

**CSE MATERIALS****Public Perceptions of Narrative Child Sexual Exploitation Material:  
A Cross-Cultural Comparison between the UK, Germany, and Greece**

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Child sexual exploitation material, more commonly known as child pornography, has received much research attention in recent years, however, researchers and policy makers have mainly focused on *visual* child pornography. Narrative Child Pornography (NCP) includes written stories or poems, sometimes recorded as audiotapes or depicted as cartoons, describing sexual encounters involving minors, and has established itself as a popular choice amongst users of child pornography (Merdian, 2012).

Laws and policies concerning child pornography are still in the development stage. In the UK, it was only in 2003 that the Sentencing Guidelines Council released its *definitive* guideline on prosecution and sentencing of offenders with indecent images of children and termed it as a sex offence. However, this does not encompass those that produce, possess or distribute NCP. It is acknowledged that problem awareness, policy development and legislation regarding child pornography evolved in stages (e.g., exploring public awareness, Cabe, 2000; Mears, Mancini, Gertz, & Bratton, 2008; Identifying law enforcement dilemmata, Wells, Finkelhor, Wolak, & Mitchell, 2007). The current research project was aimed at encompassing narrative material into these developments, by raising awareness of the issue of NCP and clarifying its potential harmfulness.

This study explored the public perception of NCP material in comparison to other types of sexual crime, in three European countries with differing legal systems (i.e., UK, Germany, and Greece). Overall, it became evident that public knowledge regarding online crime in general, and sex crimes in specific, is limited and that there is a strong need for public education. With regards to the public perception of NCP, it appeared that the material is indeed considered as child pornography and that the individuals who consume it are perceived as sex offenders. However, the participants reported a continuum of severity of sex offending, dependent on (a) the presence of a real, identifiable victim and (b) active versus passive engagement. Active engagement in the sexual abuse of an identifiable victim is considered as more severe than passive engagement, such as the consumption of child pornography. In terms of NCP, this means that the consumption and creation of narrative child sexual exploitation material is perceived as less severe than visual representations of the abuse. In addition, active creation of these narratives is considered as more severe than reading the material.

This research talk will provide an overview of the empirical findings regarding public perception of NCP in cross-cultural comparisons and will present preliminary findings from the follow-up studies on conceptualization of NCP by professionals working with child pornography users, and the users themselves.

## **What Do These Guys Do?**

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CP downloaders often spend an enormous amount of time while downloading. This presentation takes a closer look at what it is that CP downloaders exactly do during download sessions by means of a qualitative study among 30 CP downloaders who are currently in outpatient treatment. All participants were interviewed on the basis of an extensive list of questions about their exact behavior concerning CP downloading and the purpose downloading served in their lives. Qualitative analysis revealed diverging activities serving various purposes, with compulsivity as an important recurring factor. For many CP downloaders the offense behavior did not emerge from the inherent desire to satisfy sexual needs, but was more accurately described as a compulsive act that found a goal in itself.