

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE

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OVERVIEW

- Media and social engagement
- Media portrayals of child sexual abuse
- Interaction of public and media
- Media and prevention



MEDIA AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- ◉ Media often expose and define social issues
 - Construct the identities: victim vs. survivor
 - Construct images and prototypes
 - Perpetuate inaccuracies
 - Profile “crises” to focus public attention

- Challenge assumptions or perspectives
- Disseminate novel or professional ideas

Kitzinger, 2004

MEDIA AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- ◉ Media can also contribute to policy and change
 - Generate solutions to social problems
 - Put pressure on policy-makers
 - Activate community members
 - Elicit new emotions, perspectives

Kitzinger, 2004

MEDIA INFLUENCE

- Media has significant influence on how society understands and approaches a problem
 - Dominant media can influence people regardless of their preferred stance or personal experience
 - Alternative or professional sources only weakly counter dominant media
 - Avoidance of media offers little protection - subtleties are embedded



MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF CSA

- ◉ Child sexual abuse: 22.1% of females and 8.3% of males
- ◉ Most people rely on media to gain understanding of CSA
 - Sexual offenders as a homogeneous group
 - Subhuman, pervert, monster, unmanly
 - Associations with homosexuality
 - Weird, low IQ, low SES, unlikable
 - Outside of social circle or community
 - 96% newspaper articles on prevention = stranger danger

MacMillan et al., 2013; Sample & Kadleck, 2008



MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF CSA

- How sexual abuse is reported frames public perception
 - Intrafamilial offences are not described as such
 - Protect identity of victim
 - Distasteful or family business (not news)
 - Incongruent with perception of “stranger danger”
 - Editors, advertisers want to be affiliated with prevention of extrafamilial child abuse

Kitzinger, 2004



PUBLIC MISUNDERSTANDING

- ◉ Sexual offenders produce public anxiety/fear - based on moral outrage and misperception
- ◉ Public perceptions that sexual violence is the product of individual *moral failing* or *dysfunctional families*
- ◉ Little grasp of the social or structural issues underlying CSA and as source for change
 - Gender inequality, misogynistic social norms, economic inequality as root causes of sexual violence
- ◉ Public is skeptical about the efficacy of treatment and capacity for change



PUBLIC MISUNDERSTANDING

- In general the public has a more negative attitude toward sexual offenders than other groups of offenders
 - but this depends on personal or professional experience with sexual offenders
 - Different publics
 - Increased exposure/contact with sexual offenders is associated with less negative attitudes towards them



INTERACTION OF PUBLIC & MEDIA

- ◉ Media can have greater influence on the discourse and subsequent policy than actual evidence
- ◉ Episodic coverage of violence contributed to public fear and support for strict policy
 - Tough on crime



INTERACTION OF PUBLIC & MEDIA

- ◉ Episodic - case driven and specific
 - Audiences who see episodic stories are
 - more likely to determine that the event is random and not preventable and that the solution lies within the individuals involved (child, family, perpetrator)

- ◉ Thematic - contextualized problem beyond case
 - Those who see thematic stories are
 - more likely to understand the broader social factors impacting CSA and view organizations and government as accountable



INTERACTION OF PUBLIC & MEDIA

- In a study of CSA daily reporting in US
 - 80% of coverage was episodic
 - 8% was associated with solutions coverage
 - 18% described prevention - typically focused on victim/family education

- Thematic articles don't fit "news of the day" approach desired by most agencies

Kitzinger & Skidmore, 1995; Mejia et al, 2012



INTERACTION OF PUBLIC & MEDIA

- ◉ Individual cases and certainly, high profile cases often prompt public attention and advocacy which then leads to policy reform
- ◉ In this case policy is at risk of reacting to social construction of the problem instead of the problem



UNPREDICTABILITY

- ◉ Media coverage is only one variable
- ◉ Public are not passive recipients of media messages
 - campaigns interact with their personal beliefs and experiences to influence behaviour, risk evaluation, etc. despite research evidence
- ◉ Unintended consequences
 - Dysfunctional fear vs. functional fear

Jackson & Gray, 2010; Kemshall, 2014; 2015; McCartan et al., 2015

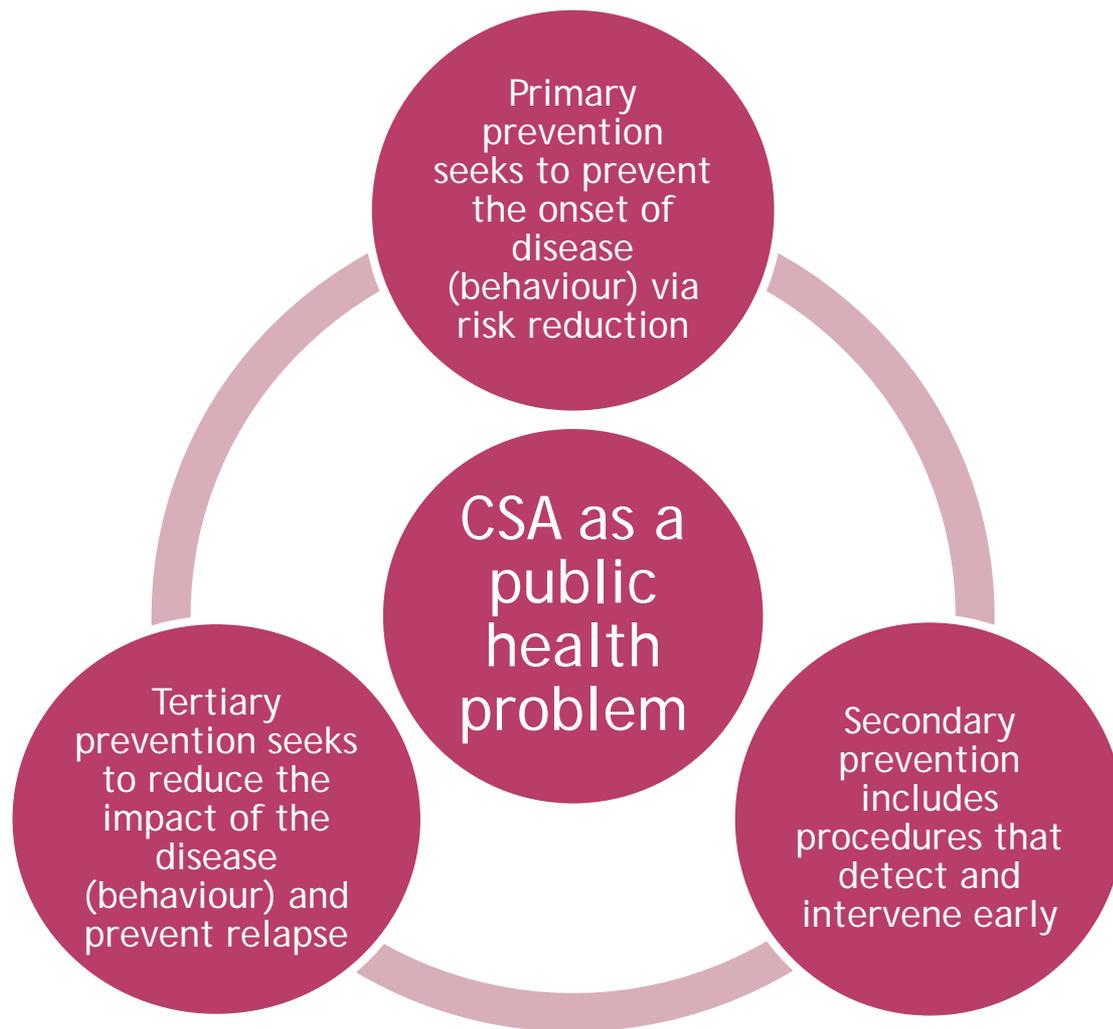


MEDIA FOR PREVENTION

- How can the media affect helpful social construction of CSA and enhance community engagement?
 - Experts/professionals are largely ineffective with lay person
- Increased reporting in recent years has led to more visibility and public discourse (1960s vs. 1990s)
- Reports of positive language shift from victim-perpetrator report as isolated incident to broader conceptualization as public health issue (episodic to thematic reporting)



MEDIA FOR PREVENTION



Smallbone, Marshall, & Wortley, 2008



METHODS OF PREVENTION

Developmental prevention

Criminal justice prevention

Treatment as prevention

Victim focused prevention

Situational prevention

Community-focused prevention



MEDIA CAMPAIGNS FOR PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE





By the time they reach eighteen,

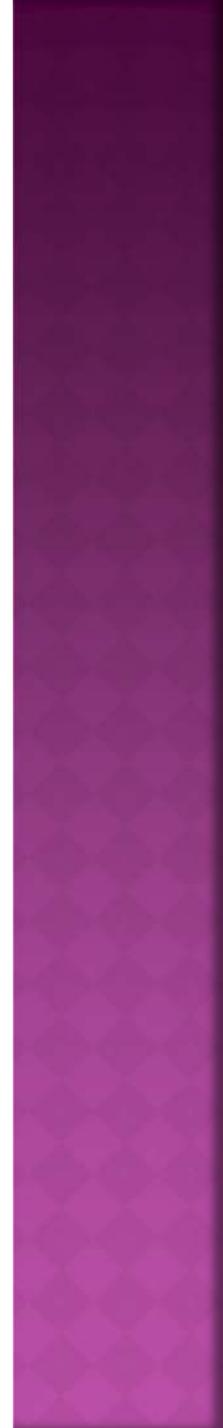


one of them will have been subjected to sexual abuse.

Z
ZERO TOLERANCE

FROM FLASHING TO RAPE - MALE ABUSE OF POWER IS A CRIME

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ZERO TOLERANCE

- ◉ Launched 1992, Edinburgh
- ◉ Major advertising campaign to challenge attitudes towards assaults against women and girls
- ◉ Outcomes
 - Increased awareness and communication about abuse
 - Empowering, increased disclosure
 - Challenged notions of abuse as outside of home, happening to “others”



BYSTANDER PROGRAMS

- ◉ Philosophy: *All members of a community have a role in shifting social norms to prevent violence*
 - ...specific role to recognize situation that promote violence and intervene in safe manner
- ◉ Address what inhibits bystanders from acting, diffusion of behaviour/innovation, social-psych
- ◉ Bystander programs
 - *It's Time to End Violence Against Women on Campus Project* at McMaster
 - Bringing in the Bystander™ and Green Dot



WHAT'S WITH THE GREEN DOT?



The power of Green Dot is simple. Red dots bad. Green dots good. You decide.



GREEN DOT BYSTANDER PROGRAM

○ Green Dot, University of Kentucky

- Launched in 2010
- Phase 1: Lecture in intro courses
- Phase 2: Invitation to intervention program and recruitment by *Peer Opinion Leaders*
- Findings: 50 percent reduction in frequency of sexual violence perpetration by students at Green Dot trained-schools compared to a slight increase at schools that did not get training

(Coker, et al., 2011; 2014)



PREVENTION PROJECT DUNKELFELD

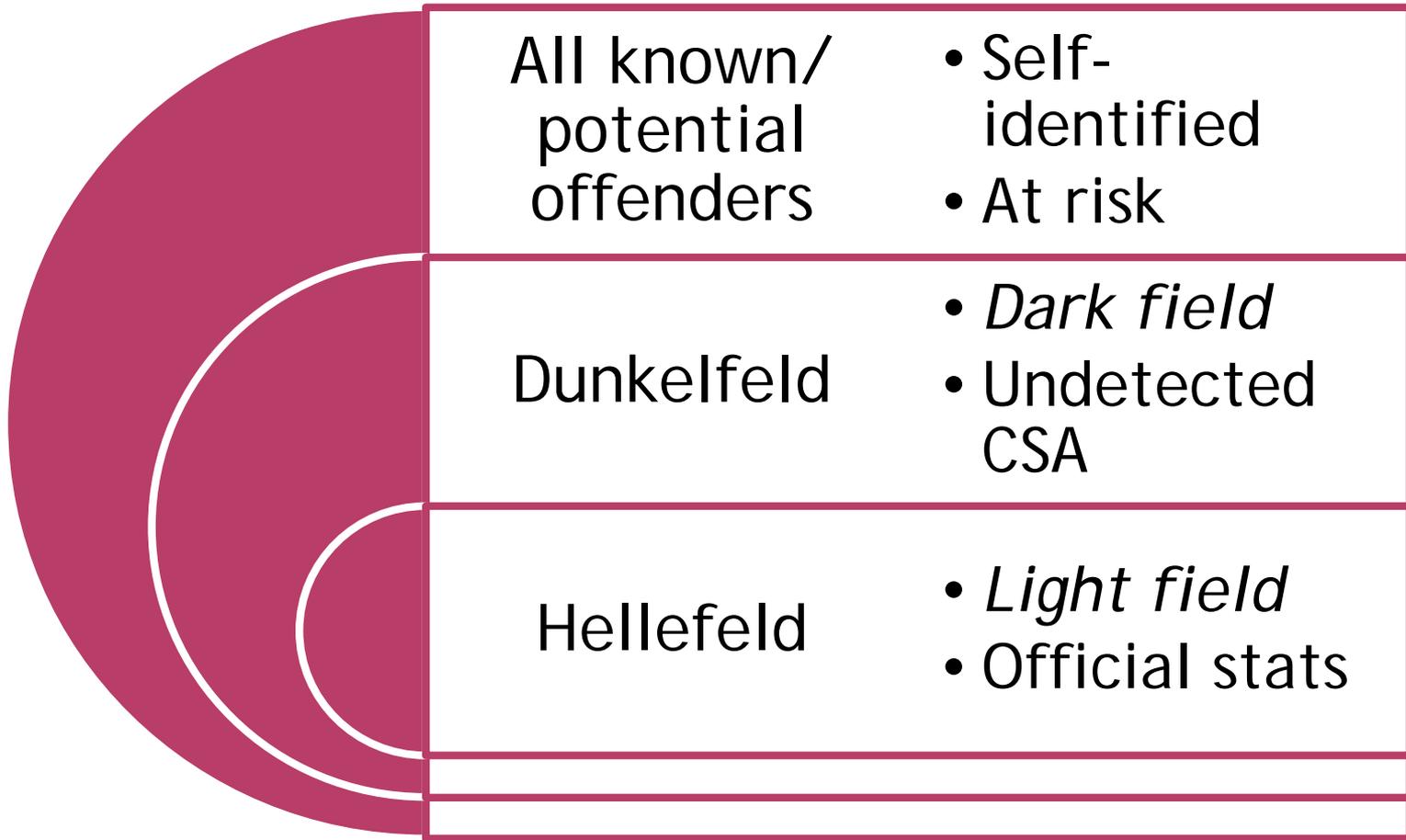
Do you like children in ways you shouldn't?



don't
offend.

there is help -
free of charge
and confidential

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ck3uOCyWB50>





PREVENTION PROJECT DUNKELFELD

- ◉ Launched in 2004 in Germany
- ◉ social marketing campaign for general public to offer treatment to self-identified potential abusers
 - Billboards, TV-spot broadcast, radio, print media
- ◉ 2005-08 +800 individuals contacted program and 200 were invited to participate in treatment program
 - ~50% had made previous attempts to get help
 - 45% willing to engage in voluntary treatment
 - Modest treatment effects - reduction of risk factors, less self-reported relapse

Beier, et al., 2009; 2014



“ It doesn't feel right when I see them together. ”

CALL 1.888.PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

www.stopitnow.org
1-888-4-A-CHILD





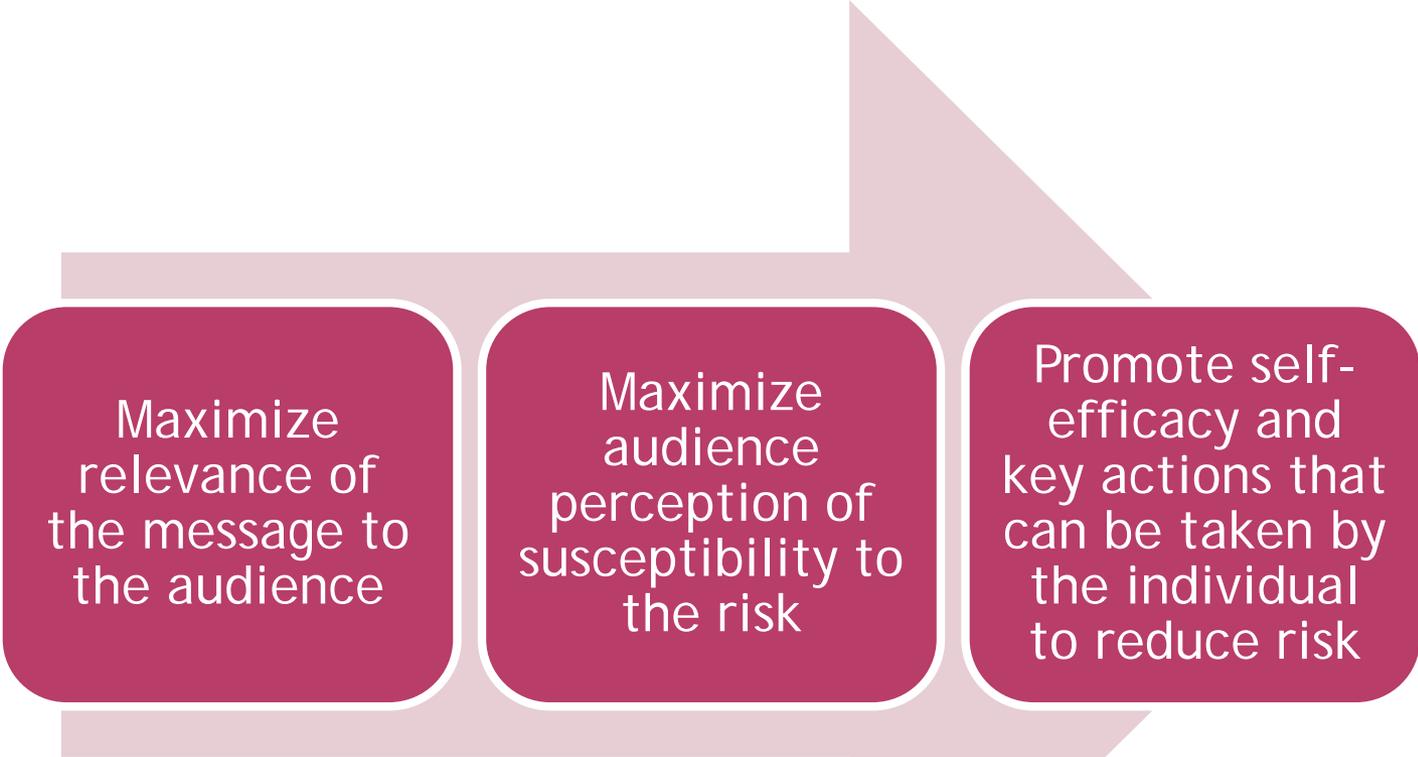
STOP IT NOW!

- Founded 20 years ago by Fran Henry
 - Stop it Now! UK & Ireland, Stop it Now! Netherlands
- CSA as preventable public health problem
 - All adults need to accept responsibility for recognizing, acknowledging and confronting behaviors that lead to abuse
- Ability to reach potential abusers and concerned adults through multiple means
 - Website, print materials, organizational support, hotline, etc.

<http://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance/online-help-center>



COMMON INGREDIENTS OF EFFECTIVE PREVENTION MEDIA



Maximize
relevance of
the message to
the audience

Maximize
audience
perception of
susceptibility to
the risk

Promote self-
efficacy and
key actions that
can be taken by
the individual
to reduce risk

see McCartan et al. 2015

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF MEDIA IN PREVENTION

- ◉ Improved public understanding of child sexual abuse and its prevention
- ◉ Training for public and professionals about how to consume and engage with media
- ◉ Direct public awareness campaigns
- ◉ Gaining public trust through enhanced resources and transparency
- ◉ Effective marketing to different publics (e.g. family, potential abuser, negative attitudes)

Comments or questions?

THANK YOU