (e.g., Michael Jackson).

The second literature review confirms that the media usually use episodic rather than thematic framing in their reports on CSA. It also confirms that the media continue to focus on perpetrator punishment as the core solution to the problem, while prevention approaches are ignored. In contrast to the literature review by Jane Weatherred (2015), however, Stjeka Popović's (2018) review reveals a slight tendency in the media to focus more on the responsibility of institutions and society as a whole, in addition to attributing blame to individual perpetrators.

Conclusion: Both research reviews make it clear that the current state of research on CSA media (mainly newspaper) representations identifies various quality deficiencies but does not provide a comprehensive framework of quality criteria for CSA reporting.

State of research on stock photos

Previous research on press coverage of CSA has usually concentrated entirely on text. An analysis of visual language is lacking but necessary (Popović, 2018). There are basically two types of images used in the press coverage of CSA: documentary photos and symbolic photos.

Documentary photos depict the real facts of the case, for example a photo of a convicted offender in a court case on CSA taken by the court reporter directly after the sentencing in the courtroom. The documentary photo acts as an *authentic witness to the real scene* of the sentencing of a specific offender (Machin, 2004, p. 317).

Symbolic photos, on the other hand, are prefabricated photos taken in completely different contexts and retrieved from one's own archive or a stock photo bank in order to illustrate a factual situation representatively through similar or abstracted image motifs. One example is a photo of handcuffs taken from a stock photo bank, which is used to symbolize a convicted offender, even though the photo in question was taken in a studio many years before the relevant court proceedings. The symbolic stock photo functions as a *principally interchangeable illustration of the general concept* of sentencing (Machin, 2004, p. 317).

The journalistic press code demands a strict orientation towards facts and truth (IFJ, 2019). This means that documentary photos must not

be manipulated by image processing and that symbolic photos must be marked as such.

Symbolic photos and stock photo banks have become more important in the practice of media reporting, advertising, and marketing in the course of digitalization over recent decades. The academic literature now speaks of a *global stock photo industry* worth billions (Frosh, 2001, 2002, 2008; Kalazić et al., 2015) and criticizes stock photo banks for spreading an often "soulless", consumption- and marketing-oriented, glossy imagery (Frosh, 2008; Machin, 2004). Leading stock photo bank providers include dpa / Picture Alliance (https://www.picture-alliance.com) and Getty Images / iStockfoto (https://www.gettyimages.com), which together provide more than 160 million symbolic photos and other symbolic images (e.g., computer graphics). Although some iconography studies on stock photos and their main motifs are available, this type of photos is considered to be disproportionately under-researched, given their wide distribution and great cultural influence (Kalazić et al., 2015).

Conclusion: To date, no knowledge exists on the question of how stock photo banks visualize the problem of CSA or which CSA iconography prevails in the stock photos used in the press.

State of research on YouTube videos

The current state of research on media representations of CSA is strongly focused on the mass media, especially press coverage. Communicators in the mass media are typically professional journalists. With the popularization of social media, the question arises of how and by whom the problem of sexual abuse is dealt with on these participatory digital platforms. By far the most widely-used social media platform to date is the video platform YouTube. In the Alexa ranking of the most visited websites, YouTube.com ranks second, with only the search engine Google.com being more popular (Alexa, 2022).

YouTube research is booming, and numerous content and quality analyses are available that explore the video representations of diverse topics and issues. Current studies deal, for example, with political communication, health communication, education, marketing, and entertainment on YouTube. However, whether and how the social problem of sexual violence in general and CSA in particular is addressed in YouTube videos has to date largely been described as a research gap.

Nonetheless, discussion and analysis have been ongoing for some considerable time as to how social media in general are used for feminist

activism against sexual violence (Mendes et al., 2019). The focus here is usually on so-called "hashtag activism", which is primarily pursued via Twitter, where experiences of sexual violence and/or other gender-related social grievances are shared under a particular hashtag (e.g., #MeToo). The respective hashtag and its political message then gain public attention and sometimes develop into a social movement (e.g., the so-called "#MeToo movement"). *Feminist hashtag activism* is increasingly being scientifically investigated, for example by manual or computer-assisted content analysis of the Twitter tweets, interviews, or surveys with Twitter activists, thereby investigating the practical and political consequences of hashtag activism. Examples are studies on anti-violence feminist hashtag activism related to hashtags such as:

- #MeToo (Bogen et al., 2019; Hosterman et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2019; Kaufman et al., 2019; Lindgren, 2019; Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018; Mendes & Ringrose, 2019; Suk et al., 2019);
- #YesAllWomen (Barker Plummer & Barker Plummer, 2017; Rodino-Colocino, 2014; Thrift, 2014); and
- #WhyIStayed (Clark, 2016; Weathers et al., 2016).

Although feminist hashtag activism is reaching its limits and receiving a backlash, previous research clearly acknowledges the benefits of this form of social media communication, which leads to public awareness, solidarity, and the politicization of individual experiences of sexualized violence such as rape and CSA.

Related forms of online activism such as the *feminist photo or selfie activism* of "Project Unbreakable" (https://projectunbreakable.tumblr.com) are in similar circumstances. This project was launched in October 2011 by 19-year-old photography student Grace Brown from New York City. It consists of a collection of user-submitted photographs (mostly selfies) in which rape and CSA survivors hold up a poster with a quote from their tormentors. The first photo of the project shows a poster with the inscription "You wanted it, though". The feminist selfie project is described in the academic literature as a successful digital form of mobilization and solidarity against sexual violence (Ferreday, 2017).

Apart from collective online activism, social media are also used individually to break the silence around sexual abuse and share personal abuse experiences. For example, the video "My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self-harm", which was published on YouTube in September 2012, gained sad fame worldwide. The 9-minute video was produced and published by 15-year-old student Amanda Todd from Canada. In this video, the teenager tells her story of online sexual abuse, ongoing bullying, desperation,

loneliness, and suicidal thoughts by holding labeled notecards up to the camera. Four weeks after the video was released, she took her own life. In the course of the subsequent intense media coverage, her video went viral.

Telling traumatic experiences via notecards has since established itself as a video genre in its own right on social media. Communication scientist Kelli Fowlds (2014) examined *N* = 90 such authentic notecard story videos on YouTube. She found that most of them are made by girls and young women and often tell stories of sexual abuse. The author explains that girls and young women use YouTube as a digital space for mutual support. An analysis of the viewer comments on the notecard videos showed that the audience mostly reacts positively. In contrast to the situation of Amanda Todd, the study expresses hope that social media such as YouTube can help to overcome the isolation of those affected by CSA as they network and support each other online.

Conclusion: Apart from Kelli Fowlds' master's thesis (Fowlds, 2014), no other published studies could be identified that investigate the representation of the CSA problem on YouTube, either individually or in the context of feminist anti-violence online activism.

Research questions

Against the background of the limited research to date, the present chapter aims to answer the following three practice-oriented research questions (RQ), which relate to textual, photographic, and videographic CSA representations and their quality deficiencies:

- RQ1: Which quality criteria should be applied to CSA-related newspaper articles? Which quality problems are to be identified and solved?
- RQ2: How is CSA visualized in the stock photos used by the press? Which quality problems are to be identified and solved?
- RQ3: How is CSA treated in YouTube videos? Which quality problems are to be identified and solved?

Methods

To answer the three RQ regarding newspaper articles, stock photos, and YouTube videos, different methods of content and quality analysis were used. Inductive and deductive approaches were combined in the development of the codebooks and the reliability of all instruments was tested

by determining the intercoder agreement. In all three studies the relevant rules of research ethics were implemented.

Method for newspaper article analysis

To answer RQ1, a framework of quality criteria for media reporting on CSA was developed. Four different sources were used for this purpose:

- $N = 22$ journalistic guidelines on high-quality media reporting about CSA;
- $N = 7$ scientific publications on high-quality media reporting about CSA;
- An online survey of $N = 29$ survivors of CSA from Germany on the quality of media reporting about CSA; and
- An online survey of $N = 59$ CSA counseling centers in Germany on the quality of media reporting about CSA.

All four expert sources were systematically analyzed (for methodological details, see Döring & Walter, 2020). The study was supported by a grant from the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues of the German government (Z2/21.31.10/P/17). As a result, the quality requirements of all sources were integrated into a criteria framework with ten central quality criteria for CSA media and press coverage.

Method for stock photo analysis

To answer RQ2, a gross sample of $N = 2,000$ CSA-related online newspaper articles (German language) was composed using the online archives of 20 regional and national newspapers. From each of the 20 online newspaper archives the first 100 articles for the search term "sexual abuse" were sampled. This gross sample of $N = 2,000$ CSA-related online newspaper articles contained a net sample of $N = 419$ articles with one CSA-related stock photo each. All these stock photos were subjected to a systematic quantitative image content analysis, so that a CSA-related stock photo iconography could be created (for methodological details, see Döring & Walter, 2021). This iconography comprises seven image types of photo motifs that can be assigned to three thematic groups.

Method for YouTube video analysis

To answer RQ3, a sample of N = 300 CSA-related YouTube videos (German language) was drawn by entering the search term "child sexual abuse" in the YouTube search mask. The top 100 hits of each of three YouTube filters (relevance, upload date, and view count) were included in the sample and subjected to a quantitative media content analysis (for methodological details, see Döring, 2018). As a result, five groups of CSA-related YouTube videos from different types of video producers were distinguished and characterized according to their content and quality.

Results

The results of the three studies are presented here in a cursory manner with a special focus on illustrative examples and practical ways of improving media quality. A more detailed presentation of the results on newspaper articles, stock photos, and YouTube videos can be found in the original papers (Döring, 2018; Döring & Walter, 2020, 2021).

Results on newspaper articles

According to the public interest model of normative media theory (McQuail, 2010), news media have the duty – in addition to their economic goals – to serve the public interest. With regard to CSA, the press should, accordingly, orient its reporting in such a way that it contributes to the education and sensitization of the public and the treatment of the problem, which can be understood as a public health epidemic. A prerequisite of responsible journalism that serves the public interest is that journalists follow the seven fundamental journalistic quality dimensions on which there is broad consensus in journalism research (Jungnickel, 2011). In the course of study 1, ten CSA-specific quality criteria were assigned to these seven general quality dimensions (see table 2). These CSA-related quality criteria, which are based on four CSA expert sources (journalistic guidelines, academic literature, CSA survivors, CSA counseling centers), can be used in research as well as in journalistic practice to identify and remedy quality deficiencies in CSA reporting.

In accordance with the fundamental first journalistic quality dimension, QD1, "Relevance" (see table 2), CSA reporting, in particular, is required to

overcome the typical focus on individual cases (episodic framing). For this purpose, sufficient contextual information is to be provided in the sense of the first quality criterion, QC1, "Thematic framing of CSA", which embeds the individual case in a broader societal context. CSA reporting typically comes in the form of *crime and court reporting* that by definition focuses on unusual cases as they are regarded as the most newsworthy (Henshall & Ingram, 2012, chapters 36 and 65). Hence, court and crime reporting is highly biased towards exceptional cases and neglects the most common and typical cases (Young & Hermida, 2015). To counterbalance these problems of episodic framing, CSA-related court and crime reporting should adopt thematic framing by including crime statistics, expert statements, and background information on those social causes that facilitate the committing and covering up of sexual abuse. The available content and quality analyses of press coverage (Wheatherred, 2015; Popović, 2018) are unanimous in their call for more thematic framing. Moreover, journalistic guidelines, counseling centers and, last but not least, sexual abuse survivors urgently demand more contextualization of the reporting on individual CSA crime and court cases. In order to promote thematic framing in journalistic practice, it makes sense for specialist institutions to provide journalists with up-to-date, *national fact sheets on CSA* (e.g., NSVRC, 2015).

Computational journalism offers another route to thematic CSA framing. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, complements its crime reporting on homicides by hosting a publicly accessible and searchable database called "The Homicide Report" (https://homicide.latimes.com/). This database provides a short, automatically generated digital news report on each and every homicide case documented by the Los Angeles County Coroner since 2010. The database is the successor to a blog project initiated by award-winning journalist Jill Leovy in 2007 and allows for statistical analyses and geographic mapping by date and location of killing, cause of death, and victim's age, gender, and race/ethnicity (Young & Hermida, 2015). It is maintained by the *Los Angeles Times* to overcome the problem of very selective, biased, and episodic coverage of homicides in the newspaper itself. This continuously updated and complete homicide database has, for the first time, publicly demonstrated that only very few selected homicide cases (about 10 % of annual homicides) are reported in the newspaper, usually with an emotionalizing "human touch". Providing objective, up-to-date, and complete homicide data organized by algorithms and curated by journalists in a public service database enables a better understanding of patterns of the homicide epidemic, for example in terms of who is disproportionally affected or non-affected. While the general turn to more computational journalism brings its own challenges regarding the ethics and quali-

ty of news reporting (Helberger et al., 2019), it holds out the prospect of more accurate, contextualized, and unbiased reporting in terms of thematic framing (Young & Hermida, 2015). If and how The *Los Angeles Times'* Homicide Report can serve as an example for future CSA-related computational journalism projects remains an open question.

Table 2

A framework for high-quality press reporting on CSA (Source: modified and based on Döring & Walter, 2020, p. 405)

Seven generic journalistic quality dimensions (QD)	Ten issue-specific quality criteria (QC) for CSA media coverage
QD1: Relevance	QC1: Thematic framing of CSA
QD2: Communication	QC2: Non-sensational reporting on CSA QC3: Use of appropriate terms regarding CSA
QD3: Diversity	QC4: Inclusion of CSA stakeholders
QD4: Appropriateness	QC5: Non-stereotypical reporting on CSA QC6: Inclusion of CSA-related prevention and intervention
QD5: Legitimacy	QC7: Ethical treatment of survivors of CSA QC8: Lawful reporting on CSA
QD6: Impartiality	QC9: Balance of CSA survivors' and alleged perpetrators' interests
QD7: Transparency	QC10: Disclosure and reflection of official sources

The second quality dimension, QD2, "Communication", refers to a clearly understandable and appropriate journalistic language style. For reporting on CSA, this means, in concrete terms, that sensationalism, which aims to shock with sexual details of the crime and emotionalize with descriptions of the perpetrator as a "monster" or a "pervert", should be avoided (QC3). Similarly, misleading terms (QC4) such as "sex scandal" or "sex affair" should be replaced by correct terms such as "child sexual abuse". Presenting perpetrators of abuse as "monsters" is misleading because, among other things, such individuals often initially appear friendly and trustworthy. Suspected abusers are often referred to in the media as "pedophiles", which is another inappropriate practice since many are not pedophiles at all and, conversely, many people with a pedophilic preference do not commit any abusive acts. The misleading linguistic equation of pedophiles with abuse offenders makes primary prevention more difficult, because in a climate of harsh stigmatization people with pedophilic tendencies hardly dare to reveal themselves and seek help at an early stage, which increases the

problem of abuse (Jahnke, 2018). Negative examples of sensationalism and inappropriate labeling are newspaper articles with titles like

- "PURE EVIL: Monster mum sold daughters, 7 and 8, to pedophile and watched as he raped them in a car" (*The Sun*, Lockett, 2020),
- "Monster who planned to rape baby tells of secret international pedophile ring" (*Liverpool Echo*, Docking, 2019),
- "Pedophile who abused up to 200 children stabbed to death in prison" (*New York Post*, Steinbuch, 2019).

The third quality dimension, QD3, "Diversity", is to be implemented according to the fourth quality criterion, QC4, "Inclusion of CSA stakeholders", in such a way that a variety of stakeholders have their say in CSA reporting, namely CSA survivors, specialist counseling centers, researchers, law enforcement agencies, etc. To foster CSA media reporting that includes the voices of diverse experts and stakeholders, the establishment and maintenance of national and local databases with CSA experts willing to speak with the media would be useful.

A particular concern of all sources examined for this study is the implementation of the fourth quality dimension, QD4, "Appropriateness", which is characterized by non-stereotypical reporting (QC5). This means that journalists should not uncritically adopt common CSA stereotypes or, even better, should actively refute them. This includes stereotypes and myths such as that the danger of abuse is primarily posed by strangers ("stranger danger"), whereas in reality it often emanates from known and trusted persons (Weatherred, 2015); that CSA is becoming ever more widespread, whereas in reality it is decreasing (Finkelhor & Jones, 2004, 2012); that perpetrators are conspicuous "monsters", "perverts", "predators", and "pedophiles", whereas in reality abusers are often people who are socially well respected and act in a trustworthy and sympathetic manner (DiBennardo, 2018); and that online abusers are ugly, old, pedophilic men who pretend to be adolescents on the net, whereas in reality it is often attractive younger men who manage to awaken the interest of some minors precisely because of their openly communicated adult status (Hasinoff, 2014; Wolak et al., 2010).

In addition to avoiding and explaining common misconceptions, stereotypes, and myths about CSA, appropriate press reporting should include the proper assessment of the causes of the problem and, in particular, of possible solutions. For this reason, quality criterion QC6 requires the inclusion of prevention and intervention approaches. Just as it has become an established practice in reporting on suicide cases to refer to help hotlines at the end of each article, reporting on CSA cases can and should

regularly refer to national contact points for CSA victims, witnesses, and potential perpetrators. Furthermore, effective prevention and intervention approaches can also be explained in more detail in the reporting itself (Davies, 2014; Mejia et al., 2012). This includes, for example, references to CSA protection concepts in institutions, recommendations for the early detection of abuse, explanations of support services such as legal and psychological counseling or trauma therapy, and references to political initiatives on children's rights and protection against violence.

In CSA reporting, the fifth general quality dimension, "legitimacy", includes ethical dealings with CSA survivors before, during, and after press interviews (QC7) and consideration of the respective national legal framework (QC8), for example with regard to the right to one's own image or privacy. Here, it is apparent that journalists sometimes treat CSA survivors very insensitively and disregard their rights, for example by revealing the identity of underage victims (Jones et al., 2010) or not making their journalistic interviews trauma-sensitive (for detailed information on good and trauma-sensitive interview practice, see, for example, WITNESS, 2013).

The sixth general journalistic quality dimension, QD6, concerns impartiality. In the context of CSA reporting, this means that, despite all empathy and support for CSA survivors, it remains a journalistic duty to thoroughly examine the facts and consider the rights of suspected offenders (QC9). Here, a special sensitivity is required so that CSA survivors do not experience the journalistic necessity to ask questions and run fact-checks as disrespect or mistrust. A tragic lesson in the damage that a lack of fact-checking can cause in the reporting on sexual violence is the article "A Rape on Campus", published in *Rolling Stone Magazine* in November 2014. The article revealed the shocking case of a young student known as "Jackie" who was raped multiple times at a fraternity party on the campus of the University of Virginia and then found that the university was unwilling to acknowledge and prosecute the crime. The article had been written by an award-winning investigative journalist who specialized in reporting on sexual violence. However, it had to be retracted soon after its publication due to lack of substance and led to a considerable backlash and several lawsuits, among others for damage to reputation. A scientific analysis precisely identifies the serious journalistic mistakes made in this reporting that meant to protect and support the alleged rape survivor but disregarded the alleged perpetrators' rights as well as the principles of impartiality and fact-checking (Coronel et al., 2015). The detailed scientific analysis of this notorious case of well-intended but badly executed reporting on sexual violence also explains how to avoid such mistakes in the future.

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Finally, the seventh and last general journalistic quality dimension is transparency. In the context of CSA, the identity of survivors (particularly minors) often needs to be protected. However, other sources must be precisely named and very critically questioned. For example, in the case of long-standing and systematic CSA in institutions, official sources often claim they had no knowledge of any abuse in the past. In such cases, officials and their claims need to be carefully scrutinized by journalists. A positive example is the *Indianapolis Star's* now multiple-award-winning coverage of decades of sexual abuse of hundreds of underage girl gymnasts in the USA by the well-respected and popular Olympic sports physician Larry Nassar. The "Out of Balance" series of articles, published in August 2016, ultimately led to the criminal conviction of Larry Nassar and Steve Penny, President of USA Gymnastics, and exposed the extent of both the sexual abuse and its institutional cover-up to the public. A Netflix documentary ("Athlete A") and a podcast series: https://believed.michiganradio.org have now been published about this exemplary press reporting, which also cast a critical eye on the role of the gymnasts' parents, who tragically failed their daughters. The critical questioning of the official statements of USA Gymnastics played a central role in this investigative journalistic work (Kwiatkowski et al., 2020).

Results on stock photos

The analysis of the symbolic photos used in press coverage showed that the *CSA iconography* (i.e., the set of typical image motifs for the representation of the issue of CSA) follows the main narrative of crime and court reporting in the articles (Henshall & Ingram, 2012). Therefore it takes up (1) the context of the crime; (2) the events of the crime and the people involved; and (3) the consequences of the crime (see table 3). Two types of crime contexts are visualized: real-world (e.g., a church, a school) and virtual (symbolized with computer equipment). In the symbolic visualization of the events of the crime and the people involved, there are three types of image motifs: the perpetrator before or during the crime, the victim before or during the crime, and the perpetrator and the victim together before or during the crime. The visualization of the consequences of the crime has two main types of motif: the consequences of the crime for the victim and the consequences of the crime for the perpetrator (see table 3).

Table 3

CSA iconography of stock photos used in press reporting (Source: modified and based on Döring & Walter, 2021, p. 378)

Three groups of CSA-related stock photo motifs	Seven types of CSA-related stock photos motifs	Stock photo examples
Context of the crime	Real-life context of the crime	Photo of a church, a school, a public swimming pool
	Virtual context of the crime	Photo of computer equipment
Events of the crime and people involved	Perpetrator before or during the crime	Photo of a gloomy, anonymous, hooded man
	Victim before or during the crime	Photo of a defensive girl, see figure 1
	Perpetrator and victim before or during the crime	Photo of a defensive girl, whom a man is approaching in a threatening manner
Consequences of the crime for the people involved	Consequences of the crime for the victim	Photo of a dirty, undressed doll lying on the floor, see figure 2
	Consequences of the crime for the perpetrator	Photo of handcuffed man

A critical evaluation of the CSA iconography created by stock photos reveals basically the same quality issues that are discussed for press reporting. Main weaknesses of traditional CSA press reporting explained above are episodic framing (Wheatherred, 2015; Popović, 2018) and neglect of prevention (Davies, 2014; Mejia et al., 2012). Looking at stock photos, we see the same patterns. The visual framing of CSA in stock photos remains episodic and case-related. The use of visual language to illustrate the larger social implications of CSA (e.g., computer graphics to illustrate the spread of the problem using statistical data) could not be observed. In addition to stock photos, the $N = 2,000$ online press articles examined used documentary photos at best (e.g., real crime scene photos) but no illustrations of background information in the sense of visual thematic framing. The only solution to the problem of CSA represented in stock photography is perpetrator punishment. All other prevention and intervention approaches remain invisible.

Furthermore, the CSA stock photo iconography can be characterized as sensationalistic and stereotyping. For example, the perpetrator in the symbolic photo typically appears as a gloomy, anonymous, hooded man. Thus,

misleading concepts of mysterious foreign perpetrators and a ubiquitous "stranger danger" (Weatherred, 2015) are visually propagated.

From the perspective of CSA survivors, who demand a comprehensive social reappraisal and appropriate press coverage (Kavemann et al., 2019), the visualization of the victims conveyed by stock photos is likely to be particularly problematic. For example, there are numerous examples of the image motif "victim before or during the crime" that objectify the victims, sexualize them through light clothing and camera focus between the legs, and force the media audience into the role of perpetrator (see figure 1).

Figure 1
CSA-related stock photo with the motif type "Victim before or during the crime" (Source: Adobe Stock)

Also worthy of criticism are the stock photos with the motif "consequences of the crime for the victims". The visual cliché of the child doll lying on the floor or in the gutter, soiled and stripped, with dead or closed eyes, is intended to visualize the physical and mental suffering of the victims and have an accusatory effect (see figure 2). At the same time, however, this (again often sexualizing) depiction reduces those affected by CSA completely to their passive role as victims and negates any hope of overcoming the trauma of abuse and creating a positive future.

Figure 2

CSA-related stock photo with the motif "Consequences of the crime for the victim" (Source: Adobe Stock)

Similarly problematic to the visual example in figure 2 are textual clichés for CSA consequences such as "soul murder". The psychoanalytic discourse on physical, emotional, and sexual abuse discusses traumatizing effects and talks about "soul murder". However, this academic literature also stresses resilience and possibilities of "soul-saving" change through social support and therapy (e.g., Shengold, 1978, 2011). Media representa-

tions often omit this perspective and absolutize the victim status of people affected by CSA.

An analysis of the prevention materials of CSA counseling centers showed that they completely dispense with such victim clichés and use a visual language that depicts CSA survivors as thoughtful, sad, or angry, but not alone. Their images of consequences of the crime for the victim include the seeking and finding of help, support, confidantes, and community, and also contain symbols of resilience and hope, such as a photo of a lifebelt or a flower breaking through asphalt (Döring & Walter, 2021).

Since stock photos are designed to visualize abstract concepts, they are usually simplified and clichéd as that is how they are easily recognizable, attract attention, and can emotionalize the audience (Machin, 2004, p. 317). These functions contradict a differentiated visual language with regard to the problem of CSA. To achieve qualitative improvements here, the textual framing of CSA would first have to change: Only when the press reporting in the text includes prevention approaches more strongly, it will make sense and be appropriate to also integrate stock photos representing prevention and intervention. Furthermore, it would be desirable for the critical questioning of CSA stereotypes and myths on the part of journalists to concern not only the text but also the visual language. Journalists could search for alternative image motifs in the comprehensive stock photo banks or at least avoid particularly problematic ones (e.g., sexualizing symbolic photos of CSA survivors). Last but not least, photo projects and competitions are conceivable which are aimed at developing and implementing alternative image motifs to CSA and uploading them to stock photo banks so that more diverse and sensitive image material is available there under the search term and tag "sexual abuse".

Results on YouTube videos

Although YouTube as a social media platform allows the active participation of media users, the analysis of a sample of $N = 300$ CSA videos showed that about half (47 %) came from media companies (see table 4). In German-speaking countries, it is mainly TV documentaries on CSA that are distributed by the media companies themselves or by private individuals on YouTube. The most frequently viewed CSA-related videos on YouTube cover particularly spectacular cases. The public video comments are accordingly emotionalized: Sympathy is expressed with the victims, whereas anger, disgust, hatred, and revenge and death fantasies are articulated with regard to the perpetrators. Sometimes conspiracy theories are voiced, for

example that top government circles systematically promote CSA (Döring, 2018; Kline, 2017).

Table 4

Composition of a sample of N = 300 CSA-related German-language YouTube videos (Source: based on Döring, 2018, p. 343)

Types of producers of CSA-related YouTube videos	Percentage of videos	Example content
Media organizations	47 %	TV documentaries on CSA cases
CSA survivors	17 %	Accounts of CSA survival
CSA experts	14 %	Explanation or demonstration of CSA-related therapy
YouTube celebrities	3 %	CSA-related clickbait
Further video producers	19 %	Far-right and anti-Islamic ideologies and conspiracy theories regarding CSA
Total	100 %	

One sixth of the videos in the sample (17 %) came from CSA survivors. However, the notecard videos described in the state of research (Fowlds, 2014) are not foregrounded. Instead, CSA survivors typically face the camera and report orally on their experiences, including trauma consequences, court cases, and psychotherapy. In the video comments, they receive support in most cases. The video comment section is also used by other survivors to share their stories and give further references to offers of help.

One seventh of the YouTube videos in the sample (14 %) were produced by CSA experts. The main content of their videos consists of social campaigns or recordings of lectures and conferences. In some cases, the qualifications of the video producers are clearly visible. Sometimes, however, there are also questionable videos by self-appointed therapists who claim that sexual abuse trauma can easily be cured, some of whom receive enthusiastic support in the video comments. This result is not surprising because healthcare information on YouTube is known for its diverse quality and often missing background information on information providers (Madathil et al., 2015).

A very small percentage of the videos in the sample (3 %) came from YouTube celebrities who take up the problem of abuse in a way that is differentiated but also deliberately lurid, thus generating great attention in the sense of clickbait. Using misleading, sensationalized video titles and video thumbnails is a common practice on YouTube used by media com-

panies, social media influencers, and ordinary social media users. Clickbait is considered a type of online disinformation (Kapantai et al., 2020).

The fifth and last group of CSA-related YouTube videos originated from "further video producers" and is quite large, at just under one fifth (19 %) of the YouTube videos in the sample. This video group points to the problem that the authorship of YouTube content is often not clearly attributable. For example, there are some YouTube channels in German-speaking countries that visually imitate the appearance of TV news but do not, in fact, originate from journalists or news organizations. Instead, they stem from individuals or networks that disseminate ideological content and instrumentalize the issue of CSA in order to spread far-right or Islamophobic messages and conspiracy theories that are also investigated as a separate type of online disinformation (Kapantai et al., 2020).

Overall, the YouTube video analysis confirmed the current state of research on the significance of social media for dealing with sexual violence (Fowlds, 2014): YouTube is used by CSA survivors for mutual exchange, networking, support, and public relations. While personal accounts and stories of survival could be identified, the sample did not entail examples of feminist anti-violence activism on YouTube.

The analysis also revealed serious quality problems. YouTube as a social media platform seems to further amplify the tendency of the mass media to sensationalize selected abuse cases and focus mainly on perpetrator blame and punishment instead of treating CSA as a societal problem (Wheatherred, 2015; Popović, 2018). This takes place through two mechanisms: Videos of extreme cases are more often uploaded to YouTube, and they receive more views, shares, and comments. As a result, the YouTube algorithm then displays those videos particularly frequently in search queries and video suggestions. The sensationalizing style of the videos is further intensified by highly emotional video comments, which simplistically pity the victims and fantasize about revenge on the perpetrators.

Other quality problems include click baiting (e.g., YouTube influencers take up the abuse problem to generate attention with sensationalized abuse content or "abuse pranks"), self-proclaimed therapists, and dubious therapeutic approaches as well as the ideological appropriation of the abuse problem by inhuman ideologies.

It is unlikely that these quality problems of CSA-related YouTube videos will be solved by educating the video producers, since they profit from their specific framing of the abuse problem. Instead, approaches to mitigating this problem consist primarily in (1) producing and publishing more high-quality and wide-reaching CSA-related content on YouTube and (2) fostering the YouTube literacy of the audience.

Discussion

The present content and quality analysis of CSA representations in press articles, stock photos, and YouTube videos provides indications a) of which quality criteria are to be applied in each case and b) that various, sometimes serious quality deficiencies are apparently widespread.

The generalizability of the current analysis is limited by the fact that mainly German-language media examples were examined. It will be the task of future research projects to apply standardized quality criteria to larger and internationally comparable samples of media materials in order to be able to assess the distribution of quality deficiencies more accurately and also to monitor quality changes over time.

In order to promote practical improvements, *workshops* bringing together stakeholders such as CSA experts (e.g., survivors, counselors, researchers) and media professionals (e.g., journalists, editors) to discuss the quality deficiencies identified and develop possible solutions for better quality reporting on CSA are promising. In addition to raising awareness and training journalists, concrete *tools* are also relevant, for example annually updated national fact sheets on CSA and pedophilia, up-to-date databases of experts and survivors available for press interviews, or collections of quality-controlled stock photos. Using computational journalism to foster thematic CSA framing seems to be another fruitful approach.

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that distortions and weaknesses in media representations of CSA cannot be completely eliminated; hence, the *media literacy* of the audience is an important factor. This is particularly true for social media, where the audience must be extra careful and critical in selecting and assessing content and also in reacting to content via likes, shares, and comments. Pedagogical measures in the areas of media education, sexual education, and violence prevention (and their interfaces) should therefore take up CSA-related social media content, discuss it critically, and practice competent usage patterns.

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The clergy child sexual abuse and its cover-up in media: An explorative study of the official Vatican media and American Catholic media in 2013–2020

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The current study enables an explorative view of the media coverage of the clergy child sexual abuse (CSA) in the Catholic Church. It is based on the contemporary knowledge of the phenomenon of clergy CSA, key Church documents on the topic of ethics in media, recent commitments situated in the core of the Vatican media reform, and decisive public speech of Pope Francis. A quantitative content analysis of the Vatican media channel *Vatican News* and the American news site *Crux Now*, which covers Vatican and Church news from the Catholic perspective in the period 2013–2020, serves as the method. The year 2019 represents the clear high peak of pushing agenda of clergy CSA forward. In comparison, *Crux Now* generally concentrates on the topic more frequently and in more practical or procession way, whereas *Vatican News* pays attention to its spiritual part, the "theology of victims", and to the fact that rule of law has not always the final word.
Keywords: Vatican media, reform, Pope Francis, clergy sexual abuse, abuse crisis

Church structures that solidify power imbalances and protect abusers support clerical child sexual abuse (CSA) as do individuals who abuse power. Thereby, the "damage […] depends on the power differential" and thus harms the less powerful person (Ormerod, 1995, p. xii). "Under conditions of privacy and confidentiality, Catholic priests and religious have access to people who are emotionally and spiritually vulnerable" (Podles, 2007, p. 17), which provides a protective framework for (potential) perpetrators. Vulnerability refers to the young age in this context, but it does also to personal or psychological problems, which may manifest for instance by emotional turmoil, weakness, and piety (ibid, p. 357). Those vulnerabilities may also arise from prior CSA victimization, child abuse, mental or physical fragility in close relatives (Assink et al., 2019), or social isolation (Fleming et al., 1997) – all factors which may drive children to the comfort of the Church but also makes them vulnerable to individuals who take advantage of their situation. According to previous research, the most frequent types of clergy CSA were forcing to petting, masturbation, or oral sex (Isely et al., 2008), which relates prevailingly to young boys at the age of 11–15 (Gold, 2000, 2008; Frawley-O'Dea, 2004). The permanent consequences on the victims- apart from the physical and psychological damage

or the misunderstanding of family and Church community -include the loosing of faith (Ganje-Fling&McCarthy, 1996, p. 22; Allred, 2015, p. 4; Rossetti, 1995, p. 1478–1479). Some victims even perceive their injury as "caused by God himself" (Farrell, 2009, p. 39). As with children who are sexually abused within the family, it is difficult for clerical CSA victims to disclose themselves. Instead, the victim suppresses her/his anger and transforms it to the "shared secret" (Augustyn, 2003, p. 17), which may be reported after *decades*.

Theoretical background and state of research

Roots of clergy CSA

The phenomenon of clergy CSA is very old, although it has been simplified as the problem of last 60 years, "American", "Irish" or basically "Western" *sin* (and not yet *crime*) spreading itself to other countries, the problem of few individuals ("few-bad-apples in the basket" theory; Boston Globe, 2016), or of bad post-conciliar theology (Pope John Paul II, 2002a; Benedict XVI, 2019). There are plenty of notions about its risks: in updated Church documents[1], the early Christian literature[2] and works of Church Fathers[3], from Elvira council in 305–306 (Farrell, 2009), the appeal *Book of Gomorah* of St Peter Damian sent to Pope Leo IX in the 11th century[4], or the statement of Council of Trent (1545–1563), relating to the sad fact

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1 Catechism of Catholic Church, 1993 (par. 2389); Code of Canon Law, 1983 (Canon 84; Canon 277, par. 1–2;Canon XVIII; or Canon LXXI, which stipulated "clerics committing sexual sins" and "those who sexually abuse boys" are threatened with "irrevocable exclusion", thus they not receive communion even at the time of death. Additionally, e.g. Canon 1395 (par. 1–2) describes the offense of child abuse, which is characteristic by obsessive, repetitive, secretive, and manipulative behaviour.

2 Didache, 96 (2, par. 2); Sipe, 1995, p. 10

3 Abba Isaac warned "do not bring young boys here [into the community]", and Abba Carion and St. Benedict recommended to "let the light lit even in the night" (cit. from Podles, 2007, p. 17). There was also implication "not to harm youth", and St. Basil stated: "A cleric or monk who seduces youths or young boys… is to be publicly flogged… For six months he will languish in prison-like confinement… and he shall never again associate with youths in private conversation, nor in counselling them" (cited from Allen, 2004, p. 232).

4 "Vice against nature creeps in like a cancer and even touches the ordered of consecrated men… unless the strength [of the church leaderships] intervenes as soon as possible" (cit. from Allen, 2004, p. 231).

that even pontiffs had sexual interactions with children (Sipe, 1995). From all that it can be concluded that the Church had already been aware of the devastative effects of clergy CSA and ordained the prevention and punishments. Nevertheless, its history of "irrevocable exclusion" is debatable (Farrell, 2009, p. 47).

Abuse of authority is commonly identified as the root of clergy CSA, in Church environment called *clericalism* (Faggioli, 2017; Carroll, 2015), and represented by "narcissism" or "arrogance" (Rhoderick, 2017, p. 190, 196), "elitism" (Gaillardetz, 2013, p. 2–3; Doyle, 2006) or "ecclesial pathology" (Cozzens, 2003). Common is the archetype of religious "guru" or preacher of high reputation. Such priests who offended justify themselves as *unable to err* (Allred, 2015, p. 13); they are convinced of their "nonaccountability" (Cartagenas, 2011) and blame victims instead (Ormerod, 1995, p. 34). Besides the Church environment there were already described broader risk factors for committing CSA like social deficits, sexual problems, deviant attitudes/beliefs, or criminal problems (Whitaker et al., 2008).

The phenomenon of CSA within the Catholic Church attracted greater public attention in the second half of the 20th century, together with the liberalization of speech about this shameful and tabooed topic in media[5] and with women's and children's protection movement. The concept of *being the victim* or – in some context – *survivor* of clergy CSA changed dramatically, and what might have been silenced in history would not have been possible to silence in the presence and the future. One of the indicators of the change is, for example, the testimonies of religious women about abuse in Church (Scaraffia, 2019).

Apart from clergy CSA itself, there is a massive problem of its cover-up. Among the most visible historical uncovering of the internal protection system of shielding the accused priests, transferring them, and muffling

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5 The first publicly known crimes were perpetrated by F. Gilbert Gauthe of the diocese of Lafayette in Louisiana (in the years 1983–1984); then it was investigated the older cause of F. James Porter from the diocese of Falls River in Massachusetts active in 1960–1972 even sadistically (Terry et al., 2011). Both are well-known as exemplary sexual predators. Later on, there were investigated older causes from El Paso, Iowa, Newfoundland or New Mexico. For today there are yet unfinished cases in Philadelphia, Kansas City, and Pennsylvania (only in US).
   Since 1950, thousands of children were molested by priests in US (Podles, 2007, p. 239) and until 2002, 300 priests had been globally taken off duty over abuse allegations (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004). The most cases came from 80's and 90', while since then the numbers are lowering (Terry et al., 2011), which reason lies in the decline of priests, lowering of the requirements in the seminaries and accepting immature candidates.

the victims with discreet financial settlements is the work of *Boston Globe's* investigative team Spotlight (Caroll et al., 2002).[6]

Among the best covered publications to the topic belong, apart from Podles'[7] and Farrell's[8], are those of Berry (1992) and Bruni with Burkett (1993).[9] From some point of view, by celibacy "ironic by-product" was made: "tolerance of clergy homosexuality" (Martel, 2019, p. xxii). Based on 1,500 interviews with clergy, the author claims that the prevailing reason for the cover-up of CSA in Church is the fact that those members of clergy who are gay are exploiting each other with discrete and compromising information, for example, about their relationships (which conflict with their promise to live in celibacy). As aside consequence, because of that omnipresent corruption the victims are not being listened to. And as other authors state, after 25 years of interviews, circa 50 % of priest do not in fact live in celibacy (Sipe, 1995, p. 61).

Francis' reforms tracing Vatican II

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, elected pope by conclave in 2013, chose the name Francis – as the first pope in history. He might have been inspired by Francis of Assisi, middle age saint and Church reformer. Specifically, he

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6 Since Boston's causes, Pope John Paul II and, after him, Benedict XVI had to cope administratively and medially with those sad facts. Pope Benedict XVI, a "weak governor and a poor politician", who's leadership was a "series of ill-drafted judgements and PR disasters" (Vallely, 2013, p. 7), was actually the very first pontiff who apologized to the victims and received them personally in 2001 during his visit to USA. His steps included speeding up of the trials of abusers, especially the case of Gino Burresi in 2002 Vatican investigation, or of Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of Legionaries of Christ investigated by Msgr. Charles Scicluna (Podles, 2007, p. 516).

7 Podles emphasizes strongly that clergy CSA *is* about homosexuality, not pedophilia (2007, p. 3), and that it is *not* problem of celibacy; he concludes, that the opinion orientation (liberal or conservative) is *not* the most important indicator for clergy CSA (ibid, p. 9).

8 Farrell focused on the history of clergy CSA and made a practical research about how people usually react to the information about it.

9 Berry clearly states that clergy CSA has to do with "clerical culture, not human sexuality per se" (1992, p. xii). For roots of this culture we may look for on the pontificate of Pope Gregory VI, author of the command of obligatory celibacy. Indeed, apart from care about wealth motivation, there were also more positive reasons for life in celibacy such as "refuge against stereotypical man and woman roles" (Cozzens, 2003, p. 98).

might have been inspired by words believed in Church as revealed to the saint by God himself: "Francis, don't you see that my house is being destroyed? Go, then, and rebuild it for me" (Leo et al., 2013).[10] Now, in the middle of the current scandal of clergy CSA (Maier, 2016) and witnessing this phenomenon on all continents, cultures, and social levels, time came for Church to "repair the house" also in this sense. Francis was sure that, to deal with the crisis right, neither Donatists[11] nor rigorists[12] have the right solutions, because they are too obsessed by the *power of law* (Ivereigh, 2019, p. 321). "While conservatives blamed a failure of discipline and orthodoxy and progressives pointed to an authoritarian ecclesiastical culture, Francis wanted to keep the focus on diabolic corruption [clericalism]" (ibid., p. 319).

Unlike other institutions, the Church is inherently built on communication (Eilers, 2009) and, paradoxically, struggles with democratization of information ever since Gutenberg's breakthrough invention (Geybels et al., 2009, p. 17). Additionally, large institutions usually do not like to change, and they only do so when forced from outside.[13] Lack of transparency may today cause big criticism (Vedrashko, 2015, p. 1). Originally, Church was hostile to media development of the early 20th century.[14]

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10 The friar of Assisi may have to be asked by God himself to help repair the world: to resist the violence of crusades, to build trust through dialogue and encounter, and to honour all creatures as God's gifts.

11 Christian sect from 4–5th centuries, which argued that clergy must be faultless for sacraments to be valid. They are named after bishop Donatus Magnus.

12 In August 2018, the bombshell "Testimony" dropped by a former apostolic nuncio in the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, and published during the night by several conservative American and Italian media trying to force Francis to resign stunned all the world. The critique of cleric's activity appeared instantly: "Can one archbishop be prosecutor, judge and jury and call for a resignation of the pope?" (CNA, 2018) Here Towey cited the 1990 instruction *Donum veritatis* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which advised theologians against turning to the media when they have tensions with the Magisterium. The document explains that all Catholics must practise "submission of the will and intellect" to what the pope teaches and that theologians, while they may disagree, must never do so in public.

13 As the author states (p. 7), the societal pressure may be both direct (e.g., investigative journalism) and indirect (increasing demand for transparency of religious institutions – e.g., to move from secrecy to candour, from hierarchies to networks, from one-to-many to many-to-many communication, from receiving to participating, from surveillance to surveillance etc.).

14 This is obvious with the anti-modernist popes Pius X and Pius XI But very soon after the situation changed with Vatican Radio based in 1931 (Sultana, 2014, p. 204).

Then, her intention was substantially formed by outcomes of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), symbolic end of the "fortress Catholicism" and shift from "institution turned inwards" to "greater interaction with, and influence on, secular society" (Vallely 2013, p. 33). The Church subsequently related to the ethical work of media in several magisterial documents.[15] The commitments to communicate honestly are situated in the core of the Vatican media reform as well (Francis, 2016b; Vatican News, 2017; etc.). Also, the decisive public speech of Pope Francis is visible in recent years.[16]

According to this, it seems that, although the Church had initially denied transparency, it later turned to enable information disclosure.[17] Those activities demonstrate the Church's interest in maintaining its credibility by compromising its secrecy. However, the current example of the diocese of Cologne – among others – shows that this transparency in processing is not yet guaranteed everywhere (Deutschlandfunk, 2021). A lot needs to be done before the Church's information policy can be called transparent. Indeed, many reforms – apart from that most visible (liturgical one) – had not been adopted yet since Second Vatican Council.[18] As initiation of the overall reform, Francis appointed the nine-member Council of Cardinal Advisers (C9, now rather "C6") in 2013 to help him.[19]

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15 Miranda Prorsus, 1957; Inter mirifica, 1963; Communio et Progressio, 1971; Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975; Aetatis Novae, 1992; Il Rapido Sviluppo, 2005, etc.

16 Evangelii Gaudium, 2013; People discarded, 2016; Meeting with the executive committee of CELAM in Colombia, 2017; Letter to the People of God, 2018; Meeting "The protection of minors in the church", 2019; etc.

17 Subsequently, documents regarding the abuse cases (e.g., instruction "Crimen sollicitationis" from 1962) have been published on the Holy See's website Vatican.va, working from 1995.

18 That was to the big extent caused by the fact that the finisher of the council, Pope Paul VI, left four important topics (celibacy, birth-control and contraception, collegiality of bishops, and (!) the reform of the Roman Curia) in his charge and thus *got round* the council in fact. Thus, some theologians concluded that neither John XXIII nor Paul VI had real willingness to the certain changes which led to the strengthening of the centralisation elements (Petráček, 2016, p. 141). According to Reese (1998, p. 12), Pope John Paul II as the first started to act as real Rome bishop. Despite the growing centralization under his leadership, he was author of forces to more collegial forms of organization (ibid, p. 30), such as establishment of the College of Cardinals. Unfortunately, he was careful never to repudiate the words of Vatican II, but he worked to empty them of the extrovert spirit.

19 These Cardinals have never worked in Curia before, but all share a fierce experience of running dioceses in all the world. There stays the question whether this structural revolution "may be reversed by the next pope" and whether the "C6"

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The common style of the Vatican communications used to be described as "bellafigura" by insiders, thus, to keep certain thinks hidden. „Obviously, it is a principle open to abuse" (Allen, 2004, p. 102). Contrary, through last years, Francis converted it to "bruttafigura" (Ivereigh, 2019, p. 50) and soon became an "icon of simplicity and humility" who is self-conscious of his own hundreds of errors confessed publicly (Vallely, 2013, p. xviii). Francis' consistent approach clearly confirmed the preceding empirical studies of the clergy CSA; he labelled excessive clericalism "ecclesial challenge" (Evangelii Gaudium 2013, par. 102), because it is not only individual but always has something in common with the *theology behind* that mentality (Rhoderick, 2017, p. 190).

For Pope Francis' critics, the situation looks different; they blame postconciliar development for corruption, heterodoxy, or even "sexual-liturgical-moral abuse intertwining" (Lawler 2018, p. 3). The opinions on crisis itself are strongly polarized from the 90s. The upper mentioned inspiration by St Francis' way probably has much broader implications.[20] Now after six years of gradual reform of Vatican communications, discussions show the first possible results of this reform. The Secretariat for Communication (later renamed Dicastery) was established by Pope Francis in 2015 as the part of Curia. Its development indicates that the reform is not only of technological nature (unification of disparate Vatican media outlets) but is also a reform in terms of content (faithfulness to the Christian mission, ethical and professional standards). The media segment of Curia was Francis' priority and should serve as the pattern for the overall reform. The theme of the Vatican communications became highly socially relevant in 2018, "annus horribilis" (Ivereigh, 2019), when a lot of previous abuse scandals came to light *again* and short after Pope's apostolic visit to Chile, where he dramatically underestimated the seriousness of the situation.

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is the real "embryo of a new system", because Francis still seems to love "both collegiality and the power of decision-making" (Franco, 2013, p. 116). Alternatively, his view of reform is about process, not outcomes (Vallely, 2016, p. 4).

20 The more time passes since Vatican II, the more important may the interpretation of the council get. Therefore, we shall "move beyond loaded labels like conservative/reactionary and progressive/liberal" (O'Malley, 2010, p. 312). Since the beginning of the pontificate of Francis, such "contraposition vanished from the horizon and [it] became clear that the real choice is between reform and restoration" (Hellemans & Jonkers, 2018, p. 17).

This study

As the state of research has shown and due to the current public debate on the topic of CSA within the Church, this environment is increasingly forced to deal with this topic. This includes, among other, the handling and reappraisal to communicate clergy CSA also publicly and medially. However, it has become apparent in recent years that the Church does not have the transparency in its public communication that it needs. Therefore, the inquiry question arises: To what extent do news about CSA produced by the official *Vatican News* differ from those published by Catholic media that are not published by the Vatican and neither by local Church? For this reason, the current study examines how the Vatican officially communicates about clergy CSA in comparison to non-Vatican Catholic media.

Methods

Procedure

A quantitative content analysis of the official online Vatican media channel (*Vatican News*, further VN) and an independent American website (*Crux Now*, CN) in the period 21–24 February of years 2013–2020 was conducted. The period was defined to compare media content of four days, when, in 2019, the extraordinary summit ""Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church" occurred.[21] The inclusion criteria for the selected articles was topic (main or side) of clergy CSA, which was considered according to the keyword "abuse" (when the article finally did not relate to clergy CSA, it was removed from the sample). Totally, it was a sample

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21 For the February 2019, Pope gathered the extraordinary summit in Vatican, where all the presidents of the world bishop conferences, religious, laics, and survivors discussed the concrete possibilities of the future development (*Meeting on The Protection of Minors in the Church*, 2019). On the summit, the Pope concretized the fight against abuse in eight points: the protection of children; impeccable seriousness; genuine purification; formation; strengthening and reviewing guidelines by bishop conferences; accompaniment of those who have been abused; protection in the digital world; and fighting against sexual tourism. Continuously, he appealed to leave behind the idea of needing to protect the institution's good name rather than the good of persons (Francis, 2019).

of 118 articles in both media. This sample was analyzed according to six categories.

Category system

The selected articles were coded according to six categories: medium (CN or VN), main topic (e.g., prevention, denying, causes), country of the event (e.g., US, Vatican, Church in general), authority who gives the key information (e.g., Pope, juries, activists), photo subject (e.g., victims, bishops, illustrative), and genre (e.g., piece of news, analysis).

Materials

Crux Now (CN) understands its mission as „offering the very best in smart, wired and independent coverage of the Vatican and the Catholic Church" (Crux Now,n. d.). Itwas founded as a project of *The Boston Globe* in 2014 but has been fully independent since March 2016. This source was chosen for this case study because of its origin from bellow and activist character. Since 2014, it is led by experienced Vatican correspondent John A. Allen. The small team of journalists encompass Argentinian correspondent Inés San Martín, former employee of Vatican radio Charles Collins, the correspondents Christopher White, Elise Ann Allen and Nirmala Carvalho (from India), and priest Jeff Kirby.

    Vatican News (VN) is the online information service of Dicastery for Communication provided since 2016, now in 39 national sections. It is divided into four thematic sections (Pope, Vatican, Church and World). Apart from the informative mission, its ambition is to "provide key to interpretation" (Vatican News, n. d.). Its content is the collaborative work of 28 authors, mainly Robin Gomez, Sr. Bernadette Mary Reis, Linda Bordoni, Christopher Wells, and editorial chief Andrea Tornielli.

Results

Descriptive results

From the total of 118 articles, 70 % (*n* =83) were published in CN and 30 % (*n* = 35) in VN. More than half of all CN articles, 59 % (*n* = 49) are from

2019, thus from summit. Similarly, in VN, there was the highest number from 2019, which is 89 % (n = 31). The tendency to medialize the topic of clergy CSA seems to decline before the summit and after it as well in both media; there were altogether 17 % (n = 20) texts in 2020, 7 % (n = 8) in 2018, 3 % (n = 4) in 2017, 2 % (n = 2) in 2016, and none in 2015 and 2014, when CN started to be issued. Similarly, in VN, there were published only 6 % (n = 2) articles in 2020 and as well 6 % (n = 2) in 2018.

To address the categories, there are altogether covered 16 countries, although 51 % (n = 60) of the analyzed texts refer to the global Church in general.

Considering whose authority is dominant in the CSA news item, Cardinals, bishops or dioceses were represented in most cases, that is 30 % (n = 35), as well as Pope, Vatican, Pontifical Commission, etc. with 30 % (n = 35), then several levels of courts, commissions, juries, etc. with 14 % (n = 16), then activists, psychotherapists, or journalists with 11 % (n = 13), victims and survivors with 9 % (n = 11), and in 7 % (n = 8) it is other or left undecided. It is noteworthy that courts, commissions, and juries find place exclusively in CN, while VN refers to Pope and Cardinals in 77 % of the articles. All but two articles in which victims resp. survivors got to speak were published in CN.

From the comparison of the newscast in VN and CN emerges that the approach differs regarding the authority mentioned. The category of Cardinals, bishops or dioceses was identified in 40 % (n = 14) in VN, whereas in 25 % (n = 21) in CN. As for the Pope, Vatican, and Pontifical Commission category, it was identified in 37 % (n = 13) in VN in comparison to 27 % (n = 22) in CN. Stronger difference is visible in the category Courts, commissions, and juries, which is not appearing in the newscast of VN at all (n = 0), whereas in 19 % (n = 16) in CN. Very similar numbers are to be found in the category of activists, psychotherapists, and journalists, which is covered by 14 % (n = 5) in VN and 10 % (n = 8) in CN. Victims and survivors appear as the category in 6 % (n = 2) in VN, whereas in 11 % (n = 9) in CN. Other cases are summed up under 3 % (n = 1) in VN and 8 % (n = 7) in CN.

Among all analyzed articles, photos prevail illustrative 20 % (n = 24), images of Pope alone or with bishops 13 % (n = 15), from summit 8 % (n = 10), or of victims 6 % (n = 7). The rest was categorized as "other" with 53 % (n = 62).

There is present a wide range of journalistic genres with piece of news leading in 69 % (n = 81), then commented speech in 16 % (n = 19), and CN's John Allen's analysis in 3 % (n = 4); 12 % (n = 14) where coded as "others".

Main topic

Turning to the topics in depth, one of the most interesting groups of main topics is summed under "change of paradigm" in the relation to clergy CSA and its dealing in 15 % ($n = 18$). There's the tendency to interpret this "change" differently in CN ($n = 10$) and VN ($n = 8$). Into CN's vision belong examples like "culture of disclosure" or "international cooperation", emphasizing that CSA is not a "Western problem" and the "cultural difference [is] no reason", whereas in VN clerical language plays a bigger role – episcopal collegiality, synodality, accountability accessible through communion, or the urgency "to name the evil". A detailed distribution can be found in table 1.

Another notable section with 12 % ($n = 14$) is summed up unto "causes" – the allegations of CSA, the court already running, or the sentencing of the perpetrator. The majority of these 14 articles were published in2020 and 2019. All but one was published in CN. No single cause quickly asserts itself there. Specifically, the CSA accusations against Cardinal Pell had only two articles, same as the accusations against Jean Vanier for sexual abuse in L'Arche community.

A significant number of articles (10 %; $n = 12$) was related to some form of criticism. All but two from these 12 articles were published in CN. As one article claims, journalists were the "worst enemies" for bishops who continue to cover-up of clergy CSA; another article regrets that parents of victims were not invited to the Vatican summit. Three articles relate to the cultural situation in Africa, where still many cases are perpetuated without adequate notion. Three articles are directly criticizing Pope Francis for his negligence to meet victims in his Mexico trip or for his dealing with the situation in Peru and; one article even claims dealing with clerical CSA is "not priority" of his pontificate

Ten articles support Pope Francis and sum up the Vatican actions. Their majority ($n = 9$) was published in CN and refers to establishing of a "task force", abolishing pontifical secret, or earlier Pope's reduction of sanctions for abusive priests for which he was criticized. Concretely, there are to find seven articles concerning Archbishop Scicluna's visitation in Chile -from his meeting with victims and his hospitalization up to his testifying of charged abuser Barros.

Six articles can be summed up under the topic "spiritual". Their aims are rather to appeal to the inner processes than to practical measures (prevention). Notably, they were all published in VN. The representatives of this genre are the concluding speeches delivered by Pope Francis on the summit or his penitential service's speech. Amongtheothercontent

Table 1
Proportions of articles by main topic and authority

	Number of articles		Number of articles per source					
			VN			CN		
	Total	In percent	Total	In percent		Total	In percent	
				of all articles	of articles in VN		of all articles	of articles in CN
All articles	118	100%	35	30%	100%	83	70%	100%
Main topic								
Change of paradigm	18	15%	8	7%	23%	10	8%	12%
Causes	14	12%	1	1%	3%	13	11%	16%
Criticism	12	10%	2	2%	6%	10	8%	12%
Support of Pope Francis	10	8%	1	1%	3%	9	8%	11%
Spiritual	6	5%	6	5%	17%	0	0%	0%
Theology of victims	6	5%	5	4%	14%	1	1%	1%
Prevention	3	3%	0	0%	0%	3	3%	4%
Denying and trivialization	2	2%	2	2%	6%	0	0%	0%
Polish statue down	2	2%	0	0%	0%	2	2%	2%
Role of laity	1	1%	1	1%	3%	0	0%	0%
Other	44	37%	9	8%	26%	35	30%	42%
Authority								
Cardinals, bishops, ordioceses	35	30%	14	12%	40%	21	18%	25%
Pope, Vatican, Pontifical Commission	35	30%	13	11%	37%	22	19%	27%
Courts, commissions, juries	16	14%	0	0%	0%	16	14%	19%
Activists, psychotherapists, journalists	13	11%	5	4%	14%	8	7%	10%
Victims, survivors	11	9%	2	2%	6%	9	8%	11%
Other	8	7%	1	1%	3%	7	6%	8%

belong summit speeches of bishops from different countries (n = 3): Filipino Cardinal Tagle's speech on solidarity with victims or Scicluna's resolution on deal with the abuse "at all costs". These were covered only by VN. There also came the evaluation of summit's contribution in the year after (in 2020; n = 5). Occasionally, there appeared appeal for bigger progress.

Another category was "theology of victims" – resp. survivors – representing 5 % (n = 6). All but one of those articles were published in VN. This approach takes victims as "Christ crucified", appeals to "hear their cry" and "to feel their wound as [our] vulnerability", or invalidates the stereotype that victims are "guilty of [too long] silence".

Other relevant topics were "prevention" with only three articles (all in CN), "role of laity" (n = 1) as well as victims' testimonies at summit (n = 1). Two articles were found todeny and trivialize the situation. The local but symbolical occasion of pulling down the statue of a Polish abuser found its place in two articles in CN.

Discussion

Now follows the comparison of the two media. *Crux Now* generally concentrates on the topic of CSA more frequently and in a more practical or procedural way, whereas *Vatican News* pays attention to its spiritual part, "theology of victims", and to the fact that rule of law has not always the final word. More specifically, into CN's vision belong examples like "culture of disclosure" or "international cooperation", emphasizing that CSA is not a "Western problem" and the "cultural difference [is] no reason", whereas in VN's articles more clerical language plays role – episcopal collegiality, synodality, accountability accessible through communion, or the urgency to "to name the evil".

CN and VN demonstrably examine the issue of clergy CSA differently and give it different amounts of attention. A reason for this may lie in the fact who are owners of that media. Whereas the establisher of VN – the Vatican Secretariat for Communication – is part of the clumsy and fossilized Roman Curia, struggling now to reform itself under Pope Francis' authority, the history of CN is more dynamic. It was founded as a project of *The Boston Globe* in 2014, after the massive scandal of clergy CSA in US was investigated by *Spotlight* journalistic team of the aforementioned newspaper. Subsequently CN did not stop to follow the cases of CSA, and step by step it became the respected and credible source of online information about Catholic Church in US, but also internationally, with

detailed but not sensationalist analysis of cases of CSA. The willingness to report about the cases constantly and with the ambition to stay faithful (but not servile) to the Catholic identity brings the living pulse, and so it stays attractive for the audience.

As was already elaborated in the theoretical part, the Catholic Church is facing the pressure to be more transparent (Vedrashko, 2015). The Vatican media reform is a unique way how to adapt on the standards under the lead of Pope Francis (Francis, 2016b; Vatican News, 2017). It is possible already to see itsimpact: The issue of clergy CSA became a frequent topic of the news – at least in comparison to the history of Vatican media. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement in the completeness and overall quality of reporting about clergy CSA, just as it is the case in non-church media, which primarily cover the topic on an occasion-related basis and not very preventively (Kitzinger, 2004; Popović, 2018). Only with this strategy can the Church ever meet Jesus' expectation: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

This inquiry is surely limited by its fixed length, which had to be reduced significantly. Another limitation is represented by the concentration solely on those four days of every year of the years 2013–2020. A broader scope would enable greater understanding of the context and long-lasting trends in Catholic media – both official and independent. Results of the study are not generalizable, because the study has an exploratory character. The used method has its shortcomings as it analyzes, rephrases, and categorizes texts and therefore loses the articles' complexity and details in the process.

Conclusion

The case study identifies how VN and CN inform about clergy CSA. From analyzed data it may be concluded that the year 2019 represents the clear high peak of pushing agenda of clergy CSA forward, which must be considered as a disappointment. As already assumed in discussion, the clerical language, prevailing in *Vatican News*, has to be considered the huge risk, whereas the chance the Church can enable is the way of holistic healing ("theology of victims"), not only the successful court process with criminals. The Catholic Church may benefit from this open, transparent, and deeply authentic approach a lot. To do so, however, it must have the courage to state clearly what is wrong at the core of the Church system.

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1.2. Media effects on victims and relatives

"Those who break the silence break the power of the perpetrators"
The media campaign of the first Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse in Germany 2010–2011

Adrian Etzel, Jelena Gerke, Cornelia Helfferich[1], Ulrike Hoffmann, Barbara Kavemann, Kathrin Lipke, Miriam Rassenhofer & Jörg M. Fegert

In 2010, a media campaign in Germany encouraged victims/survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA) to tell their story and to make political demands by telephone or in writing. This chapter links results of quantitative analyses of the telephone calls with qualitative analyses of the writings. It can be shown that three levels of the campaign (personal, political-social, public) were perceived and addressed by victims/survivors. For the success of the campaign it was essential that it was linked to a specific person – the first Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse – who could credibly convey commitment to and solidarity with victims/survivors and could provide a trustworthy framework for telling their story. The chapter pursues the question which perception of the campaign can be reconstructed from the writings. Recommendations for future media campaigns were developed: a reflection on how to address victims/survivors and, in particular, the obligation to take ethical responsibility.

Keywords: multimedia campaign; Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse in Germany; contact point; Critical Incident Reporting System; Mixed Methods

In 2010, a nationwide media campaign was launched in Germany aimed at adult victims/survivors[2] of sexual violence in childhood and youth. The purpose of the campaign was to create opportunities for victims/survivors, by telling their stories through phone calls, letters and emails, to have a

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1 Cornelia Helfferich passed away on 23 November 2021, before the publication of this chapter.

2 We use the expression victims/survivors, instead of the more common victim, to acknowledge a current debate in Germany about the proper naming of those individuals who have suffered from CSA. Many of them reject the victim label, do not want to be considered victims at all, and prefer instead to be referenced as having survived CSA or having been affected by CSA (Betroffene). Others find the reference to victim fitting and important.

public voice, become part of a political process for change, and experience some relief. It was the first time that the topic had this kind of presence in the media. The campaign was multimedia-based and included TV ads, posters in public spaces, postcard campaigns and interviews on TV and radio.

Sexual abuse and violence in childhood and youth had long been a highly taboo subject. Much suffering and injustice was caused by the fact that it could not be talked about (Kavemann et al., 2016). Despite some successes of the women's movement in the 1980s, silence and cover-ups persisted in Germany so that many victims/survivors were alone with their experiences, remained silent or were not heard, and found no help.

The campaign had been preceded by the fact that at the beginning of 2010 some victims/survivors had gone public and made a previously hidden scandal visible: the extent of CSA in institutions (Retkowski et al., 2018). This concerned CSA in socially respected educational institutions and, primarily, the sexual abuse of boys. The accusations were taken up by the public and a broad media discussion began, which was conducted under new auspices (Hoffmann, 2015). The Federal Government responded by setting up a Round Table on CSA (henceforth referred to as Round Table), in which three ministries were involved, and by appointing the former Minister for Family Affairs, Dr Christine Bergmann, as the first Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse (UBSKM). One of the tasks of this office was to raise public awareness of the problem, to process cases of CSA, and to develop recommendations for help for victims/survivors in both institutional and family CSA contexts (Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse, 2011). Victims/survivors were encouraged to tell their story and demand political change from politicians.[3] A telephone contact point for victims/survivors was set up that eventually turned into a sexual abuse helpline. The media campaign was launched. Anyone who did not want to call by phone but still wanted to get in touch could contact the UBSKM office by email or letter. The campaign was highly visible on TV and in other media and reached a diverse and large group of people, thus resulting in a high number of victims/survivors contacting the Commissioner and her team.

The campaign achieved its purpose: in the first year, more than 10,000 calls and around 3,000 letters and emails were received (Fegert et al.,

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3 Wim and Donata Wenders and the photographer Alberto Venzago supported a TV spot as well as further information and print products pro bono.

2013, p. 114). The messages and concerns of victims/survivors, which these messages revealed, were a central element in the development of policy recommendations (Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse, 2011, p. 18).

The calls made to the telephone contact point were documented, and the extent and number of calls as well as their content were evaluated (Rassenhofer et al., 2013). When the Round Table and Dr Bergmann's term in office ended (2011) and the final report was completed, accompanying research ended as well. The telephone contact point was turned into a sexual abuse helpline; its primary purpose changed from being a conduit of political expression to be a central helpline focusing on support. From 2019 to 2021, a research project conducted a more in-depth analysis of the emails and letters sent to Dr Bergmann from 2010 to 2011[4]. These emails and letters provide an answer to the question to what extent the campaign has reached victims/survivors. Furthermore, with this evidence the campaign can be viewed from the perspective of those who took the opportunity to speak for themselves. Therefore, this chapter can contribute answers to the following questions:

- How did this media campaign address the sensitive issue of sexual violence against children and adolescents and what was triggered by it?
- How could the goal of encouraging people to disclose their experiences be achieved and what was the impact on individual support needs and the political commitment of victims/survivors?
- What framework conditions are necessary for the success of such a campaign?

Framing of the campaign

The campaign of Commissioner Dr Bergmann was unique in two aspects: First, it was historically the first campaign on this topic in Germany that was directly addressed to victims/survivors of CSA. Second, although it focused on sexual violence in childhood and adolescence, it addressed adults who had experienced CSA, offering them a chance for disclosure and recognition. The focus was not primarily on the help needs of victims/survivors but on the fact that they had to remain silent for a long time or that, when they did speak, they had not been heard. The campaign aimed to

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4 See the published brochure (in German): http://www.soffi-f.de/files/Briefeprojekt-Broschuere%20_final.pdf

encourage victims/survivors to articulate for politicians what kind of social and political change must happen.

Figure 1
Campaign posters "Speaking helps", UBSKM, photographer: Donata Wenders, 2010

The multimedia concept of the campaign consisted of several components: The contact point created in May 2010 offered the possibility to get in touch by phone, letter, email or fax. Television commercials invited adult victims/survivors to talk about the sexual violence they had experienced as children or youth. The ads showed a girl and a boy with a hand covering their mouths and how they become adults who push the hand away (Figure 1). The slogan was: "Those who break the silence break the power of the perpetrators." These images also appeared on posters nationwide and in a postcard action. At the same time, the Commissioner represented the interests of victims/survivors in television broadcasts and talk shows. Besides online visibility, Dr Bergmann contacted counselling centers and multipliers and gave around a hundred interviews to reach as many victims/survivors and professional helpers as possible. A general principle of the UBSKM was to communicate directly with the victims/survivors of

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CSA, to learn from their experiences, and to include their concerns into the political process of improving protection and support for child sexual violence in childhood and in particular into the recommendations of the final report of the Round Table. Dr Bergmann and her team "have always considered [themselves] to be the ear for the victims" (Fegert et al., 2013, p. 11).

The workings of the contact point resembled a critical incident reporting system (CIRS), which has been described in previous articles (Fegert et al., 2010; Rassenhofer et al., 2013). In a CIRS, direct input from victims/survivors is solicited anonymously and analyzed, and findings are provided to victims/survivors by publishing interim results online or in the media. CIRS have their origins in aviation and are becoming more common in the areas of risk management and patient safety. Such a system can initiate a learning process and thus prevent similar incidents and errors in the future.

The participation of the victims/survivors was a unique characteristic of the German process of coming to terms with a difficult past. "Thinking from the perspective of the victims was a central principle" (Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse, 2011, p. 21). The process was two-dimensional: The contact point offered an ear to victims/survivors, and their disclosure and active participation strengthened political action.

Study 1: Contact point (2010–2011)

Methods

The contact point was accompanied from the beginning by the research team of Prof Dr Jörg M. Fegert at the University Hospital of Ulm. They evaluated the data, communicated results to the Commissioner, and posted findings and short quotations on the website of the UBSKM. In this way, victim/survivor concerns were heard and acted upon, and other victims/survivors could see that they are not alone with their experiences (Rassenhofer et al., 2013).

The contact point aimed to hear from adult victims/survivors of CSA, from their relatives, and from other social network members as well as professionals. They could provide any information they wished, e.g., share an experience, ask questions, get information, or leave a political demand, via email, letter or telephone. Emails and letters were read by Dr Bergmann and answered by her team. Around sixty counsellors and psychologists

were recruited and trained to answer the calls. All counsellors were experienced in working with victims of CSA. The training focused thus on the documentation in the data grid. During the call, the counsellors documented the content of a conversation only if the caller consented. Documentation included sociodemographic data (e.g., gender, age, federal state), but the focus was on political statements and the conversations themselves. There was no guideline for an interview; counsellors used broad, open questions, because the callers should decide on the content of the conversation and be able to talk freely. The information was documented by the counsellors in a secure web-based data grid, where they entered the information given by the caller in mainly free text boxes. This constituted a balancing act between collecting information suited to inform the Commissioner's recommendations, on the one hand, and the desire to give callers free reign and not constrain them too much, on the other.

From May 2010 to October 2011, around 3,000 letters and emails reached the contact point, and there were 20,000 calls, of which about 10,000 led to an actual conversation that was documented. Altogether, 11,426 datasets could be documented, of which 6,754 datasets were analyzable. Others were not given consent to analyze by the caller. About one fourth of these contained written messages (letters, emails; $n = 1,575$) and about three fourth from oral messages at the telephone contact point ($n = 5,179$) were documented. Below, an overview is given about the whole sample (for a more detailed description of the sample see Fegert et al., 2013). The analysis of the calls answers the question which victims/survivors reacted to the campaign by contacting the UBSKM.

Results

Users of the contact point were victims/survivors, professionals, personal contacts of victims/survivors, perpetrators, or personal contacts of perpetrators. Most of the people using the contact point were women and girls (66 %). The mean age of all users was 46 years with a range of six to 89 years. Of all users, 64 % lived in an urban region, which corresponds approximately to the information provided by the federal statistical office in 2010 on the urban-rural distribution of the total population of Germany (German Federal Statistical Office, 2010). However, there was a difference between the general population and users of the contact point regarding family status: Users were more likely to be single or divorced and less likely to be married.

The topics addressed by the users were assigned to seven categories: abolition of the statute of limitations, compensation claims, mandatory notification, expansion of therapy and counselling services, basic and advanced training for professionals, working through the past (individually and for society as a whole), and other topics. When the contact point began its work, the topic addressed most often was claiming compensation (19 % of messages); subsequently, the frequency with which this topic was mentioned decreased somewhat (16 %). Concurrently, the demand for an expansion of therapy and counselling services kept growing, from 15 % at the beginning to 20 % towards the end. Mandatory notification of cases of CSA was demanded least often.

Most users of the contact point were victims/survivors (68 %; $n = 4{,}570$). Other users were personal contacts of victims/survivors (15 %), perpetrators (1 %), personal contacts of perpetrators (< 1 %), and users who did not report a case of CSA but gave political statements or asked for information (16 %). Regarding only the victims/survivors, 67 % were female and the mean age was 46 years with a range from six to 89 years. When comparing different age groups, results showed that the share of female victims/survivors was larger in groups of younger victims/survivors.

Most victims/survivors reported that they had experienced CSA in the past (94 %) and had experienced it regularly (91 %). Most cases included hands-on CSA (96 %), about a quarter included penetration (24 %). Almost half (44 %) of the CSA cases occurred within the family, about a quarter (28 %) occurred in institutional contexts. Considering the gender of the victim, results showed that men were more likely to have experienced CSA in institutions, while women were more likely to have experienced CSA within family. However, there are generally more males in institutions (German Federal Statistical Office, 2011), such that these results do not necessarily indicate a higher risk for boys to be sexually abused in institutions compared to girls.

After the disclosures of CSA in state institutions and in the church in the beginning of 2010, it had been mainly victims/survivors of institutional CSA who came forward. The media campaign not only encouraged more people to contact the UBSKM, but the campaign also reached a wider segment of the population. After the start of the campaign, in September 2010, the share of victims/survivors of intra-familial CSA increased (Fegert et al., 2013, p. 123).

The analysis of the reports to the Commissioner shows the range of concerns with which people came forward. Victims/survivors reporting their case of CSA often described psychosocial and psychiatric consequences of

the CSA[5], such as depression (52.7 %), post-traumatic stress disorder (32.6 %), and anxiety disorders (26.7 %) as well as somatization (42.0 %), relationship problems (40.5 %), and impaired performance in their job or education (30.1 %). There were no differences in reported consequences between age groups or genders. It turned out that people who had suffered significant health impacts were particularly likely to turn to the contact point.

More women (50 %) than men (33 %) reported any kind of treatment or therapy. Moreover, the type of treatment differed, such that women more often reported psychotherapy treatment, while men reported medical or psychiatric treatment. Besides psychotherapy, many victims/survivors named counselling services as an important support. However, they stressed that these services are often not sufficiently financed to provide enough support for all victims/survivors of CSA. Moreover, victims/survivors demanded more training for professionals or more specialized counselling services. In rural regions, in particular, counselling services are insufficient.

Study 2: In-depth analysis of the written documents (2019–2021)

Methods

A more detailed qualitative analysis was based on the letters and emails which people sent to the UBSKM. From 2019 to 2021, document analysis (qualitative analysis of the documents as "self-contained methodological and situationally embedded performance of their authors"; Wolff, 2000, p. 504) was used to analyze the written data with the goal to find out which aspects of the campaign prompted written communication, in what emotional state and with what concerns letters or emails were written, and what these messages told about the writer's personal life. Considering what is known about the difficulty of disclosing experiences of CSA (Kavemann et al., 2016), it is important to ask what the process of writing meant for the writers and if – perhaps for the first time – experiences of CSA were disclosed to a person or institution known only from the media.

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5 Psychiatric diagnoses were reported by $N = 1{,}132$ callers and psychosocial consequences were reported by $N = 2{,}081$ callers. The following percentages are in regard to these basic populations.

Dr Bergmann's successor, the current Independent Commissioner Johannes-Wilhelm Rörig, enabled this more in-depth qualitative analysis of the documents, which is reported below. The research project was carried out in cooperation between the KJP Ulm and the Social Science Research Institute on Gender Issues / FIVE Freiburg (SoFFI F.). The quantitative analysis was carried out by the research team of the KJP Ulm and the qualitative analysis by SoFFI F. Ethics approval for the research project was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of Ulm. The participatory procedure included a group of seven victims/survivors (four women, three men), who met at regular research workshops to discuss, on the basis of their own experiences, the research questions and the results of the analysis. The final database for the project consists of 335 written messages from 229 writers: 89 letters and 140 emails.

Before analyzing the documents, writers were asked for consent, and documents were only included when informed consent was given. Not all letters and emails received in 2010 had usable addresses; about 900 persons were contacted. In order to maintain confidentiality, only addresses that were recognizable as private addresses could be written to. The majority of those who replied agreed to the use of their letters for research purposes. Of those who refused, some stated that their life situation had improved and that they no longer agreed with what they had described at the time. Some were upset because their situation remained precarious and they felt that they had not received sufficient compensation or support.

An access-protected database and an "inventory" (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2002, p. 307) were set up. The inventory was used to form sub-samples for the different research questions. In order to answer the research questions pursued in this chapter, content analysis (Kuckartz, 2016) was used according to thematic areas based on the research questions. Category systems were created with few deductive specifications and were inductively expanded and refined on the basis of the documents.

Results

The results are presented in the following sections and refer to the dimensions of the campaign that were perceived and addressed by the writers, the political demands of the writers, and their perception and criticism of the campaign.

Sample

Sociodemographic details of the writers are presented in table 1.

Almost all writers described a case of CSA that happened in the past (n = 207; 90.4 %), while only four wrote about a case happening during the time of the letter or email (n = 4; 1.7 %). The context of the CSA was mainly the family (51.5 %; n = 118), followed by institutions (38.4 %; n = 88). CSA by social network members was named nine times (3.9 %); CSA in a digital context was never mentioned, and 23 (10.0 %) writers did not mention the context of the CSA at all.

Table 1
Sociodemographic information of the writers

		n	%
Writers	Only survivors/victims	149	65.1
	Survivors/victims and contact person	50	21.8
	Only contact person	17	7.4
	Not reported	13	5.7
Gender	Male	69	30.1
	Female	156	68.1
	Diverse	2	0.9
	Not reported	2	0.9
Age	26 to 45	42	18.3
	46 to 65	98	42.8
	66 and older	22	9.6
	Not reported	67	29.3
Place of residence	Former West Germany	150	65.5
	Former East Germany	32	14.0
	Foreign country	7	3.1
	Not reported	40	17.5

The campaign's personal and political aims as reflected in the written documents

A first look at the documents showed that they were very heterogeneous in terms of formal characteristics (including length, degree of elaboration, and handling of salutatory and closing formulas), content, and concerns.

Some documents were very personal, revealing experiences of CSA and talking about feelings, while others were written in a formal style and articulated political concerns. The messages contain requests for support in various areas as well as offers to support the Commissioner in her work. Most of the writers addressed Dr Bergmann directly (e.g., *"Dear Ms Bergmann …"*; *n* = 120; 52.4 %) and most of the documents contain demands.

The personal dimension. Some of the writers took up the campaign as an offer of personal connection and personal communication and expressed implicitly or explicitly messages of understanding, trust, and personal support and help. In this way, the writers responded to the personal appeal of the campaign and to the "face" of the campaign as the face of Dr Bergmann to whom one can turn on a personal level.

The analysis of the letters shows that, for some writers, the possibility of establishing a personal relationship was a prerequisite for writing. Writers addressed the Commissioner as *"empathetic"*, *"compassionate"*, *"appreciative"*, *"understanding"* and as a person with a humane side. The letters impressively document the importance of the personal level. They contain personal greetings, wishes, formulas of thanks and expressions of hope for a response and for further mutual communication.

In terms of content, there are two focal points on this personal level. One, writers addressed Dr Bergmann as a listener and as someone they can *"entrust"* their own history. Trust was central: *"This is my story, I entrust it to you, you take it seriously, dear Ms Bergmann"*. Some commented explicitly on the efforts, troubles and hurdles of writing about personal experiences and breaking the taboo. The second focus is the thanks to Dr Bergmann for her personal commitment, patience, understanding, sympathy, and perseverance; for her work and for reading the letters, answering them and sharing the burdens of the writers.

The political-social dimension. In addition to the personal-private dimension, the campaign also implies a political-social dimension in that it could and should make a difference. Letters that express political and personal levels of communication took two forms: First, the offer made in the campaign was understood as an invitation to participate in the struggle for social recognition and concurrent support for victims/survivors and thus as a *"contribution to something greater"*: *"To the 1,000 and more reported cases so far I would like to add mine."* These writers saw themselves as persons who, on the basis of their special experience, can give something to society and can act and be effective within the framework provided. Second, writers responded to the personal appeal of the campaign by addressing requests and demands to Dr Bergmann (see below). The statements in the

documents refer primarily to the needs, burdens, and demands for support that victims/survivors have.

The public dimension. The campaign was public and made the problem of CSA public. The aims were to create publicity for the taboo topic of CSA and thus to make the private political, which was reflected in some of the writings: *"And it is important for me to become visible/public a little with my story, because that was (and actually still is) taboo for so long."* The message of the campaign sent a strong signal that secrecy, taboo, and stigmatization should no longer apply. More than that, the expectation was raised that speaking up is an effective instrument in the fight against sexual violence. This also raised hope for a lasting improvement for future generations: *"I certainly believe that a society that deals with the injustice of 30 or 40 years ago is more likely to establish a culture of looking after the vulnerable and protecting them."* On the political level it is useful because the voice of victims/survivors makes CSA visible and allows demands to be made.

The invitation to write. The documents indicate that difficulty specific to the disclosure of CSA converged with communication barriers specific to writing. In comments on the writing process itself, the documents show that writing can be part of a coping process in a different way than speaking. For example, it could be that certain people find it easier to write about experiences of CSA than to talk about them on the phone – according to the motto *"writing is louder than thinking, quieter than speaking"*.[6] The writing process can be controlled by the writers – e.g., by interrupting it when it becomes too stressful or by revising what has been written. There are also reflections on the emotional state or on difficulties during the writing. Here the focus shifts from the past to the present and to the current writing, and the person writing watches himself/herself writing, which enables a meta-level of reflection and thus a distancing from past experiences of CSA.

To some extent, the messages of the campaign initiated processes through which writing (to Dr Bergmann) became an integral part of situating CSA experiences of the past in one's present life. That said, for some writers writing may have been a previously established way of dealing with their experiences. Documents in which questions were asked as to who will read the letter and what will become of it also point to another difference from telephone contacts: The moment the document is sent, the

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6 Quote from an email consultation, presented at the BKSF symposium on 30.01.2020: Digitization and specialized advice on sexualized violence in childhood and youth.

person writing loses control over it and the sending of the letter becomes a moment of great vulnerability. The great importance of trust in the addressee and the desire to receive a reply and feedback can be understood from the nature of written disclosure of CSA within the context of the campaign.

The writers' demands

The campaign invited the public to articulate political demands. Some of the writers took this up. The messages of victims/survivors could be used to generate political pressure and to act. Indeed, looking back to the beginnings of the campaign, there have been improvements in some of the points addressed by the writers. The substantive concerns in the documents essentially relate to three areas: financial and administrative support (n = 36; 15.7 %); therapy and counselling (n = 51; 22.3 %); and, finally, CSA prevention and the abolition of taboos (n = 55; 24.0 %).

Financial and administrative support. In terms of financial support, the central demands relate to compensation and compensatory benefits in the event of occupational disability or old-age poverty due to the violence suffered. A recurring proposal in this context is the establishment of a fund to compensate victims/survivors for the financial losses they incurred due to violence and to enable self-determined choices of assistance not financed by health insurance like bodywork. In addition, writers expected the UBSKM to provide unbureaucratic assistance and simplified procedures in the application process, for example under the Victims' Compensation Act.[7]

Therapy and counselling. Most writers suggested various improvements to the provision of therapy and counselling. The central points of criticism here relate to lack of access to therapy, insufficient qualification or specialization of professionals, and lack of recognition and credibility in assessments and formal procedures. Based on both positive and negative experiences, writers made demands aimed at the following policy goals: the expansion of nationwide provision of therapy and counselling; an expansion of permits and financing of (needs-based) specialized help and trauma therapy for therapists; and the awareness rising of professional helpers to topics of CSA.

Prevention and child protection. Making political demands on the UBSKM can be seen as an attempt to exert political influence. In doing so,

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7 Changes in this area can be observed in the last ten years, see below.

writers looked to the future and called for improvements in the prevention of CSA, offering specific proposals for how to go about it. Retrospectively, one's own experiences of help denied can become an influential motive for action; a desire becomes apparent to productively turn one's own negative experiences *"into a contribution to something greater"* (i.e., the fight against sexual violence). The demands range from increasing the number of staff in youth welfare offices to strengthening children's knowledge of their personal rights and to establishing child protection plans and codes of ethics in institutions that serve children and youth. Another demand, related to both prevention and justice, was to abolish the statute of limitations in civil and criminal law and to introduce more severe penalties.

The writers expressed concerns for the needs of victims/survivors, both in terms of their commonalities and their heterogeneity, and especially in terms of their socio-historical specificity. The public debate about CSA, which at the beginning of the campaign had only just begun, and the precarious health care provision at the time were reflected in the messages of the writers. Against this background, the writers made good use of the opportunity provided by the campaign to draw attention to existing abuses and to suggest improvements. The campaign created a forum in which writers were empowered to participate in the public debate based on their personal expertise. The hope for the expansion and improvement of preventive, curative and rehabilitative services became clear. In the meantime, some of the desired changes have been implemented, while criticism of shortcomings remains.

Reception, criticism and limits of the campaign

Overall, the documents indicate a predominantly positive perception of the campaign (*n* = 56 positive responses of a total of *N* = 61 responses about the campaign). It should be noted that such feedback is available only from people who had decided to write. It can be shown that such a campaign, given the previous negative experiences of victims/survivors, must credibly convey that this time the perspectives of victims/survivors are in the foreground and are of lasting interest.

Praise and criticism. The campaign's posters, flyers, and postcards were mentioned only sporadically, but whenever they were mentioned, the comments were positive. The TV spots elicited more feedback, with both positive and critical comments. The ads were praised because, from the perspective of some writers, they *"hit the nail on the head"* and were appropriate to the subject of CSA: *"[T]he trauma of the child and the sub-*

sequent post-traumatic life of the adult until the silence is broken cannot be portrayed in a better way." More specifically, on one hand, writers evaluated messages about the nature of CSA and its consequences. On the other, writers commented on the emotional appeal to victims/survivors and their feelings: The ads could inspire and provoke *"goose bumps of the finest kind"*, but they also could frighten, because something was said in public that always had to be kept quiet *("My heart stopped!")*, and trigger feelings of being threatened that reminded viewers of past incidences (*"… and during the broadcast I was already afraid that someone might be watching me"*).

Besides the praise, there is also criticism of the ads. This refers to the fact that *"talking about sexual violence can be quite dangerous, the attitude of silence can be rational"*, which was glossed over in the video clips. Some viewers felt that the call to speak passed responsibility for change to victims/survivors: *"Is it your own fault if you don't finally do it?"* In addition, there was criticism of the portrayal of victims/survivors as powerless victims who are silenced by the perpetrators.

General skepticism about change. On one hand, writers attributed high potential for social change to the campaign (see section "The campaign's personal and political aims as reflected in the written documents"), while on the other hand part of the feedback shows a general distrust that improvements for victims/survivors would be possible – even if only in a small number in the present sample. Concern is expressed that the campaign might not produce satisfactory results. This is linked to past experiences that public attention to the issue only leads to *"kicking the can down the road"*, that there is still no lobby for victims/survivors, and that the feeling of not being taken seriously persists. These concerns emphasize the wider societal context on the campaign and remind us that its very existence has not yet broken the silence of society as a whole. One writer points out that the slogan *"Those who break the silence break the power of the perpetrators"* can only be redeemed *"if there is someone who listens and offers the necessary protection and support. And so far, there are far too few of these … To break the power of the perpetrators, however, there is also a need for appropriate legal action."*

One difficulty that no publicity activities can avoid remains: the potential shock of being confronted with texts and images of CSA that can trigger unwanted memories and lead to psychological distress for victims/survivors.

Conclusions

The campaign aimed to mobilize the public, bring the messages of victims/survivors to politics and society at large, and chart a path for change. Victims/survivors had not been protected as children; social institutions had failed, had not fulfilled their duty. This was the starting point of the campaign. It was developed and implemented in a special historical moment as part of wider upheaval in the discussion of CSA in Germany, and it made a significant contribution to the process of overcoming the prevailing taboo. For the framing of the campaign, it was essential that it was given a face, namely that of Dr Bergmann, the first Commissioner, who as a former government minister could exert political influence in this newly created position of special political responsibility. The system of data collection and evaluation at the contact point was modelled on a Critical Incident Reporting System (CIRS) (Fegert et al., 2013, p. 107). The data from the monitoring of the contact point was continuously evaluated and made available in aggregated form to the Round Table and the UBSKM. Victims/survivors could refer to the published results, and thus the desired feedback loop of a CIRS was created. In this way, the campaign offered recognition to victims/survivors and at the same time the many voices of victims/survivors strengthened the political fight against CSA.

The CIRS[8] elements included

- an adequate anonymous reporting system – during the campaign this was the contact point;
- appropriate responses to the notifications received – letters and emails were read and personally answered, research results were published continuously, the involvement of victims/survivors was made publicly visible;
- flexibility – it was possible to get in touch by telephone as well as by letter, email or fax. An unpredictable number of calls and letters was handled with limited resources, and different media formats were used;
- finally, the ability to learn from experiences – the campaign was accompanied by research; the current telephone helpline for CSA and the help portal were developed from the telephone contact point. The demands of victims/survivors were brought into the discussion at the Round Table and several of them were implemented.

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8 https://www.kh-cirs.de/

The analysis showed that the campaign was effective and successful in many respects. Many individuals took up the invitation to speak, as shown by the large number of phone calls, letters, and emails. Making contact as a victim/survivor by writing means something different than making contact by telephone. The formal aspects of writing can be practiced to some extent, and the writing process is more under one's own control than a conversation. A moment of great vulnerability, revealed in the documents, was the sending of written messages, and writers accordingly expressed their need for reassurance about what would happen to the document after it had been sent. Nevertheless only the voices of those who had decided to write could be picked up. A limitation of the presented study is that it does not include feedback from victims/survivors who did not want to express themselves, who had not noticed the campaign, or for whom the campaign was meaningless or had negative effects.

The letters to UBSKM Commissioner Dr Bergmann reveal the perspectives of the victims/survivors, who the campaign tried to reach. The campaign was multimedia-based and multi-dimensional, and in the person of Dr Bergmann different elements of the campaign were united. Significantly, through Dr Bergmann the campaign offered trustworthy communication in a protected environment, which writers saw as an expression of personal solidarity and used for disclosure. Moreover, the design of the campaign and Dr Bergmann's participation strengthened the political dimension and encouraged writers to articulate concerns and demands with the hope that the political clout of the UBSKM would help bring about social change. As the analysis of the documents shows, the campaign was able to collect the voices of victims/survivors and treat them as sensitive and worthy of protection while at the same time ensuring that these private voices could grow into a powerful public voice.

This is of particular importance in so far as the majority of the writers during the campaign were people who suffered greatly from the health and social consequences of the violence they had experienced and from the surrounding taboo, who had made bad experiences with the health service and with the authorities, who were in part full of mistrust, and who thus represented a particularly vulnerable group for whom access to political power is often denied.

A further characteristic of the campaign was that it addressed persons who suffered sexual violence in childhood not only as victims but as survivors, thus being entitled to make a contribution to the process of overcoming their difficult situation. The campaign addressed victims/survivors as competent persons, as experts from experience, who can make an active contribution to a common cause. The campaign did not reinforce

victim stereotypes but instead offered a framework for linking individual coping with socio-political action (Busch et al., 2020).

From the reactions of victims/survivors, we can derive quality criteria and requirements that a campaign on a sensitive topic such as sexual violence in childhood and youth should meet:

(1) Making the issue public and encouraging victims/survivors to speak out means taking ethical responsibility. A campaign must be clearly linked from the outset to a low-threshold, easily accessible offer of personal contact, because media activities can trigger memories, cause psychological distress and, in the worst case, have a re-traumatizing effect. If a helpline is available on a national or regional level, it may be sufficient if it is clearly communicated. However, this does not replace the personal accessibility of those responsible for the campaign.

(2) Anyone campaign can always reach only some victims/survivors, never all at once. Children and young people, for example, must be addressed differently than adults. Victims/survivors must be seen in their diversity and not only as victims but as survivors who were not protected as children and had to live with the impact. The helpline or contact point must be well staffed to avoid long waiting times. Support offered must not be narrow but open to the needs of victims/survivors so they can decide whether they want to seek help, express their anger, or articulate political demands.

(3) A campaign always holds a promise of change or improvement. Care must be taken here. Hopes that have been raised must be balanced with realistic potential for change so that victims/survivors do not get disappointed again. The goal of a campaign should be the empowerment of victims/survivors and the promotion of self-determined activities, not resignation.

(4) A media campaign is a temporary activity. It must be continued by long-term measures and actions that mobilize the political forces necessary to lift the burden on victims/survivors and implement the changes they demand. A campaign that calls on victims/survivors to "break the silence" – and thus "the power of the perpetrators" – must have consequences, such as improved access to therapy or appropriate sanctions for perpetrators. Here, those who run a campaign – and victims/survivors, too – are faced with a fundamental dilemma: Without the active participation of victims/survivors, the campaign will come to nothing and will not develop the clout needed to demand change. At the same time, the makers of the campaign cannot guaran-

tee that they will achieve the desired results, even if a large number of victims/survivors participate. This can lead to disappointment.

The demands that victims/survivors put into writing revealed the political urgency of the campaign: Systematic deficits in adequate victim rehabilitation and CSA prevention were identified. The voices of the writers have added weight to several initiatives aimed to remedy matters and improve the situation of victims/survivors of CSA. The Act to Strengthen the Rights of Victims of CSA (StORMG) was adopted, and the statute of limitations was extended to 30 years. A fund has been set up to provide financial support for victims/survivors; however, the fund's decision-making practice has been criticized vehemently. The Victims' Compensation Act was finally amended, but some very important demands were not implemented. Therapy and counselling have not yet been improved. It takes more than a media campaign to bring about change. After the campaign of the first Commissioner had ended, other campaigns followed.[9] In 2020, a new TV spot was launched with the slogan "Calling helps!"[10] and was aimed at anyone who suspects that a child they know is being sexually abused to call the helpline.

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9 https://www.trau-dich.de/; https://www.kein-raum-fuer-missbrauch.de/; https://www.missbrauch-verhindern.de/

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The perspective of victims/survivors on media coverage of child sexual abuse

Bianca Nagel & Barbara Kavemann

This chapter presents the results of an online survey (*n* = 103) and 51 qualitative interviews with victims/survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA). First, it examines the question of how victims/survivors of CSA perceive media coverage. 2010 is identified as a turning point in German media coverage because of a new wave of reporting on cases in children's homes and boarding schools and because of the first big media campaign on CSA. Different perspectives on media reports are highlighted: the opportunity of media to change society and reach people on the one hand and demands to keep the topic permanently present on the other hand. Second, the experiences victims/survivors have when they themselves disclose CSA in the media are addressed. The empirical findings underline the relevance of media coverage for victims/survivors of CSA both on the level of personal involvement and the need for trauma-sensitive and evidence-based reporting to change society's perception of the issue.
Keywords: child sexual abuse, victim/survivor perspective, media coverage, qualitative analysis

Reports of current cases of child sexual abuse (CSA) are regularly in the media, mostly in daily newspapers or news broadcasts in the form of reports on police operations or criminal proceedings, and victims/survivors[1] are constantly confronted with them. At the same time the topic remains a social taboo and survivors are often not believed or experience stigmatization as a result of disclosure or seeking help (Kavemann et al., 2016).

Sexual violence in childhood and youth has been a topic in the media in Germany since the mid-1980s. First self-help groups of women had brought the topic to the public eye, with a focus on intrafamilial CSA. At the beginning of 2010, victims/survivors of CSA in Germany went public and made the previously hidden extent of CSA in boarding schools and children's homes in the 1940s to 1970s visible. Compared to the previous

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1   We use the terms victims/survivors to acknowledge a current debate in Germany about the proper naming of those individuals who have suffered from CSA. Many of them reject the label "victim". They do not want to be seen as victims and prefer instead to be referred to as having survived CSA or having been affected by CSA (German: "Betroffene"). Others find the reference to victim fitting and important.

discourse, new aspects were taken up: The focus was on (Catholic) elite institutions, the positively connoted concept of reform pedagogy was being challenged, and the topic was predominantly CSA of boys (Hoffmann, 2015). Previous attempts to bring the topic to the public had failed as they were not picked up by the media (Behnisch & Rose, 2011; Oelkers, 2017). A massive scandal was needed in Germany so that the topic of CSA could no longer be ignored (see Etzel et al. in this volume). It set off a new wave of media and scientific debate about CSA (Kavemann et al., 2016).

The broad media discussion developed quickly and led to changes in politics (Bange, 2018). First, the Federal Government responded by setting up a Round Table on Child Sexual Abuse, in which three ministries were involved, and by appointing the former Minister for Family Affairs, Dr Christine Bergmann, as the first Independent Commissioner for the Investigation of Child Sexual Abuse. Second, a media campaign was launched to encourage victims/survivors to share their stories and to convey their demands and messages to politicians (see Etzel et al. in this volume). The next important step followed in 2016: The "Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany"[2] was appointed by the German parliament to investigate all forms of CSA in Germany, to raise public awareness, and to promote a better understanding of child protection on a societal level. For that, private sessions were and are still conducted to give victims/survivors the opportunity to tell their stories confidentially, but also public hearings to examine different key issues (like CSA in families, the churches, the German Democratic Republic, or sports). These activities are being evaluated and the stories told by victims/survivors are documented and published (Unabhängige Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Missbrauchs, 2019). Additionally, various research projects are conducted in the framework of the Inquiry[3] as a contribution to updating and broadening publicly available knowledge about CSA based on the experiences of victims/survivors.

The current chapter aims to gain a deeper understanding of how victims/survivors of sexual violence in childhood and youth perceive and evaluate media coverage about CSA and what experiences they made when they themselves disclosed their experiences in media such as newspapers or television. For this purpose data of one of the research projects mentioned is reanalyzed (further information see Kavemann et al., 2019).

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2 www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/english-information

3 https://www.aufarbeitungskommission.de/kommission/projekte/

CSA in the media

In the research on which this chapter is based, it became evident that victims/survivors ascribe significance to media coverage for society's approach to the topic of CSA (Kavemann et al., 2019). Media reports influence public perception, and coverage of CSA contributes to raising awareness in society (Kitzinger, 2004). Media can push institutions to respond to cases of CSA in their own organizations (Donnelly & Inglis, 2010) and can provide encouragement to people to contact child protective services (Saint-Jacques et al., 2012).

While quality media are considered important by both scientific theory and practice, quality deficiencies in reporting are frequent (Döring & Walter, 2020). Weatherred (2015, p. 29) found a "very real lack of coverage about prevention of CSA and its effects on society, law, and future public policies." Rather a focus on sensational cases and the blame of individuals instead of structures were identified. Research highlighted that, while reports from national US media between 2002 and 2012 included societal causes of CSA, solutions were still addressed on an individual level, such as prosecution of individual perpetrators (Weatherred, 2017). News stories excluded societal conditions, policy solutions or prevention (Mejia et al., 2012) and did not sufficiently involve professionals and their expertise (Cheit et al., 2010).

Inadequate reporting can spread CSA myths and reproduce incorrect and stereotyped beliefs about victims/survivors and also perpetrators (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). By that it can have a direct negative impact on the lives of victims/survivors; for instance, people who accept these myths are less inclined to believe victims/survivors when they disclose CSA (Cromer & Freyd, 2007). Such news coverage then contributes to stigmatization, to which victims/survivors are repeatedly exposed (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985; Goffman, 1975; Kennedy & Prock, 2018). Shame and stigmatization can have long-term traumatic consequences for victims/survivors (Jones et al., 2010) and negatively influence the societal attitude towards victims/survivors (Collings, 2002). There are several risks in media coverage: Publicity about individual cases can not only increase the risk of shame and stigmatization for victims/survivors. Studies have also found that media reports in the U.S. frequently contained enough information to identify victims of CSA (Jones et al., 2010). Similar findings apply to adult victims of violent crime in Germany (Kunczik, 2016). Privacy rights are thereby violated.

The use of language and images convey a picture of CSA that is not congruent with empirical findings and social reality. German media reports

on CSA are frequently illustrated with problematic pictures: small children being threatened by big hands or overwhelming shadows, teddy bears stabbed with scissors, broken dolls, children crouching in a dark corner etc. (see Döring in this volume).

This also includes the terminology used to refer to victims/survivors. It plays an important role in the reception of reporting. The German press usually speaks of "victims", while the self-description of those who experienced sexualized violence in childhood and youth varies between "victims", "survivors", and "Betroffene" ("person affected"). In a binational study, Papendick and Bohner (2017) examined the effects of the labels "victim" and "survivor" (and their German equivalents) for women who had been raped on the basis of case vignette with which participants were confronted. The research showed stereotypical and partially stigmatizing attributions to the labels. The use of different terminology affected the attribution of more positive characteristics to "survivor" and stigmatizing, more negative ones to "victim". There were parallel effects for the English and German terms. At the same time "survivor" was associated with more severe forms of violence and only considered appropriate for these. For media reports the authors conclude that "the use of a particular label may have massive effects on the public's perception of women who have experienced sexual violence and, more specifically, on the public's intention to support these women and organizations caring for them." (Papendick & Bohner, 2017, p. 19).

Victims/survivors are compelled to deal with the presence of the subject in the media. The literature at hand contains important insights into the societal impact of the reporting of CSA, but so far hardly any of the victims/survivors have been asked for their own views and experiences. In the 1980s and 1990s when media reports on CSA were just starting to appear, Kitzinger (2004) conducted interviews and focus groups with victims/survivors of CSA and relatives. She found that media reports were predominantly evaluated as positive and helpful. She describes them as a "catalyst for change at an intimate, private as well as public level" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 44). A similar lack of literature applies to research on victims'/survivors' personal experiences of participating in media. A recent study with victims/survivors who suffered CSA by perpetrators within the church and who have reported on it in different media illustrates a broad picture of experiences (Baugut & Neumann, 2020).

This study

The research presented in this chapter puts a focus on the perspective of victims/survivors and aims to contribute to closing this particular gap in research by using recent data. Therefore we derived the following research questions: (1) How do victims/survivors perceive and evaluate media reporting from the perspective of the recipients? (2) What experiences have victims/survivors themselves with personal participation in media reports? To answer these question, qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed (further information, Kavemann et al., 2019).

This text focuses on experiences with and expectations of "traditional" media, namely newspapers and TV, in which the stories of victims/survivors are published by others. Not included are self-initiated and self-determined forms of publishing (like blog posts or books). The formats differ greatly in the degree of control that victims/survivors have over the reports: Are the stories published in a self-determined way, for example by writing a biography or publishing something online, or does someone else have control over the narrative?

Methods

Online survey

As part of the research project two online surveys were carried out. The results presented here are taken from the second questionnaire ($n = 103$). The online survey was distributed to a wide range of people: through contacts that the research team had already gained from the first online survey, through a mailing list of specialized counselling centers and organizations of victims/survivors, through the website of the research project and the website of the Independent Inquiry, and through a snowball system in which the link to the questionnaire was passed on in the private networks of victims/survivors. It was online for eight weeks in 2018 and was filled out by 103 respondents. The topic was mainly the Inquiry's public relations work and the perceptions of victims/survivors of the media coverage of CSA as well as their expectations of it.

The data was analyzed using SPSS (version 24.0); open questions were categorized (using qualitative text analysis by means of Kuckartz, 2018). The survey mainly reached women (over 80 %), respondents were to a large extent between the ages of 31 and 60 (ca. 80 %), and the majority currently lived in West Germany (over 80 %). Nearly 90 % stated that CSA

had taken place in the Federal Republic of Germany (both before 1990 in West Germany and after 1990 in the whole Federal Republic), while for 11 % CSA had taken place in the German Democratic Republic. Three quarters of all respondents had experienced sexual violence in the family.

Qualitative interviews

As part of the research project, 51 qualitative, semi-narrative interviews (with 44 women and nine men, all between 26 and 68 years old at the time of the interview, most of them over 40) were conducted. Interviewees were found in three different ways: (1) Participants of the first online survey were offered at the end of the survey to participate in the qualitative interviews if they were interested. In addition, (2) the interviews were announced on the website of the research project and via various mailing lists. Later on, (3) we also received inquiries from people who had learned about the interviews from other interviewees.

The interviews gave the interviewees room to tell their own story. Furthermore there was a focus on subjective views and theories about topics and concepts like "justice" or "recognition". The interviews were analyzed by creating case-specific scripts, working out central motives and identifying dense text passages to analyze. After that cross-case, analyses were carried out.

For this article, a secondary analysis (Medjedović, 2014) of the interview passages with the broad topics "media" and "the public sphere" was carried out. The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015) by means of Kuckartz's methodology (Kuckartz, 2018, 2019). Categories were inductively developed from the corresponding text passages; they are presented below.

Results

Perception and evaluation of media coverage from the participants' point of view

The media coverage in 2010 as a turning point

The wave of reporting in 2010 was described by interviewees as a turning point. It could trigger developments in different directions: relief, because

disclosure was possible, or the beginning of a crisis, because there was no escape from the omnipresence of the topic anymore. The following passages show how different reactions of victims/survivors can be when previously undisclosed and/or traumatic experiences suddenly become a public topic.

Media reception enabled/triggered disclosure

For a part of the interviewees the perception of media coverage marked a point in time when they began, as a reaction, to address their own history in different ways. One response to the reporting was a great need for conversation. At the same time, the public presence of the topic also opened opportunities to start to talk about it. An interviewee described: *"When the cases of abuse in the Catholic Church went through the press, I said to a colleague, well, let's see how things continue. I have decided not to press charges. And he thought for a minute and then was like … wait a minute! And that's how it happened. At that time, I needed to talk a lot, like a valve to the outside."*

The media reception could lead to activity. 2010 then marked both the beginning of speaking about CSA and the beginning of researching it – on the one hand because *"I could feel it was starting to build up again inside me"*, as one interviewee said, on the other hand because the reporting caused the victims/survivors to understand the violence as violence. That in turn then triggered disclosure. One interviewee described the process as follows: *"When the whole scandal really boiled over, I realized for the first time that I was a victim, too. Before, I did not perceive it that way. (…) Until that day, I thought I did something wrong as a kid. I would have kept quiet if it hadn't been for the newspaper article; I would have always thought that it was only the others and that it doesn't concern me."*

The reporting closed off protective strategies

The intensity and frequency of the media reports was not only perceived as positive. 2010 also represents a turning point when the confrontation with traumatic experiences deprived victims/survivors of the shelter and protective strategies that were previously in place. One interviewee described her coping strategy *"like a light switch"*. She was able to repress memories of her past if she needed to: *"It was never completely gone, like electricity is always on the line, but if I didn't want it, I pushed it away and it was*

good." That coping mechanism only worked as long as CSA as a subject was not present in her everyday life; thus in 2010 it stopped working and the *"switch"* was *"turned off by the massive reporting about the abuse in the Catholic Church. That was very merciless and took away a lot of protection."*

The forced confrontation was perceived as relentless and as a time where one could not escape the subject. In this case the media presence did not provide the opportunity for personal coping but rather took it away: To deal with her own history, the interviewee would have been dependent on her existing safety strategies. The time when the memories were repressed was described as *"easier"*, while the time after was called *"burdensome"* as it could cause a spiral of negative effects.

Perspectives on media coverage

The survey asked 103 victims/survivors about their opinions on media coverage of CSA: How did they perceive and evaluate it? The results showed that the portrayal of victims/survivors in the media was viewed very critically by a large majority. Only a narrow range of respondents believed that the representation of victims/survivors in the media was mainly adequate, saying that *"at least an attempt is made"* to present the topic in its entirety. By contrast, 72 percent of the respondents thought that victims/survivors were not adequately represented in the media. The insufficient public presence of the topic was criticized here and in other parts of the questionnaire. CSA was still seen as a taboo subject that is *"difficult to access"* or *"played down"*.

The answers were not only about frequency but rather about quality: They criticized too big a focus on perpetrators on the one hand, but the media coverage was also perceived as stigmatizing with not enough recognition and a lack of understanding for victims/survivors on the other hand. It was described as *"superficial and lurid"*, long-term consequences of CSA in particular were not seen as presented in their complexity.

When asked about the type of reporting that would be best to bring the interests of victims/survivors into the public eye, two were highlighted as suitable by over 80 %: personal interviews and reports that address the issue of CSA in a factual manner. A third of the respondents spoke in favor of emotionally evocative coverage. *"The question is not necessarily whether victims/survivors get a say, but how."*

Figure 1
(Adequate) presentation of victims/survivors in the media
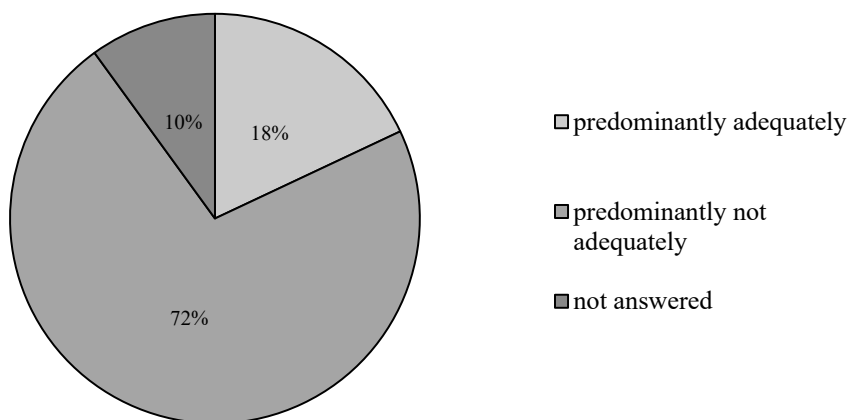
Note. Questionnaire; *n* = 103. Source: Quantitative survey, see Nagel & Kavemann, 2018, p. 9.

There was a strong desire that the interests of victims/survivors are proactively represented in the media coverage. It was of particular importance for the respondents that the consequences of CSA and the resulting need for therapy and support were in the focus of the reporting. This is related to the fact that they experienced support from the state as insufficient and access to therapy as difficult. They wanted this to be made public. The main focus was on providing information about the difficulties victims/survivors have to face in life, less about specific reports on perpetrators or institutions where CSA occurred.

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Table 1
What topics should be in the focus of the reporting?

	Absolute	Percent-age
The consequences CSA can have	90	87.4 %
The need for support and appropriate therapy/trauma therapy	72	69.9 %
The failure of state support (e.g., problems with applications to the compensation law, with the judiciary, with the newly established compensation fund)	55	53.4 %
The different forms of CSA (e.g., touching, rape, ritual abuse, organized exploitation)	50	48.5 %
Access to treatment and therapy financing	43	41.7 %
The injustice that CSA causes	43	41.7 %
The possibilities of protection and prevention for children and adolescents	42	40.8 %
Who the perpetrators are	38	36.9 %
The failure of institutions (e.g., church, school, residential care)	26	25.2 %
The possibilities of self-help and the organization of victims/survivors	16	15.5 %
Other	16	15.5 %

Note. Questionnaire; *n* = 103. Selection of a maximum of 5 from a list of 10 answers. Source: Quantitative survey, see Nagel & Kavemann, 2018, p. 12.

The passages in the qualitative interviews were analyzed according to what media coverage could achieve from the point of view of victims/survivors. Interviewees expressed ideas but not necessarily specific strategies for their implementation: *"It would be good if not everyone became instantly defensive. Reaching people would be good, but don't ask me how that would work."* The implementation would be the responsibility of rather abstract others like *"the society"*, *"politics"*, or *"those up there"*.

The opportunity to change society and reach people

Many interviewees saw potential in media reports to raise social awareness about CSA: *"That it happens in all possible contexts and in all possible forms and that victims/survivors often have to deal with it throughout their lives."* The goal should be to reach as many people as possible and to spread

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knowledge, so that this responsibility does not fall on victims/survivors, but rather that they can refer to it and are more likely to meet with understanding. That would be a contribution to destigmatization and the removal of taboos. *"That I can tell people and they know about it. That it is no longer a taboo subject."*

It was assumed that such knowledge would have a major impact: *"A topic that is perceived very differently by society is also treated differently in the therapeutic context."* Media would *"not have to function politically"*, but it was expected that a corresponding stance in the media would have positive effects on society as a whole. The media were ascribed a responsibility that they did not always live up to: *"I do believe that the media and especially advertising have a massive share in this. Advertising should be more controlled, so that sexuality is not always linked to objectification and violence."*

Reporting that explicitly provides information for victims/survivors can make help possible on multiple levels: (1) It could mean more support for children and adolescents who are being abused if their environment was well informed: *"If people paid better attention."* (2) It could encourage adult victims/survivors to seek out therapy or counselling. One interviewee described how important it was for him to see CSA discussed in the media and that he gained access to support in that way. Comparisons to other health campaigns were drawn: Media could make it known where and how support can be found and thus facilitate access: *"Motivate to seek therapeutic help as early as possible."* And (3) reporting could enable disclosure for victims/survivors. On the one hand, it could create opportunities: *"If it is talked about, then the people who experienced it also dare to do so."* On the other hand, media reception can give victims/survivors language to talk about CSA. One interviewee described how important it was for her to read books that dealt with sexualized violence. Discussions within her group of friends about this literature enabled her to address her own experiences.

Correspondingly, it was perceived as destructive when consequences of CSA that affect the lives of victims/survivors are used by the media to shock people, as was the case, for example, with dissociative identity disorder. An important part of the expectations was that media reports should use their reach to actively counteract victim stereotypes and to convey that victims/survivors *"are not totally damaged but have experienced and survived something very difficult."*

Demands to keep the topic permanently present

To reach as many people as possible, a large part of the interviewees considered it necessary that the topic of CSA has a permanent place in media reporting. The presence would have to be continuous and constantly kept up. *"It should be shown in the evening before the crime series, during commercial breaks, everywhere. It should be whacked into people's heads. With all kinds of information: what is that, where do you go with it, what do I do if, the whole range."*

It would have to go beyond *"scandalous reports"* or *"a brief outcry"* and be permanently anchored. For this the focus should be not only on reporting *what* happened but on going deeper than that, for example in case of CSA in institutions by analyzing the structures that contributed to CSA and monitor what consequences were drawn. *"More continuity"* was wished for: *"not that it is always temporarily discussed until people are sick of it and then not at all."* That could be a contribution to social reconciliation. But there was also an emphasis on the need for high quality reporting. It should not just be a *"media bonanza"* for people to get to hear stories about victims/survivors.

At the same time, it was feared that powerful institutions (such as the church) could silence critical media. *"You can see how the Catholic Church is dealing with this. It is swept under the carpet. Sometimes, by mistake, another article comes into some tabloid, but that will be killed with money very fast."*

Another wish expressed by a small number of interviewees was that the media should take different approaches to achieve different goals. Social media was mentioned, *"so that young people also know that this exists"*, but also a well-edited handling of the topic of sexual violence in films and documentaries in order to reach a broad audience. To that end it is not only important *that* the topic is processed, but also *how*. *"Like a feature film, but not depressed"*, *"the strength of the people"* should be made visible. *"High visibility, but not lurid."* Wording should be *"simple, not littered with technical terms"*, and one interviewee even suggested to *"improve the marketing"* of the topic.

Experiences with and ideas about direct contact with media

Personal appearance(s) in the media

Different expectations result from personal experiences with the media and from hypothetical thinking about speaking out publicly. This refers

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both to considerations as to whether public speaking in the media seems imaginable – or rather, reasons why this is not the case – and to personal experiences already made. Interviewees also talked about experiences outside "conventional media", such as writing their own books, websites, etc.; the focus here lies on processes not determined by interviewees themselves.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents of the survey found that there are still far too few opportunities for victims/survivors to speak out publicly. The existing coverage was described as *"superficial and tearful"*, and at the same time respondents saw explanations within the willingness of victims/survivors to talk about their individual experience of sexual violence; public disclosure is still a big step and can have consequences in personal and/or professional life. Disclosure continues to be seen as prevented by stigmatization and taboos around the topic.

Almost a third of respondents already made own experiences of activity in the media.

Figure 2

Have you ever given an interview on the subject of CSA for a newspaper or radio/TV station or written a letter to an editor?
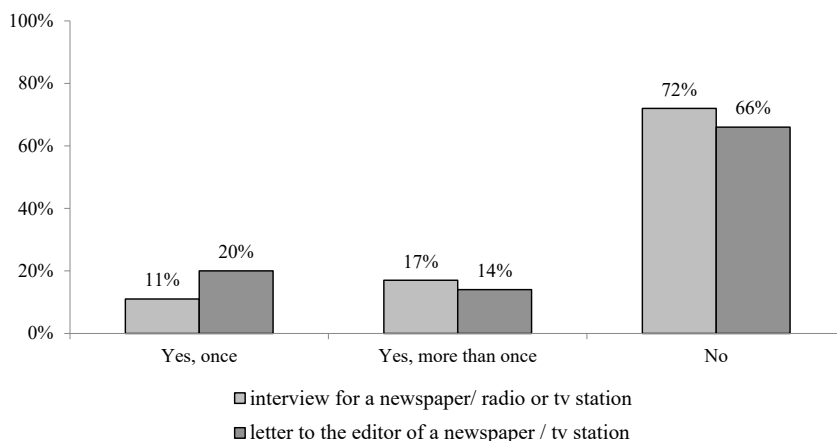
Note. Questionnaire; *n* = 103. Source: Quantitative survey, see Nagel & Kavemann, 2018, p. 12.

Reflections on speaking out publicly

What was perceived as "public" differed considerably. On the one hand, it was clearly linked to media reports; on the other hand, it could also be associated with a more "personal public". One interviewee expressed the following thoughts: *"It depends on what you mean by 'public'. I don't have to write it in the newspaper, but I have no problem talking about it with someone I have a good relationship with."*

The willingness to speak publicly was very varied. It could be seen as a part of personal coping: *"Through public speaking, I am processing this for myself."* The distance to own experiences was then perceived as helpful. At the same time interviewees clearly saw risks of stigmatization. The concern about possible reactions kept them from public disclosure. *"People whispering, I would never do that to myself."* The possibility for victims/survivors to speak publicly was considered important, but personal involvement was mostly met with skepticism: *"Not necessarily by me. I would think twice about that. Because I would be suspicious that I would be stigmatized and discriminated against because of it."*

An anonymous public appearance was considered a possible compromise until societal changes ensured that victims/survivors would not have to fear consequences. *"Not with my name online. Although I would wish that one day there would be a world where that was not a problem."*

Interviewees who were willing to be in the public eye gave specific thoughts about what kind of media outlet they would consider and in which they would not tell their stories: *"If a proper magazine would look for someone, I think I would do it."*

Personal experiences with media appearances

In addition to theoretical considerations, a part of the interviewees reported various experiences with their own participation in the media. In these narratives, two dimensions can be distinguished: (1) active choices to tell something personal in a public way and (2) unwanted reporting. In the first dimension, public speaking was preceded by a conscious decision. Positively mentioned were possibilities of being in the center of attention not as a victim/survivor but with a different expertise that was nevertheless connected to the topic, for example, as a therapist with a client for whom it is possible *"to go public with the issue, but not with yourself."* The second one included coverage of the court case of one interviewee. *"There was a lot of press. The cameras had to go, and I remember the judge saying, 'moderate*

reporting, right?' But it was still very detailed in the local newspaper. And everyone knew it was me." These reports were regarded extremely critically. Even if what had happened had already been known in the community, it was not a self-determined disclosure.

The experiences with interviews reported in the second questionnaire varied: Most of the respondents felt well informed about the process and the majority felt treated with respect. However, they had only limited influence on the course of the interviews. Twenty-nine out of 103 had given an interview at least once (see figure 2), but only three of them were compensated. Most of them would be willing to give another interview for a newspaper or a TV/radio station.

In some cases, respondents stated that they would not give an interview again or that it would depend on the topic. Their interviews had not been published, sometimes because they were withdrawn by the interviewee themselves, another time the TV station decided against publication. One person wrote that after a long interview she did not have any influence on *"which two sentences"* were selected for publication and that she therefore now decides *"very carefully"* who she talks to in the future.

In the considerations about public speaking as a victim/survivor, different fears were a major issue for interviewees. On the one hand, they feared that they simply would not be believed, and on the other hand they also feared legal consequences, especially if they dared to talk about CSA in powerful institutions. The possibility of anonymous participation in media reports was considered helpful.

Speaking out in the media could also help reduce stigmatization. One interviewee, who had experienced physical and emotional violence as well as CSA in a "Jugendwerkhof"[4], was confronted with stigmatization in her hometown; she was *"the one from prison"*. Appearances in the media were helpful to create understanding: *"Someone I knew came up to me and said, 'I saw you on TV. I didn't know things like these happened.' Many people have taken a closer look at it because of what I do. I can now walk through my city with my head held high."*

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4 "Jugendwerkhöfe" were institutions in the system of specialized homes for children and adolescents in the GDR, into which young people who were considered difficult to discipline were admitted.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of our empirical study clearly show the relevance of media reporting if it is done with participation, and in the interest, of victims/survivors. Although several decades have passed between the times of data collection in most cases and although the focus of media reports about CSA has changed significantly (Weatherred, 2015), resemblances to the results of Kitzinger's study (2004) can be found. The author shows how a shift towards increased media coverage in Great Britain had an impact on public knowledge about CSA, but also on an individual level. Interviewees in our study described media coverage as helpful for making sense of CSA and providing them with a framework for thinking and talking about what happened to them. The results of our analysis show that these issues are still important today. One major difference is that, in the past, mass media were often the only way to get this information, while today the internet offers a variety of sources and alternatives but also risks, thus raising issues for further research.

Additional research is also needed in the area of self-determined publication. While this analysis focused on the perspectives of victims/survivors on "traditional" media, the data showed that 30 % of the respondents in the survey have shared their own life story in this way. Digital platforms were also very important for the exchange with other victims/survivors that played a major role in the perception of the public discussion.

It is important to include the perspective and expertise of victims/survivors in research and reporting. Döring und Walter (2020), for example, have developed a framework of quality criteria for media reporting in a study that included, among other sources, survey data from victims/survivors. This framework is largely confirmed and supported by the results presented here, which show that these are important issues for victims/survivors. They are mentioned while interviewees were talking about their experiences and their life story, so they came up as relevant even if the interviews were not specifically about media and media reporting. This is an important result and, at the same time, a limitation: The data on this topic were not systematically collected. Furthermore, as is generally the case in such studies, the sample consists of interviewees who were actively engaged with the topic and their life history or who were willing to do so. Victims/survivors who were not (yet) able or willing to talk about it could not be reached.

An analysis of the discourse in the print media after 2010 in Germany showed that the focus of media coverage had changed (Hoffmann, 2015). While CSA of girls in families had been the main subject since the 1980s,

the debate now focused on boys who had experienced sexual violence in – mostly Catholic – boarding schools. Hoffmann identified five key lines of discourse: (1) The authoritarian-populist discourse blamed only individual perpetrators and their so-called "perverse desires". It was represented only by one medium of the tabloid press. (2) The freedom-critical discourse identifies primarily the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the associated change in values as the cause of CSA. Here, too, the focus is on individual perpetrator, not on institutional or societal structures. (3) The power-critical discourse addresses relationships of power in institutions that create opportunities, which then are exploited. Structural reforms are therefore called for here. (4) The integrative discourse assumes that the causes of sexual violence against children and young people in institutions are to be found both in the system of the institution and in the person of the perpetrators. (5) In the expert discourse very heterogeneous views are represented. None of these discourse lines could be described as dominant or (except 1) assigned to individual media. These findings show that reporting in the interest of victims/survivors exists. However, only some of these discourse lines meet the valid expectations, wishes, and demands of victims/survivors.

The current public interest in the topic of CSA is (not only in Germany) due to the public efforts and activities of victims/survivors. If they had not been willing and courageous enough to tell their stories in newspapers or television broadcasts – whether recognizable or with a concealed identity –, the debate and the legal and social reforms associated with it would not have reached its current form. A number of active and committed victims/survivors have gone public and expanded their own options for action and those of all victims/survivors.

Personal activity and speaking publicly about CSA were seen very differently in the interviews. For some it can contribute to personal coping processes and be a part of their coping strategies. Similar results were found in a recent study, where victims/survivors who participated in media reports were interviewed (Baugut & Neumann, 2020). Personal participation in media reports was assessed very differently. On the one hand, severe distress was evident when journalists ignored victims' concerns, and their behavior was perceived as disrespectful. On the other hand, victims/survivors assumed that media coverage had the potential to help them come to terms and support that their voices were heard and taken seriously. Mosser (2020) explored what inspired victims/survivors to publicly express themselves in this position. The decision to publicly speak out as victims/survivors can be understood as a form of personal coping. The self-determined movement in, and the active shaping of, public spaces

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can counteract the experiences of powerlessness in childhood and youth. But the willingness of victims/survivors to do this is not enough. It is not a question of "whether victims/survivors speak but (…) whether they are heard" (Mosser, 2020, p. 337). At the same time the author emphasizes the close connection between individual and societal awareness of CSA as a political issue. As was evident in the interviews that were analyzed here, this form of public visibility is far from being available to, or even desired by, all victims/survivors for various reasons.

Our empirical findings underline the relevance of media coverage for victims/survivors of CSA both on the level of personal involvement and for meeting the need for trauma-sensitive and evidence-based reporting for society's perception of the issue. It is evident that public education can be helpful for individuals and can provide recognition at a societal level (Doll & Nagel, 2019; Honneth, 1992) by confirming the existence of CSA and by presenting it as an injustice. Reporting on the topic of CSA is important for public awareness, and appropriate coverage could be considered part of the educational mandate for all media that have such a public duty.

Reporting was recognized and named as an important concern by victims/survivors and professionals at an early state of public discourse. Initiatives were taken to convince journalists to write about victims/survivors in a professional and respectful manner (see, for example, bff: Frauen gegen Gewalt e. V.; Pütter, 1999; Wildwasser e. V. Berlin, 2007), and there are terminology guidelines for the use of adequate language (Terminology and Semantics Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, 2016). It is important to note the risks of stigmatization and re-victimization. For reporting, especially on vulnerable children and adolescents, there are ethical guidelines by the German Press Council for their protection, to which media have committed themselves (German Press Council, 2017). The ethical requirements of reporting on serious acts of violence and the responsibility of journalists have also been addressed by research (see, for example, Kunczik, 2016; Kepplinger, 2016; Robertz & Kahr, 2016. These ethical criteria must also be observed when interviewing or reporting about adult victims/survivors to ensure respectful and non-harmful media coverage. This is especially important when victims/survivors decide to tell their story in public and thus contribute to vital societal processes.

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You don't talk about that!? – A survey on prospective social worker's knowledge on CSA and their use of media

Fatma Çelik & Beyza Karabaş

Well-trained professionals, like social workers, are essential for effective prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA). The present study assesses knowledge and knowledge acquisition regarding CSA in social work undergraduate students in a cross-sectional design. Three options for acquisition were assumed: 1) professional education, 2) media consumption, or 3) own experiences of CSA. Results indicated no improvement of knowledge through any of the prior mentioned sources and a high variability in knowledge. In contrast to expectations, personal experiences of CSA were associated with a higher threshold in recognition of CSA incidents. The meaning of the results for prevention and intervention are discussed by highlighting the role of taboos in professional education and the effects of media coverage.
Keywords: CSA, social work, education, prevention, knowledge

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global problem and can have long-term consequences on mental and physical health of survivors (Singh et al, 2014). International studies on prevalence of CSA assume rates between 7 % for boys and 18 % for girls (Stoltenborgh et al., 2015; Pereda et al., 2009). Depending on definition criteria, type of informant, and study design, these rates may differ (Zimmermann et al., 2011; Kenny et al., 2020). A higher prevalence can be assumed when including categories of internet-related CSA, that is online-grooming[1] of children for sexual abuse purposes or use of child abuse images (Negredo & Herrero, 2016).

Despite the high statistical probability to know a survivor, the public is in denial about CSA. The gap between public perception and empirical evidence may be results of taboos about discussing sexuality; feelings of shame and guilt in survivors or threat by the perpetrators, which may hinder report of CSA; and biased media coverage which may perpetuate existing stereotypes (Kenny & McEachern, 2000; Döring & Walter, 2020; see also Popović in this volume).

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[1] Grooming is a stepwise escalation of violations which may end up in abuse of a child, which can take place in online as well as offline environments (Gallagher, 2007; see also Sanderson & Weathers in this volume).

Studies on risk factors for victimization have shown that children of all ages and gender, starting in infancy, are at risk of being sexually exploited (Assink et al., 2019). Nevertheless, some groups underlie a higher risk of being sexually abused, for instance children with mental or physical disabilities, psychic problems in parents, and children from single-parent families (Wilcox et al., 2004; Bange, 2015). These risk factors are highly prevalent in clients of social workers. Therefore, this group of professionals should be well informed and trained in recognition of CSA. Moreover, it is central to effective prevention and intervention that professionals identify CSA or risk factors which enhance the probability of CSA at an early stage (Witt et al., 2013). Unfortunately, gender stereotypes, feelings of guilt, shame and insecurity about own sexual orientation when the perpetrator was male, or feelings of weakness may conceal the real prevalence (e.g., rate of sexually abused boys are underestimated) since they hinder disclosing (Pereda et al., 2009; Ullmann & Filipas, 2005). Huge discrepancies between the prevalence rates for CSA based on official reports and anonymous victim surveys underline this bias (Wetzels, 1997). Against the background of the discrepancies between official and nonofficial CSA reports, it is important to investigate how much prospective professionals working with clients at risk for victimization know about CSA at all (Pelisoli et al., 2015) and how they acquire their knowledge.

Knowledge can be formed through professional education, pro-active and passive media consumption, or own experiences (Meltzer, 2016). According to cultivation theory, high consumers of media show knowledge which is more biased by media coverage (Meltzer, 2019). Meltzer (2016) even assumes that media consumption and experiences may influence each other bi-directionally and form public perception. In the case of CSA, media coverage may also influence knowledge on CSA and related topics like CSA risk factors. However, media coverage on CSA does not draw an accurate picture of CSA since it is biased through news values such as proximity, personalization, or negativity (Eilders, 2016; Östgaard, 1965). For this reason, media coverage of CSA often misses facts like CSA being also committed by peers ("peer-offenders") or older adolescents ("child-offenders"; Allroggen et al., 2012). Misinformation on CSA and lack of awareness are widely spread among the general public due to a lack of standardized studies (Zimmermann et al., 2011) and biased coverage by media (Weatherred, 2015). Apart from general population there is also still a lack of information among professionals, who are supposed to work with victims of CSA, like social workers. A key factor for mental health in CSA survivors seems to be the presence of a confidant (Fuller-Thompson et al., 2020). Well-informed professionals may serve as a protective factor,

especially for those who experienced abuse by a perpetrator belonging to the family and are in need of extrafamilial support.

This study

In summary, social workers are in charge of children and adolescents who are more vulnerable to CSA (Bange, 2015). In opposition to this assumption there is no compulsory subject on CSA in education of social workers in Germany. This may lead to limited and inaccurate knowledge (Wurtele, 2018), which may be compensated by proactive media use or use of other sources. According to cultivation hypothesis, mass media may form knowledge. Beyond that, personal experiences may influence the way media is consumed (Schnauber & Meltzer, 2015).

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to assess knowledge on CSA and experiences with CSA in social work undergraduates. We hypothesized, (1) that advanced students should show improved knowledge compared to undergraduates in their first year. Beyond that, we (2) tested for associations between pro-active media consumption and own CSA experiences, and we (3) assessed if higher media-consumption on CSA topics or own experiences improve knowledge on CSA.

Methods

Instruments

We developed a questionnaire to assess (a) the students' knowledge (e.g., recognition of CSA incidents, age of consent in Germany, incidence rates, or type of offenders), (b) their pro-active media use, (c) their subjective evaluation on media coverage on CSA, and (d) the way media has an effect on them (rumination).

We also asked the students for their personal experiences regarding CSA by using the incidents list of the Essen Trauma Inventory (ETI; Tagay et al., 2007). In the current study we only report data on incidents including personal experiences of sexual abuse in childhood by a familiar or a non-familiar person.

Knowledge or recognition of sexual abuse was assessed as a sum of correct answers on a list of 11 different incidents (e.g., *to solicit sex, penetration, showing pornographic material to children, making sexually connoted*

remarks) and asking whether these qualify as sexual abuse or not on a dichotomous scale. Knowledge on incidence rates was assessed by asking students to estimate the percentage of victims in underage boys and girls. Percentage of involved offenders were classified regarding gender and familiarity to victim. Participants were also asked whether they know the expression "grooming".

Pro-active use of media was assessed by items asking whether media was used to gain information on CSA (*"I watch out for CSA-related News"* and *"I read up on information about CSA before my academic studies"*) on a 7-point Likert scale. A dichotomous dummy-variable was built by median split (Median = 5) for "heavy consumers" and "light consumers" of CSA-related media.

Finally, students were asked to evaluate how valid they would rate information in media regarding CSA, using four items (e.g., *"In my opinion media coverage of CSA is exaggerated"*) on a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability was sufficient for both scales.

Procedure

We used a cross-sectional design and asked undergraduate students studying social work (bachelor degree) at a university for applied sciences to fill a form (paper-pencil) on their knowledge on CSA. It was stressed that participation was voluntarily, and forms could be returned back anonymously by using a post-office box. Students were also offered a counselling interview if they wanted to talk about the questionnaire afterwards. Response rate was 79.3 %.

Sample

The final sample consisted of $N = 61$ (24.6 % male) undergraduates in their first year and $N = 58$ (12.1 % male) advanced students in their last year. The average gender-ratio in social work is about 25 % male students; thus male students were underrepresented in the advanced group (Kessler & Stiehler, 2015). First-year students' mean age was $M = 23.93$ years ($SD = 5.19$; range 18–42). Advanced students' mean age was $M = 27.02$ years ($SD = 6.96$; range 20–49). There were no significant differences between the groups regarding socio-demographic data.

Results

Statistical analyses were conducted in three steps: (1) students' degree (first-year vs. advanced), (2) media use (heavy vs. light) and (3) personal experiences (survivors vs. no experience) as independent variables. Due to small sample size, no interaction effects could be tested. The analyses revealed no significant mean effects in knowledge or subjective evaluation of media between the groups regarding degree or media-consumption. Therefore, results are presented for the whole sample.

Knowledge

In average, participants recognized seven out of 11 events ($M(118) = 7.24$; $SD = 4.39$) correctly as acts of CSA with a high variability. Students had most problems in classifying (a) milder forms like making sexual remarks in front of a child or (b) ambiguous formulations like demand to be touched tenderly by the child (no genitals).

Participants were asked to make estimations with percentages on prevalence rates regarding characteristics of perpetrators and victims of CSA. Participants estimated a higher prevalence in girls ($M = 37.5\,\%$; $SD = 24.3$) than in boys ($M = 24.1\,\%$; $SD = 19.1$). Prevalence estimations on perpetrator characteristics were: male adults ($M = 56.96\,\%$; $SD = 27.01$) and male peers ($M = 24.83\,\%$; $SD = 21.01$) as perpetrators, followed by female adults ($M = 21.67\,\%$; $SD = 16.78$) and female peers ($M = 12.18\,\%$; $SD = 13.98$). Estimations on relationship between victim and perpetrator were: relatives ($M = 46.05\,\%$; $SD = 26,19$), acquaintances ($M = 42.01\,\%$; $SD = 24.60$), and strangers ($M = 34.78\,\%$; $SD = 25.60$). Standard deviances showed a high variability in all estimations.

For the total sample, 67 % selected correctly the age of consent for consensual sexual activities (14 years), 3 % selected 12 years, 19 % selected 16 years and 11 % selected 18 years as age of consent. Moreover, only three persons indicated to know the expression "grooming".

Media use

Media coverage of CSA was rated underrepresented ($M = 2.16$; $SD = 0.98$) and understated ($M = 2.45$; $SD = 0.82$) regarding presentation of CSA

epidemiology. In average, undergraduates indicated little rumination after media consumption ($M = 2.19$; $SD = 1.29$).

Internet use was the main source of information (68.3 %), while 31.2 % of the total sample indicated that they had never dealt with the subject before. Other sources for proactive media use or other sources for information on CSA-related topics were newspaper-reports (19.5 %), therapy (17 %), TV (15.9 %), books (15.9 %), professional education (8.5 %), school (2 %) and podcasts (1 %). However, a majority of the students (85.7 %) expressed their wish for more information during their study of courses.

Personal experiences with CSA

Prevalence rate of own victimization were 18.6 % for familiar perpetrator and 15.3 % for non-familiar perpetrator for this sample, with five persons who were both victimized by familiar and strangers as perpetrators (re-victimization; Bockers & Knaevelsrud, 2011). Only seven persons indicated that they had been in therapy in the past. One person did not give any response.

Survivors were more engaged in personal research on CSA topics before professional education ($M(33) = 4.30$) than non-victims ($M(84) = 2.79$), exact Mann-Whitney-U-Test $U = 740.5$, $p = .000$, $r = .68$. They were no heavy consumers of media related to CSA in general though. Survivors of CSA rated media coverage of CSA as more understated ($M(33) = 2.24$) than non-victims ($M(84) = 2.54$), exact Mann-Whitney-U-Test $U = 1044$, $p = .034$, $r = .20$. No significant differences occurred regarding estimations on prevalence of CSA. Non-victims ($M(84) = 8.07$) rated more CSA events correctly than survivors ($M(33) = 5.03$), exact Mann-Whitney-U-Test $U = 942$, $p = .004$, $r = .87$.[2]

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to assess knowledge, media use, media evaluation, and own experiences in undergraduate students of social work and to identify sources of knowledge. Contrary to our expectations, there was no improvement in knowledge through professional education, pro-

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2 Data did not meet criteria for parametric tests, therefore non-parametric tests were applied.

active use of sources of information like mass media, or personal experiences.

This may be interpreted as a lack of improvement in knowledge regarding CSA in professional education and through media and (biased) knowledge through own affliction. These results cannot be generalized, for we assessed knowledge only in one institution and in a cross-sectional design.

The current study also showed that undergraduates have had abuse experiences themselves. This is noteworthy as experiences of professionals are influencing perceptions of indicators of sexual abuse. Therefore, those professionals "should be sensitized to possible sources of bias in their judgments" (Kendall-Tackett & Watson, 1991, p. 385).

However, results showed that sexual violations were recognized correctly when they were very explicit and clear. Students have had more problems in identifying mild and ambiguous situations. Ambiguous situations are more difficult to categorize, for victims and for professionals as well (Enders & Kossatz, 2012). This was also true for this sample. Survivors of CSA identified less situations correctly than non-victims. This could be interpreted as a higher threshold in recognition of CSA. Ambiguous situations may appear when a possible perpetrator grooms a child. Therefore professionals need to be trained in recognition of early signs of inappropriate behavior (Gallagher, 2007).

Estimated prevalence rates were higher than in epidemiological studies, especially for boys. One reason for this overestimation could be the characteristics of the sample, which may lead to differing, maybe even biased, perception regarding child welfare (Mallette et al., 2018). Students of social work may be confronted more often with these subjects than the common population and have more opportunities to discuss and question gender stereotypes during their course of studies (Tozdan et al., 2019). The study also showed that perception of the male adult perpetrator is still common, but students also named female perpetrators as well. Familiarity to perpetrators were closer to epidemiological estimations in this sample. This may be a methodological artefact, by effects of cued recall, biased perception, or self-selection effects of the sample (Hall et al., 1976). In general, further studies should assess knowledge by free recall and not by recognition items.

Within all estimation items, there was a high variability between the participants which indicates a high variability regarding knowledge and a need for standardized training.

To avoid self-selection and probable tabooing structures within professionals, courses on sensitive topics like CSA need to be obligatory. To integrate this into curricula should be one of the future challenges of uni-

versities or other educational institutions in order to guarantee improved child-welfare (Enders, 2015).

Prevention studies show that media is the preferred source of information regarding CSA (Babatsikos, 2010). In her framework model, Weatherred (2015) assumes that media content and public perception of CSA have an impact on public policy, which in turn may change societal responsibility for CSA. Media coverage plays a central role in public perception of CSA by framing information (Weatherred, 2015; Gitlin, 1980; Scheufele, 1999; see also Popović in this volume). Pressure by media may also affect decisions of policymakers, which then again lead to societal changes.

The framing of CSA in different settings by media coverage changed over time. Recently, structural conditions in institutional and in social contexts which contribute to child sexual abuse are more in focus (Görgen & Fangerau, 2018). Though sexual violent behavior against children is common and frequent, public consciousness for it decreases immediately after media coverage has ceased. More reports on CSA by familiars and the key role of internet use may change public perception. Media coverage mirrors societal structures and therefore reproduces societal taboos. Concrete strategies are required to overcome these taboos (Weatherred, 2015). Quality criteria in reporting CSA, e.g., correct wording, are mandatory to prevent misinformation and make adequate prevention possible (Döring & Walter, 2020). It is important to emphasize responsibility for prevention for the whole society (Weatherred, 2015).

Professionals need skills in differentiating sensationalist reports from correct empirical evidence in their media use, especially when they share the described experiences. Tabooing structures in churches, to which Görgen and Fangerau (2018) refer to as "culture of self-serving secrecy" or "culture of silence", have to be entangled not only in media but also in other social systems. Further studies should focus on possible silencing structures among professionals.

Finally, studies show that knowledge and attitude of students can be improved through curricular interventions (e.g., Wurtele, 2018). Courses providing information from experts, survivors, perpetrators, and non-offending people with pedophilia should be obligatory in professional education as well as presentations by professionals (e.g., Stelzmann et al. 2020). Media's crucial role in public perception of CSA and its influence on policymakers, professionals, and survivors can be met by providing non-biased, non-sensationalist documentaries. This information should be provided for free on the internet, as the results indicated that students have a preference for this source of information.

Conclusion

Professionals working with children in risk groups have a higher probability in working with children at risk for CSA. They are more likely to be confronted in their work (e.g., youth welfare, handicapped aid, dependence aid) with different forms of maltreatment in different age groups or to people who suffer from the consequences of CSA. Therefore, social workers and other professionals should be aware of risk factors to effectively prevent abuse or other forms of maltreatment (Kindler, 2010). Professionals need an educational setting which prepares them for challenges of their work. This requires providing professional education and training of a range of skills like recognition of early indications of abuse or probable abuse (e.g., grooming), standardized instructions in handling situations, and skills in mental hygiene, especially for those who have personal abuse experiences in the past.

In the present study, we wanted to assess undergraduate students' knowledge on CSA, their use of media, and their attitudes towards media coverage. Many barriers to disclosure exist, barriers from within, barriers in relation to others, and barriers in relation to the social world (Collin-Vézina et al., 2015). As the results show, barriers and inaccurate information within professionals (in training) do exist, too, and have to be identified and removed. Research on strategies to overcome these barriers should be the next step to improve CSA prevention.

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1.3. Media effects on perpetrators and other groups

Media presentation and stereotypes of child sexual abuse perpetrators

Stjepka Popović

The main objective of this study was to determine how the newspapers present child sexual abuse (CSA) perpetrators. A longitudinal content analysis (2007–2016) of a random cluster sample of 1.159 CSA news printed in Croatian daily newspapers was conducted. Perpetrators are presented as single/individual, male, elderly perpetrator, usually a church figure or person in charge of childcare. They are a known person to the child or a complete stranger. Use of derogatory terms to describe the perpetrator is greater in episodic news dealing with criminal offenses that highlight background information on the perpetrator and victim. Also, perpetrators are often wrongly described as pedophiles, while a portion of the news still incorrectly describes perpetrators as mentally ill persons. Finally, the news prematurely reveals the identity of the perpetrators, and predictors of identity disclosure are emphasized. News reports still support common stereotypes regarding the perpetrators, making them difficult to detect and recognize.
Keywords: child sexual abuse perpetrators, media presentation, stereotypes, content analysis

Since the media are the main source of information on child sexual abuse (CSA) to the general public (Babatsikos, 2010; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015), public knowledge and attitudes towards CSA perpetrators are shaped through media depictions. Moreover, the media has the power to stigmatize perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Pryor and Reeder (2011) formulated a conceptual model that seeks to clarify the existing yet diverse literature on the stigma (Bos et al., 2013). Their model displays four dynamically linked manifestations of stigma (public stigma, personal stigma, relationship stigma, structural stigma), with public stigma at the heart of the model, representing human social and psychological responses (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) to someone they perceive is being stigmatized (Bos et al., 2013). Public stigma affects personal stigma in three ways: by treating a person negatively, feeling and experiencing stigmatization, and internalizing or diminishing their own worth and associated psychological stress (Herek, 2007 as cited in Bos et al., 2013). In this context, the media has the power to label and stereotype the perpetrators. For this reason, it is important to investigate what labels the media attributes to CSA perpetrators and what stereotypes they support, so that implicit conclusions can be drawn about the stigmatizing potential of CSA news.

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When considering the issue of child sexual abuse and the stigma and labeling theory, the first association includes the perpetrators of child sexual abuse, who experience severe stigmatization and labeling because, in addition to being personally responsible for committing sexual abuse, it is a serious and dangerous crime at the cost of one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The taboo nature of sexual intercourse with children makes it seem so deviant that negative emotional reactions from the public are completely justified and inevitable. Reading, listening, and viewing of stories of child sexual abuse is a consequence of the adults' need to not only protect the victim but also to express disgust and anger at the perpetrator. However, the stigmatization of perpetrators is problematic for detecting and reporting child sexual abuse. The stigmatization of perpetrators as "monsters" gives the impression that the perpetrators are easy to recognize, that we personally probably do not know them, and it discourages children from reporting for fear that they will not be trusted. In reality most sexual abusers give the impression of a kind, considerate, and caring person, which is the reason why they are able to mislead parents and children, make friends with them, and thus reduce the likelihood of the child disclosing the abuse (Buljan-Flander, 2003: 90). The perpetrators generally come from different social, ethnic, professional, and age groups, making them literally impossible to identify (Sanderson, 2005: 18). The stigmatization of perpetrators as mentally disturbed individuals gives the impression that the perpetrators are easily identified, and it diminishes the responsibility of the abuser for the committed abuse. This is a completely wrong stereotype because most abusers do not suffer from mental illness (Sanderson, 2005). In addition, calling the perpetrator mentally disturbed stigmatizes people with mental illness. Psychotherapists who have a stigmatizing attitude towards people who have been diagnosed with pedophile disorder may be less willing to provide counseling and psychotherapy, which underlies sexual abuse and recidivism prevention (Jahnke et al., 2015). In addition, perpetrators are aware of stigmatization, which is why they manipulate children into silence, but also develop anonymous methods of exploiting children to alleviate the feeling of stigmatization (sex tourism, "online grooming") (Modly, 2006). Moreover, labelling a perpetrator as a pedophile is wrong since not every person with pedophilia commits child sexual abuse offenses and not every child sexual abuse offense is committed by a person with pedophilia (Seto, 2008). In understanding pedophilia it is newsworthy to mention that many people with pedophilia take responsibility for their sexual preference and do not act on their sexual impulses (Stelzmann et al., 2020: 14).

Stigmatization of the perpetrator can also endanger members of the perpetrator's family. Research shows that the perpetrators' family members experience "relationship stigma" and "structural stigma", that is, embarrassment, scrutiny, and restrictions given that they are treated as extensions by the system and society. Approximately 85 % of family members of perpetrators in the United States have experienced stress from the perpetrator registry, over two-thirds have felt isolated and ashamed, and more than half have feared for their own safety, with 7 % being victims of physical violence and three-quarters being subject to the same housing restrictions as the offender (Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). Perpetrators' children also feel the consequences. Most of them report that they are treated differently by the environment, 78 % say that the stigmatization has a negative impact on their friendships, while 13 % report suicidal tendencies (Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). Comments on the news of child sexual abuse have urged the media to disclose the identity of the perpetrator to the public (Popović, 2017). The public believes that public disclosure of the identity of the perpetrator is the safest measure to protect the children because of the belief that the perpetrators will relapse (Levenson et al. 2007 as cited in: Schultz, 2014). The perception that most perpetrators relapse is based on media reports and is triggered by moral panic (Schultz, 2014). In reality, perpetrators have relatively low recidivism rates compared to perpetrators of other crimes – the recidivism rate is at 15 % (Robbers, 2008 as cited in Schultz, 2014). In addition, focusing only on those already known as perpetrators neglects the reality of most perpetrators who have never been discovered and reported to the authorities, and it misleads the community into a false sense of security. It is the media stigmatization that contributes to the moral panic that then results in emotion-based policies without really evaluating their effectiveness (Schultz, 2014).

The moral panic theory is one of the key theories in the criminological literature that explains the impact of media presentation of crime on its readership. A well-known example of moral panic when it comes to child sexual abuse is the "stranger danger" during the 1980s. However, caution is advised when applying moral panic to the problem of child sexual abuse as it may cause panic around the panic and create the impression that child abuse is an overrated social concern (Atmore, 1997 as cited in Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1999). This usually challenges the arguments of those who want to emphasize the seriousness of child abuse and to work on prevention. It is more appropriate to think about moral panic in the context of creating panic from specific categories of perpetrators (e.g., strangers, mentally ill, male perpetrators), who can completely divert public attention from the fact that children are most frequently abused by

well-known persons to them who are not mentally ill and which include women. In doing so, it is closely linked to the stereotyping of particular categories of offenders. The main objective of this research is to determine how CSA perpetrators are presented in CSA news, which stereotypes are supported, if there is a correlation between the use of endangering practices for perpetrators and stereotyping practices, and what are the predictors of endangering practices while reporting on CSA perpetrators.

Main concepts

There are several main concepts used in this research: general presentation of the perpetrator (gender, number, age, profession, relationship between perpetrator and child, background information on the perpetrator), stereotyping practices (use of derogatory terms, pedophile perpetrators, perpetrator as a mentally ill person, perpetrators as homosexuals, perpetrators use/engage in child exploitation material/exhibitionism), endangering practices for the perpetrators (premature disclosure of the perpetrators' identity), and predictors of endangering practices for the perpetrators (characteristics of a CSA event, characteristics of CSA victims, characteristics of CSA perpetrators).

Methods

This study is a part of a broader research project "Testing the model of media coverage and presentation of child sexual abuse content", so the detailed methodology is described in the article "Presentation of victims in the press coverage of child sexual abuse in Croatia" (Popović, 2021).

Sample

In order to investigate press coverage of CSA perpetrators, a content analysis method was conducted. As already described elsewhere (Popović, 2021), six printed nationally available daily newspapers in Croatia were analyzed, while the units of analysis were thematic (newspaper articles/news on CSA). The population consisted of all newspaper articles on CSA in national daily newspapers in the period 2007–2016. The Presscut Agency Archive was searched using keywords in order to track all newspaper

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articles on CSA. The search identified 3,289 units of analysis on CSA in a ten-year period (from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2016). Since the search yielded a large number of articles, cluster sample was selected. Cluster sample in this study represents a systematic random sample of five years out of ten years of news about CSA (Popović, 2021).

Relevance coding and intercoder reliability

Relevance coding of the articles was needed in order to determine all news on child sexual abuse published during five randomly selected years. Relevance coding assumed exclusion of the articles that did not meet the technical criteria of the news and coding of the remaining news according to relevance (adapted from Cheit et al., 2010). Three trained coders were included in the relevance analysis, and upon the completion of coding intercoder reliability was calculated. The APPA value was 0.96, while Krippendorff's α was 0.86, which made the coding results highly reliable. Following the relevance analysis, articles labeled "relevant" constituted a cluster sample of CSA news ($N = 1{,}159$) (Popović, 2021).

News content coding and intercoder reliability

News content coding was required in order to develop a reliable analytical matrix. A total of three trained coders analyzed the content. In the final calculation, the APPA value was 0.97 and the average value of Krippendorff's α was 0.90, so that the analytical matrix was justifiably considered to be extremely reliable. After calculating the final reliability, the author of the research independently analyzed the cluster sample of all CSA news ($N = 1{,}159$) (Popović, 2021).

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the research was acquired from the Ethical Committee of the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law, Social Work Study Center (Popović, 2021).

Results

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse in the news: general picture and stereotypes

The gender of the perpetrator is not specified in only 3.1 % of the news, with only 0.5 % of the perpetrators in the sample being female, while 4.4 % of the news includes perpetrators of both genders, and 91.8 % of the perpetrators in the sample are male. Similarly, at the event level[1], gender is not specified in 2.4 % of cases, 1.5 % of the perpetrators are women, 4.7 % are of both genders, and 91.4 % are male. Out of a total of 1,050 news reports that could determine the number of perpetrators, 61 % of CSA are committed by one person and 39 % by two or more perpetrators. In the sample of individual cases reported and specified by the number of perpetrators ($n = 335$), 76.9 % of CSA are committed by one perpetrator and 22.6 % by two or more perpetrators. The age of the offender is not specified in half of the sample news (51.9 %). The most frequent are elderly perpetrators (age over 50) (61.3 %), followed by the perpetrators aged 30–49 (34.2 %), and the least represented perpetrators are aged 18–29 (4.5 %), which is consistent with the stereotype that the perpetrators of CSA are elderly people.

The profession of the perpetrators is specified in just under half of the news reports (43.2 % of sample-level news and 48.07 % of cases). Among the professions of the perpetrators in the media, the most prevalent are members of the clergy (55.1 %), child care workers (14.37 %), law and order representatives (9.78 %), perpetrators representing the entertainment industry (10.18 %), and perpetrators performing other reputable professions (7.58 %). In the overall sample, the emphasis on members of the clergy is more prevalent than in individual cases, while the emphasis on professions in charge of child care, government representatives, and law enforcement is more prevalent in the sample of individual cases. Because the professions in the analytical matrix have been recoded for the purposes of analysis by professions identified by keeping a case record, data on the specific proportion of low-skilled professions and persons with household access in the total sample of research are lacking. However, the practice of

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1 There is a difference between general sample and the event level sample. General sample includes all news articles on child sexual abuse ($N = 1,159$). However, the general sample of this research included 337 unique events/cases of CSA (since different newspapers report on the same events/cases) which are recorded during the collection of data in a separate record list, creating a separate database with the basic characteristics of individual cases.

highlighting specific professions in the media has been observed. Thus, the news of the largest police investigation against child exploitation material in Croatia, where there were more than 100 suspects, mostly dealt with one offender who was an educator by profession. In an Australian police investigation involving 70 perpetrators, it has been pointed out that, among them, there is a police officer and several teachers; in an Italian police investigation, a priest was emphasized among 100 cases; in an U.S. investigation, a police chief, a scout leader, and a medical technician stood out among the 71 perpetrators, etc. Distinguished professions or professions that make regular contact with children are emphasized, e.g., doctors, educators, social workers, diplomats, lawyers, TV presenters. Generalizations are sometimes credited to editors in highlighting, for example, "teachers and educators filming children", whereas the text would indicate that only four of the 100 men suspected of exploiting child exploitation material were teachers. When it comes to people who have free access to the household, the headline regularly features the profession (e.g., mailman, chimney sweeper) that contributed to the creation of moral panic.

Figure 1
Distribution of the use of different types of background information about the perpetrator in the sample (N = 1,159)
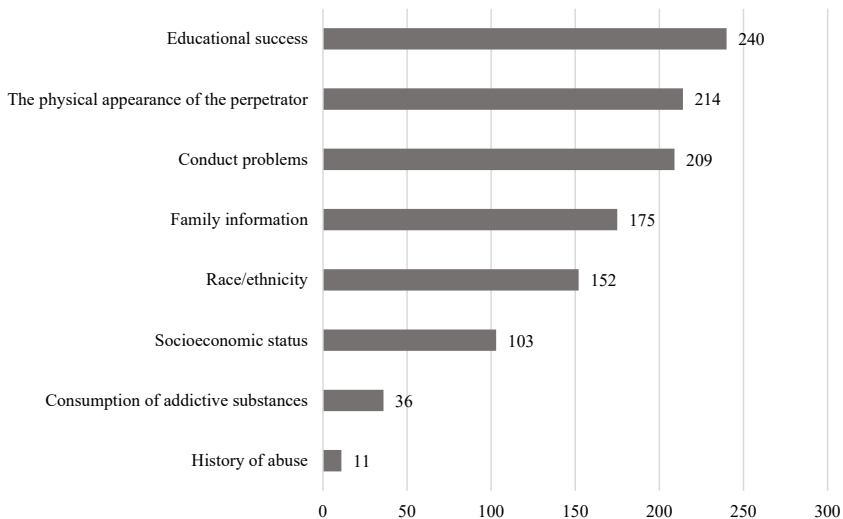
In most news, it was possible to determine the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Persons known to a child, with authority over

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the child (46.1 %), are slightly more represented than unknown persons (41 %), with the members of the immediate and broader family being the least represented perpetrators of CSA in the media (12.9 %). Among all known perpetrators, about 1/4 (24.7 %) are members of the child's family at the case level or about 1/5 (21.9 %) at the sample level.

Out of a total of 913 news that could encode the use of background information about the perpetrators, as many as 60.7 % use at least one piece of background information about the perpetrator. The frequency distribution of the most used background information is shown in figure 1.

In the overall sample of news regarding perpetrators, information on the perpetrators' educational success, physical appearance, conduct problems, family, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status were the most frequently used. Family information was statistically significantly more frequently used when the (co)offender was female, while information on the educational level was significantly more frequent when the offender was exclusively male (table 1). No statistically significant differences were found for the offender's gender for the remaining background information.

Table 1

Relationship between the perpetrator's gender and background information on the perpetrator

Background information		Perpetrator's gender			Test		
		Male	Female (co-offender)	Total			
		N (%)	N (%)	N	χ2	df	P
Family information	Yes	152 (87.9)	21 (12.1)	173	22.305	1	0.000
	No	816 (96.5)	30 (3.5)	846			
Educational success	Yes	234 (98.3)	4 (1.7)	238	Fisher's exact test	1	0.003
	No	734 (94.0)	47 (6.0)	781			

When the perpetrator was a known person to the child, family information, information on the person's educational attainment, behavioral problems, and consumption of substance was significantly more used than when the perpetrator was a stranger (table 2). No statistically significant correlation was found for the remaining background information.

Table 2

Relationship between the perpetrator-child relationship and background information about the perpetrator

Background information		Perpetrator-child relationship			Test		
		Stranger	Known to a child	Total			
		N (%)	N (%)	N	χ2	df	*P*
Family information	Yes	54 (32.5)	112 (67.5)	166	5.959	1	0.015
	No	343 (42.8)	459 (57.2)	802			
Educational success	Yes	67 (31.5)	146 (68.5)	213	10.310	1	0.001
	No	330 (43.7)	425 (56.3)	755			
Conduct problems	Yes	60 (33)	122 (67)	182	5.997	1	0.014
	No	337 (42.9)	449 (57.1)	786			
Consumption of addictive substances	Yes	6 (19.4)	122 (80.6)	31	6.209	1	0.013
	No	391 (41.7)	546 (58.3)	937			

The correlation between the use of derogatory terms to describe the perpetrator in the media and the general practices of creating news and presenting background information about the perpetrator and victim was tested (table 3).

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Table 3

Relation of using derogatory terms to describe perpetrators, general news-making practices, and background information about the perpetrator and victim

		Derogatory terms to describe perpetrators			Test		
General practices of creating news and background information on perpetrators and victims		Yes	No	Total			
		N (%)	N (%)	N	χ2	df	P
Media frame	Episodic	218 (27.4)	579 (72.6)	797	8.163	1	0.004
	Thematic	20 (15.5)	109 (84.5)	129			
Main topic	The offense	190 (30.4)	436 (69.6)	626	31.691	1	0.000
	CSA in church	17 (9.5)	162 (90.5)	179			
Family info perpetrator	Yes	93 (54.4)	78 (45.6)	171	83.194	1	0.000
	No	177 (20.7)	677 (79.3)	854			
Race/ethnicity perpetrator	Yes	58 (38.7)	92 (61.3)	150	13.757	1	0.000
	No	212 (24.2)	663 (75.8)	875			
Socioeconomic status perpetrator	Yes	38 (37.6)	63 (62.4)	101	7.350	1	0.007
	No	232 (25.1)	692 (74.9)	924			
History of abuse perpetrator	Yes	8 (88.9)	1 (11.1)	9	Fisher's exact test	1	0.000
	No	262 (25.8)	754 (74.2)	1016			
Conduct problems perpetrator	Yes	86 (42.0)	119 (58.0)	205	32.181	1	0.000
	No	184 (22.4)	636 (77.6)	820			
Consumption of addictive substances perpetrator	Yes	20 (58.8)	14 (41.2)	34	19.123	1	0.000
	No	250 (25.2)	741 (74.8)	991			
Physical appearance perpetrator	Yes	76 (35.5)	138 (64.5)	214	11.728	1	0.001
	No	194 (23.9)	617 (76.1)	811			
Family info victim	Yes	97 (52.7)	87 (47.3)	184	80.408	1	0.000
	No	173 (20.6)	668 (79.4)	841			
Socioeconomic status victim	Yes	18 (40.0)	27 (60.0)	45	4.525	1	0.033
	No	252 (25.7)	728 (74.3)	980			
Conduct problems victim	Yes	43 (40.6)	63 (59.4)	106	12.329	1	0.000
	No	227 (24.7)	692 (75.3)	919			
Mental health victim	Yes	102 (56.7)	78 (43.3)	180	103.487	1	0.000
	No	168 (19.9)	677 (80.1)	845			

Although most news items did not use derogatory terms to describe the perpetrators (73.7 %), the odds that derogatory terms would be used in episodic frame news was 2.052 times higher than in thematic news (95 %

CI, 1.243 – 3.388) and 4.153 times higher when the news dealt with the offenses and persecutions of the perpetrators in general than with the CSA in the church (95 % CI, 2.449 – 7.041). Also, the odds of using derogatory terms were 4.560 times higher when using family information about the perpetrator (95 % CI, 3.235 – 6.429), 4.234 times higher with the use of substance abuse information (95 % CI, 1.243 – 3.388), 1.972 times higher for race and ethnicity information (95 % CI, 1.371 – 2.835), 1.799 times higher for the offender's socioeconomic status information (95 % CI, 1.171 – 2.763), 2.498 times higher for the offender's behavior problems (95 % CI, 1.810 – 3.448), and 1.752 times higher when describing the physical appearance of the perpetrator (95 % CI, 1.268 – 2.420). Regarding the background information on the victim, the odds of using derogatory terms to describe the perpetrator were 5.270 times higher when using the victim's mental health information (95 % CI, 3.752 – 7.402), 4.305 higher when using family information (95 % CI, 3.082 – 6.014), 2.081 times higher when describing the victim's behavior problems (95 % CI, 1.373 – 3.153), and 1.926 times higher when describing the victim's socioeconomic status (95 % CI, 1.043 – 3.556).

At the quantitative level, the stereotype that the perpetrators are homosexuals is not supported in the media. Out of 484 news reports in which the perpetrator is male, 36.0 % are male victims and 64 % are female victims. The stereotype of homosexual perpetrators was only supported in the news about the CSA in the Catholic Church. For example, in the news with the title "I know that pedophilia is caused by homosexuality" (Jutarnji List, 2010: 18) the Vatican cardinal gives false information about the connection between pedophilia and homosexuality. In the sample, only four news articles deal with the CSA committed exclusively by women, with all victims being male. However, at a qualitative level it is possible to notice a different way of reporting when compared to cases where the perpetrator is a man and the victim a girl. For example, in the news "My husband is 16, but he seems like a 30-year-old", the perpetrator is called a sex trainer, the responsibility for the abuse is shifted to a 13-year-old boy ("he seduced me"), and the relationship is called love (Jutarnji List, 2012: 11). No news deals with the CSA in which both the perpetrator and the victim are female. By contrast, in the news where women are co-perpetrators, females account for as many as 80.7 % of the victims.

In the list of case records, out of a total of 72 individual cases of child exploitation material not one perpetrator committed CSA with contact, while at the level of a sample of 291 child exploitation material news reports, in which it was possible to determine that contact had been made, only three cases included contact between the perpetrator and the victim.

Thus it can be argued that the news supports the stereotype that people who use child exploitation material or exploit children for child exploitation material will not sexually abuse children. Exhibitionism was recorded only at the level of the case record list, so that out of a total of seven exhibitionism cases only one perpetrator engaged in child sexual abuse.

The stereotype of pedophile perpetrators has been confirmed since, out of a total of 813 news where the term "pedophile" is used at least once, 72.3 % use this term to describe the perpetrator of sexual abuse, while as many as 87.3 % used the term incorrectly (from which in 11.2 % it is certainly not a pedophile disorder and the rest cannot be said to be a pedophile disorder).

Although most news reports do not describe perpetrators as a mentally ill person (86.3 %), in 145 news outlets that describe the perpetrator in this way, only 19.3 % ($n = 28$) can confirm that a person suffers from a mental illness, 78.6 % could not confirm that it was a mental illness, while in 2.1 % it was certainly not a mental illness. In doing so, in the news that with certainty reports that it is not an illness, a qualitative analysis shows that the most commonly used terms are "disturbed", "sick", "maniac", and "out of their mind".

The correlation between the use of endangering practices for perpetrators and stereotyping practices

The only endangering practice for the perpetrator is the premature disclosure of the perpetrator's identity. The identity of the alleged perpetrator was prematurely disclosed in as many as 40.8 % of the news ($n = 894$), with the same proportion being revealed directly (49.3 %) and indirectly (50.7 %). An association was found between the premature disclosure of the identity of the perpetrator and the use of derogatory terms to describe the perpetrator, the description of the perpetrator as a mentally ill person, and the description of the victim as permanently damaged (table 4).

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Table 4

Relationship between premature disclosure of perpetrators' identities and stereotyping practices

Stereotyping practices		Premature identity disclosure			Test		
		Yes	No	Total			
		N (%)	N (%)	N	χ2	df	P
Derogatory terms to describe a perpetrator	Yes	75 (30.2)	173 (69.8)	248	15.784	1	0.000
	No	289 (44.9)	355 (55.1)	644			
Description of perpetrator as mentally ill	Correct	3 (12)	22 (88)	25	4.760	1	0.000
	Not correct	34 (34.3)	65 (65.7)	99			
Victim permanently damaged	Yes	33 (26.8)	90 (73.2)	123	11.906	1	0.001
	No	328 (43.3)	429 (56.7)	757			

The odds were lower that the news which prematurely disclosed the perpetrator's identity would use derogatory terms to describe the perpetrators (OR 0.533, 95 % CI: 0.390 – 0.728), would use correctly the perpetrator's description as a mentally ill person (OR 0.261, 95 % CI: 0,073–0,934), and would describe the victims as permanently damaged (OR 0,480, 95 % CI: 0.319 – 0.733). No significant association was found for other stereotyping practices.

Predictors of the identity protection of the alleged perpetrator

Binary logistic regressions were conducted to determine the predictors of the identity protection of the alleged perpetrator. Variables at the CSA event level (type of CSA, form, duration, use of physical force/threat, additional crimes), victim level (gender, age, number, and background information about the victim), perpetrator level (gender, age, number, relationship with the child, and background information about the perpetrator) were used as predictors. Table 5 provides the results of binary logistic regressions.

Table 5

Predictors of the identity protection of the alleged perpetrator

	Predictors	OR	95 % CI		P	Nagelker-ke R²	Hosmer & Leme-show test
			Lower	Upper			
Characteristics of CSA events	Type	0.826	0.445	1.535	0.545	0.140	0.881
	Form	1.351	0.923	1.977	0.122		
	Duration	1.325	0.818	2.144	0.253		
	Physical force	3.058	1.740	5.375	**0.000**		
	Additional crimes	2.284	1.112	4.690	**0.024**		
Characteristics of CSA victims	Gender	0.485	0.298	0.789	**0.004**	0.102	0.425
	Age	1.157	0.648	2.064	0.622		
	Number	1.025	0.624	1.683	0.922		
	Family info	0.954	0.549	1.658	0.868		
	Ethnicity	1.116	0.485	2.564	0.797		
	School success	0.367	0.144	0.940	**0.037**		
	Socioeconomic status	0.452	0.183	1.118	0.086		
	Sexual behavior	1.115	0.569	2.183	0.751		
	Conduct problems	1.022	0.530	1.974	0.947		
	Mental health	1.795	1.075	2.998	**0.025**		
	Physical appearance	1.917	0.940	3.911	0.074		
Characteristics of CSA perpetrators	Gender	0.523	0.167	1.635	0.265	0.111	0.881
	Age young				0.731		
	Age mature	1.403	0.508	3.872	0.513		
	Age old	1.131	0.722	1.772	0.591		
	Number	1.265	0.686	2.335	0.452		
	Relationship with a child	0.541	0.341	0.857	**0.009**		
	Family info	0.882	0.504	1.545	0.661		
	Ethnicity	1.623	0.904	2.912	0.105		
	Educational success	0.554	0.322	0.955	**0.033**		
	Socioeconomic status	0.400	0.187	0.856	**0.018**		
	Conduct problems	1.115	0.675	1.840	0.671		
	Consumption of addictive substances	3.009	0.973	9.311	0.056		
	Physical appearance	1.114	0.649	1.911	0.695		

Eight predictors significantly contribute to predicting whether the news will protect the identity of the suspect in the CSA: use of physical force, presence of additional crimes, victim's gender, victim's academic achievement, victim's mental health, offender's relationship with the child, offender's educational attainment, and the socioeconomic status of the offender. When it comes to the predictors of CSA characteristics, two significant predictors were found: news that used physical force is 3.058

more likely to protect the identity of the perpetrator, while news that has additional crimes is 2.284 times more likely not to reveal the identity of the alleged perpetrators. When it comes to the victim-level predictors, news about female victims is 2.06 times more likely to protect the identity of the suspect than news about male victims (OR 1/0.485 = 2.061), news that does not provide information about the school achievement of the victims is 2.72 times more likely to protect their identities (OR 1/0.367 = 2.724), and news items that provide victim's mental health information are 1.795 times more likely to protect the identity of the alleged perpetrator. At the perpetrator level, three predictors stand out. News in which the perpetrator is a known person to the child is 1.85 times more likely to protect the suspect's identity than news in which the perpetrator is a stranger (OR 1/1.848); news that does not present information about the perpetrator's educational success is 1.81 times more likely to protect the suspect's identity than news that provides information on their educational achievement (OR 1/0.554 = 1.805), while news that does not present information on the socioeconomic status is 2.5 times more likely not to disclose the identity of the alleged perpetrator than the news that provides socioeconomic information (OR 1/0.400 = 2.5).

Discussion

Croatian daily newspapers support most of the dominant stereotypes about perpetrators, which impairs the capacity of identifying perpetrators in the environment and gives the impression that we cannot know them personally. Research into the association between the news content and online commentary on CSA news has found that perpetrators are the most represented among the readers' comments (Popović, 2017). In the Croatian daily newspapers, the perpetrators are mostly men, while women are portrayed as persons who cannot sexually abuse children, and if they do, they are described in the context of a love affair with a younger male person or create the impression that they were persuaded into the act by the male perpetrators. Sexual abuse of female children by women is virtually non-existent in the media, while in cases where female are co-offenders most victims are female children. Research has long suggested that not only women are perpetrators of child sexual abuse, both female and male (Graystone & De Luca, 1999), but also that child victims often suffer the long-term effects of female abuse, which includes substance abuse problems, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, depression, and others (Denov, 2004). Bourke et al. (2014) found on a nationally representative sample of adult

victims that women committed 6 % of the CSA and that their victims were more likely to be young, male, and children between nine and 17 years of age compared with the victims of male perpetrators. Children at the age of five and boys in their teens are at a highest risk; however, the latter is often ignored and dismissed as an introduction to adult sexuality (Sanderson, 2005). The difficulty in believing that women are abusers is the consequence of the belief that women's sexuality causes them to be perceived as a passive recipient and not as an active initiator of sexual relations. Often associated with this is the mistaken belief that the CSA refers only to the penetration by sexual organ, which ignores the full range of abusive activities that can be done to a victim in other ways (either by objects or by forcing the victim to do something to the perpetrator). Moreover, it ignores the fact that women abuse not only male but also female children. It is generally estimated that women commit about 14 % of CSA in boys and 6 % of CSA in girls, while Sanderson (2005) estimates that as many as 20–25 % of CSA are committed by women. A systematic review of research of CSA by women from the perspective of victims and experts shows that CSA experts considered CSA committed by women as less serious, less harmful, and less valuable to investigate than CSA committed by men, while the victims feel that their experience has significantly affected their psychological well-being and ability to create and maintain interpersonal relationships (Clements et al., 2013). The language used in the newspapers to describe CSA committed by women is qualitatively different from the language used to describe CSA committed by men. Similar findings we can see by Landor and Eisenchlas (2012); they found that female sexual offenders are more romanticized, that they are described more sympathetic, or that excuses are used to reduce the severity of abuse compared to male offenders. The authors conducted a qualitative analysis of the content of Australian newspapers in order to compare media coverage of perpetrators of CSA by gender (e.g., teachers, educators). They found that the media presents male perpetrators with derogatory labels such as "pedophiles" or "perverts", while sexual abuse perpetrated by women is somewhat romanticized by the use of consensual words such as "student lover" or "young lover" or while female perpetrators are infantilized. An analysis of online news on CSA in the national daily newspapers in Croatia found that derogatory terms were predominantly used to describe perpetrators (53.2 %), whereby no statistically significant gender difference were found (Popović, 2017). However, derogatory terms for describing male and female perpetrators differed qualitatively, with men being described with the terms "monster", "disgusting sex monster", "stepfather from hell", "maniac", "sick", "pig", "mentally depraved", "deranged mind", "demons", "sav-

ages", "beasts", or "barbarians", while the two terms most commonly used for women are "lascivious" and "lustful" (Popović, 2017: 114). Rachel Allsopp (2014) also found in her literature review that CSA female perpetrators are presented as either "virgins" or "prostitutes", while male perpetrators are presented as embodiments of evil, and the term "pedophile" is much more commonly used to create a completely misleading picture that most perpetrators are persons diagnosed with the pedophile disorder. Female perpetrators appear to be less serious than male perpetrators, whom the media demonizes, thus inciting the public to retaliate against them. The moral panic surrounding male perpetrators is probably the result of male perpetrators being more frequently included in media reports, and the media only report on female perpetrators when forced by men (Allsopp, 2014). Goddard and Saunders (2000) also found that journalists often use language that reduces the severity of abuse. Because of the cultural belief that women are caregivers and incapable of sexual aggression, women are not considered to engage in child sexual abuse (Sanderson, 2005). Consequences of this may be the belief that boys do not suffer the consequences of sexual abuse perpetrated by a woman and that therefore the consequences for boys are less serious than for female victims of a male perpetrator. This also supports the belief that boys want to have sexual experiences with older women. A survey of online commentary on CSA news confirmed that comments about "lucky boys" were statistically significantly higher in news in which the offender was a younger female and the victim was a teenage male, as well as in the news that used consensual words for describing the abuse, describing details, and revealing the victim's identity (Popović, 2017).

Not only on a quantitative but also on a qualitative level the media research also supports the stereotype that CSA perpetrators are old, while the CSA committed by adolescents is underrepresented. A survey of police cases in Croatia shows that the average age of the perpetrator is 37 years (Sladović & Družić, 2000), and foreign studies show that adolescents commit as many as 1/3 of child sexual abuse cases[2].

When it comes to professions, the perpetrators in this media study are the predominantly church members of the clergy, followed by the persons in charge of child care, law and order representatives, and those working in the entertainment industry. Keeping a case-by-case record has found that the offender's profession stands out when it comes to persons in

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2 https://victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/statistics-on-perpetrators-of-csa (May 27, 2019).

charge of child care, but also when it comes to persons with free access to the household, which contributed to the moral panic surrounding specific categories of offenders (e.g., chimney sweeper, postman). Also the practice of highlighting respectable professions, professions that come into regular contact with children, and professions in child welfare has been observed in the media when reporting mass arrests of perpetrators in child exploitation material cases, where the professions in question constitute a minority of perpetrators. Such generalizations seem to attract the attention of the readership and create moral panic around particular professions and support the stereotype that perpetrators engage exclusively in these professions.

On a quantitative level it could be concluded that the myth that the perpetrators are strangers is not supported because just over half of the news reported on persons known to the child; however, the proportion of strangers is still much higher in the media than it actually is. Research has consistently shown that in 90 % of cases the victim knows the perpetrator (Finkelhor, 2012; Whealin, 2007). Creating the fear of "strangers" draws attention from the fact that children are most often abused by people in their immediate vicinity, including family members. The danger of this myth is that it entices children and parents into a false sense of security that nothing will happen to them if they are taught not to communicate with strangers. Reporting suggests that children are mostly at risk from known persons who have authority over them and from strangers, yet the least from their own family members. When it comes to family members who commit sexual abuse, the dominant figure in the media is the paternal figure (father, stepfather, mother's partner). Sexual abuse perpetrated by an older sibling has not been the topic of any CSA news, whereas research indicates that it may be the most common and long-lasting form of CSA within the family, although the least reported and explored (Tener et al., 2017).

Although most news outlets do not use derogatory terms to describe the perpetrators, it is important to note that the word "pedophile" in this research is not coded as a derogatory term, because it is assumed that journalists and the public consider all persons who commit CSA as pedophiles. Derogatory terms were much more used in episodic news, in which the main topic was the description of the perpetration or of the persecution of the perpetrator, than in news about the CSA in the church. The avoidance of using derogatory terms when describing CSA in the church in relation to other cases points to the inclination of journalists to "protect" church people from demonization in the media, which may also be due to the predominantly thematic coverage of the topic. The chances were higher

that the media would use derogatory terms when it came to family information about the perpetrator, consumption of addictive substances, the race/ethnicity of the perpetrator, socioeconomic status, problems with the perpetrator's behavior, and physical appearance. In other words, derogatory terms were reserved for cases in which the offender displayed other behavioral problems or had a minority group status. A survey of online commentary on CSA news has shown that using derogatory terms for the perpetrator promotes the public view that the perpetrators are "monsters to be killed" (Popović, 2017). This portrayal of perpetrators gives the impression that the perpetrators are easy to identify and that we cannot personally know them, which may discourage children from reporting the perpetrator for fear that they will not be trusted. The belief that perpetrators are monsters completely distorts the dynamics with which sexual abuse usually takes place. Most sexual abusers leave the impression of kind, considerate, and caring people, because without that mask they would not be able to approach either children or parents (Sanderson, 2005). Many spend months first to gain family affection by establishing a friendly relationship and only then approach the child, paying particular attention to them, ensuring that the child will not discover what is happening for fear that he/she will not be trusted (Sanderson, 2005). Because they develop a "special" relationship with both the parents and children, it often happens that children love the perpetrator and want to protect him, especially if the perpetrator is a family member. Many children do not want to end this relationship or do not want the perpetrator to be punished; they just want the abuse to end.

Croatian daily newspapers support the belief that the perpetrators of CSA are persons with pedophilia, but as many as 87.3 % of the news that uses the word "pedophile" does it incorrectly. A minority of child sexual abusers suffers from the pedophile disorder; in the Croatian prison population only 13 % of sex offenders suffer from pedophilia (Mužinić & Vukota, 2010). In their analysis of 50 expert reports made at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry, Goreta et al. (2004) found the diagnosis of pedophilia in 14 % of sexual offenders. Naming the perpetrator of child sexual abuse a pedophile draws attention from the fact that children are abused by persons who have sexual preferences towards adults and who are usually married, but also from the fact that some perpetrators of CSA are women. The patterns in which sexual arousal occurs towards children are different and include not only persons with pedophilia, whose primary and exclusive sexual object is the child, but also those who show sexual deviations towards adults or who are situational abusers (Buljan-Flander, 2003). These are persons who have an adult sexual orientation but respond with sexual arousal

towards children in certain conditions (e.g., lack of other sexual experiences, stress affecting marital and interpersonal relationships and communication, etc.) (Buljan-Flander, 2003). Situational abusers abuse in situations of stress and have fewer victims than perpetrators who are persons with pedophilia; the victims are usually family members and these perpetrators begin to abuse at a later age than persons with pedophilia (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

Although most news outlets do not describe perpetrators as mentally ill individuals, of the news using words that imply a mental illness only 1/5 can confirm that they are mentally ill. Although the purpose of such a description is to demonize the perpetrator, the stereotype is particularly dangerous because it absolves the perpetrator of the responsibility for the abuse and further stigmatizes those with mental illness who have never committed a crime. A minority of perpetrators suffer from mental illness, most of them acting quite normally. Mužinić and Vukota (2010) point out that among the prison population of sexual delinquents there are a smaller number of those with a mental illness or underdeveloped intellectual capacity. A systematic review conducted by Greathouse et al. (2015) found that studies were not equivocal on perpetrators of social skills difficulties, although they found that deficits in social skills could be slightly greater compared to the perpetrators of sexual abuse at the expense of adults. Multiple studies have found that offenders have problems with a lack of empathy (results vary depending on the type of empathy being measured), attachment style, and misconceptions about sexuality (victim-related cognitive distortions) (Greathouse et al., 2015). In a survey of online commentary on CSA news, the stereotype of perpetrators as mentally ill was significantly more prevalent in the commentary of the news about exhibitionism than of the news on other types of sexual abuse, and it was associated with the stereotype that exhibitionists would not sexually abuse children (Popović, 2017). The latter stereotype is confirmed by this research, as well as the stereotype of persons who use child exploitation material as those who will not sexually abuse children, which completely negates the fact that the production and exploitation of children for child exploitation material is also a criminal offense of sexual abuse. Elliott, Browne, and Kilcoyne (1995: 584) found that 21 % of perpetrators used pornographic content just before engaging in CSA. The stereotype of perpetrators as homosexuals is not supported on a quantitative level; however, it has been mentioned qualitatively in CSA cases in the church as a cause of CSA in priestly ranks in an effort to further stigmatize an already stigmatized minority social group. The perpetrator's stereotypes are usually associated with social stereotypes about minority social groups (e.g., "Perpetrators of sexual

abuse of boys are homosexual" or "Perpetrators of sexual abuse belong to national minorities") (Popović, 2017).

When the identity of the perpetrator was revealed in the news, the chances were less that derogatory terms would be used to describe the perpetrator and that the victim would be described as permanently damaged. This finding is not surprising given that journalists want to protect themselves from a possible lawsuit for breach of reputation and honor by the alleged perpetrator. The main predictors of the disclosure of the perpetrator's identity were: the news about CSA that did not involve the use of physical force; perpetrators who did not commit additional crimes, had male victims, and were unknown to the child; provided information on educational attainment and the socioeconomic status of the perpetrator; provided information about the victim's school performance; the omission of information about the victim's mental health. Such findings clearly show that journalists are more inclined to identify persons who have not committed additional crimes or used physical force, which makes them less "dangerous" for themselves. The tendency to disclose the identity of the perpetrators is not surprising given that the public, and even media professionals, often consider this to be the best type of protection against the CSA. Moreover, the research by Klein, Tolson, and Longo (2013) shows not only the propensity to disclose the identity but also the tendency to characterize a suspect as guilty before being found guilty. A study of one Croatian portal in 2015 found that the chances of discovering the identity of the perpetrators were higher in cases that had entered the final stages of the judicial process, in which the victims were elderly and male, and in which they gave a detailed description of the abusive event (Popović, 2017). The consequences of premature identity disclosure can cause lifelong harm to both the innocent and closely related individuals since it is probably the most undesirable possible label that may harm the family of the alleged perpetrator because they experience a "relationship stigma" (Schultz, 2014).

Research limitations and recommendations for future research

This is the first exploratory study of how Croatian daily newspapers report and present content on perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Since it is part of a broader project, it suffers from the limitations already described elsewhere (Popović, 2021): The selected newspapers are not representative of all daily newspapers in Croatia, but they are the most popular printed Croatian daily newspapers. Moreover, all recommendations for future

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research apply to this research as well (Popović, 2021): to address the changes of reporting over time, to investigate differences in reporting between nationally and regionally oriented newspapers, to determine the extent to which the clusters describe the dependent variable, to carry out experimental research into the impact of CSA news on the readership, to do a comparative study of the analysis of the documentation by the competent authorities and the analysis of the media content, to investigate the reactions of victims and perpetrators to CSA news, and to focus on online media and CSA television news (Popović, 2021).

Conclusion

The news still supports common stereotypes regarding perpetrators of CSA, making it difficult to detect them in our environment. Perpetrators are presented as single/individual, male, elderly, usually a member of the clergy or a person in charge of child care. Perpetrators are persons known to a child or complete strangers. They have a lower educational success and their physical appearance is important. Highlighting background information on the perpetrator is more likely when the perpetrator is a known figure to the child. The use of derogatory terms to describe a perpetrator was greater in episodic news dealing with the criminal offenses that highlight background information on perpetrator and victim. Homosexual perpetrators are highlighted in the news about CSA in the Catholic Church. The news supports the idea that those who use child exploitation material and exhibitionists will not sexually abuse children. Also perpetrators are described as persons with pedophilia, while a portion of the news still wrongly describes perpetrators as mentally ill persons. Finally, the news prematurely reveals the identity of the perpetrator of sexual abuse, potentially compromising the quality of life of innocent persons and their family members.

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Media coverage about child sexual abuse – a qualitative survey from the journalists' point of view

Daniela Stelzmann & Josephine Ischebeck

Child sexual abuse (CSA) remains a social problem. Studies indicate that most people use media coverage to inform themselves about CSA. Thereby, journalists can educate society about the topic by reporting important information about CSA and thus take preventive action against it. Results of content analysis show that CSA is mainly mentioned in media when it comes to particularly severe cases of CSA. Reports on help or prevention offers are rare. Since media coverage impacts society's understanding of CSA, it is crucial to understand how journalists deal with CSA. For this reason, we conducted 11 qualitative in-depth interviews with journalists who reported about CSA in German-language print media. In accordance with the state of research, our results show that journalists usually report about CSA when there is a specific case including spectacular aspects or elements. Moreover, our results reveal that journalists see both benefits and risks in media coverage of CSA – from increased awareness and public education to re-traumatization of victims and stigmatization of those affected. Based on our results, we will discuss basic conditions that need to be improved to report about CSA in a more beneficial way.
Keywords: child sexual abuse, media coverage, qualitative study, stigmatization

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global problem. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines CSA as "the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violate the laws or social taboos of society" (World Health Organization, 1999, p. 15). The consequences of CSA can be devastating for those affected long-term as well as short-term (Barth et al., 2013) and are reflected in the victims' psychological, physical, behavioral, and interpersonal well-being (Singh et al., 2014). Unfortunately, children who experience CSA face internal and external obstacles to communicate their burden, e.g., emotional dependency and ambivalent feelings towards the offender or a lack of understanding the sexual abuse as victimization due to developmental immaturity (Alaggia et al., 2019; Lemaigre et al., 2017). In most cases, the offender and victim know each other very well (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2005), which increases the barrier for children to disclose themselves to reach help (Schaeffer et al., 2011).

Against this background, having a public that is sensitized and informed about CSA seems necessary to take informed and effective action against CSA. However, CSA is still a socially tabooed topic and rarely part

of the public discourse (e.g., Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Nielsen, 2016). At the same time, media coverage is an important source for shaping the public discourse and personal opinions. It gives us access to topics that go beyond our everyday experience (Jackob, 2018), including tabooed topics. This important function comes along with great responsibility (Schultz et al., 2017). In case of CSA, it enables media to provide information, take preventive action against it, and exert pressure on political actors or institutions (e.g., Donnelly & Inglis, 2010; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015). Unfortunately, research indicates that media coverage of CSA is often loaded with myths and stereotypes of the affected persons (victims/survivors as well as offenders; see Döring, see Popović, both in this volume). However, numerous determinants influence the production of media coverage. For instance, the audience, journalists' framework conditions, and journalists' knowledge and attitudes are factors that influence the tenor and degree of differentiation of publications (Scheufele & Engelmann, 2016). Until now, little is known about the journalists who report about CSA. For this reason, this chapter addresses how journalists deal with CSA in their daily work, how they generally perceive media coverage about CSA, and what potential they see in it to combat CSA.

Media mechanisms and their impact on CSA reporting

Media coverage "shapes the audience's perception of reality" (Eilders, 2016, p. 432; translated by authors). It serves as an important resource to help us form experience about issues that we do not directly experience ourselves (second-hand experience; Jackob, 2018; Meltzer, 2019; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2014). Established theories of communication science show that processes within media reporting have an influence on education, opinion building, and the associated public discourse (Eisenstein, 1994; Gertler, 2015). In the case of CSA, media coverage has a crucial role in informing and educating about this sensitive topic (e.g., Babatsikos, 2010; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015; Kitzinger, 2004). However, media coverage is often characterized by misconceptions and knowledge gaps (e.g., see Döring, see Popović, both in this volume), which can be traced to the fact that media production is "not a one-to-one reduction of world events" (Eilders, 2016, p. 432) and therefore only partially coincides with scientific findings or evidence-based information.

Two of the most relevant media theories in communication studies are the news value theory and agenda setting. The so-called news value theory assumes that specific characteristics of an event make it more or less

newsworthy. In this context, factors such as proximity of the event, person-alization, or negativity increase its likeability of being reported (Eilders, 2016; Östgaard, 1965). Therefore, media coverage about CSA often displays seven characteristics: (1) stranger-danger: The offender is an unknown person; (2) upstanding accused: a person is an upstanding member of the community like a politician; (3) extra violence: more violence than usual in CSA like a murder; (4) bizarre facts: especially strange or memorable facts like Satan worship, (5) multiple parties: more than one victim or more than one perpetrator; (6) celebrity status: offender or victim or both are celebrities; and (7) cover-up: institutional stories about scandalous ac-cusations like cases within the church (Popović, 2018).

Moreover, besides reporting about specific events, the media set up an agenda (media agenda) which impacts the perceived relevance of a topic (audience agenda; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbu-ry, 2007). In line with this theoretical approach, media coverage about CSA often occurs in the context of particular severe cases such as the trials regarding the abuse scandals of the Catholic Church (e.g., Görgen & Fangerau, 2018; Weatherred, 2015). Furthermore, studies indicate that CSA is over-reported in relation to sexual violence against adults and that reporting on arrests and trials are the most common topic (e.g., Breen, 2007; Thakker & Durrant, 2006). Studies that have not explicitly based their research on agenda-setting theory come to similar conclusions (e.g., Cheit, 2003; Davies et al., 2017; Dowler, 2006; Ducat et al., 2009; Hove et al., 2013; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Lonne & Gillespie, 2014; Niner et al., 2013; Saewyc et al., 2013; Shavit et al., 2014; Wilczynski & Sinclair, 1999; overview see: Popović, 2018). On the other hand, possible preventive measures are hardly reported on, and if they are, they tend to be on a short-term individual or on an unspecific level (e.g., Kitzinger, 2004; Mejia et al., 2012). Specific cases of CSA that generate increased reader attention due to their scandalousness do attract high media resonance, while the broader context and background information on CSA receive little atten-tion (e.g., Mejia et al., 2012; Waller et al., 2020). This asymmetry leads to a narrow perspective on the problem of CSA and obstructs the view on preventive measures. Moreover, by focusing the media coverage on spectacular cases, media coverage perpetuates existing myths and spreads incorrect beliefs about the characteristics of victims and offenders (e.g., Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Additionally, it may reinforce stigmata (e.g., Jones et al., 2010) and cause distress through insensitive treatment of those affected (e.g., Jones et al., 2010; Maercker & Mehr, 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that previous studies indicate a lack of quality in media coverage about CSA (e.g., Döring & Walter, 2020; furthermore see Döring

and also Popović in this volume). Thus, media coverage on CSA can best be described as a *double-edged sword*, which is torn between educating society and the perpetuation of existing stigmata.

This study

The body of research demonstrated the importance of media coverage to society while also showing the consequences that result from inappropriate or undifferentiated media coverage. Of course, media production depends on various circumstances like journalists' working conditions (e.g., Loosen et al., 2020; Loosen & Schmidt, 2012). However, journalists are not neutral observers but play an essential role in selecting, producing and framing media coverage (Scheufele & Engelmann, 2016). Therefore, the way journalists deal with the topic of CSA is a crucial starting point to improve media coverage of CSA. For this reason, the current study aims to investigate how journalists deal with CSA while reporting. Based on the state of research, we derived the following research question:

Against the background of news value theory and the agenda-setting approach, the question arises as to which criteria must be met for journalists to report and how they generally perceive media coverage on CSA.

RQ1: What criteria must be fulfilled for journalists to report on CSA?
RQ2: How do journalists generally perceive media coverage on this topic?

Analogous to media coverage of suicides, the content and wording may pose certain risks but also benefits (World Health Organization, 2008). What risks and opportunities journalists see in media coverage of CSA may influence their reports. For this reason, we ask the following research question:

RQ3: What benefits and risks do journalists see in media coverage of the topic?

CSA can evoke emotional reactions even from those not directly involved, such as journalists, who, moreover, report particularly frequently on extreme cases of CSA. Thus, the question arises as to how they deal with the content and what influence this has on their emotional state. For this reason, we ask the following research question:

RQ4: How do journalists deal emotionally with this topic?

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Method

Sample

We conducted 11 qualitative in-depth interviews with journalists who had published at least one article in a German-language print media focusing on CSA in the period from 1 January 2018 to 12 December 2018. The restriction to journalists who had written about the topic in the recent past was to ensure that all interviewees had dealt with the topic at least once and could report from their own, relatively recent experience. In selecting journalists, we focused on print media, as they are the most frequented media both in print and on their online platforms (Schultz et al., 2017).

The relevant articles were researched via the LexisNexis database, which offers full texts of international periodicals. In addition, the online platform of the Süddeutsche Zeitung was searched, as it is a leading medium (German: Leitmedium) in German-speaking countries (LAE – Leseranalyse Entscheidungsträger e. V., 2018) but is not represented on LexisNexis. The search resulted in 101 articles, for which 100 authors could be identified – some with personal email contact (e.g., firstname.surname@provider.de), some with central email addresses (e.g., info@newspaper.de). A short description of the study and a request for a telephone interview were sent to all contacts, in the case of central email addresses with a request to forward to the respective journalists. Eleven journalists agreed to participate in this study. The participants consisted of seven men and four women, who were on average 46 years old (SD = 9.65 years; range: 30–65 years) with an average working experience as journalists of 23.68 years (SD = 9.64 years; range: 10–40 years). Their professional functions were editors (n = 4), reporters with a focus on court/justice/crime (n = 3), freelance journalists (n = 2), correspondent (n = 1), and columnist (n = 1). They worked for four national and four regional print media as well as one online platform[1]. One medium was published in Austria, all others in Germany. Most of the represented media were published daily (n = 7), the other two weekly. The online medium was updated weekly. Two print media were classified as lead media in Germany (LAE – Leseranalyse Entscheidungsträger e. V., 2018). Two participants worked for the same national, German, daily print medium, while two others worked for the same supra-regional, German, weekly leading medium. Based on the political spectrum and the

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[1] The interviewee who worked for the online platform had published an article which was reprinted in an offline periodical.

self-representation of the media houses for which the interviewees worked, the journalistic orientation of the publishers can be assumed to be heterogeneous with a left-liberal bias. Six journalists worked for (tendentially) left-wing publishers, one for a non-partisan publisher and three for conservative publishers. For one publishing house, no information was found on its political orientation.

Procedure

From 15 January 2019 to 4 February 2019, partially structured telephone interviews were conducted with all 11 journalists who had agreed to take part in this study. The interviews lasted between 33:39 and 1:18:35 (hours:minutes:seconds; x = 55:21; SD = 16:41). In their responses, the interviewees provided information about their individual media coverage, attitudes, and background knowledge on the subject of CSA and their related emotions.

Process of coding and data analysis

The collected data were processed by means of qualitative content analysis following Mayring (2015), using the software f4analyse (version 2.5 for iOS; dr. dresing & pehl GmbH, Marburg, Germany). The aim of the analysis was to register statements about the interviewees' background knowledge, attitudes, and emotions regarding CSA. Also, statements on prevention concepts as well as risks and benefits of general reporting were to be extracted. The transcripts of the interviews served as source material. The text passages relevant to the research questions were systematically analyzed. Since some of the answers consisted of affirmations or denials, only one word was defined as the coding unit (smallest material component; Ramsenthaler, 2013), while the context unit was the statement which could consist of several coherent sentences.

During the analysis, the transcripts of individual interviews were processed one after another. Passages relevant to the research questions were marked and paraphrased. In a further step, these paraphrases were reduced to categories, which in turn were iteratively revised on the basis of the material analyzed up to that point. If the categories were changed or expanded based on new material, the previously analyzed transcripts were

revisited. Table 1 shows an example of how the paraphrases and categories were formed.

Table 1

Paraphrase formation and category system (example)

Quote	Paraphrase	Reduction/Category
"I try to filter out of the countless court hearings that take place every day in [city] those which either describe particularly striking cases or show a particularly original aspect that might be of interest to the readers."	There are many CSA cases of which I chose to report particularly interesting or sensational ones.	Own reporting – Criteria for reporting on CSA – Spectacular aspects (Refers to RQ1: What criteria must be fulfilled for journalists to report on CSA?)
"Unfortunately, the tabloids are incredibly voyeuristic about these issues."	Parts of the media report about CSA in a voyeuristic way.	Perceived media coverage – Tone/tenor – Sensationalistic and voyeuristic (Refers to RQ2: How do journalists generally perceive media coverage on this topic?)

Results

In the following, we present the results according to the identified categories.

RQ1: Reporting criteria of CSA reflect commonly mentioned news values

Our first research question aimed to capture criteria that must be fulfilled to report about CSA from the interviewees' perspective (RQ1: *What criteria must be fulfilled for journalists to report on CSA?*). For this, we asked the participants when they report on CSA and which criteria they consider to be important. In sum, based on the statements, we were able to identify six categories as reporting criteria. Five participants mentioned *spectacular aspects* to be a key criterion: They report about CSA cases *"which either describe particularly striking cases or show a particularly original aspect"*. Four participants described *occasion / current case of CSA* as a criterion: *"In journalistic terms, one always tends to report on the specific crime"* compared to

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CSA in general (e.g., reporting results of prevalence studies or addressing long-term consequences for victims). Moreover, four journalists saw in reporting about CSA the opportunity to *transfer knowledge / add to the socio-political discourse* and therefore mentioned this chance as a reporting criterion *("I think it is important to report on the topic if you have the opportunity to also provide knowledge").* A few of our participants also considered *public interest* since it *"is always the be-all and end-all"* (3 out of 11) and *external encouragement* (*"that may be the case, then, that the reason for such a report is that someone has contacted me"*; also 3 out of 11). As the category with the fewest statements (2 out of 11), we could identify the criterion *proximity* since two participants had to cover events from specific areas (*"It must happen in [state] because I am here as a correspondent"*).

RQ2: Media coverage about CSA is perceived as mostly objective and appropriate

Besides their reporting criteria, we wanted to know how the interviewees perceive the media coverage of the topic regardless of their own work (RQ2: *How do journalists generally perceive media coverage on this topic?*). In principle, the participants described the media coverage about CSA diverse which ranged *"from tasteless and somehow distanceless or even (...) unappetizing reports to very good and distanced reports."* In sum, we were able to derive four categories from their answers. The two categories most frequently mentioned by the journalists were torn between *objective and appropriate* reporting on one hand (*"I think the media coverage has become more diverse and more informed"*, 7 out of 11) and *sensationalistic and voyeuristic* coverage on the other hand since *"it gets more and more screaming, more and more smashing (...)"* from the participant's point of view (5 out of 11). Moreover, a few criticized that *"we have been looking too much at the offenders or on the institutions to which the perpetrators belong (…) and too little at the victims."* So, from their perspective, media coverage should focus more on the perspective of victims (4 out of 11). Besides, two participants acknowledged that *"the terms pedophilia and child molester are too often treated as equivalent"*, which they mentioned as problematic since not every person with pedophilia sexually acts out towards children and not every child sexual offender has this predisposition (Seto, 2009; also see Pedersen in this volume).

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RQ3:   Media coverage as benefit and risk – the content determines the
          course

With regard to the general reporting about CSA, we asked the participants
what kind of benefits and risks they see in reporting about CSA (RQ3:
What benefits and risks do journalists see in media coverage of the topic?). In
sum, we identified 11 categories.

In terms of the benefits of reporting on CSA, it became clear that our
interviewees saw the potential of reporting on CSA in raising *awareness for
prevention services for potential offenders* (6 out of 11) since *"someone who is
now playing with such thoughts may pause and then seek help."* Moreover, five
participants each stated that media coverage of CSA also raises *awareness
for CSA within society* and positively *impacts social education* by *"encouraging
through knowledge transfer, inspiring thoughts, enabling people to handle this
topic better than they were before."* A few journalists considered reporting
about CSA benefits if it *impacts the public discourse*, *promotes help services* in
general and *deters potential offenders* by clarifying *"that such things do not go
unpunished and that years later you can serve a long prison sentence"* (2 out of
11 each).

However, next to the benefits of reporting about CSA, our participants
mentioned several risks which were reduced to five categories. Four jour-
nalists were concerned that, *"for those affected, insensitive reporting carries the
risk of re-traumatization"*. On the other hand, four interviewees enumerated
the risk of *triggering potential offenders to commit CSA* because *"it doesn't
scare them off, it's more of an incentive."* The conflation of pedophilia and
CSA was described as a problem by four participants as it maintains
and/or perpetuates the *public stigma towards persons with pedophilia* and
therefore *"could lead to one or the other not getting any help because he does
not dare to reveal himself to anyone at all."* Moreover, some stated the risk of
secondary victimization of victims while reporting about CSA (3 out of 11)
or the risk of *generating hysterization* since it may *"wake up fears that are not
reasonable"* (2 out of 11).

RQ4:   Emotions reported when dealing with the topic of CSA – anger vs.
          professionalism

Since being exposed to the topic of CSA may evoke uncomfortable emo-
tions and may affect journalists' work, we wanted to know how our partic-
ipants emotionally deal with reporting on CSA (RQ4: *How do journalists
deal emotionally with this topic?*). In sum, their response can be reduced to

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seven categories. Four out of 11 interviewees stated that they feel *disgust* against the perpetrator when they are confronted with CSA as a crime (*"Revulsion and disgust when it comes to crime"*). Just as many participants reported feelings of *anger* (*"Of course one is (...) emotionally agitated, angry, will feel rage"*). Both anger and disgust were mostly reported by journalists whose field of work did *not* focus on court/justice/crime (for each of the two categories one journalist working on court/justice/crime vs. three journalists from other fields of work). Three journalists mentioned *compassion*, mainly towards offenders, because the interviewees *"do not want to be in his [the offender's] shoes with this predisposition. That's horrible."* Apart from these emotions, two participants expressed a *lack of understanding* towards offenders, while two others spoke about a *professional interest*. Four interviewees claimed to have no emotions at all when dealing with the topic of CSA, including all three journalists working mainly with focus on court/justice/crime (although two of those four interviewees did report emotions in other parts of the interview). Three interviewees described the expectation for themselves to maintain a *professional distance* in reporting on CSA (*"that you somehow get a structure, somehow get some objectivity into the text in order to simply (...) transport information or evaluations and insights and not just the emotion itself"*), all of them did *not* work with focus on court/justice/crime. Three interviewees described that dealing with the topic of CSA in their work can be a *stressful experience*: *"This is a topic that gets under your skin, both as a journalist and as a human being, of course."*

Discussion

Our study used a qualitative method to gain a deeper understanding of how journalists deal with CSA in their daily working routine. To this end, we addressed four research questions and interviewed 11 journalists about their reporting criteria (RQ1), their perception of the current CSA media coverage (RQ2), the benefits and risk of reporting about CSA (RQ3), and how dealing with CSA in their daily work impacts their emotion (RQ4).

Narrowing down the reporting criteria of our interviewees, it turned out that the majority of the identified categories mirror commonly news values like actuality or harm (Eilders, 2016; Kepplinger, 2011). In detail, those criteria were mentioned in the context of reporting about CSA in particular if it is a *current case* or *spectacular aspects* of CSA. Those identified reporting criteria are also in line with previous studies which demonstrated by using content analyses that media coverage of CSA primarily focuses on spectacular cases rather than prevention (Kitzinger, 2004; Kitzinger &

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Skidmore, 1995; Mejia et al., 2012; Weatherred, 2015). By relying mainly on those criteria, journalists generate a picture of CSA which is limited and thereby misses the actual heterogeneity of CSA. Our results indicate that the topic is rather framed episodically than thematically since both the reporting criteria and the perceived media coverage of CSA demonstrate a focus on specific cases rather than a continuous reporting about CSA in general (see Döring in this volume). Therefore, it can be assumed that complex contexts and expert viewpoints play a subordinate role since these characteristics are usually covered by thematical reporting (e.g., Ruhrmann & Woelke, 2003). Furthermore, exemplification or case studies show that linking a topic to a case creates a much stronger impact on the recipients than factual reporting and thus, under certain circumstances, also creates a distorted perception of the topic (e.g., Krämer, 2015). At the same time, such reports on individual cases may trigger distress among affected groups (e.g., Jones et al., 2010; Maercker & Mehr, 2006) and lead to this topic being even more taboo because the factual reference is missing (e.g., Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Nielsen, 2016).

Against the background that media coverage serves as a central source for the public (Babatsikos, 2010; Kitzinger, 2004), it is even more important that media coverage frames the topic in a balanced way to point out the true heterogeneity of CSA. The over-representative portrayal of individual, particularly sensational cases fail to address CSA as a social problem in all strata of society and can thus lead to a false sense of security: If CSA only happens on the fringes of society, it is not necessary to be attentive in one's own environment. This narrowed idea of how and where CSA happens makes it difficult for victims to disclose, especially if their own circumstances differ from the common stereotypes.

Balanced reporting should include information about preventive programs, similar to the sensitized media coverage about suicides. This could mean info boxes with services for victims and potential offenders or contact points where further information about CSA in general can be obtained (e.g., Stelzmann et al., 2020).

Participants also mentioned *transfer knowledge* and *public interest* as reporting criteria. Therefore, it seems essential to increase the quality of CSA news by supporting journalists in the translation of those complex "information into content that can be understood by a layperson" (Friedman et al., 2014, p. 379; Logan et al., 1991). We believe that low-threshold training opportunities can initiate change at this point, for example in the form of online or in-app workshops to (a) make the complex and heterogeneous topic of CSA more comprehensible to journalists and (b) to emphasize the understanding of journalists as a central communicator

for society and thus encourage journalists to report on CSA more in a thematical framed way to raise social awareness of CSA as a public health problem. Easily accessible and reliable services could also address their limited time resources. Moreover, such low-threshold training gives the opportunity to support them in dealing with possible emotional stress which can be evoked through reporting about CSA. Even though the psychological stress caused by CSA reporting was not very pronounced in our sample in contrast to the public reactions (Jackob, 2018; Jahnke, 2018), it seems to be important to learn how to deal with these emotions and to be able to correctly assess when they can become a long-term burden, especially against the background of long-lasting process reporting. Strong emotions such as *anger* or *disgust* were mainly reported by interviewees who did not work mainly in the court/justice/crime field. Almost all court/ justice/crime-focused journalists in our sample reported no emotional reaction when confronted with CSA. It seems that these journalists manage to compartmentalize their own emotionality with regard to CSA, possibly as a result of their many years of professional experience in the field of court/justice/crime.

In contrast, three interviewees who did not work with a focus on court/ justice/crime said that they tried to maintain their *professional distance*. We could interpret this as an indication that it is not a matter of course for journalists who have little or no work experience in this field to maintain this distance and that it takes effort for them not to include their own emotionality in their reporting. If we follow this interpretation, it highlights the usefulness of support for journalists, both in terms of content and emotion. Future studies should therefore investigate to which extent journalists would accept such offers and to which extent this support would contribute to higher-quality media reporting. In this context, it will also be necessary to look at the working conditions under which journalists work. Media bias can be attributed to, among other things, lack of time and pressure to publish (Jackob, 2018; Schultz et al., 2017). It is up to the publishers to support their employees in being able to research in depth and to make use of training opportunities, and they also have to offer adequate support in emotionally demanding work situations.

Interestingly, we also identified the category *external encouragement* as reporting criteria. However, in cases where affected persons turn to journalists, it should always be critically examined to what extent the experiences described correspond to the truth (see Apin, in this volume). Even though it is an issue that requires, above all, dignified treatment of the victims, there are always cases in which the allegations of CSA are not confirmed. Since the mere suspicion of a sexual offense may cause long-term harm

to the suspect, who may subsequently turn out to be innocent, journalists should always examine the accusation critically. A warning example of this is Jörg Kachelmann, Swiss television presenter, who was arrested in 2010 on charges of raping a former lover. The associated court proceedings were intensively covered by the media. The reporting was characterized by prejudgments as well as the deliberate playing up and down of incriminating or exculpating circumstantial evidence. A public battle of interpretation about the guilt or innocence of the accused flared up over months. Kachelmann was acquitted due to lack of evidence, later due to proven innocence. However, the accusation of rape stuck in people's minds (Rückert & Sentker, 2021, 57:00). This illustrates that the media has a special responsibility – both for the person of the suspect and for the victim (Jackob, 2018).

Furthermore, in the view of some interviewees, too much focus is placed on the offenders. Previous content analyses have shown that offenders are often represented as "stranger danger" in media, who had no previous relationship with the victims (see Döring, see Popović, both in this volume; Weatherred, 2015). It can be assumed that these are often spectacular CSA cases, which are therefore reported on particularly frequently. In contrast, studies of CSA offender characteristics demonstrate that in a vast part of cases the offenders and victims know each other very well (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2005). Unfortunately, those existing relationships enhance the barrier for affected children and adolescents to open up to someone (Schaeffer et al., 2011). For instance, in Germany around 16,000 cases of CSA were registered by the police in 2019 (Deutscher Kinderverein, 2020). Comparing the prevalence (approx. 13.9%; Witt et al., 2017), it becomes clear that there is a tremendous discrepancy between prevalence and reported cases. This can be attributed to social and individual barriers to disclosure, including the relationship between perpetrator and victim. Accordingly, it seems essential to report on the offenders but in a diverse way and thereby reducing existing myths as this can serve as a central path to creating awareness of potentially dangerous situations. In addition, reporting on the legal consequences for offenders can help deter potential offenders and therefore prevent CSA, which was also mentioned as an advantage by some of the respondents (*deterrence of potential offenders)* and confirmed in previous studies (e.g., Stelzmann et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, it is also important to focus on the victims' perspective, too. Especially communicating the possible consequences of CSA can help potential offenders to understand what they do to children with their actions (e.g., Stelzmann et al., 2018). Thereby, special care should be taken in dealing with the affected victim in particular and CSA victims in

general to suppress a re-traumatizing effect since some still suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) years after abuse (Briggs & Joyce, 1997; Filipas & Ullman, 2006; Rowan & Foy, 1993). *Re-traumatization* was mentioned by journalists as a risk of media coverage, too. To minimize this risk, journalists should critically reflect on what kind of information is necessary to report (see Popović, in this volume).

The journalists in our sample seemed to be aware that for comprehensive prevention it is not enough to offer support only to (potential) victims. We must also give potential offenders the opportunity to deal with their predisposition. As the follow-up studies of the German prevention network "Don't Offend" (German: „Kein Täter Werden"; Beier et al., 2015) show, this is active CSA prevention. Some of the interviewees feared that media coverage of CSA could have an incentive effect on potential offenders. What effect media coverage ultimately has may be a question of the specific content. Here, the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2008) on reporting on suicides can be transferred to a large extent, e.g., "Avoid explicit description of the method used" should protect against imitation. Risks such as re-traumatization of victims or stigmatization of affected groups are also a question of precise wording and selection of content. Moreover, studies indicate that people with pedophilia depend on media coverage to learn about such support services (Stelzmann et al., 2020; Stelzmann, 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that in a large number of cases the offender does not have a pedophilic preference (Seto, 2008, 2009, 2017), and it can be assumed that a considerable part of persons with pedophilia do not sexually act out towards children (Cantor & McPhail, 2016). Therefore, further prevention projects are necessary which address other predisposition besides pedophilia to support potential offenders dealing with their disposition and thereby prevent CSA on the long run.

Even though media coverage about CSA has the potential to serve as a place where information about prevention offers is in the first place, our results rather indicate that reports about prevention offers – on the part of potential victims as well as offenders – play a rather subordinate role, even if the interviewed journalists name reporting about prevention as a benefit. Thus, our study is in line with a large number of other studies that criticize the focus on individual CSA cases and the infrequent reporting of prevention (e.g., Kitzinger, 2004; Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Mejia et al., 2012; Weatherred, 2015). However, media coverage also depends on an appropriate audience. The agendas of the media and the recipients condition and reinforce each other (Couldry, 2011; Maurer, 2016). Nevertheless, we believe that media coverage is a point where this dynamic can be broken.

When the media do their part to educate society, they also preventively combat CSA. However, the question remains how to capture the interest of an audience that – considering media theories such as agenda theory and relating this to the prevailing media coverage – values mostly easy to consume reports with sensationalist elements. For this reason, future research should investigate how articles about CSA must be designed in order to arouse the interest of recipients, even if these articles address prevention services, and not to create a rejection of this taboo topic.

Limitations

At this point, we do not wish to conceal the fact that the study presented has its limitations. Due to the qualitative design of the study, it is a small, non-representative, German, self-selected sample of 11 journalists. For instance, journalists who worked for tabloid newspapers were missing. The interviewees worked for media houses whose political orientation was heterogeneous but with a left-liberal bias. For these reasons, a generalization of the results is not possible. Moreover, because of our search strategy, only journalists who published in 2018 were included. This can indeed be problematic since media coverage about CSA is often focused on extreme cases and thus tied to a specific time period. Furthermore, we did not interview journalists who had not reported on CSA – so their reasons for not reporting remain speculation. Although this explorative approach offers valuable insights, we were not able to use content analysis to determine how their statements were reflected in the published article. However, most of the identified categories were confirmed by previous content analysis studies. The results of this qualitative analysis should be seen as a starting point from which further work can be done to understand journalistic practice in the context of media mechanisms and to support interested journalists in taking a further step towards evidence-based and differentiated media reporting.

Conclusion

Our results show that journalists assess the media coverage about CSA to be diverse, ranging from objective and appropriate to sensationalistic and voyeuristic (RQ2). However, our interviewed journalists stated that they usually report about CSA when there is a specific case including spectacu-

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lar aspects or elements (RQ1). With these identified categories, we are in line with the current state of research (see Popović, 2018). As plausible as this reporting procedure may be, it leads to a media coverage which overrepresents "stranger danger" and misses the fact that CSA is a problem which occurs in all social classes (Barth et al., 2013) and mostly in settings where children trust and love adults, like families (Finkelhor et al., 2005). Our interviewees saw both benefits and risks in media coverage of CSA – from increased awareness and public education to re-traumatization of victims and stigmatization of those affected (RQ3). Which effects of media coverage are actually realized may be a question of the content and tone of the reports. At this point, professionalism and profound background knowledge are indispensable. At the same time, CSA is a topic that can evoke emotions such as anger and disgust, in our sample especially among journalists who do not focus on court/justice/crime (RQ4). Keeping a professional distance and not letting the topic become a burden can be a challenge.

Media coverage that educates society and helps to take preventive action against CSA needs an adequate balance between exemplification and embedding in a fact-based thematic context. The presentation of the complex social context is essential to realize the potential of media coverage on this issue: to provide a platform for affected persons and to put pressure on politicians and institutions to implement measures to protect children (see Apin, in this volume; Donnelly & Inglis, 2010).

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1.4. Prevention through media coverage

Guidelines for media reporting on child sexual abuse

Stjepka Popović

The main goal of this paper is to define the guidelines for media reporting on child sexual abuse (CSA). Guidelines are necessary since the media are the key source of information on CSA to the general public and history has shown that the media can play a positive role by reporting on CSA. However, media messages might also be the reason why unrecognized victims do not disclose abuse to the authorities especially if they violate victim's right to privacy and dignity, textually victimize the survivor, create moral panic, offer instructions for abusers or sexually explicit material, and support CSA myths. The paper explains the importance of the journalist's role while reporting on CSA, defines guidelines on how to report on CSA, and offers brief advice for preparing and writing a story and short tips on the language that should and should not be used while writing a CSA story.
Keywords: media guidelines, media reporting, child sexual abuse

Why do we need guidelines for media reporting on child sexual abuse?[1]

1. History has shown that the media can play a **positive role** by reporting on child sexual abuse (CSA), but only if they do not victimize the directly involved parties and do no harm to passive recipients of media content. Recipients of media content include unrecognized victims and others in the environment of the child and/or perpetrator who could play a key role in detecting, identifying, reporting, and providing assistance.
2. The media are **a key source of information** on child sexual abuse for the general public because of their power to inform the masses about this social issue, but they can only be judged as a relevant source of information when they report factually and accurately about a particular event, when they serve primary prevention, and when presenting this serious social problem is not supported by the myths of child sexual abuse, victims, and perpetrators.
3. Child sexual abuse is a serious social problem; however, the statistics of the authorities responsible for the treatment show that **most cases are**

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1 The detailed version of this chapter can be found in the preface of the dissertation "Testing the model of media coverage and presentation of child sexual abuse content" (Popović, 2019, p. 2).

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not reported. Moreover, most victims do not disclose the experience of sexual abuse to anyone in their environment, and since people in their surroundings usually lack knowledge and recognition skills, they cannot be adequately supported. Messages that unrecognized victims receive about CSA directly from the media or indirectly from people around them interpreting media content may be the reason why victims do not disclose abuse to close persons or authorities.

4. International and national recommendations for reporting on sexual violence and violence against children have emerged from the experience of experts in working with victims and from recognizing the power of the media to inform the general public and to do harm. However, **no evidence-based guidelines** addressing specific issues so far existed nor recommendations on how to communicate with media professionals about this problem (Popović, 2019, p. 2).

Why is the role of journalists important?

Journalists play a key role in informing the public about child sexual abuse because research shows that the general public receives information about child sexual abuse through the media (Babatsikos, 2010; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015). In this way, the media can have a strong influence on public attitudes and knowledge about this problem and on understanding the causes and solutions.

The positive role of journalists

There are several reasons why the media should report on CSA:

1. Prevention of CSA

The media have an irreplaceable role in the primary prevention of child sexual abuse and can be used for secondary and tertiary prevention of CSA (Popović, 2018). Media space can be used to inform and educate the public, parents, and children, but also stakeholders who play a key role in formulating public policies to combat and prevent this problem.

2. Development of awareness, public debate, and public policies

The media have the power to construct child sexual abuse as a social problem, which can stimulate the development of public policies and the investment of funds for their implementation and the work of child protection services (Cheit et al., 2010). It is the media that has played a key role in defining child sexual abuse as a public issue and a serious social problem. Prior to the 1970s, the general public perception was that CSA was a rare occurrence and skepticism about the existence of CSA resulted in the perception that prevalence was low, which led to the labelling of children as "lying" and "perverse" (Bonnet, 2000). The perception of child sexual abuse as a social problem began in the United States (USA) only in the late 1970s after the first retrospective population studies found it to be much more widespread than previously thought (Harrison & Morris, 1996). The first media reports on the results of these studies and the problem of non-reporting played a key role in alarming the public and policymakers (Painter as cited in Beckett, 1996). The shift in media attention to the most brutal instances in the institutions during the 1980s has caused increased public concern, resulting in new laws that oblige teachers, doctors, and other professionals to report suspected child sexual abuse (Beckett, 1996).

3. Alarming the public and pressure on institutions

The media can alarm the public and pressure institutions in cases of violations of victims' rights (Popović, 2018). On the one hand, the media may alert the public in cases when they are searching for a perpetrator or seek public assistance in the search for either the perpetrator or the abducted child. On the other hand, the media can put pressure on institutions when victims' rights are violated, and sometimes victims themselves report to the media when they feel helpless or frustrated by the system. Finally, when the media themselves determine institutional responsibility in cases of sexual harassment, thematic reporting can put pressure on institutions, which can cause institutional change.

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4. Encouraging victims to disclose and increase of CSA reports

Certain media reports may encourage victims to disclose sexual abuse to trusted persons or competent institutions (Popović, 2018). For example, victims may first learn from the media that what is happening to them is sexual abuse and may turn to an adult for help. Also victims can learn from the media about certain changes to the legislation, which can trigger a report (e.g., repealing statute of limitations in cases of CSA). Intensive reporting on CSA can encourage adult victims to disclose what happened to them in childhood due to a feeling of not being alone, empowerment, or confidence that the perpetrator will be prosecuted.

The negative role of journalists

On the other hand, the role of the media can be negative, as reporting can do additional harm to victims, suspected perpetrators, their families, and the general public.

1. Violation of the child's right to privacy, dignity and re-victimization

The media can violate a child's right to privacy by directly or indirectly disclosing the victim's identity. The importance of protecting victims' identities is best reflected in the most famous cases of intrafamilial sexual abuse, where victims and their families have had to completely change their identities in order to continue their private lives (e.g., Elisabeth Fritzl case) or have been forced to live as publicly exposed persons, such as is the case with the so-called "girl from the cellar". The dignity of the victim is most often violated by the description of the details of the abusive event, regardless of whether the details are accurate or not. Journalists sometimes do not understand that they harm a child every time they describe in detail the manner and circumstances of the abuse, even when they do not disclose the child's identity and even when it is unlikely that the child will see and understand the media reports. This further victimizes the victim by revealing details to the people in her/his surrounding who are likely to know that the child has experienced some kind of violence (Flego, 2011, p. 71). When it comes to violating dignity with the disclosure of a victim's identity, the media really does harm to the survivors because they victimize.

2. Textual victimization of victims

The media can victimize textually victims through the use of inappropriate language, especially consensual words (e.g., "make love", "satisfy", "relationship", "affair", "sex / oral sex", etc.) to describe a proven CSA (Popović, 2017). The language used by journalists should reflect the undesirable nature of sexual abuse, regardless of the method by which it was committed. In the preliminary survey for the purposes of drafting these guidelines, it was found that consensual words on one Croatian portal in 2015 were used in as many as 36.8 % of the news in which CSA was proven in court (Popović, 2017). The odds that consensual words would be used in reporting child sexual abuse were 11.5 times higher when using a detailed description of an abusive event and 8.5 times higher in cases where the victim was a male child (Popović, 2017).

3. Creating moral panic

The media can create moral panic if they use premature conclusions or generalizations (Popović, 2018). Such situations usually occur when, on the basis of one CSA case, which is usually extreme, all sexual abuse cases are sought to be described. Such reporting can create the impression of danger from, for example, specific categories of perpetrators who in reality constitute only a minority of CSA perpetrators. The most famous example of encouraging moral panic is the "stranger danger", which refers to the warning that all strangers may be potentially dangerous to a child. Sexual violence prevention has therefore focused on risk reduction strategies (e.g., self-defense) that suggest that an individual can prevent the attack himself if prepared. This campaign, originally created in the United States in the 1980s and subsequently transmitted to other parts of the world, has been criticized for confusing children because it gives the impression that children are safe when accompanied by people they know and are responsible when fail to escape or defend against abuse.

4. Instructions for abusers

When reporting on child sexual abuse, the media can become a guide for abusers (Popović, 2018). This usually happens when journalists or sources of information by describing the details of an abusive event unknowingly

describe the method by which the perpetrator approached the victim, lured her/him, and assured her/him not to tell anyone. For example, when reporting child abductions and rapes, they describe in detail how the perpetrator built a dungeon in the basement of the house that other family members did not know, what material made it soundproof, how the victim was abducted so that no one noticed him/her, etc. However, instructions for perpetrators can also be found in problem articles about CSA, where sources of information, including experts, in order to alert parents unintentionally offer detailed instructions to the perpetrator on how to approach the victim.

5. Sexually explicit material

Media reports can even become sexually explicit material (SEM) that serves the perpetrator for sexual purposes (Popović, 2018). This happens when the media presents sexually explicit details/language of the abusive event, photographs of the child in explicit poses or underwear, illustrations of the abusive event, forensic statements, or drawings of the respective child at court. Although the media may consider that in this case they are only accurately informing the public, they do provide material that can serve the sexual gratification of offenders or adolescents who have sexual preferences for children but have not yet committed a crime.

6. Violation of the privacy rights of suspects who may not be the perpetrators

Since there is a widespread belief that revealing the identity of CSA perpetrators is the best protection measure (Popović, 2017), it is not surprising that the media is rushing to disclose the identities of arrested, suspected, and accused persons for sexual abuse. Although there are certainly those who are later convicted, such practices can lead to the lifelong stigmatization of potentially innocent persons and significantly impair the quality of life of the innocent person and his/her family members. Even when they disclose the identity of a convicted person, the media can harm members of the perpetrator's family who are not responsible for the perpetrator's behavior.

7. Supporting the CSA myths

Finally, the media can support the myths about child sexual abuse. They are usually defined as incorrect beliefs regarding sexual abuse, victims, and perpetrators (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Supporting myths creates an unfavorable environment for the detection and reporting of sexual abuse (Popović, 2017).

How to report on child sexual abuse?

Media reporting frame and information sources

Child sexual abuse should be reported as a serious social problem, using a thematic frame and including a larger number of sources dealing with CSA at a professional or scientific level and with experience in dealing with sexually abused children and perpetrators. In doing so, thematic reporting should be avoided within only one institution and applied when reporting on all social institutions, including the child's family. Avoid superficial interviews with persons who have allegedly testified or allegedly referred to the case (e.g., neighbors). When reporting on individual cases, a combined (episodic and thematic) approach should be used, and it should be reported more frequently on cases that are more everyday cases of CSA. The whole story needs to be told without focusing on incidents by placing events in the broader social context within which the CSA takes place.

Protection of the victim's identity

Disclosing a child's identity is associated with shifting responsibility for abuse to the victim and describing the victim as permanently damaged. The identity of the victim should always be protected irrespective of the type and form of the CSA, with particular care in CSA family cases so that the identity of the perpetrator or the non-abusive parent is not disclosed. Do not provide any identifying information about the victim regardless of the victim's age or about problems with the victim's or perpetrator's behavior. Do not provide background information about the victim and perpetrator regardless of gender. Always make sure that the identity of the victim is not indirectly disclosed. Do not use the blurry character of the victim, since they can also be identified by the clothing or interview room.

Always consider the well-being and the safety of the victim when posting news. Consult with experts as parents may not always be aware of the harmful effects of publicity. Check with the experts about the possible consequences of participating in the news for the victim, and generally inquire about the impact and causes of child sexual abuse and the local conditions and circumstances in which the CSA is occurring and, if necessary, seek psychological help yourself. If an adult who has experienced childhood sexual abuse wishes to be identified, provide psychological support. The only situation where identity disclosure is justified is when the child has disappeared; however, after the child has been found, media coverage of the case should cease. Also do not make premature conclusions that the child is a victim of pedosexual chains while the investigation is going on.

CSA dynamics

Explain to the public the dynamics with which CSA usually takes place, without stereotyping the victims and perpetrators of CSA and without detailing the method used by the perpetrators to reach the victims. The description of the perpetrator's method is associated with the use of consensual words to describe the abuse, the transfer of responsibility for abuse to the victim, and the description of the victim as permanently damaged (Popović, 2019). Consult with experts who can refer to indicators on how to identify a CSA perpetrator; advice on how to protect against CSA, without giving ideas to a potential perpetrator. Deny a source of information that offers a detailed description of the perpetrator's method or ask him/her to rephrase it so that it cannot be used by other (potential) perpetrators.

CSA details

The description of the details of the CSA event is associated with the transfer of responsibility to the victim and the description of the victim as permanently damaged (Popović, 2019). Do not give details that describe the CSA event, especially when it comes to contact CSA, since the victim is being victimized even when no identity is revealed. Also excessive details can upset other victims and trigger memories for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and they can also be stimulating for other (potential) perpetrators. Do not disclose information about how the

CSA happened, especially when the perpetrator is a known person to the child. Do not disclose other background information about the victim and perpetrator, no matter how problematic the perpetrator's or the victim's behavior may be. Particular care should be taken not to disclose details that are not known to the victim's family and acquaintances so as not to be heard from the media. While writing, think about the potential impact of news publishing. Sharing too much information can jeopardize a potential investigation.

Responsibility for abuse

Do not shift individual responsibility for abuse from the perpetrator to the victim, the non-abusive parent, competent professionals, and institutions or other related persons. Educate the public on the universal social responsibility of protecting children from sexual abuse and the need to report any suspected child abuse. Social responsibility for the protection of children should also be emphasized in the news of individual cases, of intrafamilial CSA, when it comes to one child, when the children are female, and when the perpetrator is unknown to the child. When the victim is male and the perpetrator is female, make sure that no consensual words are used and that the abusive event is accurately reported. Do not make premature conclusions about what the child wanted or thought to want because children cannot give informed consent to having sex with an adult. Inaccurate or manipulative reporting can cause victims to appear in the media as unreliable.

Presentation of the perpetrator

Present the perpetrators as human beings, not as monsters, as this separates them from the rest of society and may discourage the reporting of suspicion on the person that does not fit the description. This can prevent the victims from discovering the abuse for fear that they will not be trusted. When a perpetrator is demonized, the public shies away from the fact that they may know the perpetrator personally and that a good person can do bad things. Do not emphasize the profession of the perpetrator, whether it is a reputable or low-skilled profession, because the perpetrators cannot be identified based on the profession they are engaged in. Do not prematurely suspect institutions where the perpetrator is employed or which are

attended by the child victim. In general, do not pay special attention to the perpetrator.

Institutional responsibility

When a system failure occurs in which the media can play a key role in protecting children, be careful not to use generalizations and premature conclusions. Balanced reporting of failures and system successes to protect children is needed. Do not shift the responsibility for not disclosing details and not disclosing the identity of the perpetrator to the institutions. Educate the public that protecting identity and details is necessary for the best interests of the child victim. Justifying that the public does not understand the seriousness of the crime if it is not familiar with the details is not a valid argument, because details can traumatize victims and support stereotypes about perpetrators.

Judicial proceedings

If a police investigation is ongoing, consult with a competent police officer and do not share too much information that may harm the judicial process. Do not make assumptions about guilt or interfere in other ways with the judicial process. Do not disclose the identity of the suspected perpetrator, especially if he/she is a family member or a person known to the child, so as not to indirectly disclose the identity of the victim. Only in cases where the indictment is confirmed or in consultation with the judicial authorities if there is a suspicion that the suspected person is a serial abuser, consider disclosing the identity of the perpetrator, which might encourage other victims to report the CSA. Do not offer rewards to the victim that could be interpreted as mentoring or influencing the accuracy and authenticity of the evidence.

Research results and official statistics

When reporting on research results and official statistics on CSA, explain to the public that these are different sources of information that are incomparable and that may underestimate the actual prevalence of CSA. When reporting on intergenerational transmission of abuse, explain the gaps in

the respective research. Consult with scientists in the field about the results of epidemiological surveys on nationally representative samples in order to present as accurately as possible the prevalence of this serious social problem.

Moral panic

Do not foster moral panic (fear and danger messages) around individual cases that do not represent the majority of cases or specific types of CSA; do not rely on multiple news value factors as CSA with contact or female victims (Popović, 2019). Do not use fear messages around specific categories of perpetrators and victims; resist generalizations and premature conclusions. Do not use moral panic in thematic news either. When editing a headline about CSA, make sure that it accurately reflects the text, avoiding exaggeration and taking the headline out of context. Avoid using victims and perpetrators to express emotions (anger/empathy).

Sexually explicit material

The use of sexually explicit material (SEM) is associated with the use of consensual words to describe confirmed abuse and the shift of responsibility for abuse to the victim (Popović, 2019). Do not provide sexually explicit material to illustrate the story of abuse, especially not material in which the child acts as a voluntary participant or material in which the child involuntarily participates in the CSA, because the first victims are shown as responsible and the other may provide satisfaction to a perpetrator and further traumatize the victim. In particular do not use SEM in episodic news, regardless of the territorial orientation of the news, the duration of the abuse, and the number of victims (Popović, 2019). If the source of information provides SEM (e.g., forensic drawings of the child), refuse to publish it. Do not use sexually explicit photos of teenage girls to illustrate news on material in which children are sexually exploited.

Assistance information

Always provide detailed information on where a person can seek help in case of CSA, as the news may re-traumatize victims. Provide assistance

information in any news regardless of the CSA type, gender, age and number of victims, and other background information about the victim (Popović, 2019). This can give the impression that a specific event can happen to anyone and that there is a place in the community where help can be received. Include information on what assistance is provided to help victims get structure or knowledge on what happens next after they seek help.

Protection information

Always offer protection information or information on how to protect oneself against CSA; offer social solutions especially in episodic news which use only one source of information and in which the victim is a teenager (Popović, 2019). Include information on how to protect oneself, how to respond to CSA without contact, and who to contact when a perpetrator is a person known to the child.

Online comments

Consider banning online commenting on child sexual abuse news if there is no control over the content, since they support stereotypes about perpetrators, victims, and CSA myths, provide free space for hate speech, and can be a source of additional traumatization for victims (Popović, 2017).

Brief advice for preparing and writing a story

WHO?	WHAT?	WHEN?	WHERE?	WHY?
Be sure that the privacy of involved parties is protected in the text and on the photos (use gender and age of the perpetrator and the term "child" to describe the victim). Avoid using photos of the perpetrators and victims even when their faces are blurred. Present the perpetrators as human beings, not monsters and do not pay special attention to them. Respect the right of the source of information (especially the victim) to say no. Include multiple sources, especially sources that play a key role in preventing CSA. Counsel with a local expert or organization.	Use the correct language and check terminology (use, e.g., "child sexual abuse" or "child exploitation material" when describing abuse). Make a good decision about how many details to include and avoid using them if they can re-traumatize victims. When describing an attack, it is not necessary to use background information on the victim or perpetrator. When editing the headline, make sure that it accurately reflects the text. Include national and local resources, such as helplines. Discuss prevention options and give specific examples of programs, policies, and other measures.	Describe when the abuse happened and how long it lasted. Describe when the prevention program is taking place. When reporting on research results and official statistics, make sure that you accurately describe the time period of the prevalence research.	Use more general regions or the country where the abuse happened (name of the city in case of the big cities, name of the region in case of small cities). Avoid using the exact location of the abuse (in text and on the photos). Describe exactly where the prevention program is taking place.	Focus on the CSA as a social problem and not just as specific incidents; emphasize social responsibility. Avoid making premature conclusions and generalizations. Avoid using consensual words when describing abuse and avoid making assumptions about guilt or interfering in other ways with the judicial process. Investigate judicial and civil protection systems before writing. Describe the consequences of CSA for victims, families, perpetrators, and the community, as well as the resilience of CSA survivors. Explore rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities for CSA perpetrators.

Language[2]

Don't use	Use	Why?
"Victim"*	"Survivor"	In order to acknowledge that the experience of the CSA does not determine the victims.
"Innocent victim"	"Survivor"	All victims of CSA are innocent.
"Allegedly"*	"Police/perpetrator says"	There is a suspicion in an event. Use sources of information and indicate who claims something happened.
"Victim admits"*	"Victim says"	In this way, the victim engages in violence and this implies responsibility and shame on the victim's side.
"Pedophile"	"Perpetrator"	Most CSA perpetrators are not people with pedophilia, and naming the perpetrator pedophile reduces the likelihood of being identified in the environment.
"Engaged in sexual relationship"**	"Was forced"	The victim is described as an active participant, and consensual words make it difficult for readers to understand the unwanted nature of the CSA.
"Violent attack"	"Sexual abuse"	CSA is always violence, irrespective of the dynamics that took place and regardless of whether the victim suffered physical injuries.
"Sexual activity or relationship"*	"Sexual abuse"	It says nothing about the violence committed or how to feel about the unwanted harm, or whether the authorities' responses were appropriate to what happened. It blurs the line between voluntary sexual intercourse and crime. The use of consensual words should always be avoided when there is a difference in age and power.
"To fondle"*	"Unwanted sexual contact or manual abuse"	It implies that touching a child is done with love, which maintains the idea that CSA is comfortable, which can prevent the audience from perceiving unwanted sexual activity as harmful.

Don't use	Use	Why?
"Oral sex, anal sex"**	"Forced oral/anal contact"	It puts the victim in the role of the perpetrator and portrays the perpetrator as a passive recipient. The CSA is placed in the context of daily, enjoyable human activities and ignores the range of negative emotions the victim has experienced.
"Sex scandal"**	"Sexual abuse"	Sexual scandal sensationalizes crime and blurs the line between normal voluntary activity and violence.
"Child pornography"	"Material in which children are sexually exploited" or "child exploitation material"	To avoid comparison with adult pornography and to avoid the idea that children can give informed consent to having sex with an adult.
"Child prostitution"	"Sexual exploitation of children"	Otherwise, children are stigmatized and blamed instead of acknowledging their exploitation by adults.
"Relationship/affair"	"Sexual exploitation of children"	In order not to shift the responsibility for the abuse to the victim.
"Kiss"	"Forcibly placed a mouth on the mouth of a child"	In order not to shift the responsibility for the abuse to the victim.
"Incest"	"Intrafamilial child sexual abuse"	Incest also refers to voluntary sexual intercourse between adult family members.
"The victim did not suffer serious physical injuries."	–	It implies that there is physical evidence in cases of CSA, yet in most cases it is missing.
"No weapons were used during the attack."	–	It implies that the CSA is being conducted under threat of weapons and the severity of other cases of CSA is diminished.
"The victim was young, but she was not a child."	–	It implies that older victims are responsible for the abuse.
"The victim voluntarily met with the perpetrator."	–	The responsibility for the CSA is transferred from the perpetrator to the victim.
"Where was the girl's mother? Did the mother know?"	–	The responsibility for the CSA is shifted from the perpetrator to the non-abusive mother.
"How could they only let the child out in the evening?"	–	There is a shift of responsibility for the CSA from the perpetrator to the non-abusive parent(s).

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2 *A Media Toolkit for Local and National Journalists to Better Cover Media Coverage. http://www.chitaskforce.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Chicago-Taskforce-Media-Toolkit.pdf (04.02.2020.); **Reporting on Sexual Violence. A Media Guide for Maine Journalists. https://www.mecasa.org/uploads/1/0/1/7/101776612/mecasa_media_guide_2019.pdf (04.02.2020.)

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Don't use	Use	Why?
"The victim was found unharmed."*	–	This implies that the CSA is always physical and that there must be physical traces of abuse, while the psychological nature of the violence and the traumatic impact on the child is ignored.
Remove all descriptions leading to blaming the victim from the news: private life, child's habits, dressing, child's age, child's sexual behavior, behavioral problems and physical appearance.	–	Such descriptions can lead to blaming the victim and create a false sense that others are not at risk if they do not behave as described.

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Education and prevention through media. Interview with public relations officers

Jens Wagner, Maximilian von Heyden, Josephine Ischebeck & Daniela Stelzmann

"Don't Offend" (German: "Kein Täter werden") is a unique project in Germany that offers free and confidential therapy for people with pedophilia. In 2005, the project started at the Institute of Sexology and Sexual Medicine of the Charité Hospital in Berlin with a large media campaign to draw the attention of those affected. Today, the therapeutic offer is available in numerous cities throughout Germany. The aim of "Don't Offend" is to prevent sexual assaults by giving people with pedophilia and hebephilia the opportunity to come to terms with their sexual preference.
Jens Wagner was responsible for the project's public relations and networking work from 2011 to 2018. Today, Maximilian von Heyden has taken over this task.
Keywords: prevention, pedophilia, Dunkelfeld, public relation

Dear Jens and Maximilian, thank you very much for your agreement to do an interview with us. This interview is mainly about your public relations work in the project "Don't Offend", what experiences you have had with the media, and what role you attribute to the media.

How did you get involved in this project?

Jens Wagner (JW): I previously worked mainly as a writer and editor for various TV stations. After a few years, I realized that I was longing for a job in which I could make a difference and have a lasting impact on society. I wanted to do something that was not only fun and fulfilling but also benefited other people. I had often read about the prevention project at the Charité hospital in Berlin and was fascinated by its approach. When friends told me one evening that they knew a medical doctor working in the project and that there was currently a vacancy for press and public relations work, I applied. Three days later, I had an interview and was hired.

Maximilian von Heyden (MvH): I was familiar with the project "Don't Offend" from my studies, and I knew about the high prevalence of CSA

and about the variety of motives for committing these crimes. In addition, I had to deal with a CSA incident in my immediate environment, which is why I was already intensively concerned with the topic before I started working for the prevention network. When the chairman of a foundation approached me about a vacancy in the prevention project for young people, I immediately identified positively with it and decided to apply because I had the impression that I could contribute something meaningful here.

What does or did your work in the prevention project involve?

JW: In my role as press officer, the focus was mainly on the conception and implementation of communication strategies as well as press and public relations work. This included answering press inquiries, organizing and taking on interviews, writing press releases, as well as organizing, conducting and moderating press conferences. I also designed and edited the project's website and its social media channels. And I invested a lot of time in networking and lobbying for the development and expansion of the prevention network and for the intensification of cooperation with other institutions. This position for press and public relations work was only set up when I joined the project. The great thing about it was that I was able to contribute a lot of what I had already learned and was passionate about, such as developing and implementing event formats, films, and commercials. In this context, I realized, among other things, the commercial "Kein Täter werden" (Don't offend) together with the director Bernhard Semmelrock and the short film "Stigma" with Peter Jeschke as producer and director.

MvH: As the person now responsible for health communication in the prevention network, my goal, in cooperation with Clara Stockmann, is to positively influence the help-seeking behavior of those affected, i.e., to increase self-identification with one's own problem, to educate and destigmatize about the help offered, its contents, and its effectiveness. We have chosen the term "health communication" as a guiding concept for this work, since press and public relations work are only instruments to realize this work which is oriented towards psychological findings. We differentiate between target groups and channels and apply the findings of help-seeking research. In concrete terms, this means that we develop and implement campaigns, organize or participate in specialist events,

deal with press inquiries, and establish contact with political and other stakeholders.

Before you worked here, what did you know about CSA and pedophilia, and where did you learn it? How do you see your knowledge at that time today?

JW: Until then, my sources were exclusively the media. It was always clear to me that CSA can have serious consequences for those affected. I didn't know much about persons with pedophilia, except that they were always associated with CSA, at least in the media. That was my level of knowledge when I started at Charité. And if you had asked me back then if CSA offenders were persons with pedophilia, I probably would have answered: "I think so."

The issue of child protection has always been important to me. But the concept that not every person with pedophilia becomes a perpetrator of sexual violence against children and that preventive therapy services for persons with pedophilia can prevent acts, I found particularly appealing. Especially after I started my job, I realized how much resentment I had towards pedophilic individuals. I had my previous view, as I said, mainly through my own reception of the media. These resentments have diminished over time through personal contact with the participants in the project and discussions with my psychological and medical colleagues. I quickly realized how important it is that people who seek help should also receive help and that there is no reason to deny them this. Especially when people seek help in order not to harm others and themselves!

In connection with my work, I read more and more studies and learned that not all CSA acts are committed by persons with pedophilia and that other factors besides sexual preference can be decisive for committing such acts. For example, lack of empathy, own experiences of abuse, and much more. And that it is a great challenge for someone who has this sexual inclination not to act on it and to learn to live with it. A very important learning experience for me was the differentiation between sexual inclination and sexual behavior. To understand that no one chooses their sexual preference and orientation, but of course everyone is responsible for their behavior.

MvH: I had already explored the concept of pedophilia before I took the job, and of course I continued to do so during my work. Before that, I already had the mindset "I am a human being and nothing human is alien to me" – otherwise I wouldn't have wanted to take the job. But working

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on destigmatization and the consequences of sexual traumatization at the same time has repeatedly triggered integration tensions. In retrospect, it was not so much my level of knowledge that evolved; it was my attitude. It creates cognitive dissonance to destigmatize those affected, to protect their human dignity, and to advocate for them to get help, on the one hand, and at the same time to be confronted with convinced pedophilic sex offenders who actively work against the prevention network, sometimes beyond the law, or who go to great lengths to motivate persons with pedophilia to act out their preference. Here it is not always easy to keep one's composure. This is what has shaped the development of attitudes, to find an adequate way of dealing with the emotions that are understandably intense on all sides in connection with both the sexual preference pedophilia and CSA.

What did you particularly enjoy about your work, or are there moments that you remember fondly? What negative experiences did you make?

JW: As I mentioned, it was great to bring a lot of what I liked to do before into this job. That I could work in a cinematic way. And that the core of my work was always about people. That's why networking was essential to me. Also, in my opinion, child protection can function more successfully if all the stakeholders in this important field of work are involved and connected to be part of the network with their diverse competencies. Particularly through our films (Jeschke & Wagner, 2017, 2018) and Commercials ("Kein Täter werden", 2013, 2018) I was able to gain a much deeper insight into the lives of persons with pedophilia, for whom the therapeutic services are intended. That was an important experience, and, above all, it helped me grow as a person. Also important was to learn that not everything in life is black or white.

Unfortunately, however, there have also been repeated attacks and accusations against our work from very different areas. From some sides, for example, we were accused of protecting offenders with our work.

From some specific Internet forums came the accusation that we deny that children can also have fun having sex with adults. This is, of course, completely absurd and contradicts all clinical experience and all serious scientific studies. Accordingly, we have always communicated here quite clearly that there is no such thing as "consensual sexual relations" between children and adults. For reasons of developmental psychology alone, a child cannot consent consensually and cannot assess the consequences.

Dealing with such attacks was not always easy.

MvH: Of course, I particularly enjoy it when things you have thought about succeed – for example, cooperation projects with companies came about that allow for large coverage and a high degree of differentiation in addressing target groups. A particularly positive experience in the area of press relations was when an experienced science journalist contacted us with the intention of applying for a grant and reporting in detail on the work of the prevention network (Smith, 2021). Through his unusually detailed research, a comprehensive and internationally published picture of the work of the prevention network was created for the first time, which also allowed that critics with whom we ourselves had never had any exchange had their say. Before the article was printed, Undark Magazine gave us a fact check with over 40 questions. This kind of quality journalism was very encouraging.

In contrast to this experience, there was a particularly negative one. A journalist called us and said something like, "So, I've always reported positively about you, but now I've come across criticism, I'm horrified by it, and I'm going to write something negative because I see myself as an investigative journalist and I'm outraged." And then she published a completely undifferentiated, polemical article, which then also led to a right-wing political party starting protest actions. There have been marches on a clinic campus and people have rung the doorbells of citizens in the vicinity of the clinic and warned about the "danger" posed by the pedophile patients. Also, the site manager of the project was summoned to the ministry. Yet the criticism was neither new nor unknown. Instead of reflecting on her own working methods and questioning why she had overlooked them, the journalist consequently launched an emotional campaign against us. And that made me very angry, especially since we always point out the limitations of the approach and the limited validity of the available studies when talking to the press.

How does the typical cooperation with journalists look like?

JW: In my years as a press officer, I spent a lot of time explaining to journalists the differences between CSA and pedophilia and that one is not necessarily related to the other. That not every person with pedophilia commits sexual violence against children, and not every offender is a pedophilic person. Similar to what happened to me before I started my job, this information was new to many journalists and made quite a difference

to them. I was always very happy to do this because I could understand it and found it essential to enlighten.

At the same time, it annoyed me when I noticed in press inquiries that the focus of interest was not on education but rather in the direction of sensational journalism.

However, most of the time I found the cooperation with journalists to be very interested, professional, and appreciative.

MvH: With the exception of press conferences and press releases on significant events such as the start or completion of projects, we work with journalists rather passively, which is also due to the large number of inquiries. We acknowledge an average of 1.3 media inquiries per week. In recent years, the media landscape has changed noticeably. For example, the number of inquiries from podcasters, YouTubers, and affected people who are politically and publicly active themselves has increased considerably. The cooperation on well-known CSA cases is something special. Here, we have only been available to the press since 2020 after the recommendation of the network advisory board, as long as the question at the focus of the inquiry is "why people commit such acts". The challenge here is to avoid suggesting that all persons with pedophilia become perpetrators and at the same time to use the opportunity to educate and draw attention to the offer.

How has media coverage of CSA developed in recent years from your perspective?

JW: Even though I no longer work in the project, I naturally notice that pedophilia is often discussed in the media. Unfortunately, this reporting is still usually done in connection with current cases of sexualized violence against children. And pedophilia and sexualized violence are still often equated. At the same time, however, I notice that there is also more informative and differentiated reporting than many years ago. I think that the project's media work has made a big difference here and continues to do so.

MvH: I systematically follow the media coverage based on certain search terms. The prevention network is mentioned much more often than we would expect based on the number of press inquiries. Even without our involvement, the reporting is increasingly oriented towards the question of how acts can be prevented. Also, CSA is no longer equated with pedophilia as often as it still is in other countries. I find it positive that, similar to reports about suicides, a reference to the offer of help is made – and

often without our involvement – when cases of abuse that have become public are reported. What still happens is the publication of potentially stigmatizing images, such as the hand reaching for the child, even if it is not about a concrete case of CSA but about the work of the prevention network. But that's also hard to get out of people's heads. I find it interesting that especially young journalists have published excellent reports with high impact in the last few years and have reached a lot of people with their approach.

How do you think media can help prevent CSA?

JW: Of course, the media cannot directly prevent CSA. But they can, for example, help reduce stigmatization within society through differentiated reporting and thus encourage those affected to open up. This, in turn, helps prevent CSA. Especially in the case of offenders of sexualized violence, we know that social isolation can be a risk factor. In addition, media reports can draw the attention of the various affected groups to specific therapy offers.

The media can also educate people about what we as a society can do to intervene and prevent sexualized violence. After all, reporting often focuses heavily on highlighting the acts as well as the perpetrators. This form of reporting is undoubtedly essential. At the same time, however, I think it's important to show what every one of us can do, or what we can do together, to prevent and combat sexualized violence. How we can support children, for example, so that they don't have to do anything that makes them uncomfortable. For instance, that they don't have to hug their aunt just because it's their aunt, and that they don't have to shake hands with their neighbor just because he wants them to. In my opinion, learning integrity is just as crucial for children as knowing that they will always be seen and taken seriously. Not least to protect them from sexualized violence and show them that we are all attentive and are there for them when they need us.

MvH: Because of their reach, the media have enormous influencing power. Prevention research shows that the work of the media can also promote undesirable behavior. I have the feeling that journalists are often not aware of this ethical dimension. For example, victims of sexual trauma can be re-traumatized by reporting, and persons with pedophilia can be stigmatized, but they can also learn that it is apparently easy to find images of CSA on the darknet with little risk of discovery, and so on. If media

want to prevent CSA, they have to report on the causes and the risk and protective factors. They must also help to ensure that potential offenders learn about offers of help and that they are not unnecessarily stigmatized.

Do you feel that your work makes or has made a difference in the media coverage?

JW: I think so. I often recognize our wording in the reporting. The changes I recognize are not hurricane-like, but that would be expecting too much. I think that we have initiated a lot in terms of differentiation in media coverage of persons with pedophilia and CSA, and the media work of Clara Stockmann and Maximilian continues to make a lot of difference. In any case, I am happy about every report in which not every offender is automatically labeled a "pedophile". After all, pedophilia is a clinical diagnosis and not a crime. Not everyone knows that, not even every journalist. And that's why we need to continue to educate people about it.

MvH: The international comparison shows clearly that the work of the prevention network has contributed to a differentiation in media coverage in the sense of the distinction between sexual preference and behavioral disorder. The impressions in the cooperation with journalists from abroad and the reactions to international campaigns suggest that the discourse in Germany has decoupled from the rest of the world – it would be interesting to validate this impression empirically.

What do you think are the basics that should be in every article about CSA?

JW: The mentioned differentiation should be covered. Contact points for all possible victims should always be mentioned. Depending on the reporting topic, it can be essential to inform that there are different types of perpetrators and that perpetrators often come from the direct social environment. Likewise, as I said, information should be provided more often about what we can all do personally to prevent or intervene in sexualized violence.

  This topic naturally frightens many people. That's why I think it's all the more important not to leave the public, both children and adults, to deal with it alone and provide information early. In my opinion, education and prevention should also be incorporated more into the institutions where children are cared for and grow up. This can also be taught in a

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child-friendly way early in kindergarten. There are specialized counseling centers that can do this and do it well.

In my opinion, the media can support such processes through their reporting by which they raise public and political awareness.

MvH: I also think that, if you are going to report on CSA, you should provide accompanying information and also explain why you are reporting on it, similar to the issue of suicide. And when journalists report on CSA, they also have to be aware that there are many victims who may also need help or may be re-traumatized by the reporting. So a trigger warning and naming adequate points of contact is the minimum. That should be the framework of the report.

How should society and journalists in particular deal with at-risk groups in order to take preventive action against CSA?

JW: A differentiated approach from all of us is undoubtedly essential for this. Our society should offer help, such as therapy, to people who fear and/or are at risk of committing sexualized violence, especially to those who actively seek help. I believe it's our duty to protect children and to help people who need help.

At the same time, we have to protect against those who pose a permanent danger. That's what the penal system is for. Of course, the protection of children always comes first.

Through their reporting, journalists can contribute a great deal to clarification, factual discussion, and finding solutions.

MvH: We know from help-seeking research that it is important to address risk groups in a differentiated way and without stigmatization. For example, one cannot expect every affected person to already conceptually understand their impulses and inclinations and to have integrated them into their self-image. This process of understanding can be accelerated through differentiated communication. Positive case reports can also reduce negative expectations of effectiveness and fears.

What can experts (scientists, consultants, etc.) do better in working with the media?

JW: Of course, science often communicates in a more complex way than journalism. That's why it's important to explain scientific research to the

public in an understandable way. That's why good science communication is so important.

In all the topics and areas we have been talking about we can only achieve the best possible results if we pull together. Especially when it comes to child protection, I think it's enormously important for the many disciplines involved in the topic to network and work together. If all who work with potential and real perpetrators, from politicians to specialized counseling centers and academia to people and institutions, share their knowledge and expertise to develop solutions and concepts jointly, they would serve as a fundamental building block for the most successful prevention and intervention of sexualized violence against children.

MvH: The current pandemic has clearly shown the importance of good cooperation between the media and experts. In my opinion, experts should always point out the limitations of the knowledge they have and make conflicts of interest transparent. This is the only way to gain trust and generate positive change in a highly complex issue like CSA.

Thank you very much for the interview!

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Reporting on child sexual abuse: Personal insights into the workings, challenges, and opportunities in journalism

Nina Apin

With the "scandal year" 2010, CSA appeared prominently on the media agenda in Germany. Numerous cases of CSA in renowned institutions were uncovered. The media took on an essential exposing and educating role. Nina Apin, editor of a major German daily newspaper, has been dealing with the topic of CSA and the associated journalistic challenges for years. In the current chapter, she offers an insight into how journalism works in relation to CSA, including achievements and traps, and gives an outlook for future directions.
Keywords: child sexual abuse, journalism, experience report, Germany

The press as an agent of the enlightenment – The "scandal year" 2010

Berlin, January 2010. I am attending a press conference as a local reporter for the Berlin editorial team at *taz*[1]. The scene takes place at the Canisius College on the edge of Berlin Tiergarten. The Jesuit high school is one of the most renowned educational institutions in the city; the upper-middle class has their children educated here. Numerous press representatives crowd into the auditorium, the institution's prestige contrasts sharply with the scandal's enormity. Subject of the press conference: Two Fathers are said to have committed sexual assault and violence against students in the 1970s and 1980s. The matter is not new: There had been internal rumors, also calls for help from affected students, even a self-report by one of the offenders. The Jesuit order had covered up the matter for 19 years. What had been tolerated and kept quiet for years becomes public only when old school students turn to media representatives and the school principal Klaus Mertes opens the school gates to the capital's press with a unique boldness.

The press conference at the Canisius College is my first encounter with the subject of child sexual abuse (CSA). My subsequently specializing in the subject is due to the fact that in 2010 what is called a topic boom in journalism emerges: The audience's attention for a subject – in this

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1 *taz die tageszeitung*: national German daily newspaper.

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case: sexual violence against children – is aroused, and the journalistic industry delivers: background, further developments, new scandals. After the kick-off in the Canisius College, a series of abuse scandals hit almost all institutions in the country. Affected people who had been silent for years or decades now confided to media representatives what had been done to them as children in boarding schools, foster homes, and other institutions. And this time, the media and the public want to listen (Behnisch & Rose, 2011).

Differently back in 1999: The investigative journalist Jörg Schindler published research on the reform pedagogical Odenwald School in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Schindler, 1999) that had what it took to be a scandal: Schindler had spoken to numerous old school students and contemporary witnesses who reported systematic and massive sexual violence by teachers. One of the main offenders: the headmaster himself, a star of German reform pedagogy. But this article had no noteworthy response, the school and those affected got caught up in fruitless internal disputes. It wasn't until eleven years later that Schindler's revelations hit a sensitized audience. The impact of this second report is enormous. Many other media are following suit and bring more and more new monstrosities to light. Public education and victim compensation are set into motion, and finally the closure of the Odenwald School follows the moral bankruptcy of this former model institution in 2015.

Both cases, Canisius college and Odenwaldschule, show that the media, as a powerful engine, can initiate and accelerate educational processes. The "fourth power", as an uninvolved instance, can do what affected institutions are usually unwilling and unable to do: It can listen to those affected and – at best – ensure that their experiences are the subject of criminal and public investigations, that the offenders are identified and held accountable, that the institutions concerned take responsibility and provide compensation. At the same time, however, the media are never entirely free of self-interest: To report on sexualized violence, it is necessary to have as unambiguous a history as possible with guilty parties, victims, and confidants – an intensification that is opposed to the interest in reassurance and reconciliation. For press revelations to be sufficient, however, they must also meet with a social climate that accepts these stories: In 1999, German society was still heavily preoccupied with the consequences of reunification, and the West German intelligentsia struggled with its self-concept in the confrontation with East German traditions. Reports from former boarding school students who had been humiliated at a beacon institution of left-wing liberal intellectual life did not fit into the picture. In addition, I have come to know media companies as "tendency clubs":

Quite a few editors who are ardent supporters of reform education, who themselves had attended the Odenwald School or sent their children there, worked for the major newspapers such as *Zeit*, *Spiegel*, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (see von Dohnanyi, 2010). From my perspective, there was a correspondingly greater tendency to chase acts of abuse in church institutions than in their own milieu.

I had the same experience when the abuse revelations reached the left-wing alternative spectrum from which my newspaper originated: A colleague discovered a cross connection during research on the Odenwald School: Dietrich Willier, co-founder of the *taz*, who according to older colleagues was a charismatic and recognized political journalist of the early years, later went to the Odenwald School as an art teacher. There he abused at least nine boys between the ages of 12 and 14, including on trips to Greece organized by him; he is also said to have owned a collection of abuse films (Apin et al., 2011).

Abuse and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens): The election campaign year 2013

What about CSA in the name of sexual liberation, as occurred in the left-wing milieu? I started searching the *taz* archive for clues. And I found some things there that make the hair of those born after the event stand on end: There was an article under the headline "Pedophilia — Crimes without victims" advertising for "consensual" sexual contacts between adults and children (Stüben, 1979). Other authors talked about "tender fucking" with boys on the threshold of puberty or bluntly demanded: "Away with the paragraphs 174–176!"[2] At the beginning of the eighties even an activist of the pederast group within the "Homosexuelle Aktion Hamburg" (Homosexual action Hamburg) was responsible for a regularly appearing gay and lesbian page. Colleagues remember that he sometimes even brought a young companion to the editorial office. "Back then it was just a different time", defended those who had already been there at the time. Pedosexual[3] positions had made it into the newspaper out

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2 Paragraphs 174–176 Strafgesetzbuch [German Criminal Code] penalize the sexual abuse of wards and children.

3 Pedosexuality is often confused with pedophilia. Pedophilia describes sexual interest in prepubescent children, independent of actual behavior. Sexually abusive behavior against children, on the other hand, is referred to as pedosexuality, which is not necessarily connected to pedophilia. Many acts of CSA are not motivated

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of a misunderstood sympathy for minorities: The story that pedosexuals were the (suppressed) avant-garde of sexual liberation had been hoisted. Moreover, hardly anyone had been interested in these niche topics anyway. What had been important in terms of publicity was something else: RAF, NATO double decision or solidarity with Nicaragua.

As unsatisfactory as I personally thought some of the information provided by the founding generation of the *taz* was, and as strange as the collective amnesia was when it came to establishing the identity of an activist named Ulli-Dénise, who was a busy writer at the time: No one prevented me from publishing some texts that critically dealt with the *taz*'s own past. The *taz* seemed more able to deal with its own misconducts than institutions like the Kinderschutzbund (German Child Protection Association), where similar issues led to rifts, or the reform pedagogy scene, which still refused to see the Odenwaldschule as anything more than a regrettable slip.

This changed in 2013, probably not by chance in the middle of the election campaign, when accusations of abuse reached Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens; German green party). Especially the political opponents and media close to them reported with relish how the pedosexual lobby had made it into the committees and resolutions of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in the 1980s and 1990s. The more journalistic research and political instrumentalization blended together, the more the reporting of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen pedosexual involvement became the subject of bitter discussions, including in the *taz*: Was it the intention of a left-wing alternative newspaper to take part in a witch-hunt – and allow reactionary forces to badmouth the achievements of the sexual revolution of 1968 under the disguise of unsparing clearing-up? As a newspaper originating from the same milieu, didn't one have to be more lenient with the Greens? After all, it had been all so long ago, and if there had been victims at all, no one had come forward so far.

Such views were held above all by older colleagues, who also felt attacked in their own biographies by the frenzy of clearing-up. Younger ones, on the other hand, like me, found that anyone who is not squeamish in the Catholic Church must also clear up the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen ruthlessly – even if the truth comes at the wrong time and could benefit the wrong political forces. A classic journalistic topic – researching, revealing, publishing – had suddenly turned into an open war of opinions.

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by pedophilia, and a significant number of those affected by pedophilia never commits CSA (Cantor & McPhail, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Jahnke, 2018).

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The then *taz* Editor of Education Christian Füller wrote in a provocative opinion piece that the Greens as an organization were "permeated" by "pedophile ideology"[4] (original quote). The editor-in-chief personally stopped the publication and the editor left the newspaper in dispute.

Empathy and hard facts: Journalistic challenges

The politically charged atmosphere before the Bundestag elections 2013 was an exceptional situation. But as it soon turned out, it was wrong to think that there had been no victims in the left-wing alternative milieu. The continuous reporting of abuse, which began in 2010 and resurfaced in 2013, led those affected to turn to journalists who seemed trustworthy to them. Books were written about abuse in educational shared flats and communities and films such as "Meine keine Familie" (My No-family) about sexual violence in the Otto Mühl sect were produced (Neumann & Robert, 2012). All of these products were based on the strong sympathy for those affected, often giving them the opportunity to make their voice heard for the first time. The press as the advocate of the victims – this role is also not entirely free of tension, for despite all sympathy for the concerns of those affected, accusations must also be provable. In 2015, a man contacted the *taz* newspaper who stated that he wanted to uncover abuse at a boarding school in Lower Saxony on behalf of his former classmates. He had even written a book about it that had been alienated as a novel. I met with him, he kept sending me new contact addresses and "material" – finally I drove to the boarding school and spoke with the current principal, former students, teachers, and a representative of the local police department. But since none of his accusations could be substantiated in the end, I refrained from publishing it. The man wrote an angry letter to the editor – he felt abandoned. The line between an empathic perspective and reporting on the victims is narrow, and sometimes the danger of being guided by feelings instead of facts can be great. But victims also have self-interests. And the offender side can also become unpleasant if you get too close to it: Since I interviewed one of the last openly acting pedophile lobbyists in 2014 (with the attempt to approach him with fairness, too; Apin, 2014), the man regularly has sent me "news" on the pedophile cause,

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4 The *taz* archive version of the then not published text can be read in the archive of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, https://verlag2.faz.net/dynamic/download/faz/Befreites_Menschenmaterial.pdf (retrieved on August 28, 2020).

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has corrected my articles continuously in his sense and sometimes even sent "pedophile Christmas greetings" to the editorial office.

For those affected, however, editorial offices increasingly became contact points for unprocessed requests: A man from Darmstadt in Hessen, Germany, asked the *taz* for support by letter to the editor: A teacher at a primary and secondary school had abused pupils for decades. To this day, the state school supervisory authority has not assumed any responsibility. A colleague and I joined forces, met several of those affected, got to know their families, looked through court records, interviewed contemporary witnesses, and read in the offender's diaries. In the end, our research led to the state of Hessen setting up an independent commission and compensating the victims. When the Minister of Education and the spokesperson of the victims' initiative thanked the *taz*, it was a small "spotlight" moment for my colleague and me. Only a small one, however – because we had not crushed the entire Catholic Church but only prevented a legacy that was unpleasant for the authorities from being shelved forever.

The resistance of the institutions was low in the Darmstadt case: The offender, a lone perpetrator, was dead and, moreover, his guilt had been established beyond doubt beforehand; he spent the last years of his life in prison. Our service consisted primarily of exerting pressure on the authorities to compensate the victims – and to make known the strategies of an offender who had systematically brought children from unstable families into his dependency and skillfully deceived his adult environment.

This was different in a case from Berlin. In the course of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen investigation, the final report of the Göttingen Institute for Democracy Research recalled a remarkable case from Berlin: The authorities had set up foster homes with pedosexuals with criminal records – for boys from difficult social backgrounds who were to be raised to full members of society through the "loving" influence of the pedosexual foster fathers. The cases had never been investigated, no victims had come forward, and neither the Berlin Senate for Youth nor the then governing Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD; Social Democratic Party of Germany) had any interest in clearing up the matter. This did not change until 2013, when several media reported on the case. A scientific report was commissioned, whereupon two of the victims came forward. What they reported about growing up in one of these foster homes led to outraged media and political reactions. A further expert report attempted to clarify the political and structural responsibilities for this educational "experiment". And while, supported by an unrelenting media interest in the case, the two known victims struggled with the Berlin authorities for compensation, a third victim contacted the researchers. This man, who

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grew up in a comparable "foster home" outside of Berlin, gave evidence of a larger pedosexual network.

The case, which is also called the "Kentler Experiment" after the sexual scientist Helmut Kentler, spiritus rector of these "foster homes", shows that the press can not only publicize grievances but also maintain interest in their clarification and investigation over a longer period of time: Without the constant inquiries and the articles that repeatedly raised the question of the extent to which the Berlin Senate intended to do justice to its responsibility for the abused foster children of the past, the case would probably have been closed with the first scientific report. The intensity of the investigation was also increased by the public interest expressed in the media: The foster children's files, which in 2016 were still considered untraceable, turned up later. They show, among other things, that the controversial foster care relationships existed until at least 2003 – and that there were repeated attempts by pediatricians and social workers to intervene on behalf of the children, which were not followed up.

Apart from the obstacles that are put in the way of journalistic work by complicated records and by representatives of the authorities who are not particularly willing to provide information, there is also an ideological aggravation in this case that makes neutral reporting difficult: Time and again, right-wing groups try to exploit the Kentler scandal for their own purposes: For example, the German right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD; Alternative for Germany), both in the Berlin House of Representatives and at the federal level, tried to profile itself as an advocate for those affected by CSA and a champion against a "child molester scandal" for which the social democrats were responsible (to quote Thorsten Weiß, family policy spokesman for the AfD parliamentary group in the Berlin House of Representatives). The right-wing extremist alliance "Demo für alle" ("Demo for all") also uses the Kentler scandal to campaign against sex education in day-care centers and schools, because in the eyes of the activists "gender mania" and "early sexualization" of children is a legacy of Kentler's pedosexual ideas. I turned down a request to participate in a film by "Demo für alle" about the Kentler case, because I do not want to serve as a chief witness for a group that acts against sexual diversity.

What responsible journalism can achieve

In addition to exposing injustice, accelerating and intensifying the coping processes, and asserting the interests of those affected, another task of the media is to disseminate knowledge about the extent, prevalence, and con-

sequences of CSA. While spectacular cases still dominate the reporting – after the Odenwald School and the Greens comes Lügde, comes Bergisch-Gladbach, comes Münster –, it seems that the social knowledge about CSA is greater than ten years ago (e.g., about trauma long-term consequences, the difference between a pedophilic preference and acted out pedosexuality, about abuse in children's homes and problematic structures in the church). People are more aware that children are at risk in their immediate family, not only from stranger danger. Nevertheless, a lack of knowledge within society remains.

From my perspective, the quality of reporting on CSA has unquestionably improved over the past ten years. Voyeuristic horror reporting á la "The Incest Monster Josef Fritzl" has become less frequent, which is certainly due to the fact that the victims' perspective has become more in focus. Abuse-trivializing titles such as in the weekly news magazine *Spiegel*, which in 1977 featured the eleven-year-old Eva Ionesco naked on the cover in addition to the headline "Sold Lolitas" (Spiegel, 1977), are no longer thinkable today. And also the tendency of the tabloids to stir up against "child molesters" with striking punishment fantasies has clearly decreased. On the other hand, there is an overall fair reporting about prevention offers for people with pedophilia such as "Kein Täter werden" ("Don't offend"), and even feature films from the perspective of the perpetrator such as "Head Burst" (Reich et al., 2019) are discussed in a differentiated manner. This suggests that the media narrative framework in which the topic of CSA is framed has become more diverse and multi-perspective and that some taboos, from the needs of people with pedophilia to the question of women as perpetrators, have begun to break. Finally, it is the task of responsible journalism to constantly expand society's knowledge about CSA and to keep it up to date based on the latest scientific research.

Traps and blind spots

Nevertheless, there are still deficits and omissions in journalistic work on the topic of CSA (see Popović in this edition). Since sexualized violence against children is an emotionally charged topic, reporting on it constantly runs the risk of falling into one of the three biggest "traps":

1. Sensationalism: The scandal, the monstrous crime, the pedosexual offender as a danger to the general public – such material, prepared and embellished in great detail, sells well. Sensationalism and voyeurism offer the audience a framework in which the crime of CSA can be so-

cially understood: The banal normality of what the neighbor does with his daughter is ultimately far more disturbing than revelations about highly criminal child pornography networks. However, the focus on spectacular evil instead of the "normal" abuse in everyday life obstructs the view of the actual structures that promote abuse and therefore hinders prevention in various ways.

2. The victim bias: A general empathy for victims of CSA can help to even out the structural power gap between offenders and powerful offender institutions on the one side and often marginalized victims on the other. However, if the reports are too one-sided from the perspective of the victims, the analysis remains on the subjective level: Structural connections are ignored just as much as the potential or necessity of government action. Similarly, reporting runs the risk of remaining stuck in a law-and-order approach: Calls for ever tougher laws, higher sentencing ranges, and more powers for law enforcement agencies, however, obscure the fact that offenders also have rights, for example as parents, as employees, or to reintegrate into society after serving a prison sentence.

3. The fixation on institutions: From my view, media reporting generally focuses too much on institutions such as churches and clubs and thereby neglects cases in which the abuse was committed in immediate family environment by "normal" (step)fathers, uncles and aunts, or neighbors, which results in a one-sided picture of CSA.

Future directions

Even today there are still topics that have been neglected by the media: CSA cases in families, the large Christian churches, and institutions of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) have been covered in the media. Now also mass and professional sports clubs are increasingly coming into the focus of investigations and media reports, thanks to the work of the Independent Commission in Germany, which systematically investigates the extent of CSA in all areas of society. And through new research projects, but also through reports from those affected to counseling centers and help hotlines, a public debate is slowly beginning about the fact that more women are perpetrators than previously assumed. What is still little known about, partly because it concerns particularly weak and vulnerable victim groups, is ritual sexualized violence within the framework of sects and occult or right-wing extremist communities. Here the particular severity of the subject, i.e. the intolerable fact that children are tormented and

tortured, makes it difficult for journalists to deal with it: The risk for reporters to research in a criminal and violent milieu is high, the facts are difficult to ascertain – and even if the research is successful, it is unclear whether such a dark and unappetizing "story" will even find buyers. The same applies to the organized sexual exploitation of children on the internet: Individual successful searches, as in the case of the Bergisch-Gladbach network (Germany), are accompanied by media coverage. We learn about criminalistic methods and criminal structures in darknet, but research on who the many customers are who buy the abusive material is hardly ever read.

Moreover, little is known about the prevalence of sexual violence against disabled and sick children, for example by caregivers and hospital staff. Individual cases such as that of the doctor who abused small patients for years in the Saarland University Hospital have been reported (e.g., Martens & Müller, 2019). Further reports, for example on the prevention in German clinics, was sparse, and the topic did not seem worthwhile to most of the editors. A real blind spot in the public perception and also in the reporting is finally the lack of protection of homeless children and of children in refugee housing: Since the great rush of refugees to Germany in 2015, sexual assaults on women and children in hostels and other collective accommodation have become known time and again. The lack of space and possibilities for retreat, but also the isolation and vulnerability of the children in these shelters pose a great risk of abuse. Several times the Independent Commissioner of the Federal Government in Germany, Johannes Wilhelm Rörig, drew attention to the lack of child protection in the refugee facilities, but his warnings found little resonance not only in politics but also in the media. The protection of refugee children simply does not seem to be an urgent issue at a time when the right refugee policy and immigration are being debated.

Writing about CSA responsibly also involves illuminating niches and looking at aspects that you suspect might be important but would prefer not to investigate further. Consider the foster child system, which has been under suspicion not only since the so-called Kentler Experiment: Around 100,000 children and adolescents live in German foster care facilities and families – and the number is rising. The question of the responsibility of the state youth welfare service is a recurring theme in reports on cases of abuse: Why was a foster child assigned to the pedosexual long-term camper of Lügde, Germany (e.g., Wiegand & Hell, 2020)? Why was the main offender in Münster, who was convicted several times for possession and distribution of abuse images, able to live together with the 10-year-old son of his partner, although the family was under observation by the youth

welfare office (WDR, 2020)? Investigating the structural conditions that make such cases possible in the first place, critically examining the role of youth welfare services and juvenile courts and the expert witnesses who are so important for court proceedings – these would be worthwhile tasks for a journalism that focuses not only on individual acts but also on the systemic factors behind them.

More reports about the benefits of prevention would be educational in the best sense, because they would provide knowledge: What can individuals do to prevent, detect, and stop CSA? Why is it necessary to thoroughly investigate past incidents so that prevention measures can be implemented in institutions? And why is comprehensive sexual education in schools at least as important as setting up a confidential mailbox or the open-door rule for one-on-one conversations? There is still a lot to be done for a journalist who wants to contribute to the fight against CSA in a serious way. An intensive and systematic exchange between journalists and the scientific community would certainly be helpful at this point.

However, although the number of journalists in Germany who regularly deal with the topic of CSA has grown, and although many editorial offices consider continuous work in this area of reporting to be relevant and important, it is still not very prestigious to write about CSA. Most journalists, myself included, do not cover this area "full-time" but in addition to their regular work as society reporters, political editors, or correspondents. The time and financial resources for research are therefore limited. Often, there is no time in the daily editorial routine to familiarize oneself with scientific background material "on the side". The statements made at the press conference or the preparation of current studies and expert reports offered to the press by bodies such as the Independent Commissioner of the Federal Government for Questions of Sexual Child Abuse in Germany have to suffice. The reading of more complex scientific studies or specialist literature then takes place "privately" after work, and long conversations with those affected, which are too confidential for the open-plan office, are moved to the lunch break. As a result, the journalistic preoccupation with sexual violence against children eats into private everyday life. The dramatic personal fates and the nature of the crimes committed weigh heavily; the question of unresolved responsibility, the search for offenders, or the often scandalous treatment of victims by the authorities can cause sleepless nights. It would be desirable for all journalists who regularly cover the topic of CSA to have access to psychological support. At my newspaper, a psychological on-call service for colleagues was recently established. Although I have not yet used this support service, I am reassured that it exists. It's not only important for my own mental health – if consternation,

disgust, and anger get out of hand, they will eventually be reflected in the reporting. But that is something we must avoid. Because if there's one thing I've learned in ten years of dealing with CSA, it's that the worse the crimes we report on, the more professionally we have to act.

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2. Media as a platform for prevention, emotional support and child sexual abuse

Child pornography in the Internet

Edith Huber

Child pornography: Nearly no other crime reflects the deep abyss of human behavior in our society more than this one. Still there is no denying the fact that with the spread of digitalization child pornography experiences a significant increase in content and consumption. EUROPOL (2019) sees this crime as one of the biggest current threats which presents both legal and executive authorities with challenges on an international scale. This article discusses the phenomenon of child pornography in multiple dimensions and thus provides an overview of its variety and evolutions. In its course, the discussion covers criminological and social aspects. After laying the ground by defining what child pornography is from a legal point of view, how it can be produced, and what possible means of distribution are, various aspects of child pornography are discussed from a victim's, a perpetrator's, and a process point of view. At the end the difficult topic of prevention is touched upon.

Keywords: Child pornography, cybercrime, profiling, crime

"We are dealing with one of the most popular websites in the world and with tens of thousands of uploads per week: Badly trained operators are tasked with deleting pictures of rape and of persons under age from the pornographic platform xHamster. Alas the incomplete policy of the platform protects victims of sexual violence insufficiently."
(Meineck & Alfering, 2020)

Pornographic representations of humans have been known to exist from early times on. As the Internet and its community grew, presentation and distribution of pornographic pictures expanded into new dimensions. Social media, file-sharing-sites, photo-sharing-sites, gaming devices, and mobile applications support the sharing of pictures and videos (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). Pornography by itself is not rated as negative in the scientific literature (see the section "Definition"). This is why in case of child pornography the notions "child sexual abuse material (CSAM)" and "child sexual exploitation material (CSEM)" are used quite frequently (Interpol & Ecpat, 2018). Child pornography on the Internet is a global phenomenon which does not stop at national borders. It is not always easy to determine what is to be understood as child pornography on the Internet, what represents a criminal action, and how related content is distributed.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is an English organization with the goal of minimizing criminal misuse of sexuality with a specific focus on the abuse of children. To achieve this, IWF analyzes relevant websites and evaluates the results each year. 2019 their report documents that 9 from 10 websites containing child pornography are hosted in Europe. Of the sites hosted in Europe, 71 % are hosted in the Netherlands which is equivalent to 93.962 URLs (IWF, 2020).

When talking about the content created, the network End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International) and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) introduce the terms "child sexual abuse material (CSAM)" and "child sexual exploitation material (CSEM)" (Interpol & Ecpat, 2018). The latter describes all sexualized material depicting children, including "child sexual abuse material" which refers specifically to material showing acts of sexual abuse or focusing on the genitalia of the child or both. In the context of this article, CSEM represents the growing amount of content produced at home by using the technological means which are easily accessible for anyone on the Internet.

Definition

In order to describe the topic more clearly, it pays off to take a step back and have a look at the definitions of pornography and child pornography in general. Pornography can be seen as representation of verbal and visual acts (Duden, 2018). Based on this definition, four controversial points of view have been developed (Hill et al., 2007; Huber, 2019):

1. Pornography is seen as a safety valve. People with a leaning towards all kinds of sexual practices consume pornography so as to reduce the urge to realize their fantasies in real live.
2. Pornography is seen as direct or indirect cause for sexual violence. It serves as amplifier and also as trigger for aggressive sexual violence.
3. Consumption of pornography is seen as the consequence of an existing tendency to sexual aggressiveness.
4. There is no relationship between sexual violence and pornography.

Besides the fast development of online-pornography, the progress of digitalization emerged new notions like "cybersex". Cybersex (also known as cybering, online-sex, or virtual sex) is understood to be "computer aided interaction between humans who are explicitly sexually motivated, which means that they seek sexual arousal and satisfaction sending each other

digital messages" (Hill et al., 2007). Understood as interaction, cybersex is legal, but it is also seen as the basis for the distribution of pornographic content in general and child pornographic material specifically on the Internet (Hill et al., 2007).

In most countries on earth child pornography is illegal. The legal frameworks themselves as well as the responsible governmental entities differ for differing countries. An important example is the legal definition of the age until which a person is still regarded as a child. In Austria and Germany, you are a child until you have reached your 14th birthday. In Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Great Britain you are protected as a child until your 16th birthday. In Italy, France, Canada, and the United States of America a person is protected until the age of 18 (Kuhnen, 2007). In Germany, the legal framework is provided in § 184 (Verbreitung pornographischer Inhalte – Distribution of pornographic content) of penal code (Strafgesetzbuch – Deutschland, 2020). In 2015, the legal situation changed in Germany, so that files which present content that is known as "posing" (not necessarily punished legally until 2015) is now deemed to be child and adolescent pornography and treated as such even if the production of the content was self-motivated (Bundeskriminalamt, 2020a). Austrian legislation provides a framework for child pornography since 2012 in §§ 207a (Pornographic representation of persons under age) and 208a (Initiation of sexual contacts with persons under age) of Austria's penal code.

In nearly all countries in the world, legal regulations deal with the crime of child pornography. As an example, American legislation defines the distribution of material containing child pornography as follows: "Sexual activity is not needed in the image to be considered pornography. The images may contain a nude picture of a child that is deemed sexually suggestive and be considered illegal. Child pornography under federal law is the disregard for age of consent for sexual activity in a given state. Some states consider age of consent to be younger than 18 years old, but when child pornography is concerned, any depiction of a minor under the age of 18 engaging in sexually explicit conduct is unlawful." (HG.org, 2020) Sweden, on the other hand, does not define a specific age but takes the physical development into account (Kuhnen, 2007).

Methods, forms and distribution

"The Public Prosecutor's Office in Frankfurt am Main and the German Federal Bureau of Investigation possess more than 3,800 picture and video files showing serious sexual abuse of two children by an

unknown suspect in at least 12 cases. The victims are two boys be-
tween 7 and 12 years of age. The pictures and video clips are assumed
to have been produced starting in 2014 and were uploaded to a site
located in the so-called dark net providing child pornographic material
in December 2017."
(Bundeskriminalamt, 2018a)

Methods for producing child pornographic material

Developments of media technologies in the 1990s provided a boost for
the distribution of child pornographic content. An important element was
the camcorder, a combination of video camera and video recorder, as it
enabled a new type of observation and recording. These new capabilities
also supported criminal misuse and provided an essential contribution to
the distribution of child pornographic content. For the first time it became
possible to create content at home and share the results with an interested
audience (Kuhnen, 2007). In addition, personal computers became part of
households starting with the mid-eighties. This and the introduction of the
Internet to the wider public (Lamp, 1985) allowed a rapid distribution of
child pornography.

Regarding sexually motivated criminal acts against children in online
environments, one can discern three mechanisms: (a) distribution, produc-
tion, and consumption of child pornography, (b) getting into contact
with potential victims in preparation of abuses ("cyber-grooming"), and
(c) formation of subcultural networks of offenders (Franke & Graf, 2016).

Forms of child pornography

*Example: Ann and Max, both 13 years of age, fall in love for the first time. They
take nude pictures of each other in clearly intimate positions. They break up after
a few months and Max posts some nude pictures in various WhatsApp groups of
their school out of hurt pride and anger.*

The example shows that child pornography has far more facets than
perceived by the public and that it starts at a much earlier stage than it
would be expected. One can distinguish between two forms of producing
child pornography:

- voluntary posing
- involuntary posing

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Voluntary posing encompasses all cases in which children and adolescents present themselves out of their free will. Here you come across the following situations: Teenagers like Ann and Max take pictures of each other being nude or in clearly recognizable erotic positions. More often they do not think of the consequences the publication of photos in intimate and private situations might have for them. Such photos are shared amongst teenagers mostly using social networking tools (Huber, 2019). Looking at the Austrian criminal statistics concerning voluntary posing, one can find a multitude of reports dealing with the scenario just described (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2017b).

Another variant is the voluntary posing in an everyday situation. In this context, there is an ongoing discussion whether regulations from child protection actually apply to nude pictures arising from photos of an everyday situation of children and teenagers if these do not show an unnatural emphasis of their sex (Liesching, 2014). The discussions stem from the fact that the border line between an everyday situation and the emphasis of the sex of the child, something that is strictly forbidden, is not always easily drawn.

Both variants of voluntary posing still leave you with the fact that removal of the content from Internet may need quite some effort or may not be possible at all.

In addition to the variants of voluntary posing there exists involuntary posing, for which children and teenagers are forced to carry out sexual activities. These are clear cases of child sexual abuse. In many of them additional crimes like trafficking in human beings or slavery are committed. Taylor et al. (2001) distinguish 10 levels of presentation in involuntary posing.

When cyber-grooming – one of the important ways to achieve involuntary posing – takes place, grownups often pose as adolescents or children in order to win the trust of the young person. In many cases the grownups are older and use online-games or social networks to persuade their victims to send them sexually explicit pictures or videos. However, cyber-grooming represents a special variant in all of the scenarios introduced, because sometimes, as already discussed, children and adolescents share pictures and videos voluntarily (Make-it-safe, 2019; IWF, 2020). This trend has experienced rapid growth in the last decades.

In the relevant literature a number of terms are used for the description of sexually motivated contacts to children. You talk about luring (Canada), solicitation (United States), and grooming (United Kingdom) (Quayle & Newman, 2016).

Victims

> "The latest case of abuse in Münster is only the tip of the iceberg: Since the start of the Corona crisis, the demand for child pornographic pictures has risen up to 30 %. To catch the perpetrators, investigators use increasingly intelligent methods."
> *(Döbber, 2020)*

Sexual violence against children and teenagers becomes more and more a topic because the number of cases has been growing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This observation is supported by Ylva Johansson, the EU's Commissioner for Home Affairs: "[…] there were indicators that child sexual abuse was increasing 'enormously' during lockdown." (McCaffrey & Gill, 2020) Without doubt a pandemic will always present any society with challenges, but what is known about sexual violence in general and child pornography specifically?

Basically, we need to distinguish between known cases (here we talk about cases registered with the responsible authorities) and cases we can only speculate on (cases not registered with the responsible authorities). Taking the situation of known cases in Germany from 2016 to 2019 as an example, one will see that cases of child pornography grew significantly (2016: 5,687; 2019: 12,262). A comparison between 2019 and 2018 yields a growth rate of 65 %. In addition, the German Federal Bureau of Investigation is aware of 2,100 provable acts of crime which cannot be prosecuted due to the lack of data retention (Bundeskriminalamt, 2020b).

To glean analytic results about victimization from the available data is difficult as the cases registered with the authorities do not provide personal data like age or country of origin of the victim. Thus, there is a lack of statistically significant information which hampers the tracking of perpetrators massively on a worldwide scale. Global organizations like the IWF have access to more data. In 2019, the IWF provided a statistical analysis of 132,676 pertinent URLs and 54 newsgroups showing that more than three quarters of all victims of child abuse are between 7 and 13 years old and 92 % of the victims were female (IWF, 2020). It should be noted though that victims can be found in all ages of children and adolescents.

Interviews of victims indicate that children without a male person to trust, with mental handicap, with a history of abuse, or from a difficult economic environment become victims of child abuse with a higher probability. This is true for girls as well as boys, the latter being a little bit older on average (Hesselbarth & Haag, 2004). In addition, many publications show that victims are subject to traumatic disorders for the rest of

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their lives as a consequence of the abuse. They need both medical and psychological treatment (Franke & Graf, 2016).

Variant 1: voluntary posing

Presenting oneself in social media like Instagram and Facebook has become a cultural part of our time. This is already true for children and teenagers. Erotic pictures and videos are often produced and shared voluntarily. (The story about Ann and Max at the beginning of section "Methods, forms and distribution" may serve as a good example of voluntary sharing.) At a later point in time, criminals use the material for distribution without obtaining consent from the victims. In Austria, the victims are typically between 14 and 19 years of age and are both male and female (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2017a).

Furthermore, "voluntary" videos from children and teenagers which are produced by criminals via live streaming are on the rise. The victims are then often blackmailed by the perpetrators. In this case the victims are mostly female (IWF, 2020; Quayle & Newman, 2016). Partly activities of this category can also be assigned to cyber-grooming, which is discussed in the following section.

Variant 2: involuntary posing

Taking data from Interpol, Europol, and the Latin-America-Report, it becomes clear that especially children of countries which are poor become victims. Victims can also be found more often in countries known for their sex tourism like Eastern Asia, parts of Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, North America, the Pacific region, Southern Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Ecpat, 2016; Europol, 2019; Interpol, 2019). Girls are found to be victims more often than boys, their age being between 0 and 17 years. (IWF, 2020)

Perpetrators

A large number of experimental and epidemiological studies were carried out in a purely male environment or with convicted criminals. In this context, pornography is often associated with male violence. Hill et al.

(2007) prove via evidence-based and experimental studies that "people with a high risk of being sexually violent […] have more interest in violent pornography and experience a stronger negative influence. […] Hardcore pornography without violence as well as with violence intensifies aggressiveness. Consuming pornography probably supports the fixation of sexual deviations (e.g., for pedophilia or sadomasochism) and can prepare the ground for sexual crimes" (Hill et al., 2007). The publications remain pretty general and do not differentiate between different types of crime. They can best be used to describe variant 2 (involuntary posing).

Further on a distinction is made whether the criminals produce, distribute, provide, or consume child pornography. In most countries on earth all of these activities are forbidden by criminal law. The criminals use the Internet out of intrinsic reasons to "develop fantasies, overcome scruples, monitor and contact victims, avoid detection, and communicate with other criminals" (Hill et al., 2007). There are groups of criminals called "searching". They are motivated by searching through the Internet to find corresponding material. In contrast there is a group of criminals called "collecting". Their main goal is to collect as much material as possible and store it in databases (Aiken et al., 2011). An extrinsic motive for participating in child pornography can be found in the financial gain arising from the production or distribution of child pornographic material or from providing a platform for the processing of this material. In addition, many authors from the area of forensic psychiatry describe the criminals by distinguishing between different psychological disorders (Franke & Graf, 2016).

A critical remark may be made about the scientific methods used to analyze the psychological disorders of criminals as it can be assumed that there are a high number of unknown cases in this area. In a variety of publications it came to light that criminals in the area of child pornography are nearly all white, male, and between 25 and 50 years of age. They seldom have a criminal record and have a better education than hands-on criminals. Very rarely the criminals are female (Elliott et al., 2009; Merdian & Egg, 2009; Wolak et al., 2011). Beyond that a relationship between Internet addiction and the consumption of child pornography has been proven (Wolak et al., 2011). Howitt und Sheldon (2007) carried out studies about 51 criminals which revealed that they had long criminal records and experienced heavy abuse during their childhood. Again it has to be remarked that the results present more of a collection of single studies than an evidence-based survey. The current status of available data makes it difficult to create an unambiguous typology of the criminals in question. Moran (2010) evaluated existing databases and identified the following

types: simple observers, beginners being curious about the material they might find, traders and criminals who provide the material online, closed groups of traders and distributors of illegal contents, and community experts.

Hands-on and hands-off crimes

> „Sexual abuse can be divided into so-called 'hands-on' and 'hands-off' crimes. 'Hands-on' crimes always involve physical contact between the victim and the criminal. 'Hands-off' crimes entail the presentation and creation of pornographic material as well as voyeurism, exhibitionism, and all other sexually explicit actions without physical contact between child and perpetrator."
> *(Monks – Ärzte im Netz GmbH, 2019).*

Based on the statistic of reported crimes, the situation in Austria can be characterized as follows. A phenomenon of the last few years shows an increasing number of children and adolescents producing pornographic material of their friends and partners. This has been described in variant 1: voluntary posing.

According to the Austrian criminal statistics, "sexual crimes are often committed by young and sometimes also female criminals" (Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2017a). The perpetrators are often at the same age as their victims (between 14 and 19 years of age). In this context one has to be careful using the word "criminal". In many of these cases there is no conviction as the lawsuits are terminated at a preliminary stage. Thus, one can often only talk about an "accused" or "suspected" person (Huber et al., 2018).

There is nearly no data available about criminals falling into variant 2: cyber-grooming. In a qualitative survey by Stelzmann et al. (2020) about criminals guilty of grooming the following reasons for using the Internet were put forward: 1) In an offline-environment the risk to be caught is higher; 2) it is easier to get into contact with possible victims; 3) the psychological barrier to operate is lower; 4) victims can be manipulated more easily. The lack of research results for this topic also presents challenges for the development of preventive measures. Basically we are looking at persons who use social media and are active on gaming platforms. Frequently they will be grown-up males who chat up children or adolescents as described at the beginning of this section. These facts were corroborated by qualitative studies (Quayle & Newman, 2016).

Process model

> Tiroler Tageszeitung, 28.08.2018: „Limburg, Vienna – During the trial dealing with the child pornographic platform 'Elysium' at the district court in Limburg (Germany) a 62 year old Bavarian, who is said to have acted as moderator in chats and abused children sexually, admitted to also having been active in Austria. He said to have arranged a meeting with a man in Vienna to abuse the latter's son and daughter."
> *(APA, 2018)*

The available literature provides three different kinds of process- and business models concerning child pornography:

Variant 1: voluntary posing

If, as described at the beginning of this section, digital material is created on voluntary basis, the producers will mostly be children and adolescents during a romance. The act of distribution on the Internet typically follows a break-up of the relationship with one of the two being hurt and burning for revenge (Huber et al., 2018). There is obviously no intent of financial gain at the basis of this variant.

Variant 2: involuntary posing

There is a worldwide rise of willingness to collect material about child-sexual-abuse (CAM, child abuse material). This in course leads to a market worth billions of euros. Pictures are produced in many ways, for example via scanning and upload, using a hidden camera, recording domestic sexual abuse, commercial pictures, or by the children and adolescents themselves (Aiken et al., 2011). Production of the content often takes place in third world countries, whereas the distribution mainly takes place in the industrialized world. Frequently the criminals act in closed trading groups, which are equipped with a high level of security. Regarding the technical means of distributing child pornography, two technological developments encourage the rapid permeation of child pornography in the Internet: Anonymization services and peer-to-peer networks used for live streaming enable a commercial (live) access to child pornographic activities that is difficult to track.

The alarming dimension the process model involving peer-to-peer networks can reach is shown by the German Bundeskriminalamt's results concerning the child pornographic dark net site "Elysium". This site generated more than 87,000 users worldwide in a mere six months. This also led to an enormous rise in the number of pictures posted about child abuse and is now subject to many criminal investigations against the operators and the users involved (Bundeskriminalamt, 2018a).

As a second business model Europol singles out live-streaming of sexual abuse of children. Supported by new technologies described in the technical part of this article, a trend towards profit-generating abuse of foreign children makes itself felt. The criminals mostly reside in the western world. For cash the abuse can be consumed live (Europol, 2019).

Prevention

It proves to be difficult to do preventive work in order to reduce the worldwide consumption of child pornography. It is a fact that victims are found especially among children living in poverty. This is certainly true for third world and emerging countries. Still there are also a significant number of consumers of child pornography in the western world for whom a prevention strategy has to be worked out as well.

International activities have been started to provide a better protection for victims. Interpol started a worldwide initiative to protect the rights of children. With forensic tools and international networks, the database ICSE was created. It allows 54 countries to send queries about convicted criminals (Interpol, 2019). The German Bundeskriminalamt notes on its website: "Most leads to data containing child pornographic material come from the US American non-governmental organization National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). It cooperates with American Internet service providers like Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo, or Google, which continuously scan their data and the data distributed using their services via newest filter technologies for abuse pictures" (Bundeskriminalamt, 2018b). It is imperative to define a worldwide coordinated strategy to battle child pornography in the Internet and destroy criminal networks more successfully by coordinating governmental organizations in a more efficient way.

A different set of preventive measures focusses on educating children and adolescents how to use new media. It uses didactic means in schools to explain the consequences of using the Internet. An important part is that

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the children and teenagers are warned about typical approaches to certain crimes.

Summary

This article takes the reader on a journey through the motives for producing and consuming child pornography and through the personal and social environments of the victims and their perpetrators. It shows the many, sometimes unintendedly produced, variants of child pornography, the legal frameworks that define them as being crime, and the ways criminals take to avoid detection.

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Child sexual abuse in sport: Safeguarding child athletes in the age of digital media

Jimmy Sanderson & Melinda Weathers

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive problem that occurs in a variety of contexts, including sport. While previous researchers have examined this topic, few have explored the role that technology plays. This chapter addresses this gap by examining the intersection of CSA in sport through digital and social technology. We discuss sexual abuse in sport, with a particular focus on the coach-athlete relationship. Then we examine the growing use of technology by children and look at the intersection of sport and technology, which creates problematic opportunities for CSA to occur. We conclude with directions for future research, along with programming and policy recommendations that organizations who work with children can consider in efforts to safeguard children amidst the challenges presented by digital and social technologies.
Keywords: child sexual abuse, youth sports, digital technologies, social media, coach-athlete relationships

Sexual abuse is a behavior that encompasses diverse forms (e.g., violent, pseudo-intimate) and involves a variety of perpetrators (e.g., heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual) and victims, including children (Brackenridge et al., 2008; Erooga et al., 2020). Children are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, and child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global problem that impacts most cultures and societies (Morrison et al., 2018). Accordingly, CSA is a pervasive social problem (Hall & Hirschman, 1992; Morrison et al., 2018), which is often ignored as cultural and institutional forces compound to silence victims (Greeson et al., 2016). Consequently, many child victims believe their reports will be met with skepticism and disbelief, which contributes to habitual under-reporting of this behavior (Hartill & Lang, 2018; Sanderson & Weathers, 2019).

CSA occurs in a variety of contexts; however, in this chapter, we focus on the intersection of CSA in sport through digital and social technology. Similar to society, CSA is a persistent problem in sport (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Tschan, 2013) Scholars have reported that sexual abuse of minors in sport varies between 2 % and 22 % (Alexander et al., 2011; Mountjoy, 2018; Parent et al., 2015) and that CSA occurs at all competitive levels (Mountjoy, 2018). Scholars also suggest that actual incident rates of CSA in sport are above reported statistics (Kirby & Greaves, 1997; Toftegaard Nielsen, 2001), for reasons such as institutional silence (Cooky, 2012), or-

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ganizational structures (Nite & Nauright, 2020), and societal disbelief that CSA could occur within a trusted community institution such as sport (Wolfe et al., 2003). Additionally, media framing of sexual abuse in sport organizations tends to focus on individual actors while ignoring systemic factors that could be addressed to enhance prevention efforts (Smith & Pegoraro, 2020).

Children also are often early adopters of technology, such as social media, and many children now possess their own cell phones. Indeed, it is estimated that 95 % of teens have access to a smartphone and 45 % report that they are online "constantly" (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Thus, children can be contacted and groomed by perpetrators in very convenient ways that may escape detection by parents, teachers, and other trusted adult figures who could intervene. Indeed, many parents often do not know that their child has been exposed to CSA until notified by law enforcement. For example, in a recent case involving a high school coach that occurred in the United States in the state of Oregon, the perpetrator had been contacting and grooming the victim through Snapchat. According to a news report of the coach's arrest, "The parents of the young girl had no idea this was going on until police notified them" (Furuichi, 2020, para. 9).

With the increasing and arguably constant use of social media and smartphones by children, digital technology has become a fertile domain for perpetrators and offenders to contact, locate, and groom victims for CSA in sport contexts. As such, parents and those who oversee adults who work with children in youth sports (e.g., high school, club sports, training) must address the potential for CSA to occur in these spaces and to safeguard children. In this chapter we discuss sexual abuse in sport, with a particular focus on the coach-athlete relationship. We then examine the growing use of technology by children. Thereafter we look at the intersection of sport and technology, which creates problematic opportunities for CSA to occur. We then conclude with some directions for future research, along with programming and policy recommendations that organizations who work with children can consider in efforts to safeguard children amidst the challenges presented by digital and social technologies.

CSA and sport

Multiple variables within sport may enhance CSA, as sport organizations often fail to address underlying structural and cultural issues that contribute to it (Hartill, 2018; Nite & Nauright, 2020). First, sport is considered an ideal environment for sexual abuse as it is perceived to be a

"sacred" culture; thus, behavior that is normally socially unacceptable is permitted and unquestioned (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018; Tschan, 2013). Additionally, when sexual abuse allegations are made, the sport community often attempts to forget victims and positions abusers as deviant outliers (Hartill, 2018). These actions tend to silence victims and perpetuate a culture of inaction towards sexual abuse (Parent, 2011).

Second, the nature of sport, which implies that child athletes spend significant time, often in intimate quarters, with peers and coaches, also facilitates CSA (Johansson, 2018; Parent et al., 2015). These conditions also involve school settings, as young athletes are exposed to perpetrators who are both educators and coaches, which potentially enhances one-on-one time athletes spend with these offenders (Henschel & Grant, 2019).

Third, sport cultural norms also play a prominent role in CSA (Mountjoy, 2018). For instance, some athletes interpret abuse as normalized within athletic settings (Stirling & Kerr, 2009; Toftegaard Nielsen, 2001), given that abusive behaviors that would be considered inappropriate or unacceptable outside of sport are normalized within it (Brackenridge, 2000).

Fourth, sport organizations often have unclear reporting mechanisms for abuse (Parent, 2011), enable institutional forces that perpetuate abuse (Nite & Nauright, 2020), or provide inadequate responses when CSA is reported (Harper & Perkins, 2018). Brackenridge (2001) posited that sport organizations are composed of "onlookers" or those who are aware of or witness the abuse but do not report it due to the perceived challenges the reports will have on the institution's viability (Cooky, 2012; Hartill, 2018). For example, in her study of CSA, Parent (2011) found that one sport administrator was suspicious of an offending coach's behavior but did not want to expose the coach. As this literature suggests, sport has at times been an ineffective protector of children's welfare (Berg et al., 2016) and been complicit in covering up CSA (Brackenridge, 2001; Hartill, 2018).

Finally, power imbalances also contribute to CSA in sport, as victims often stay silent which ultimately reinforces the perpetrator's power (Hartill, 2014, 2018; Parent & Bannon, 2012). Researchers have further noted that coaches' authority is rarely questioned (Parent, 2011; Parent & Demers, 2011; Parent & Bannon, 2012), which stifles reporting as coach perpetrators often pressure athletes to not report abusive behavior (Stirling & Kerr, 2009), and parents may not ask their children about a coach's behavior due to inherent trust in the coaching position. These power imbalances within coach-athlete relationships become problematic when coach perpetrators began to enact sexual abuse towards victims (Owton & Sparkes, 2017).

Coach-athlete relationship and CSA

CSA perpetrators in sport can hold many roles (Bjørnseth & Szabo, 2018); however, coaches tend to be a prevalent offender group (Johansson & Lundqvist, 2017; Parent et al., 2015). Athletes spend significant time with coaches and often work with them in close quarters (e.g., locker rooms), isolating conditions which can facilitate CSA (Henschel & Grant, 2019). Additionally, adolescence is a time marked with emotional and sexual growth and uncertainty, and elite athletes often spend these developmental years away from peers and friends as they train (Kirby, 1986). The coach-athlete relationship is further characterized by boundary uncertainty (Parent & Demers, 2011). Parent and Demers (2011) noted that some coaches may not fully understand boundaries for appropriate behavior. Thus, coaches may fail to adopt a strict code of behavior in their interactions with athletes, although some coaches report recognizing the importance of clear boundaries (Fasting et al., 2018). Coaches also have been subjected to false allegations of abuse (Pépin-Gagné & Parent, 2015), and these reports enhance uncertainty around appropriate boundaries in the coach-athlete relationship. Indeed, some athletic administrators have expressed that their inaction around CSA is influenced by fears about false allegations, although researchers have debunked this concern (Parent & Demers, 2011).

Whereas some coaches may perceive ambiguity around boundaries, others may believe that an athlete has consented to the relationship (Johansson, 2018). However, Brackenridge and Kirby (1997) argued that such claims did not fully consider how coaches' abuse of power and breach of trust influenced what might be perceived as consent. Indeed, some coach perpetrators appear to use their power and influence to lure athletes into sexual encounters (Fasting & Sand, 2015; Plummer, 2018). Coaches have historically utilized practice, locker rooms, classrooms, and other intimate spaces to gain victim's trust preparatory to enacting CSA (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2005, Plummer, 2018; Sanderson & Weathers, 2020). While these physical environments are still utilized, the advent of digital and mobile technology, such as social media, has opened up additional pathways for coaches to gain victim's trust and enact CSA (Henschel & Grant, 2019), and the blending of the virtual and physical world has made deviant behavior easier to enact (Kavanagh et al., 2016).

Digital and social technology and CSA

Digital and mobile technology, such as social media, possesses critical implications for CSA in sport. Technology such as text messaging and social media have become tools for CSA as perpetrators can more easily access victims outside of professional boundaries (Henschel & Grant, 2019; Rhind et al., 2014). Perpetrators can use these technologies to engage in sexually abusive behaviors that are often not enacted publicly, such as taking nude photographs and videos (Henschel & Grant, 2019). Children also are predominant users of social media, which enables perpetrators to scout for victims in a domain that children heavily populate. For example, reports indicate that 85 % of U.S. teens use YouTube, 72 % use Instagram, and 69 % use Snapchat (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).

The spread of these technologies in society has opened up avenues for athlete maltreatment and abuse (Kavanagh & Jones, 2017; Kavanagh et al., 2016; Litchfield et al., 2018). Scholars have observed that social media and other digital technologies have become so ensconced in social life that many people are not consciously aware of their effects (Chan, 2014). For some users, technology such as smart phones has become an extension of the self (Kavanagh et al., 2016). These technologies offer allure through perceived anonymity, which can prompt people to behave virtually in ways that they would not act offline (Suler, 2004). The virtual world enables people to express their conscious and unconscious mind, allowing them to create hybrid personas (Kavanagh et al., 2016). Given these conditions, online environments have become safe spaces for athlete abuse and maltreatment (Alexander et al., 2011; Kavanagh et al., 2016; Litchfield et al., 2018).

Given the use of these technologies by young people, including athletes, online abuse can be a persistent experience (Mountjoy et al., 2016). Kavanagh et al. (2016) conceptualized online abuse as virtual maltreatment, which they defined as "direct or non-direct online communication that is stated in an aggressive, exploitative, manipulative, threatening, or lewd manner and is designed to elicit fear, emotional, and psychological upset, distress, alarm or feelings of inferiority" (p. 788). In their model of virtual maltreatment, Kavanagh et al. (2016) suggested that virtual sexual maltreatment can include "threats of rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult would not consent or comments regarding sexual behavior with or of an individual" (p. 789).

Researchers have observed that, although abusive behavior in virtual contexts is increasing, there is still much we do not know about this facet of abuse (Kavanagh et al., 2016; Litchfield et al., 2016). Additionally, little

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empirical work has examined the influence of social media on CSA, particularly in school settings, a context where many coaches have access to victims (Henschel & Grant, 2019). In one study of school employee sexual misconduct cases, Henschel and Grant (2019) found that out of 361 cases 71 % of offenders used technology to communicate with victims, with 18 cases involving Facebook and 10 involving Snapchat. Henschel and Grant analyzed cases occurring in 2014, and it seems plausible that with the growth of platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok as a predominant communication tool for teens (Anderson & Jiang, 2018), these social media sites provide an avenue for coach perpetrators to engage in sexually abusive behaviors with young athletes.

Litchfield et al. (2018) posit that social media "has also afforded the presence of unbridled, unexamined, and often unpunished abuse which can reach individuals not only in real time but can further be re-read, re-posted, and re-visited" (p. 155). While acknowledging that other social media platforms can be tools for sexual abuse, we employ a particular focus in this chapter on Snapchat. Snapchat has several factors that make it a particularly attractive mechanism for coach perpetrators to carry out sexual abuse. For example, Snapchat markets its platform to users with the promise that their messages disappear within 10 seconds after a recipient opens it. Thus, Snapchat's premise of disappearing content aligns with sexual grooming practices that are focused on secrecy (Canter et al., 1998; Cense & Brackenridge, 2001). Nevertheless, there are several ways that Snapchat content can be saved, such as taking a screenshot of the message or using an app to store the message (Byrd, 2018), methods which have been employed to document coaches' sexual abuse on the platform (Eriksen, 2018; Hayes-Freeland, 2017).

Additionally, Snapchat has a location sharing feature that many young users do not turn off. Consequently, abusers have used this feature to physically locate victims (Fish, 2018), and law enforcement personnel have warned parents about the danger associated with this feature (Gans, 2017). Snapchat also is a frequently used platform for the transmission of sexual content among teens (e.g., sexting) (Simmons, 2017), and many school administrators are struggling with determining how to address sexting behaviors by students on the platform (Barron, 2018; Herold, 2017). With the prevalence of peer sexting on Snapchat, coach perpetrators may perceive sexting on the platform as normalized behavior. Finally, research indicates that every day 92 % of teens are online (Mountjoy et al., 2016), and Snapchat is the social media platform that teens report that they use most often (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Given these conditions, social media plat-

forms like Snapchat warrant consideration to ascertain and better understand how perpetrators are carrying out CSA via these platforms.

CSA in sport with technology

Unfortunately, little scholarly work has been conducted which examines the use of technology such as social media in CSA. While there has been work in school settings that has looked at the role of technology in CSA (Henschel & Grant, 2019), this topic remains underexplored in the CSA literature as well as sport literature. Sanderson and Weathers (2020) examined how Snapchat was used in child sexual abuse cases that were reported in the media involving coach perpetrators. They discussed how coach perpetrators moved through various stages of abuse based on Cense and Brackenridge's (2001) *Temporal Model of Sexual Abuse with Children and Young People*. This model consists of four phases that illustrate how perpetrators engage in sexual abuse: (a) motivation to abuse; (b) overcoming internal inhibitions; (c) overcoming external barriers; and (d) overcoming resistance. With respect to motivation to abuse, Sanderson and Weathers (2020) found that coach perpetrators used Snapchat message to victims to inquire about their sexual activity. For example, one coach perpetrator sending a victim an image of two people having sex with the caption "Want this?" (p. 87), while another coach perpetrator initially talked about day-to-day activities with the victim but eventually channeled their conversations to discuss sexual activity. Other Snapchat messages included coach perpetrators inquiring about virginity status or asking if the victim would like to kiss. Coaches also demonstrated motivation to abuse through exposing victims to pornographic images such as coaches masturbating, sending nude pictures, and asking victims to video pornographic acts and send those back to the coach perpetrator. Perhaps most disturbingly, coach perpetrators created fake profiles on Snapchat wherein they posed as a teenage boy or girl and requested nude images from victims, which they promised to then exchange. The victims, believing they were interacting with a peer, would then send the coach perpetrators nude images of themselves.

In the next phase of overcoming internal inhibitions, coach perpetrators used Snapchat to "test the waters" and gauge if victims were willing to engage in sexual messaging or activity (Sanderson & Weathers, 2020). Examples here included a coach perpetrator asking a victim if she liked older men, another coach perpetrator telling a victim he would be honored to be her first kiss, and another coach who sent a male athlete pictures of her partially naked and then eventually fully naked. Thus, some coach perpe-

trators gradually sent images that increased in sexual content, starting with semi-nude pictures that eventually evolved to full nude pictures. In terms of overcoming external barriers, coach perpetrators employed a number of strategies here as well (Sanderson & Weathers, 2020). For instance, many coach perpetrators encouraged victims to keep their Snapchat messages a secret and to not tell anyone about their relationship. This also included coach perpetrators encouraging victims to move their interactions to Snapchat after they had started on other platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. In the last phase, overcoming resistance, coach perpetrators pressured victims to add them on Snapchat, including one coach perpetrator who took a victim's phone and tried to add himself to the girl's Snapchat account, telling her that he "needed to keep an eye on her" (p. 88). Coach perpetrators also offered incentives in exchange for victims sending them nude pictures, such as free lessons.

Sanderson and Weathers (2020) also discussed how Snapchat enabled coach perpetrators to shift sexual abuse from digital to physical spaces. For example, some coach perpetrators would invite the victim to their classroom where they would engage in sexual activity. Other coach perpetrators invited victims to their home where they engaged in sexual liaisons. In other cases, coach perpetrators used Snapchat's location feature to track victims and approach them. In one example, a coach arrived at a victim's home and walked into her backyard where she was sun tanning beside her pool. When law enforcement was contacted, the coach perpetrator responded that he had only gone to the victim's home to "check on her" (p. 88). Finally, other coach perpetrators engaged in bizarre and brazen behavior such as one coach perpetrator who went to a victim's place of work and had sex with her or a coach perpetrator who went to a victim's home and began kissing her and then having to abruptly run out the back door when the victim's mother came home unexpectedly.

Sanderson and Weathers (2020) noted that social media platforms like Snapchat provide open access for perpetrators to contact children and groom them for CSA. Given the ability to track victims' location and contact them at all times, including through the use of deceptive profiles, the use of digital and social technologies warrants more research attention as well as policy and programming from youth sport organizations, which we now discuss.

Future research directions

One of the foremost needs for future research is simply the research itself. There is very little work on the role of technology such as social media in child sexual abuse, and we find an even greater dearth in areas such as sport. Some emergent research has looked at the role of social media for CSA victims telling their stories (Alaggia & Wang, 2020), and although this particular study was not solely focused on CSA, it does illustrate how social media platforms may empower victims to tell their stories. Other research (Sanderson & Weathers, 2019) has observed that user comments to stories about sexual abuse also can invite CSA victims to tell their stories, including in ways that protect their identity and which allow them to shape the narratives around their experiences as they are disclosed. Thus, although social media can be a tool for CSA, it also seems to function as a vehicle for victims to share their experiences and find community, and future work can explore how social media, through these disclosures, can bring more awareness to CSA and prevention efforts. Next, there is a crucial need to continue to examine how perpetrators in sport and other contexts are using social media platforms and other forms of technology to carry out CSA. A Google search for terms such as "coaches arrested Snapchat" or "teacher arrested Snapchat" yields an unfortunate number of responses. Analyzing these cases to ascertain how perpetrators use technology can help inform programming and policy initiatives.

Along those lines, it will be important to examine emergent technology such as relatively new and popular social media platforms such as TikTok. In one media report, a teacher was arrested for sending unsolicited nude images of herself to a child victim via TikTok (Keegan, 2020). Given the rate at which technology advances, understanding where children are congregating online can help to identify risk areas and, again, help to inform training and policy for organizations. Next, while we discuss programming and policy separately, it seems important that future research also examines how organizations are utilizing these resources to help protect children. As one example, in 2019, Pittsburgh Pirates player Felipe Vasquez was arrested after it was discovered he had been carrying on a two-year relationship with a female victim beginning when she was 13 (Chiari, 2019). In this particular case, the relationship with the girl began on social media and involved him sending sexual images and video through these platforms. Thus, it would be important to understand how sport organizations are using such instances to educate players to ensure that they are not engaging in CSA and to help them avoid becoming vulnerable to this behavior.

Finally, it also would be important to investigate parents' understanding of this behavior and to explore to what degree parents are talking about the potential for this behavior with their children. As the news story shared earlier in the chapter illustrates, some parents may not have any idea that their child is being exposed to CSA until the police notify them. Understanding parents' knowledge of what is happening with CSA and technology, including any reticence that might impact them talking about it with their children (e.g., concerns about violating child's privacy), would be useful to help understand how education and other programming can be tailored to assist parents in dealing with this issue. This also may help reduce the number of news articles that frequently cite law enforcement officials requesting that parents be aware of technology platforms that perpetrators are using to contact children (Aldous, 2019).

Although there is much work to be done from a research and scholarship perspective, sport organizations that serve children need to concurrently be taking steps to help mitigate the potential for CSA to occur via technology and actively promote safeguarding of children under their auspices. In the following sections we discuss some policy and programming recommendations that these organizations may wish to consider.

Policy recommendations

First, we suggest that youth sport organizations and school districts determine appropriate boundaries for coaches and child athletes as it pertains to technology. While it may be too restrictive to specially prohibit the use of specific platforms like Snapchat to communicate with child athletes, it seems plausible to at least address the risks associated with technology. For example, coaches might be informed that they should avoid sexually explicit communication with athletes on social media. It would be helpful to provide examples such as telling coaches to avoid asking about virginity, kissing, and other sexually suggestive content. Coaches also should be informed that creating fake social media accounts to lure athletes into sending sexually explicit content is prohibited.

Coaches also should be cautioned that using social media to communicate with student-athletes may begin innocently but can easily evolve into problematic areas. For instance, coaches should be counseled that it is inappropriate to pressure student-athletes to add them on social media platforms. Boundaries also should address the co-mingling of virtual and physical spaces. For instance, coaches should be counseled to avoid meeting student-athletes in isolated and private spaces. Additionally, many

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youth sport organizations use platforms that are more public in nature such as Team App that allow coaches to text out group information and announcements, and it may be worthwhile to encourage coaches to use this kind of messaging rather than a platform such as Snapchat. It may be helpful to stress to coaches that social media content provides documentation to substantiate abuse allegations (Barron, 2018). It also may be useful to show coaches news articles that depict coaches who have engaged in sexually abusive behaviors in prison attire to illustrate the life-altering consequences this behavior can produce. Second, youth sport organizations and school districts should consider social media screening as part of their vetting processes. While legislation varies by geography and is not without ethical concerns (Hedenus & Backman, 2017), such practices may provide some warning indicators, which could prevent these entities from exposing athletes to a potential coach perpetrator.

Programming recommendations

McMahon et al. (2018) observed that parent education can help prevent abuse in youth sports and protect sport participants. Thus, youth sport organizations and school districts may want to consider developing programming for parents and child athletes to educate them on policies relating to acceptable behavior from coaches and athletes via technology such as social media and text messaging. This kind of programming is important, as parents may not question a coach's actions, believing that the coach's behavior is necessary for their child to succeed (McMahon et al., 2018). Parents also may not have a strong understanding of technology; therefore, this kind of programming can help educate parents on the technological trends manifesting with CSA (Vaterlaus et al., 2016). While youth sport organizations and school districts could certainly develop a training curriculum for parents and child athletes, a basic framework might involve at least an annual meeting with parents and child athletes (e.g., beginning of school year/club season) wherein parents are informed of policies governing coach-athlete interaction via technology, so that both parents and athletes understand the expectations and boundaries. Parents and athletes could be given information about acceptable behavior and be encouraged to report violations. Certainly, these approaches will be time-intensive and involve discussion of unpleasant behaviors. However, the safety and integrity of youth sport participants warrant these steps (Kavanagh et al., 2016).

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Conclusion

CSA is a pervasive social problem that has extended into digital and technological spheres. As children are heavy consumers of technology such as social media, it is imperative that youth sport organizations as well as all organizations who work with children are proactive in educating adults, parents, and volunteers about acceptable boundaries and reporting mechanisms that can help with prevention. Smith and Pegoraro (2020) noted that much of the coverage around CSA in sport, such as with the Larry Nassar case, focused on individual level factors, with little discussion of organizational and systemic changes that can be made to help encourage prevention. Developing strong policy and training programs can help youth sport organizations foster a more preventative approach to CSA, including the use of technology to engage in this behavior. Such attention is even more warranted amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as many children are dependent on technology to communicate with coaches and teachers, and children are arguably spending more time consuming technology. Extending safeguarding efforts to digital domains is a critical factor as children are now immersed and socialized in these spaces from very young ages.

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Who is worthy of help?
Constructing the stereotype of the "ideal victim" of child sexual abuse

Simone Eelmaa & Maria Murumaa-Mengel

The stereotype of the "ideal victim" often determines who is considered deserving of victim status, especially in sexual violence cases. In this chapter, we explore how the so-called "ideal victim" stereotype is constructed and what are the elements necessary for the perception of "ideal victimhood". We use empirical data from an unmoderated anonymous Estonian online forum that hosts various topic threads from children and young people, including posts about personally experienced sexual violence ($N = 28$) and replies to these posts ($N = 361$). The data was analyzed by combining a discursive psychological approach with qualitative thematic analysis. Results reveal and illustrate how the stereotype is constructed from various elements and characteristics of social scripts, perceived gender roles, and misconceptions about sexuality. We unveil how these social constructions affect responses and attitudes towards sexual abuse victims to provide input for designing prevention efforts that support disclosure and help-seeking.
Keywords: child sexual abuse, online communication, sexual violence, stereotypes, victim-blaming

Every year, millions of children around the world suffer due to sexual abuse (UNICEF, 2020). In Estonia, where our study is located, nearly 90 % of reported sexual violence victims are minors, averaging at 12 years, with the youngest victim less than a year old (Ahven et al., 2018). There is an enormous gap between sexual abuse victimization and reported cases (Priebe & Svedin, 2008; Ullman, 2002), and statistics do not even tell us half of the story. Disclosure and help-seeking are dialogical processes (Reitsema & Grietens, 2016) where society and others play a pivotal part in victims' access to help and justice. Unfortunately, societal and cultural framing of sexual violence and victims' experiences often prevents dialogue (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; McElvaney et al., 2014). To that end, Internet may offer more suitable or safer ways to share concerns and offer or seek help while maintaining the own identity private (Friesen 2017). However, online communities are not excluded from, or immune to, wider societal attitudes toward sexual violence; thus, others' reactions, even when anonymous, may still define or redefine victims' experiences (Eelmaa & Murumaa-Mengel, 2020). If the world deems you unworthy of help, would

you still seek it? The notion of some sexual abuse victims being more deserving of victim status than others – and therefore worthy of compassion and support – is the focus of this chapter.

To be clear, we are fully aware that the term "ideal victim" carries linguistic connotations we do not want to enforce; thus, we take extra care when framing our results with this theoretical concept. By "ideal victim" we mean that victim status is socially constructed (Daly, 2014, p. 378), and so is the ideal victim concept – it is always determined by society or others. Society gives structure and meaning to everyday life, and collectively (re)told stories that surround us make up the "rules and resources recursively implicated in the production of social systems" (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). Even when victims define or redefine themselves, they do it based on socially constructed understandings of the so-called "ideal victim" that is built on and from rape myths (Adolfsson, 2018), gender stereotypes (Lips, 2017), and sexual scripts (Sun et al. 2016). Criminologist Sarah Jankowitz (2018, p. 70) argued that "encountering victimhood as socially constructed enables an analysis of wider socio-structural processes which define the 'victim,' who has the power to do the defining and how the label of victim produces certain realities, beliefs, and knowledge." Here, we construct the archetype of the ideal victim of child sexual abuse (CSA) and investigate the implications of the categorization. In other words, we aim to define or find those specific elements and reconstruct the stereotype by following the reactions of the audience to online forum posts describing personally experienced CSA incidents. For that, we seek answers to the following research questions: How is the ideal victim stereotype constructed, and what are the following observable implications to victims?

Finally, as we focus on stereotype construction and meaning-making of a controversial term, the victim-survivor dichotomy and the rationale for our approach should be reflected. As this is mainly a victimology study focusing on a phenomenon addressed with the phrase "victims", we decided to use it throughout the study. We recognize the term carries some negative connotations and may have stigmatizing consequences. On the other hand, the phrase "victim" is linked to criminal law and therefore conserves some critical nuances. For one, the phrase has juridical value; victim status comes with legal implications such as specific rights during criminal proceedings, rights for a civil claim, or access to victim assistance services. Secondly, the phrase is used in the context of criminal acts and, in most cases, connects an offender to the equation, which brings attention to the one culpable for the incident. Moreover, avoiding a term due to its potential adversarial connotations, while extensively used and relevant at least in judicial settings, would only further stigmatize victimhood.

Nevertheless, in interactional settings, we advocate respecting language preferred by victims/survivors.

Theoretical framework

We are mostly rooted in the social constructivism paradigm with its core idea that the world and its meanings are constructed by constant social interaction. It means reality is plastic, shared, collaborative by nature, kept "real" by people's thoughts and actions (c.f. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Giddens, 1984). Social interaction can take place as one-to-one or many-to-many (Castells, 2009), face-to-face or computer-mediated communication, in-depth conversations, or small acts of engagement (Picone et al., 2019); it can be mediatized and mediated (Couldry & Hepp, 2018) or experiential. Combined, all these interactions form grand narratives and specific stereotypes on various aspects of social life. In this study, we are investigating the construction of the "ideal victim" stereotype in the context of child sexual abuse in online environments.

Though the "categorization" of the victim is relevant in legal contexts as it provides grounds for certain rights, social categorization often overrides the legal aspects. For instance, social categorization may work to revoke victim status or undermine victims' access to justice. Walklate (2007) described the process of becoming a victim as something to be achieved; victim status is negotiated during personal acknowledgment of victimization through social and institutional recognition. Construction of the victim label mirrors the societal awareness and beliefs about victims, offenders, and different crimes, yet often it reinforces stereotypical judgment of victims (Jankowitz, 2018). Holstein and Miller (1990) argue that producing the meaning of victimhood is interactional; that is to say, victimhood does not inherently lie in someone or come as an invariable axiom but instead is interpreted, constructed, and understood through social interactions. Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie (1986) introduced a conceptual hierarchy between victims, claiming some are considered more legitimate or real. His theory of the "ideal victim" has made an immense contribution to the field of criminology. Christie (1986, p. 18) believed the ideal victim is "a person or category of individuals, who, when hit by crime, most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim." When introducing the concept, Christie relied on polarizing examples of two different victims to illustrate the point: a vulnerable old lady who was robbed in the middle of the day on the street by a big scary man on one side, a man at a pub who got into a drunken altercation

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with an acquaintance on the other side (Christie, 1986). The ideal victim has to be vulnerable and blameless, whereas at the same time the ideal offender has to be deviant. The ideal victim stereotype is influenced by individual victim-related aspects, the victim-offender relationship, the level of physical violence, induced injuries, and victim's lifestyle (Stewart et al., 1996). According to Susan Estrich (1987), the proximity of sexual violence to the archetype of "real rape" is the resolving factor of how severe and genuine someone's experiences are deemed.

Discourses surrounding sexual violence are burdened by several stereotypes, myths, and beliefs about how "real" crime or "true" victim or offender is supposed to be. The tacit question of who is "worthy" of victim status (Christie, 1984), often operating on a subconscious level, leads to the construction of "ideal" cases and victims. Myths are the grand narratives that shape social structures of life and serve as tools for meaning-making. The values, power dynamics, and conflicts interwoven into these myths are presented as natural, thus hiding the socially constructed nature and socioculturally situated historical development of these myths (Fiske, 2010). In other words, we view myths as collectively built and maintained overarching stories we (re)tell ourselves to make sense of social structures and reinforce them. Stereotypes can be viewed as sentences within these stories, smaller entities that bolster the grand narrative. To give an instance, our research has to consider rape myths (Adolfsson, 2018), narratives that do not view rape as an act of violence (but as a sexual one), the image of the rapist as an aggressor (someone who is unable to control sexual urges), and a tendency to assign blame to the victim (Manoussaki & Veitch, 2015). These myths comprise stereotypes and misconceptions about gender, sexuality, power dynamics, and roles in violence (Anderson & Doherty, 2007; Lips, 2017; Sun et al. 2016). Pickering (2007) has emphasized that most stereotyping uses a distancing mechanism, reducing the stereotype into an idiosyncratic attribute and separating those stereotyped from those among whom the stereotypes are reproduced. Children are incredibly perceptive to recurring stereotypes in their surrounding (Sherman et al., 2013). Additionally, broader societal values are a factor of the discourses of "ideal victims", as conservative and authoritarian ideologies and acceptance of traditional gender roles predict the derogation of gender violence victims (Spaccatini et al., 2019) and the acceptance of rape myths (Manoussaki & Veitch, 2015).

Disclosing sexual abuse is a sensitive process. Face-to-face synchronous communication can be immensely stressful for victims, especially when victim-blaming is widely accepted and internalized by children and young people as a "natural" response to such crimes. Screen-mediated online

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communication that structurally supports anonymity and asynchronous interactions, providing a sense of control over the communicative situation (Friesen, 2017), can offer opportunities for help-seeking, sharing, and support. On the other hand, written communication of anonymous online forums echoes and reinforces harmful stereotypes and myths related to sexual violence. In fact, "media's intrusive ubiquity" (Silverstone, 2005, p. 190) is influencing micro-level individual experiences and perception of different societal phenomena, whether we are talking about screen-mediated communication or media representations being perceived as accurate replicas of reality (which itself is problematic in the context of social constructivist thought). As media devices and media services are increasingly omnipresent "at home and at school, during training and in leisure time" (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019), it comes as no surprise that help-seeking processes become mediated and mediatized as well, and although our study does not focus on the technological mediation, nor screen-mediated communication, it is an important contextual factor that shapes our results.

Methods

This study is based on 28 individual forum posts about personally experienced sexual violence (described to happen in between ages 5 and 17) and 361 answers to these posts. The data was collected in late 2019 from an unmoderated Estonian online forum where children and young people can anonymously discuss various topics such as relationships, health, hobbies and interests, sexuality, risk behavior, violence, etc. The specific forum had over 330 posts under the sexual violence sub-thread. For in-depth qualitative analysis, we narrowed down the posts using the following criteria: 1) The post entailed a clear assertion of personally experienced sexual violence or threat of it; 2) an indication that the victim was a minor during the incident; 3) an indication that the author of the post was a minor when creating the post; 4) at least two verbal reactions from different people to the post. The empirical data consists of 20 descriptions of rape cases (three of which fit the definition of multiple perpetrator rape), while eight cases either refer to an attempted rape, sexual harassment, threatening with rape, or other sexual violence (e.g., child sexual exploitation or online sexual abuse). The cases included in our study were published on the forum between 2007 to 2018.

To analyze these texts, we relied on qualitative thematic analysis and discursive psychological approach. As we worked with a large data set (for a qualitative study), thematic qualitative text analysis was helpful for

identifying "what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Thematic coding helped to organize the data set by allowing us to systematize it according to common themes. Firstly, to identify who was deemed an ideal victim, we followed the reactions of the audience. We were seeking compassionate, encouraging, and supportive reactions towards victims. Of 28 cases, solely four of such were found. In all other cases, adverse reactions such as victim-blaming, shaming, and non-believing were present. Thus, the initial themes were: negative reactions, positive reactions, and victims' subsequent reactions. This helped identify the markers for the stereotype construction and what observable implications such stereotyping has on victims. The stereotype markers were categorized into three themes: victim-related elements, situation-related elements, and offender-related elements.

In the second phase of the analysis, we followed the way audience negotiated different characteristics or elements to explain how exactly these stereotypes are constructed. For that, we employed the discursive psychology approach, a form of discourse analysis, which means the key is to look in depth of the text and scrutinize the text in a context. Discursive psychology essentially aims to find psychological themes from the language people use, understand how psychological notions are utilized in a discourse (Potter, 1998), and see how language is used as a social activity (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). We identified patterns (e.g., if the offender is a peer, the abuse is more often justified; reporting to police is usually recommended when the incident is recent) and rhetorical devices (e.g., the sociolinguistic construction of blame and justifications), which are shaped by sociocultural determinants. We illustrate our analysis by using representative quotes and interpret those in a broader context of the conversation.

To protect the privacy of people involved in this highly sensitive research topic, we used ethical fabrication (Markham, 2012) by reconstructing texts as examples of dominant discourses and repertoires within. The paraphrasing was done with careful consideration of not changing the meaning but merely ensuring the exact sentence would not be directly recognizable. This was done by translating from Estonian to English, grammar correction, replacing jargon and abbreviations with more formal language, and using terms or passages equivalent in denotation to replace some distinctive or idiosyncratic language. On a final note, throughout the study the phrases "stereotypical" or "stereotype" refer to the "ideal victim" stereotype and the phrase "non-stereotypical victim" to those deemed not to fit the stereotype. For clarity, these are not objective classifications or

our personal convictions but constructions of online forum participants' views.

Results

The stereotype of the "ideal victim" of child sexual abuse

Discerning the audience, particularly their reactions to victims' help-seeking, we identified six victim-related markers and four situation/offender-related markers that circumscribe the social categorization of the victim, commencing below with the former six.

The central **victim-related element** of the stereotype is vulnerability – the ideal victim ought to be weak and defenseless. Vulnerability as a trait itself insinuates victim's age, meaning "ideal victims" are young children who cannot fight back due to their age or inability to recognize abuse. In this study, all stereotypical victims were under the age of 14; the youngest was five to six years old when the abuse happened. Forum participants were quick to emphasize age and agency in their responses:

> "It is not your fault; you were just a child ..."

Here, the message reflects the paradigmatic construction of an innocent child and the perception, not expressed but intended, that children are not responsible for their safety. However, when one is not considered a child anymore but becoming an adult, one should be able to protect oneself. Accordingly, others (e.g., Back & Lips, 1998) have found older victims of CSA attributed to greater responsibility than younger victims. The responses evidenced that children over the age of 10 are expected to protect themselves from sexual abuse or at least comprehend abuse. This proposes that the ideal victim is below the age of 10; yet, if other characteristics of the stereotype are present, children between the ages of 10 and 13 may still fit it. A common assertion was that children above 14 should have sufficient physical strength to resist abuse:

> "I agree; this story does sound a bit hard to believe. Your writing implies you are a teenager; you should be faster and stronger than your grandfather ..."

Similar patterns were present in other discussions in our data. Case in point, a 14-year-old girl described being raped by a classmate in the school lavatory, and the reactions were comparable; the victim was predicted to be "old enough" and physically able to counter abuse. Here, perhaps the

specific cultural and sociolegal context may offer some sense to this – for example, the legal age of sexual consent is 14 in Estonia, and sexual intercourse between a 14-year-old child and an adult is not a crime. The difference in expectations between children below 14 and below 10 is also identical to our current criminal law. Estonian Penal Code § 145 criminalizes sexual intercourse or other act of sexual nature with a child less than 14 years of age. The *actus reus* does not require violence or threats; the lawmaker has relied on the premise that obtaining consent from a child under that age always assumes exploitation. However, § 147 declares a child below the age of 10 legally incapable of giving sexual consent. Consequently, sexual intercourse or other act of sexual nature with a child below the age of 10 always constitutes rape. The age of consent is a negotiation between biological, legal, and sociocultural foundations that promulgates the expected level of maturity, responsibility, and capacity legally required to give consent (Moore & Reynolds, 2018). These assertions insinuate that childhood innocence and child sexuality are juxtaposed as antithetic concepts with exclusionary effect. Following the data, the fixation on children's agency to resist abuse was relentless:

> "How could you let him rape yourself? He couldn't be that much bigger and stronger than you; I think you actually wanted it."

The above quote manifests a widely prevalent victim-blaming praxis: If victims do not actively resist or fight their abusers, "*they must want it.*" A fundamental problem with such contention is that it is based on the "no means no" concept, not affirmative consent ("yes means yes"). The responses reveal a concerning approach towards sexual consent, meaning consent is inferred from the fact the other person is not actively resisting sexual activities. Yet a conviction supposing that resistance is the test of whether someone consented or not obscures the line between voluntary and criminal sexual activities. Regrettably, this sentiment has a long sociolegal history, as many jurisdictions have situated their acknowledgment of non-consent in the "utmost resistance" (Estrich, 1987; Little, 2005).

Resisting abuse was "required" from victims over the age of ten; even more so, it was a prerequisite for the act to be considered violence:

> „Wait, but if you didn't resist, is it actually rape? Maybe this guy thought you were just inexperienced and didn't understand you don't want to have sex."

The language again reflects how rape and sex are perceived so alike that differentiating one from the other may easily confuse people. As the anterior segment already discussed the issue, we now move on to the

third marker for the ideal victim stereotype: suffering a violent attack with visible injuries. The level of resistance needed to fit the stereotype was bound to the physical violence level present in the attack. Likewise, Little (2005) outlined that physical injuries legitimize victim status and serve as evidence. Relating this to our study, having evidence and being able to prove that violence happened was an essential factor for others to believe the victim. Besides physical injuries, respondents sometimes asked for other plausible evidence such as messages, videos, or photos to prove the abuse.

Victims' gender is another significant marker for victim categorization. The central argument here was that boys are strong enough to resist and escape violence, though it appeared to pertain only to adolescents. This line of reasoning reflects the general societal discourse towards male sexual abuse victims and, at the same time, conforms to the heteronormative expectations of "weak and vulnerable women" and "strong men". Previous studies have found sexual scripts to exclude males as possible victims of sexual violence (Javaid, 2018) or consider male victims of rape by women as "lucky". Such discourses may hinder prevention activities aimed at boys but also impede boys' willingness to disclose abuse (O'Leary & Barber, 2008).

The fifth marker was victim's appearance, primarily concerning clothing along with hair color, make-up, and body shape. It has been previously identified that victims' attire and the amount of revealed skin is perceived as an imperative part of ideal victim construction – short skirts and revealing cleavages deny women of victim status (Spaccatini et al., 2019). As per our data, those who wear "provocative" or "sexually-suggestive" clothes are more inclined to be assaulted.

> "For the most part, sexual violence is dependent on a woman's clothing – the more provocative, the greater the chance of being raped."

This statement alleges that women can choose to become a victim, and the recurrence of sexual violence in their life is under their control. Another problematic sentiment with such an assertion is the gender implication: Women's victimization is reliant on clothing or behavior. Equally important is how language is used as a rhetorical tool: A euphemistic reconceptualization of children and underage girls to young women was a common way of diminishing the severity of violence and shifting focus to victims' responsibility. In addition, such mode of expression adds to the practice of premature sexualization of children. And not only clothes matter; merely by having a body, women are often perceived to violate gendered territoriality and treated not as persons but as bodies (Fairchild

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& Rudman, 2008) – a dehumanizing innuendo of female shape "inviting" advances and aggressions.

The sixth marker was victim's behavior in the aftermath of abuse. The "ideal victim" had to be visibly traumatized and notably emotional, and victims were expected to display their emotional state. Victims who did not explicitly express their fear, anxiety, or other emotions were not taken seriously. The psychological discourse of harm depicts the victim as *ipso facto* traumatized and permanently damaged (O'Dell, 2003). This narration creates a frame and a script for expectations on victims' mental and emotional state, behavior, and feelings. Besides being traumatized, another aftermath behavior evaluated was disclosure. The later victims are seeking help, the less likely they are believed. Alongside the timing of disclosure, the frequency of abuse added to the stereotype construction. Following the responses, sexual abuse had to be isolated, not a recurring circumstance. The reasoning was that younger children would at least accidentally tell someone and older children would not let someone repeatedly assault or abuse them (unless *"they wanted it"*). The reactions reflected a belief that "real" victims would report CSA immediately, not months or years later.

> "It is hard to believe a child could keep a secret like that for that long ..."

Unfortunately this is another widely accepted misconception, as most children do not disclose abuse immediately (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Priebe & Svedin, 2008; Ullman, 2002), and even when children do disclose, the abuse is rarely reported to the authorities or other professionals (Priebe & Svedin, 2008). The assumption about the unlikelihood of ongoing abuse may be influenced by both the selective media reporting of isolated stranger rape cases (Marhia, 2008) and general misconceptions about the complexity and dynamics of CSA. The main reason children refrain from disclosing is being afraid of blaming and shaming and feeling scared (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; McElvaney et al., 2014). A 2007 study in Israel revealed that 63 % of parents were unsupportive (i.e., angry and accusatory) when children disclosed sexual abuse, above all when the perpetrator was known to the child (Hershkowitz et al., 2007). Ergo, children are justifiably scared to disclose CSA, as negative reactions and harmful attitudes are common in disclosure.

The underlying doctrine of **situation-related elements** of the stereotype appears to lie in the unavoidability of the attack. In other words, sexual violence has to be unforeseeable and inevitable to count as "real". A violent and unexpected sexual assault by a stranger in a dark alley is the "real

rape" archetype (Estrich, 1987); hence the more resemblant an incident is to the archetype, the more likely it is taken seriously. The majority of victims in our study were raped at a party or in their own home. In some cases, the unavoidability was met with victim-related elements, such as being unable to resist or avoid abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as victim's age. In two cases when the victim was over the age of ten, the unavoidability of violence was situation-related. By way of explanation, an example of a "stereotypical" case in our sample was the rape of a 13-year-old girl walking home from practice in the evening; she was suddenly and violently attacked and then raped by an intoxicated stranger. In most cases, being sexually assaulted at home was not perceived as unavoidable.

Predominantly, the elements associated with the non-ideal victim stereotype were non-negotiable. One of these non-negotiable elements was alcohol. If victims were under the influence of alcohol or in a situation where people consume alcohol (e.g., at a party), the reactions towards them were always negative:

> "It is your own fault that you got yourself so irresponsibly drunk and let someone take advantage of you."

Being intoxicated decreases the perceived victimhood, and, according to common perception, women who consume alcohol are considered at least partially responsible for what was done to them (Reynolds, 2017).

Moving on to the **victim-offender relationship**, we see dynamics that function either as legitimizing or depreciating the victim. Following earlier studies (Gravelin et al., 2019; Reynolds, 2017), the closer the relationship with the offender, the more likely was the victim regarded as not fitting the ideal victim stereotype and the grand narrative of "real" rape. Our empirical data has evidence of an "ideal offender" profile that would, in turn, legitimize victim status. The "ideal offender" is antisocial, extremely violent, ideally a stranger, and always a male. But most importantly, the offender must be somehow deviant and different from the norm; the landmark works of this field confirm the requirement of the "big bad" offender (Christie, 1986).

Around two-thirds of our sample were acquaintance rape cases. Only two of these cases met the ideal victim stereotype; however, for an acquaintance rape victim to be categorized as an ideal victim, the assault had to be unavoidable, unforeseeable, and carried out with extreme violence. Hence, as most victims were formerly familiar with their assailant, the assault was not taken seriously, and victims received less support and were more likely to be blamed. From previous research, we know that children assaulted by a perpetrator known to them are more likely to avoid reporting or

disclosing abuse (Hershkowitz et al., 2007). The same tendency was again present in our study. What is more, when victims were assaulted at their home, in general it was by their partners, usually their boyfriends. However, none such cases were categorized as fitting the stereotype. In fact, precisely the contrary – intimate partner rape by a peer, even when the victim is a minor, was not regarded as a crime but instead morally wrong and, at times, delineated to a mere misunderstanding.

> "Of course, it wasn't nice of him to take advantage of you like that, but as I understood, he was also drunk and didn't quite realize what he was doing."

Firstly, the above quote demonstrates a widespread hypocritical paradox: For victims alcohol is an aggravating marker, whereas for perpetrators it is a mitigating determinant. Secondly, peer sexual abuse here is framed as an immoral or impolite act, not as a violent or criminal one. Studies show victims as more likely to disclose sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult than a peer: 34 % would not tell when being victimized by an adult, compared to 82 % when the offender was a peer (Radford et al., 2011). However, peer-on-peer sexual violence makes up one third to half of CSA cases (Vizard et al., 2007).

For some reason, victims of multiple perpetrator rape were rarely believed and never deemed to fit the ideal victim stereotype. Similarly, studies have found that multiple perpetrator rape victims are not believed and lead to greater degrees of victim-blaming (Adolfsson, 2018). This suggests that the "facts" of sexual violence are subordinate to personal beliefs and perceived stereotypes, serving as rhetorical means rather than contemplated reasons.

To sum up, attitudes observed in reactions CSA victims received blatantly epitomize common rape myths (Larcombe, 2002) present in social interactions and popular media formats. Media is a common source of information on CSA (Pullins & Jones, 2006), but it is also the reason why a discrepant image of victims and offenders persist in society (DiBennardo, 2018). Media still maintains narratives framing female victims as responsible for sexual violence and constructing perpetrators as primarily violent, antisocial, and predatory, oftentimes in connection to kidnappings and murders (DiBennardo, 2018). Research confirms that media is disproportionately representing the most violent and aggravating stranger rapes when reporting sex crimes (Marhia, 2008). Given the media's power in shaping beliefs, it is problematic that most perpetrators have little in common with media representations: If the perpetrator differs from the

stereotype, is less "other", the young might not regard the harmful actions and abuse as such, to begin with.

The observable implications of victim stereotypes

The "ideal victim" stereotype played a pivotal part in others' reactions and the observable outcome for the victim. In our study, four cases out of 28 matched the ideal victim stereotype. The only children receiving the help they sought from the forum were children categorized as "ideal victims". Hence the only ones receiving help were the ones whose experience was legitimized, who were supported and guided to further action. According to available data, those who did not fit the stereotype did not receive the help they expected. Instead, their attempts were met with doubt, an "if it is true ... it is your own fault" trope.

These reactions do not include only blaming and shaming but also redefining the experience and victim status. Rape was often reduced to something less, sometimes even to the extent of the act being normalized as if it was somehow inevitable or a routine feature of sexual interactions, at most "sex gone wrong". Sexual aggression was portrayed as a normal part of male masculinity and female victims as naive and stupid, but at the same time as flirtatious and deviant "gate-keepers" of male sexuality. The non-stereotypical victims were rarely guided any further. When victims of sexual violence fit the profile of the ideal victim, they are more likely to get help and compassionate responses (Krahé et al. 2008), as they "did not deserve what happened to them."

Research shows that negative reactions when children disclose sexual abuse are not rare (Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Hlavka, 2019). When children do disclose, others' reactions are critical determinants of whether the child gets help, treatment, and support (Reitsema & Grietens, 2016) or child's endeavors to seek help are impeded (Ahrens, 2006) and the victim is silenced. Seeking help from police or mental health specialists is rare in sexual violence cases (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Moreover, when victims seek help, the above-described stereotypes and discourses reinforce victims' stigmatization, eminently in formal contexts such as courts or the police (Greeson et al., 2016). Underage victims of sexual violence do not use communicative coping strategies (talk to an adult, seek help), because they carry a deeply rooted fear of not being believed (McElvaney et al., 2014) – precisely what we witnessed in our study.

Besides establishing empathy, supportive attitudes, and guidance being crucial in the help-seeking process, it is noteworthy that specific guidance

given to children can, too, be consequential. The victim of the stranger rape case was instructed to report the abuse to authorities, and later, when expressing gratitude for the support from others, she also reported contacting the police. In parallel, a victim of a violent sexual assault by a peer was primarily guided to tell her mother and seek psychological counseling. When later expressing gratitude for the support and guidance, she announced telling her mother and receiving psychological counseling. However, some recommendations may have detrimental consequences for victims, as was the case of one ("stereotypical") victim from our sample who was encouraged to retaliate. Again, later she expressed feeling empowered and grateful for the support and confirmed success in retaliation. Thus, it is not merely the apt approach to support victims that affect victims' help-seeking but correspondingly what exactly is recommended to them. Our results suggest that victims are more inclined to choose more comprehensively described recommendations.

Conclusions

In this study, we sought to establish how the stereotype of the ideal victim of CSA is constructed and what implications the stereotype has on victims. Such "ideal victims" are young children, primarily girls, who are supposed to be traumatized by what happened, displaying (semi)performative signs of distress, and seek help or engage in communicative coping strategies soon after the incident. In the center of all is the stereotype of an innocent and vulnerable child, as opposed to sexualized, pathologized, and demonized "child-seductresses" who are not deserving of victim status. After all, myths and misconceptions are the primary way CSA is conceptualized, and for most victims the ideal victim archetype seems to act as a barrier to help.

As the study relied on self-reported accounts of sexual violence and the following reactions, we were only able to examine the implications visible in the discussions. Thus, the results must be interpreted with caution. Another important limitation is that the sample included only girls; a thorough insight into online help-seeking of boys and non-binary people should be subject to further investigation.

On a final note, findings presented in this chapter provide insight into the struggles children face when seeking help. Reducing the critical gap between the realities of sexual abuse victimization and reporting could be supported by tailoring intervention efforts that specifically address such barriers. Defining sexual acts clearly and normalizing the use of

specific terminology in public discussions and sexual health education is crucial in providing language tools for prevention and help-seeking strategies. Teaching affirmative consent to children helps to create a clear line between consensual sexual activities and sex crimes. Along with that, the message "it is not your fault" seems fundamental to validate victims' experiences and empower them. Furthermore, as demonstrated, the recommendations children receive are focal to the outcome. Adequate information should be made available and easily accessible to all children. Step-by-step guidance on how to seek help or disclose abuse is advisable. Our concluding message is aimed at owners and moderators of various online platforms: Ensuring that necessary support is available for children seeking help may prevent other adverse effects. No child should feel unworthy of help.

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Where is the harm?
Exploring online peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors as platforms to prevent child sexual abuse

Mikkel Rask Pedersen

A significant number of people sexually attracted to minors manage to live without offending. Nevertheless they all face punitive and stigmatizing attitudes, causing detrimental effects to their psychological well-being and increasing the risk of offending. The stigma of pedophilia both necessitates and hinders help-seeking; thus, anonymous options to reach support are crucial. The chapter explores how online anonymous peer-support forums can help prevent child sexual abuse by helping people sexually attracted to minors combat identified risk factors of social isolation and loneliness. Based on an observational and explorative fieldwork on two peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors, it is argued that such forums, though they can work both as platforms to facilitate coping strategies and justifications of abuse, show preventive potential for their ability to promote pro-social factors when living with a stigmatized identity. An analytical framework to explore this further is suggested.
Keywords: peer support, critical learning, pro-social factors, pedophilia, online forums

Having sexual thoughts of minors is for many inevitably linked to the act of committing child sexual abuse (CSA) (Seto, 2009). Being attracted to minors is undeniably a prominent risk factor for committing CSA (Mann et al., 2010; McPhail et al., 2014; Theaker, 2015), but nascent research shows that a significant number of people sexually attracted to minors manage to live without committing CSA (Cantor & McPhail, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Dombert et al., 2016; Seto, 2008; Theaker, 2015). Having sexual thoughts of minors has, however, proven to be rather immutable and permanent over time, making managing and coping with these thoughts a life-long process (Beier et al., 2009; Cantor & McPhail, 2016; Parr & Pearson, 2019). This does not only commend people managing to live without offending but also reveals the need for support to people sexually attracted to minors to manage living without abuse. For this reason, several scholars have argued that, as non-offending people with sexual attractions become increasingly visible, this group is imperative to reach early through support and help to prevent CSA (Cantor & McPhail, 2016; Houtepen et al., 2016; Levenson et al., 2017).

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Research highlights how the stigma attached to pedophilia – i.e., common stereotypes of the pedophile man as dangerous, abnormal, and amoral (Imhoff, 2015; Imhoff & Jahnke, 2018) – has detrimental effects to the psychological well-being of people attracted to minors. Managing the stigma attached to pedophilia is therefore argued to be one of the most important risk factors to manage to prevent CSA (Jahnke & Hoyer, 2013; Lasher & Stinson, 2017; Cantor & McPhail, 2016). Specifically, finding ways to work through the social isolation and loneliness as derived consequences from the stigma is identified as key to aspects of preventive treatment (Cantor & McPhail, 2016).

However, the stigma not only has negative psychological effects increasing the *need* for support but also decreases the likelihood of help and support being pursued as well (Shechtman et al., 2010; Vogel et al., 2007). Due to the vastly documented and serious punitive attitudes towards people sexually attracted to minors (Jahnke, 2018), fear of exposure (Cacciatori, 2017), high levels of shame and guilt (Lievesley et al., 2020), mistrust in mental health practitioners (Kramer, 2011), or fear of being (wrongfully) reported (Beier et al., 2009), all work to prevent help being pursued. Barriers of help-seeking are thus a large cause for concern, as what is identified as a key risk factor to manage to prevent CSA – the stigma – simultaneously is the factor which prevents help-seeking to support this. Anonymous options to reach support without mistrust or fear of exposure could therefore be crucial to prevent CSA.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and discuss how online anonymous peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors could be potential platforms to combat CSA, as they could help combat social isolation and loneliness by providing support and information anonymously and empathetically. To explore this, the chapter will be comprised of two parts:

1. Discussing and introducing considerations and challenges in online anonymous peer support in general and for people sexually attracted to minors.
2. Presentation and discussion of the findings from a qualitative, observational, and explorative fieldwork on two separate online forums for people sexually attracted to minors.

Finally the chapter will discuss how the results can help guide future research and preventive efforts to navigate both challenges and potentials of online peer support to prevent CSA.

Approaching peer support

"Peer support has been defined by the fact that people who have like experiences can better relate and can consequently offer more authentic empathy and validation." (Mead & MacNeil, 2006)

For above reason, peer support is an exciting mode of intervention for hard-to-reach groups. Research shows peer support – as defined in the quote – to be effective in establishing therapeutic bonds in those most alienated from healthcare systems (Sells et al., 2006), helping increase hope, control, and ability to effect change in one's life (Davidson et al., 2012), while also building a sense of community for those who have had disconnecting kinds of experiences (Mead & MacNeil, 2006).[1] Mental health services has thus increasingly come to use – and with good results – peer support as formalized treatment programs with employed peer-support workers, who use their experiences of having recovered from mental illness to help others (Davidson et al., 2012; Repper & Carter, 2011).

As the goal for this chapter is to explore online forums, peer support here does not refer to an institutionalized and therapeutic system set in place to combat severe psychiatric disorders (Solomon, 2004) but simply to a process of engaging in discussions and support between like-minded individuals. Despite no formalized structure, studies of mental health concerns and online peer-support forums have found these to be powerful platforms for self-disclosure and social support seeking (De Choudhury and De, 2014; Manikonda & De Choudhury, 2017) and that self-expression through these is beneficial in improving the individual's state of mind (Yates et al., 2017). On a theoretical level, peer support thus show very interesting prospects to combat or manage the loneliness and social isolation in people attracted to minors, which Cantor and McPhail (2016) argued to be key to prevent CSA.

As peer support move to online anonymous platforms and away from professional treatment, the ability to build community and change attitudes in individuals may, however, not always result in a desired effect. Discussing mental health concerns on anonymous online peer-support forums are consequently not only a chance to increase hope and control but also a risk to promote radicalized behavior. This risk/chance or dou-

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1 Peer-support is typically studied in groups with severe mental illnesses. It is not the intention here to implicitly compare having sexual thoughts of minors to a severe mental illness but to draw comparisons between being stigmatized and alienated instead.

ble-edged sword of online peer support has been the focus for several studies of online forums, particularly on suicide prevention forums. Here, the ability to provide immediate support to individuals in moments of crisis are essential to prevent suicide, but among the thousands of posts on such forums users can also come to normalize harmful behavior, discourage professional treatment, and instigate suicidal ideation (Soldaini et al., 2018). Using social media for peer support can thus have the opposite effect to a desired sense of recovery, largely because of the potential risk of "contagion" – in the case of suicide prevention forums this means enhancing the risk of people copying acts of suicide (Robinson et al., 2015).

In comparison, the double-edged sword of online anonymous peer support for people sexually attracted to minors would then be the risk/chance to promote a sense of community supporting managing a life without committing abuse or to create a "contagious" community supporting justification for the opposite. The following will consider this more closely.

The double-edged sword

Eleanor Stevens and Jane Wood (2019) argue that, due to lack of support in society, people sexually attracted to minors are increasingly turning to online communities for support. When people attracted to minors go online, the anonymous affordances of the internet have, however, primarily been viewed for its potential to "support" criminal practices (Durkin, 1997), rather than for its potential to pursue help anonymously to reduce the risk of offending. Or as Emily D. Gottfried et al. writes: "The Internet has not just made life more convenient and made it easier to keep in touch with others, it has also made accessing potential victims much easier for individuals who commit sexual offenses" (Gottfried et al., 2020, p. 1).

Though only few people have explored the internet's potential to pursue help and reduce the risk of offending, literature on people with sexual attractions to children not offending and pursuing help online is nascent (Stevens & Wood, 2019; Levenson et al., 2017). As the stigma of pedophilia contribute to an isolation of individuals experiencing sexual attractions to minors, Levenson et al. (2017, p. 114–115) argues that peer-support forums could be "helpful in de-isolating those who experience these attractions and might help them find role models who have successfully navigated the complexities of minor-attraction and found ways to lead satisfying and healthy lives." Holt et al. (2020, p. 309) contributes to this point, arguing that: "For many, these forums may provide a safe space to talk about their sexual interests and to receive support from a network of

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likeminded individuals who share common interests." Online anonymous peer support may therefore have the potential to play an essential role in combatting CSA by providing a safe space and a community to combat the social isolation and to discuss ways to lead satisfying and healthy lives.

The majority of literature on peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors is, however, not on the chance to prevent CSA but on the risk of doing the opposite. Just as the internet with its anonymous affordances primarily have been seen as a catalyst of crime, so peer-support forums mostly have been considered as an ability to support justifications of abuse and cognitive distortions to avoid responsibility (D'Ovidio et al., 2009; O'Halloran & Quayle, 2010; Holt et al., 2010; Johnson, 2013; Malesky & Ennis, 2004). Online forums and communities have thus been showed as to provide individuals access to ready and available validation of attitudes and behaviors supporting CSA (Lasher & Stinson, 2017). Though understanding the risk of the forums is important, Holt et al. (2020, p. 311) have also argued that it is "imperative that we continue to examine online communities to understand the potential risks as well as discover the possible measures of prevention".

The critical question – and the point of departure for this chapter as well – is then how to approach online anonymous peer support for people sexually attracted to minors to combat CSA if the very ability to be anonymous, share information, and provide validation may simultaneously have the potential to help manage these attractions safely *and* to support offending behavior?

Exploring online anonymous peer support for people sexually attracted to minors as platforms to enhance prevention of CSA, we need to find a way to engage this doubled-edged sword. After the following short introduction to the methodology and context of the empirical data for this chapter, I will introduce the results of the observational and explorative data from two online anonymous peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors to argue for a potential framework to do so.

Methods

The data for this chapter is based on explorative observations on two forums, Virtuous Pedophiles (VP) and Visions of Alice (VoA), in the period from August 1, 2019 to December 1, 2019. To protect the pseudonymity of the users, all following quotes are paraphrased, and the only identity marker left is the forum from which the quote was observed. The paraphrased quotes have tried to stay as close to the original tone and language of the

user to contain personality and context without compromising searchability. The level of textual complexity and general readability have thus been edited as little as possible. All quotes were in English and no quotes have been translated.

To provide adequate context for the analytical aspects of the data, I will shortly introduce the observational and explorative methods of the fieldwork separately.

Observational

The data comprises almost exclusively on textual quotes observed and screenshotted without any interaction from my part as a researcher. Neither of the forums in question have been observed in an entirety, as the sheer number of categories, topics, and posts in both forums are far too numerous to be explored through qualitative methods. As a result, the categories with the highest number of topics and posts[2] on each forum were selected to be observed initially and ongoing through the period of the fieldwork. Approximately 75 topics – containing as little as five posts and up to 500 posts and more – were included in the analysis during the period and were bookmarked[3] for continuous observation through the remaining time.

Explorative

"Explorative" refers to the absence of any predefined inclusion criteria before observational activities on the forums began. Instead, the methodological choice relied on building a "grounded theory" of the forums to accommodate openness to unknown ways in which the users of the forums managed and coped with their attractions (Clarke, 2003). The explorative tasks in the data-collecting thus consisted of "mapping" the most prominent actors – i.e., noting down and describing the most prominent individuals, groups, political discussions, discursive constructions, symbol-

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2 Categories contains topics, topics contains posts. Each category has a description of the types of topics included and each topic consists of individual textual posts prompted by an initial question or statement from the author of the topic.

3 Prompted to give a notification every time new posts were added to the topic between log-ins.

ic elements, etc. – to continuously develop and evaluate analytical perspectives throughout the fieldwork. Across both forums observed, one – if not the most – frequent theme discussed in relation to have to manage sexual attractions to minors was negotiating and discussing the legal and moral boundaries of using (il)legal digital content of children sexually. Though being a prominent theme across both forums, discussing the harmfulness of using (il)legal digital content of children for sexual purposes was just one theme out of many. Both forums include a large variety of topics ranging from trivial matters of everyday life such as good TV shows to discussing the latest results of neurological research on pedophilia. The following results should thus rather be seen as emerging topics and cases for analysis than representations of an exclusive focus on the forums.

Results

The most prominent concept that emerged in the discussions of using (il)legal digital content of children for sexual purposes was *harm*. In the following parts I will present three different cases – one from each forum and one including both –, all involving different ways of managing pedophilic attractions to minors through negotiation and discussion of the "harmfulness" of using (il)legal digital content of children:

1. Using social media – Virtuous Pedophiles
2. Using sexualized signature pictures – Visions of Alice
3. Using candid photography – both forums

The following results thus come to show specific practices discussed on the forums while simultaneously exemplifying the explorative processes of how *harm* came to be mapped as a prominent element on the forums as well. It is important to note that, due to the methodological choices, the data represent points in discussion rather than fixed attitudes. Furthermore, though *harm* is argued to be one of the most prominent actors, the different attitudes represented in the discussion to reach this conclusion is not sorted in prevalence, and some of the attitudes depicted may even be subject to contradiction from other users. The results should thus be interpreted as explorative cases to understand dynamics of peer support and themes on the forums, not as a sorted content analysis.

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Social media – Virtuous Pedophiles

A theme that emerged on both forums was the question of the extent to which it was okay to use content of children on social media such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc. sexually. In the following, quotes of different points of view in a discussion[4] of using YouTube are mapped, prompted with the first quote:

Initial question: *"I know I can't be the only one here using YouTube. What's your personal set of rules? Do you think it's OK to use everything that's on YouTube? Or do you stick to specific types of videos? Is it better to just stop looking at all? I'm in a moral conflict about it."* (VP)

Responses:

1. "I stay stick to the videos that are not intentionally sexual. I have seen many kids on YouTube who are being manipulated to do videos in sexual ways. While I did enjoy those videos, they are immoral, as the child has been taken advantage of." (VP)
2. "I don't see anything to feel guilty about. No kid was hurt making it and you aren't hurting anyone by watching. I don't see a problem unless you use so much time at it that it interferes with the rest of your life." (VP)
3. "When girls with online videos realize that much of their popularity is due to sexual attraction, some will obviously react differently than others. I worry about the sensitive ones […] I would imagine that it might be difficult to handle the realization that many people get turned on by your younger videos." (VP)
4. "If you look at some children's YouTube channels, you will see 4–50 views for videos where they're wearing a shirt, but 400–400,000 views of videos where they aren't wearing a shirt or they're doing something erotic. I see this as a problem. Naturally, children want views. So they do what it takes to get them." (VP)

The following table shows the different points in discussion of how YouTube can or should/should not be used as a platform to explore content for sexual purposes in relation to the harm caused:

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4 All the quotes are from the same "thread" on the forum.

Table 1

Social media use in forum discussions and perceived harm

Use of social media	VP response no.[a]	= / ≠[b]	Harm to self/to children
Videos without sexual intention	1	≠	Harm to children
Manipulated intention	1	=	Harm to children
No harm in production	2	≠	Harm to children (in use)
Excessive use	2	=	Harm to self
"Normal" use	2	≠	Harm to children/to self
Disproportional views	3	=	Harm to children
Popularity from sexualization	4	=	Harm to children

Note. [a] Refers to quotes in the text above. [b] Usage is largely perceived as being harmful (=) or not harmful (≠) by forum users.

Sexualized signature pictures – Visions of Alice

This section presents a discussion on Visions of Alice of the use of sexualized signature pictures[5]. As with the previous case, all following quotes are from the same discussion, and the discussion was prompted with the first quote here as well:

Initial question: *"I do like the pictures, I must admit. But, is it hurtful to our cause if we use them? I'm conflicted. I can see it both ways."* (VoA)

Responses:

1. "If I believed the pictures were wrong, I would also say my attractions are wrong. It is not wrong and I even think it can even be a positive thing. That's what I believe and support. I will never apologize for my existence to the general public." (VoA)
2. "You can find most of the pictures in a Google search for clothing stores, so I don't see the harm. As long as it doesn't cross any legal boundaries." (VoA)
3. "Law enforcement could use these sexy pictures as a way to shut this site down. If this wasn't an issue, then I would be all for using sexy

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5 Using sexualized signature pictures is not allowed on Virtuous Pedophiles and is thus a unique feature of the Visions-of-Alice forum.

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avatars, and I would have one myself. But for this site to shut down is the last thing we want. I prefer to play it safe and don't use the pictures." (VoA)

4. "I consider nothing wrong in sexy pictures of little girls, but I do question where they come from, as they are a little too sexy for Google Images. Either way, VoA is not here to cater to those that oppose us, but to be a place for pedophiles." (VoA)

5. "We're in a forum where we can speak openly about our love for little girls. Of course, we think it's sexually stimulating, and a sexy signature pic is just as harmless as a pinup. We don't have anything to be ashamed about." (VoA)

The following table shows the different points in discussion of how sexualized signature pictures can or should/should not be used in relation to the harm caused:

Table 2
Use of sexualized signature pictures in forum discussions and perceived harm

Use of sexualized signature pictures	VoA response no.[a]	= / ≠[b]	Harm to self/to children
Digital avatars	1	≠	Harm to self (benefit)
Access through Google	2	≠	Harm to self/to children
Excessive sexualization	3	=	Harm to self (site)
Unwanted exposure	3	=	Harm to self (site)
"Place for pedophiles"	4	≠	Harm to self/to children (?)
"Just like a pinup"	5	≠	Harm to children

Note. [a] Refers to quotes in the text above. [b] Usage is largely perceived as being harmful (=) or not harmful (≠) by forum users.

Candid photographs

The term "candid photographs" describes photos taken of one person or more without their knowledge (or consent). As in the other cases, I will consider quotes and then arrange their content in a table. This time, however, I will include observations from both forums. All posts within the same forum are from the same discussion, and the initial quotes from both forums are the initial posts for the discussions as in previous cases.

Visions of Alice

Initial question: *"How do you feel about candid photography of little girls and sharing these with other? I feel fine about having candid photography, but I don't know if it's ethical to share it with other online."* (VoA)

 Responses:

1. "Personally, I don't agree with sharing it, because even though the person who took it had no bad intension and only have it for personal use, when he shares it with others, they can have bad intentions and perhaps hurt the child." (VoA)
2. "If I see a little girl that I like I take a picture with my phone, using an app so no one can tell. I don't usually share them; I just keep them in a secured folder. I only take picture in public places, no up skirt or bathroom stuff." (VoA)
3. "I like seeing candid pictures of little girls on the internet. I do feel a little guilty sometimes, as if I'm invading their privacy. But everyone posts pics of others and themselves all the time, so it shouldn't come as a surprise when they end up all over the Internet." (VoA)
4. "I believe candid photography can be okay as long as the pictures aren't taken anywhere where the person on it thought they were private. So in the water park in a swimming suit: yes. In the changing room of that water park: no." (VoA)

The following table shows the different points in discussion of how candid photography can or should/should not be used in relation to the harm caused on Visions of Alice:

Table 3

Use of candid photography in forum discussions and perceived harm (Visions of Alice)

Using candid photography (VoA)	VoA response no.[a]	= / ≠[b]	Harm to self / Harm to children
Use for own purpose	1	≠	Harm to children
Loss of control through sharing	1	=	Harm to children
Decent and public images	2	≠	Harm to children
Condition in a digital age	3	≠	Harm to self/children
Indecent and private images	4	=	Harm to children

Note. [a] Refers to quotes in the text above. [b] Usage is largely perceived as being harmful (=) or not harmful (≠) by forum users.

Virtuous Pedophiles

Initial question: *"I was looking around on the Internet and came across a nudist beach website with pictures of children. I know that these images are not illegal where I live – but are they morally acceptable? […] I really want to make sure that what I do doesn't harm children, and I've felt guilty since finding the pictures"* (VP)

Responses:

1. "I guess you have to decide if it's okay yourself. They chose to go to a nudist beach, so I don't have a problem with it. Also, the pictures were probably put on the website with either the children's or the parents' knowledge" (VP)
2. "This shows the difference between a human and a monster. We can choose if we want to cause another person harm. All humans have temptations, but we can decide whether a temptation is safe or not." (VP)
3. "You decide your own morality, so you are the only one who can answer if what you are doing is okay." (VP)
4. "My perspective is on harm prevention both for you and the children. I think many will agree that viewing those pictures do not hurt the children. But does using those pictures help you manage your attractions and increase your general happiness? That is for yourself to decide." (VP)

The following table shows the different points in discussion of how candid photography can or should/should not be used in relation to the harm caused on Virtuous Pedophiles:

Table 4

Use of candid photography in forum discussions and perceived harm (Virtuous Pedophiles)

Using candid photography (VP)	VP response no.[a]	= / ≠[b]	Harm to self / Harm to children
Public place / implicit consent	1	≠	Harm to children
Morally safe / not safe temptation	2	≠ / =	Harm to children
Subject to own morality	3	≠ / =	Harm to self
Increase / decrease in happiness	4	≠ / =	Harm to self

Note. [a] Refers to quotes in the text above. [b] Usage is largely perceived as being harmful (=) or not harmful (≠) by forum users.

Discussion

Online peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors could show promise to help prevent CSA by circumventing barriers of help seeking to manage the stigma attached to the attraction. However, the double-edged sword of anonymous online engagements provides no immediate distinction of whether peer support helps cope with pedophilic attractions or justify them in potentially harmful ways. The results here show case-specific examples of how users on two different forums themselves discuss how to manage their attractions and to avoid harm.

In the results, we saw that for several users it was okay to use YouTube as sexual outlet, but only if they consider the ways in which these actions could cause unwanted sexualization or if they are sure not to "support" content exploiting the child in production. For several users, it was okay to have a place made for *them*, to feel positive about themselves, and to mark that by using sexualized pictures. For several users it was okay to use candid photography if they made sure not to disclose the sexual use by sharing the pictures and if they made sure it would not lead them into unwanted temptation.

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For people who are not sexually attracted to minors, it would be fair to assume that the idea of even connecting YouTube videos to a sexualized context – as in the first case – is surprising at best. To use signature pictures of children as digital avatars in a sexually explicit context or take candid photography of children in public places for sexual purposes would also for many immediately be seen as very wrong and harmful. Indeed, these practices are dangerous and harmful and could have serious consequences for the children depicted in the pictures or videos if they would become aware of the sexualization. Other practices, however, such as considering potential exploitation in production of legal videos or making sure to avoid exposing a sexualized context from the digital "footprints" left from watching YouTube videos seem to reveal a genuine effort and concern to keep children safe.

When trying to explore online anonymous forum's ability to help prevent CSA, the results do not immediately reveal such a potential, and one could even suggest dismissing online forums altogether for the purpose based on some of the results. As discussed earlier, the double-edged sword of online peer-support makes evaluating the forums in terms of potential to prevent CSA a challenging task – and thus a pressing concern. In their thematic analysis of different coping mechanisms on the Virtuous Pedophiles forum, Stevens and Wood (2019) point out that, when some users report using indecent fantasies of children to stay "offence free", it's uncertain whether such explanation functions more as a rationalization and justification than coping. The difficulty in assessing the preventive potential of online peer support is thus not only to classify the forum's potential support as either coping or justification but to sort through the ambiguity of the interactions on the forums as well.

Perhaps, the method to understand the potential of peer support to prevent CSA is not to differentiate between coping and justifications or to categorize ways of attraction management as harmful or not. We might, in fact, need to be careful not to misattribute professional labels such as "coping" or "justifications" to observations on peer-support forums prematurely. Instead, as Maruna and Mann (2006) argue when researching offenders, we should maintain a more nuanced understanding of their motives through their own explanations. Building on the need to understand people's own motives in peer support, Mead and MacNeil (2006, p. 6–7) also argue that, if we want to be able to answer the question of "what is really needed to help people see things in new ways", we should be careful not to judge these questions through predefined criteria.

I argue that in the context of understanding the potential double-edged sword of peer support we should, too, be mindful of this consideration,

and we might therefore see the results in this chapter not immediately for their potential to cope or justify but as 'critical learning' instead: "Critical learning doesn't assume a medical definition of the problem and opens us to exploring other ways of thinking about the experience rather than trying to deal with the 'it.'" (Ibid, p. 10)

Considering a perspective of critical learning, the value of the results is not whether the practices they discuss are relevant goals specifically to prevent abuse from a professional point of view; the value is, rather, that these discussions are *other ways* of thinking about the experiences of being sexually attracted to minors. Specifically, I argue, we should pay attention to how the practices discussed are created and negotiated from the user's own experiences and in the absence of professional or medical perspectives. Discussions of how to use or not to use (il)legal digital content of children for sexual purposes are thus not only discussions of exactly that but examples of how the users *learn* from their own and other's explanations and experiences in the absence of professional or public intervention. The results, then, do not reveal practices that are likely to be set as treatment goals. Instead, they reveal intentions to find moral and legal ways to manage the complexities of living with one of the most stigmatized attractions without harming children or oneself.

Critical thinking and the ability to explore new perspectives outside normative ways of understanding a problem have been identified by several other researchers as being the key elements to the success of peer support (Kingod et al., 2017). On the two online forums explored for this chapter, a "new" perspective that emerges is that the harm of certain practices does not only pertain to children but to the practitioners as well. Almost all examples are interesting in the way they include the value and quality of their own life into the ways they make sense of their attractions. This result, of course, is not unique to an analysis rather looking for practices of critical learning than differentiating between coping and justifications. Nevertheless, it might be a new perspective for the way in which it does not immediately assume an indifference to the welfare of children or as a justification of harmful practices. Considering this more closely, a user on Virtuous Pedophiles wrote:

> "We each have to find that line that causes the least harm and most full life." – Anonymous user, Virtuous Pedophiles

This quote highlights the value found in this new perspective excellently. In absence of the actual or perceived condemnation of the rest of society, critical elements such as the need to manage one's own happiness emerge, and experiences and accounts that would otherwise be dismissed by non-

peers gain value as a perspective to teach and learn how to navigate the balance between one's own life satisfaction and the goal of not harming children. When classifying into coping or justifications, we evaluate the interactions as whether they could harm children or not. Here, the results make visible the need for users to balance efforts to manage their attractions without harming children up against practices that do not harm themselves as well. *This*, I argue, could still help guide preventive efforts, as it could show a dynamic of the users exercising pro-social behavior. Pro-social behavior, such as helping yourself and others do the "right" thing or finding credible ways of identifying yourself as a moral human being rather than a monster, is a way to learn and teach how to live happy and satisfying lives. Indeed, if social isolation and loneliness are prominent risk factors of CSA, then pro-social factors are of analytical importance even while being inconsistent with formalized and professional treatment goals.

Lasher and Stinson (2017) argue in their suggestion for future policy and research for adults with pedophilic interests that people who have a pro-social identity and pro-social influences show greater rates of desistance in sexually abusive behaviors. Though the results of this chapter do not reveal how to absolve the double-edged sort of peer-support, it still shows that – if we engage online peer support as critical learning – we come to see the practices discussed not as immediately preventive or escalating but as negotiations and discussions of pro-social practices to lead happy lives in balance. Peer-support forums give users access to trustworthy interaction to provide empathy and validation in themselves and others. The understanding and acknowledgment that these interactions function both as a receiving and giving role to develop and cultivate pro-social identities and practices is important to understand the value of peer support. However, this understanding may be lost if we only evaluate these interactions as a risk of harming children or not. Developing healthy ways to live good, non-offending lives when being sexually attracted to minors could be key to combat the risk factor of loneliness and isolation associated with the stigma of pedophilia. Online peer-support forums could be valuable platforms to do so for their pro-social interactions.

Importantly, making visible negotiations and discussions through "critical learning" could also help both practitioners and researchers gain important insight into specific issues and practices to engage when developing or exploring preventive efforts. Peer-support forums can thus give both users and people working to develop preventive programs important knowledge to facilitate a "Good Lives Model" that "focuses on pro-socially obtaining primary human goods, such as a healthy life, knowledge, occu-

pational excellence, independence, relationships, community, happiness, and creativity" (Ward & Gannon, 2006, as cited in Lasher & Stinson, 2017).

Holt et al. (2020) wrote, as quoted earlier, that it is "imperative that we continue to examine online communities to understand the potential risks as well as discover the possible measures of prevention". In their article, the authors themselves speculate that the pro-social influence on individuals from peer-support forums could serve as protective factors that prevent contact with minors (Holt et al., 2020). Here, through an explorative and observational fieldwork on two forums, this chapter has sought to contribute to a further examination of the risk and possible measures of prevention of online peer support. As both Holt et al. (2020) and Lasher and Stinson (2017) raised, pro-social factors could be the important preventive potential of peer support.

However, though pro-social factors could be the important preventive potential of peer support, this should not be mistaken as *the* important preventive factor of pedophilia and CSA. Despite having avoided discussing harm from a professional point of view so far, some critical reflections on the differentiation between what the chapter identifies as a preventive potential and the actual risk of harming children are needed. As mentioned in the very introduction of this chapter, having sexual attractions to minors cannot be dismissed as harmless and poses a considerable risk factor in itself. When the results here highlight preventive aspects of pro-social behaviors, this is to consider *a* preventive potential that is prone to being lost in translation, but pro-social factors are in themselves not a safeguarding of children. Using (il)legal digital content of children for sexual purpose can be harmful to children regardless of intention. Becoming part of sexualized context as a child gives rise to feelings of anxiety, loss of control, and powerlessness, thus affecting children's ability to form trust-based social relations (Stevnhøj & Strange, 2016). Even more so, children can experience high senses of guilt and shame when being exposed to a sexualized context if they have produced or shared the material in question themselves (Jansen, 2015). As mentioned, some of the practices discussed are therefore potentially harmful, and the results of this chapter do not mean to contradict the troublesome aspect of peer-support forums to provide validation and justifications for such behaviors. In fact, the results show also how potentially harmful practices are justified, which could even mislead new users to engage in such practices in good faith. A topic for future research should therefore be to explore how moderation on online forums for people sexually attracted to minors could minimize such cases without compromising the incitement of the forums to engage

and discuss controversial matters in new ways. Additionally, though peer support show promise to circumvent barriers of help seeking, developing pro-social factors as a preventive factor does not absolve the potential need and value for therapeutic help and interventions. It is impossible – and, importantly, not the scope – of peer-support forums to provide any meaningful form of risk-assessment, and the ease of access to the forums supposedly results in a large difference in actual risk of committing abuse among the users. Peer support on online forums is thus not a therapeutic intervention in itself or a replacement of such, but it could be a means, or a tool, to facilitate it. In fact, combatting social isolation and loneliness through pro-social factors could be a first step to encourage professional help seeking, which was frequently observed on the Virtuous Pedophile's forum as well. With these considerations in mind, the pro-social factors emerging from the analysis in this chapter thus point to a preventive potential of peer-support forums but not to a therapeutic intervention or preventive effect in itself.

This chapter has then sought to contribute that – when exploring peer support in practice on these forums – we should not try to immediately assess whether the interactions help cope safely with abusive behavior or justify it. Instead, we may adapt an openness to view their interactions as learning, teaching, and developing pro-social factors and practices, and, importantly, we may learn from their own accounts the challenges at stake to which they seek support, thus being able to help direct preventive efforts more effectively.

Limitations

The unsystematic ways in which peer support is used in the forums and the explorative method employed to observe this make it unfeasible to use the results to conclude any *effect* of how peer support affects the user's ability to desist from crime. Additionally, the practices discussed on the forums should only be seen as pertaining to the users of the forums and not be mistaken as showing the general practices of people sexually attracted to minors. Though the results may coincidentally come to depict general practices, the absence of information available of the background of the users of the forum should afford critical considerations as to the possibility that the people observed on such forums represent rather a quite specific niche group than a general group. Neither this nor the other limitations disqualify the data, but it does entail specific consideration to its generalizability and applicability outside of the specific online digital

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communities. Importantly, the results still reveal valuable perspectives to show how users navigate the complexity of living with one of the most stigmatized attractions in Western societies.

I will proceed to discuss how specific findings from these perspectives may still help develop a further understanding of online peer support's potential to combat CSA.

Conclusion

Online peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors are potential platforms to prevent CSA, as they provide anonymous access to like-minded communities to combat the risk factor of social isolation and loneliness. However, online forums and subcultures have also been discovered to be effective in supporting rationalizations and justifications of abuse. This chapter has shown how the users of two peer-support forums for people sexually attracted to minors discuss moral and legal practices of using (il)legal digital content of children sexually. In the results, the practices discussed did not immediately seem to facilitate coping mechanisms beneficial to protect children, and some practices could even be considered as abusive. Despite not showing immediate potential to combat CSA, the chapter discussed that, to explore the potential of online peer support for people sexually attracted to minors to prevent CSA, we should not immediately try to decide whether these forums escalate or reduce offending; instead we should see it as platforms for "critical learning". The chapter discussed how the results highlight ways of balancing harm between children and themselves and considered these interactions as pro-social factors to combat the stigma of pedophilia. For this, peer support was argued to have a potential to combat CSA by providing both forums users and people working to prevent CSA knowledge to develop specific models that support ways to lead healthy, satisfying, and pro-social lives without abuse. Finally, the chapter argued that online peer support should not be seen as a therapeutic intervention in itself but as a tool to facilitate such processes.

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