

Blurring lines of intimacy. A critical-empirical reflection of digitalizing our relational lives

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For this presentation we would like to share some findings of the HUMAN project that explores with a participatory research design struggles in dealing with sexualized violence with digital media on a micro level with qualitative methods such as interviews, case documentations and focus group interviews considering the heterogeneous forms of sexualized violence with digital media use as well as the heterogeneous respectively wider group of parties concerned. By now forty-seven case documentations, eighteen interviews and five focus group interviews have been collected. For this presentation, the authors will focus by drawing on the empirical data the notions of intimacy and (gendered) relational life but also the narratives of personal limits and privacy among adolescents as well as among professional helpers and highlighting differences in dealing and coping with the experience of exceeded limits due to blurred lines of intimacy, (gendered) relational life, personal limits and sexualized violence in on- and offline spaces. We argue that digital media communication results in a transgression of the idea of intimacy and (sexual) norms that operates in the offline-world. This is significant because digital media have become critical spaces in which we re-negotiate ideas and practices of intimacy within a context of supposed anonymity and distance, disguising the divide between consensual and non-consensual actions. In the hope that the idea of intimacy itself will be opened out in the process, we shed light on digital media intermeshing the idea of intimacy with multiple levels of normativity.