Adapting investigative interviewing with children to the reality of online child sexual abuse cases

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Notorious cases of bad child interviewing in Europe and elsewhere
APPENDIX

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Protocol: Interview Guide

I. INTRODUCTION

1. ‘Hello, my name is _______ and I am a police officer. [Introduce anyone else in the room; ideally, nobody else will be present.] Today is _______ and it is now _______ o’clock. I am inter...
Aspects of online CSA of particular relevance

• There is often evidence for the abuse
  • need to modify interview strategies accordingly

• Children may not realize or consider they have been victims of abuse
  • The perpetrator may pretend to be a child
  • Many cases come with a long delay; children may struggle to remember (particularly in less severe cases)
(Even) lower disclosure rates among online CSA victims?

Case in inner Finland: Of ca 200 child victims (age 8-13), one case was reported to the police.

N = 1762 children aged 11 to 17

The vast majority had received messages with some kind of sexual content.

Yle investigates: Online sexual exploitation of children alarmingly prevalent

Nearly 90 percent of children in one survey had received sexually explicit messages from an adult, but cases very rarely reach the awareness of parents or authorities.
There seems to be a conception that online CSA is less severe compared to offline, evidence points to the contrary

"All of Me Is Completely Different": Experiences and Consequences Among Victims of Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse

The aim of the present study was to gain a fine-grained understanding of technology-assisted child sexual abuse (TASA) and how it may affect its victims. Seven young women who had experienced TASA participated in this study. The study employed a qualitative research design, and the data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that TASA is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has both immediate and long-term consequences for its victims. The study highlights the need for further research and development of effective interventions to address the unique challenges posed by TASA.
Child interviews in the context of online sexual abuse

• Current guidelines are not in all aspects well adjusted to online cases

• Particularly: how to address cases where there already is (absolute) evidence for the abuse
  • ...which the child may be unaware of!

• In terms of judicial information, there are many questions that should be asked but that may be unknown to investigators
  • Often, a lack of knowledge about online activities and CSA cases
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FOR ONLINE CASES

1. ‘Hello, my name is _______ and I am a police officer. [Introduce anyone else in the room; ideally, nobody else will be present.] Today is _______ and it is now _______ o’clock. I am inter-
Example:
Addressing pictures / videos not mentioned by the child

• It may be very traumatising for the child to realise there are pictures or videos of them and that the police in front of them are likely to have seen these

• If these need to be addressed and the child has not brought them up in relation to more open-ended prompts, different suggestions are made for how to bring them up

• The police have investigated the phone used by [Mr. Suspect] and found pictures that he has asked children to send him. Please tell me anything you know about this..?
The NICHD “online version”

- Exists in a ”first version” in English, Finnish and Swedish and is being field tested in Finland and Sweden during the months to come

WORK IN PROGRESS

- The online modification still needs empiric validation but the core of the online protocol is the NICHD-R, which has been thoroughly validated by scientific studies and is found very functioning by practitioners
Thank you!

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