Traveling imagery - Young people’s sexualized digital practices

Engl. transl.: Traveling imagery - Young people’s sexualized digital practices

# Keywords

* sexualized
* normativity
* digital ethnography
* new materialist theory

# Details

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Copenhagen

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Online safety and policy regulation
* Content-related issues

## Sample

"The analogue fieldwork was carried out over 21 days at a vocational training school on
the outskirts of Copenhagen. During the fieldwork, Penille took part in classroom activities
on equal terms with students in a school class assigned by the school counsellor. This
class consisted of 16 boys and 2 girls."
"In the final week of the fieldwork, Penille also conducted seven semi-structured
interviews with a total of 21 students (18 boys and 3 girls), primarily from the same
school class."
"During a six-month period before, during and after the analogue fieldwork, Penille daily
undertook approximately three hours of digital ethnography on social and digital media.
She accessed sites where images are posted and exchanged, such as Facebook, Instagram,
Snapchat, Reddit, Google Drive, Dropbox, Discord servers, various bulletin, image and
discussion boards, and websites created specifically to spread sexualized imagery. Focused
on practices of young people aged 15 to 20 years old"
"We also included cases from a helpline that is operated by Save the Children Denmark,
targeted at children and young people under the age of 18 with requests regarding socialdigital
issues. These cases also provided insight into the many ways in which imagery is
produced and spread. The cases that we collected date back to the period from May
2016 until July 2018, and were categorized by Save the Children Denmark as digital sexual
harassment, which includes all cases related to sexualized imagery. After excluding cases
outside of our targeted age group, cases regarding grooming, and cases unrelated to
imagery, we were left with 308 cases, ranging from a one-line question to two full A4
pages describing a situation."

# Abstract

How is the sexualized digital imagery that young people engage in enacted and spread? How are negotiations of normativity reshaped by analogue-digital involvement? This study travels through shady as well as easily accessible parts of the web, combining insights with analogue research approaches in trying to contemplate these questions in new ways. We use digital ethnography, analogue fieldwork, inter-views, and helpline cases to study how young people’s sexualized imagery moves through and transforms across boundless networks, and also across digital and analogue space. Thinking with new materialist analytics, we show how these movements blur the distinction between mundane and abusive practices, and how the opaque and indeterminate character of the material functions as a game changer and affects what it means to be young in gendered communities. Although the effects vary among different young people and among different social groups, in all cases they infiltrate conditions for becoming, positioning, and relating.

# Outcome

"..young people’s production and spread of sexualized digital imagery are entangled practices that move in boundless networks of human and non-human forces and intra-agencies. Through these movements, the borders between relatively mundane, generally accepted practices and hardcore, abusive practices become blurred."
"..the gendered discourses high-lighting the bodies of young women and the potential erotic investment in those bodies as the focal point of all these practices is an aspect that, in all the material-discursive entanglement, seems to remain remarkably stable across all this traveling and transformation, and across all of the efforts to produce and re-contextualize imagery and argue for its authenticity."
"No matter the volatility and opaque character of the travel-ing and spreading, the eff ects for the young people involved are in that sense indisput-able. For some, the effects are devastating; for all, they infiltrate conditions for becoming, for subject positioning, for building relations and influencing normativities, grounding respect and inclusion, disrespect and exclusion."
"Therefore, whether at the center or the periphery of these practices, and of the negotiations and sense-making of various forms of imagery as they travel across sites, are consumed, interpreted, and evaluated, they affect all young people and their material-discursive conditioning of being and becoming."