UNIVERSITY OF
SURREY

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF
IMAGE-BASED SEXUAL ABUSE
(IBSA): ADDRESSING NEW
CHALLENGES IN RESEARCH,
POLICY AND PRACTICE

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

11 February 2025

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20TH ANNIVERSARY

The Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at the University of Surrey sponsors workshops and Fellowships at the 'cutting edge' of science, engineering, social science and the humanities. Through this scheme the Institute fosters interdisciplinary collaborations and encourages a flow of international scholars to visit, enjoy their stay at Surrey and leave behind excellent ideas and innovations.

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INTRODUCTION

This workshop addresses the rapidly evolving landscape of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), with a focus on 'sextortion' and 'deepfakes', particularly affecting young people. Developments in digital technology are being used to perpetrate IBSA in new ways. However, while incidents of sextortion and deepfakes have garnered media attention, their precise nature, prevalence, and the connections between new/evolving and traditional IBSA remain underexplored. The workshop fills this gap by bringing together experts from academia, policy and practice to examine the issues and develop a research, policy and practice agenda.

It will adopt a 'post-digital' perspective, situating IBSA within offline contexts of relational and sexual harm. It will critically assess current policy and practice, particularly the failure to clearly differentiate between abusive and non-abusive image-sharing among young people, which has contributed to cultures of IBSA whereby victims feel ashamed or fearful of punishment to report abuse, with recent examples connected to incidents of sextortion.

As well as academic and applied papers, the workshop includes a 'world café' session to co-identify solutions to the sexual harms and challenges young people face online.

Organising committee:
Dr Emily Setty, School of Social Sciences: Sociology, University of Surrey
Mr Jonny Hunt, University of Bedfordshire and Mr Jude Mukoro, University of Surrey

Administrative support:
Louise Jones, Institute of Advanced Studies

PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY
Treetops, Wates House

(GMT)

09.15 – 09.30	**Arrival & Registration**
09.30 – 10.00	Introduction and Welcome
10.00 – 10.15	Ofcom – Implementation of the Online Safety Act Fred Langford, Ofcom
10.15 – 10.30	AI Literacy for the Synthetic Self: Safeguarding Young People from AI-generated Image-based Sexual Abuse Devina Sarwatay, City St Georges, University of London
10.30 – 10.45	Meta – Tackling Sextortion and Intimate Image Abuse Dave Miles, Meta
10.45 – 11.00	Claiming Best Interests is One Thing, Enacting Best Interests Seems to be Something Else Andy Phippen, Bournemouth University
11.00 – 11.15	Q&A
11.15 – 11.30	**Coffee Break**
11.30 – 11.45	Bypassing Consent? A Platform Affordance Methodology for Exploring Young People's Experiences of Social Media Jessica Ringrose, UCL
11.45 – 12.00	Shore: A Safe Place for Young People Worried About Sexual Behaviour Rachel Haynes, Lucy Faithfull Foundation
12.00 – 12.15	Using a Children's Rights Framework to Respond to Youth Sexual Image Sharing Louisa Street, Keele University
12.15 – 12.30	Shame and the Power of Stigma Sophie Mortimer, Revenge Porn Helpline
12.30 – 12.45	Q&A
12.45 – 13.45	**Lunch Break**
13.45 – 14.00	A Hotline Perspective on Image Based Sexual Abuse Tamsin McNally, IWF
14.00 – 14.15	Private Pre-Emptive IBSA Reporting: Current Risks and Future Potential Sophie Hawkes, Royal Holloway
14.15 – 14.30	Judgements of Deepfaking Survivors Differ as a Function of Facial Versus Body Likenesses Dean Fido, University of Derby
14.30 – 14.45	Q&A
14.45 – 15.00	Coffee Break
15.00 – 16.00	World Café Session to Generate Ideas and Suggestions for Research, Policy and Practice
16.00 – 16.30	Panel Q&A Session Reflecting on Next Steps for Research, Policy and Practice
16.30	Close

BIOGRAPHIES

Dean Fido

Dr Dean Fido is an associate professor of forensic psychology based at the University of Derby (UK). His work primarily involves exploring societal judgements and understanding of image-based sexual harassment and abuse, as well as how these views might be predicted by variation in demographics and personality. Though his work is framed through a psychological lens, Dr Fido draws upon work from broader frameworks including sexuality and law.

Sophie Hawkes

Sophie Hawkes is a PhD student and member of the Center for Doctoral Training in Cyber Security at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research interests include investigating real-world privacy vulnerabilities and designing privacy-preserving solutions, to provide users with the best security against complex harms. Her presentation builds upon an article published recently in IEEE Security & Privacy Magazine with Dr Christian Weinert, Dr Teresa Almeida and Dr Maryam Mehrnezhad. Hawkes received a B.Sc. in mathematics from the University of Warwick, UK, with Erasmus+ year at the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Germany.

Rachel Haynes

Rachel Haynes is Head of Clinical Services for Children and Young People at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. Managing an experienced team of practitioners, Rachel oversees the Foundation's services for young people, including clinical assessments and interventions, young people's programmes and the Shore website. Rachel delivers clinical work with children, young people and families where there are concerns regarding problematic/harmful sexual behaviour.

Jonny Hunt

Jonny Hunt is a Senior Lecturer in Applied Social Sciences – Childhood and Youth Studies at the University of Bedfordshire. His background is in practice, having previously spent over 20 years working face-to-face with children and young people, and the adults who support them around issues of sex and relationships; this includes training social workers, youth workers, teachers and parents around the most challenging of topics, especially digital intimacies, harmful sexualised behaviours and cultures. Much of his work specifically focuses on ensuring young people have a voice in the policy and practices that most affects them, including bridging the gap between young people and the adults in their lives.

Fred Langford

Fred Langford is Director of Technology – Online Safety at UK Communications Regulator Ofcom, a Visiting Professor at University of Suffolk, Visiting Professional Fellow, member of the REPHRAIN (Bristol University) and INHOPE (International Hotline Association) Advisory Boards. Fred is also a Trustee Foundation and a Non-Exec Director of the Games Rating Authority.

Fred has over three decades of experience working online with two of those in online safety. Prior to joining Ofcom Fred was CTO of Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and President of INHOPE (International Hotline Association) with his focus being on Internet Policy/Governance, Cybersecurity, Child Protection, Trust and Safety/Safeguarding Technologies, online crime prevention and effective regulation. Throughout his career Fred has been instrumental in developing technologies/data sets to identify and remove harmful online content protecting billions of internet users

Fred's experience spans a variety of sectors (Commercial, CSO's/NGO's, Military, Regulatory, Cyber Security, Compliance, Emerging Tech/Innovation) and a vast amount of experience across a multitude of technologies. Fred is also Former Chair of the UK Council for Internet Safety, Technical Working Group (UKCIS TWG), Board Member of the UK Home Office Child Abuse Image Database Strategic Group, Member of the National Crime Agency (NCA) Prevent Strategic Board, a founding Director of the UK Safer Internet Centre and is an expert advisor to UK and other Governments, Parliamentarians, The Commonwealth, Police and NGOs.

Tamsin McNally

Tamsin McNally is the Hotline Manager at the IWF. She oversees a team of analysts who investigate reports from members of the public who have stumbled across potential child sexual abuse images. They additionally proactively search for child sexual abuse material on the internet so that it can be blocked and removed. In partnership with the NSPCC, the IWF also run Report Remove; a tool that empowers children in the UK to report their own nude images and get them taken down. She also manages the IWF Taskforce team, who assess and grade images and videos of child sexual abuse, creating hashes that can be used to prevent further distribution.

Dave Miles

Dave Miles has more than 25-years executive management experience within the technology, charitable and regulatory sectors. In his current capacity, he is a member of the European Commission's Alliance to Better Protect Minors Online, the Child Dignity Alliance and former member WePROTECT Global Alliance's 2021 Global Threat Analysis (GTA) Steering Group.

Prior to joining Meta, Dave was a member of UNICEF's Expert Roster at the Global Fund to End Violence against Children (EVAC), Policy Director of the British Board of Classification (BBFC) and the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI).

Sophie Mortimer

Sophie Mortimer is the manager of the UK Revenge Porn Helpline supporting adults affected by intimate image abuse. She is also part of the team supporting the StopNCII.org platform which allows any adult around the world to protect their own images from sharing and resharing across partner platforms. Sophie participates in events in both the UK and globally to raise awareness of intimate image abuse and the help that is available to support survivors. She is a keen proponent of the importance of collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries as a key element in finding solutions to online abuse.

Jude Mukoro

Jude Mukoro is a PhD researcher with a focus on cultural diversity and education. He has published seven academic articles on culture and sexuality education in various journals, cited over 100 times. His current research examines cultural conflicts in English secondary schools from the perspectives of parents and teachers. This interdisciplinary study, drawing on sociology, education, and psychology, explores the emotions involved in these conflicts and the strategies parents and teachers use to manage them.

Andy Phippen

Andy Phippen is a Professor of Digital Rights at the Bournemouth University and is a Visiting Professor at the University of Suffolk. He has specialised in the use of ICTs in social contexts and the intersection with legislation for almost 20 years, carrying out a large amount of grass roots research on issues such as attitudes toward privacy and data protection, internet safety and contemporary issues such as sexting, peer abuse and the impact of digital technology on wellbeing. He has published fifteen books in the area and frequently contributes to policy and media debates.

Jessica Ringrose

Professor Jessica Ringrose, PhD (York University Canada) is co-Director of the Centre for Sociology of Education and Equity at IOE UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. Ringrose has lived and conducted research in England for 21 years developing an extensive public engagement profile informing policy and practice across sectors of education, communications, health and justice. Her research explores youth digital cultures and recent projects focus on developing education to prevent tech facilitated gender based and sexual violence and online misogyny. In 2020 she was the recipient of The American Educational Research Association Distinguished Contributions to Gender Equity in Education Award. Her latest book, Teens, Social Media and Image Based Abuse is out in early 2025.

Devina Sarwatay

Devina Sarwatay, PhD researches young people and digital cultures. She is Presidential Fellow at City St George's, University of London. She is involved in leadership at the International Communication Association (ICA), International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), part of the Publishing ThinkIN Group at The British Academy and a member of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) and associated with FemLab and Media Education Lab. Her latest (award-winning) work is published in Information, Communication & Society, Media International Australia, Frontiers in Human Dynamics, Journal of Communication, and Routledge and Wiley Handbooks. Her PhD, supervised by Professor Usha Raman, University of Hyderabad, India was awarded in 2023.

Emily Setty

Dr Emily Setty is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Surrey. Her research focuses on young people's experiences of sex and relationships, across online and offline contexts, with a particular focus on sexual harm, consent and digital intimacies. Emily's research investigates the nature and effectiveness of policy and practice designed to prevent and respond to the risks and harms young people face, and seeks to develop and evaluate effective intervention strategies. Emily works extensively with young people, parents/carers, professionals and policy-makers to achieve impact with her work.

Louisa Street

Louisa Street is a PhD student at Keele University exploring young people's views on the law and policy around sexual image sharing. Prior to starting her PhD, Louisa worked as a youth worker in Cornwall for over ten years, supporting young people around issues including mental health, sexual health, drug and alcohol awareness and digital resilience. Louisa has worked on the Headstart Digital Resilience Project since 2019, which has focussed on developing tools to help professionals support young people to navigate the digital world, all of which are available for free.

ABSTRACTS

Ofcom – Implementation of the Online Safety Act
Fred Langford, Ofcom

This talk will discuss the implementation of the Online Safety Act, including with regard to children, young people and image-based sexual abuse. It will address what has changed over the last year, what is live, and expected actions.

AI Literacy for the Synthetic Self: Safeguarding Young People from AI-generated Image-based Sexual Abuse
Devina Sarwatay, City St Georges, University of London

With young people's use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and GenAI (Generative AI) increasing (Picton & Clark, 2024a), the need for AI literacy to ensure young people are critically informed in their usage of these technologies is becoming more urgent. Teachers also agree that it is important for students to be taught to use these technologies with discernment and critical engagement (Picton & Clark, 2024b).

As we move from the 'networked self' (Papacharissi, 2012) to the 'algorithmised self' (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022) and now to the 'synthetic self' (developing from Lovink, 2017), we see a proliferation of AI and GenAI tools already being used for non-consensual image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) (Internet Watch Foundation, 2024; Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, 2022; Portnoff et al., 2024). This has generated responses from different governments in the forms of calls to action, joint statements, and efforts by agencies to begin identifying and tackling this problem (Klein & Prabhakar, 2024; Rajput et al., 2024; UK Home Office, 2023) and the need for young people to be even more critically digital.

It is time to understand what knowledge and skills young people might benefit from in this GenAI age and what researchers can do to engage platforms, policy, and practice for safeguarding young people from AI-generated IBSA. This project engages key stakeholders – young people, parents and teachers, platforms, policymakers, and practitioners – to understand what AI Literacy for the Synthetic Self means and how we can prepare and support young people to combat AI-generated IBSA.

Meta – Tackling Sextortion and Intimate Image Abuse
Dave Miles, Meta

Keeping people safe online has been a top priority for Meta for more than a decade. With nearly 4 billion people from all over the world using at least one of our family of apps, which include Facebook, Instagram, Threads, WhatsApp or Messenger, each month. With billions of pieces of content posted on our apps every day, we take the issue of safety on our platform very seriously, especially the safety of children. It's one of our most important responsibilities. We have built safeguards and

technology to help prevent and combat sextortion and non-consensual sharing of intimate images (NCII). We have strict rules against content or behaviour that exploits people, including sharing or threatening to share someone's intimate images. Meta treats manipulated intimate images the same as non-manipulated or authentic NCII. Some people refer to these images as "deepfakes."
In 2023, NCMEC launched Take It Down. This new platform proactively prevents young people's intimate images from spreading online. Using Meta technology that allows the user to hash the image on their device and report it to NCMEC. It builds on the success of StopNCII which helps adults to stop the spread of adult intimate images online, so-called "revenge porn."

Claiming Best Interests is One Thing, Enacting Best Interests Seems to be Something Else
Andy Phippen, Bournemouth University

In this presentation Professor Phippen will first reflect upon researching this topic for over fifteen years and consider what has changed, and whether, while legislation has developed, attitudes have not. In order to ground this discussion, he will reflect upon a recent case study where he was supporting a student who was groomed and subsequently criminalised post disclosure. He will unpick the stages that led to this outcome, the stakeholders involved and their responses, and the current status of the case. He will argue that while developments in law undoubtedly provide a level of support for adult victims that did not exist before 2015, the same is not true for minors. Given that prevailing narratives around minors engaging in intimate image sharing are still informed by very old legislation and focus on shame and blame, there is a conflict with more victim centric approached in new legislation. This, compounded with a dearth of training across the children's workforce, results in chaotic outcomes for young people who come forward to report abuse.

Bypassing Consent? A Platform Affordance Methodology for Exploring Young People's Experiences of Social Media
Jessica Ringrose, UCL

With the ubiquity of technological devices, young people are more visible and accessible than ever before, and they are encountering, using and producing an unprecedented amount of sexualised imagery, but is it consensual? In this talk I focus on how the social media app Snapchat works and mediates youth postdigital intimacies. I demonstrate how arts-based methods can help to show how platforms function in context specific ways that go beyond conventional methodologies such as talking about social media use with young people. Attending to the platform affordances of snapchat through an iterative process with youth reveals issues of consent and

how and when consent is bypassed via technological processes, which we can only understand by paying close attention to the features and functions of apps as documented by the user (Light et al., 2018; Robards and Lincoln, 2019). I use postdigital as a framing concept to better understand these entangled processes and relationships between the digital, affective and material (Renold and Ringrose, 2016; Handyside and Ringrose, 2017) in youth experiences; documenting how Snapchat opens up young people to non-consensual content/interactions, paving the way to image-based harms and abuses.

Shore: A Safe Place for Young People Worried About Sexual Behaviour
Rachel Haynes, Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Rachel Haynes, Head of Clinical Services for Children and Young People at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, will share insights from the first year of delivery of the Foundation's new website, Shore. Designed especially for young people aged 13-18, Shore is a dedicated and confidential resource for teenagers concerned about their own or someone else's sexual thoughts and behaviour. Since its launch in June 2023, over 46,000 people have visited the site, with over 300 young people seeking support via the anonymous chat and email service. Whilst young people have shared a wide range of concerns about both on and offline sexual behaviour, they have most frequently sought support and advice for their illegal online sexual behaviour, including downloading

and distributing CSAM. The anonymity that Shore offers has given the Foundation a unique opportunity to learn about young people's experiences, perspectives and support needs.

Using a Children's Rights Framework to Respond to Youth Sexual Image Sharing
Louisa Street, Keele University

The Protection of Children Act, 1978 (PCA) is widely considered the definitive piece of legislation with regards to youth sexual image sharing. It states that it is an offence to make, possess or distribute indecent images of anyone under 18 and was designed to respond to cases where adults sexually abused children and filmed or photographed that abuse. As youth sexual image sharing has become increasingly normalised, many have called for the legislation to be changed or updated to prevent the over-criminalisation of young people. Another issue with the PCA is its influence on education policy, promoting the prevention / prohibition approach. I will explore how this prohibition message does not in fact prevent young people being victimised by adults but instead serves to reinforce the threats and control tactics used by groomers who coerce young people to take and share sexual images, therefore the PCA is incompatible with children's rights. I will discuss how the Online Safety Act's (2023) development of non-consensual image sharing offences may offer an alternative approach. This approach could be used to foreground young people's consent, whilst also providing opportunities to share details of support

services and how to remove images that have been shared to social media and pornography sites (such as takeitdown.ncmec.org), which a straightforward prevention message cannot easily achieve. I will conclude by showing how this approach is more compatible with children's rights and can challenge rather than reinforce the tactics used by groomers.

Shame and the Power of Stigma
Sophie Mortimer, Revenge Porn Helpline

Intimate image abuse is the use of any intimate, nude or sexual photograph or video to cause harm to the person depicted in that image. That harm could be many things: perceived embarrassment, shame and humiliation or what has been described as "social rupture": the breakdown of personal relationships, impacts on working life, professional reputation and career progression, or interpersonal or honour-based violence. But the root of all these real and undeniable harms, the reason why these forms of abuse work to coerce, to devastate and to extort, is shame. It is shame that stops victims of this abuse from coming forward and asking for help from friends, family and even the police, despite campaigns and the creation of criminal offences.

This session will look at the forms of intimate image abuse most commonly seen on the Revenge Porn Helpline: how they focus on the impact of shame and the persuasion that humiliation will have further, wide ranging impact on someone's life. It will also show how shame can be a barrier to someone

coming forward and the care that is needed not to inadvertently reinforce those feelings when someone does disclose.

A Hotline Perspective on Image Based Sexual Abuse
Tamsin McNally, IWF

The Internet Watch Foundation's Hotline team spends their day online; searching for, responding to reports of, and removing images of child sexual abuse. They see how these images are distributed online, once they have deviated from their original location. They watch as offenders change tactics to groom and exploit children and try to understand how the ever-increasing speed of technical advancements, especially in terms of AI, leads to new and unseen harms. Gain an understanding into the types of trends and day-to-day realities that the public and our Hotline are encountering, and how children are reporting that their own explicit images (or "...fake nudes") are being used to blackmail and exploit them. Learn about the commercial nature of images, and how this has exploded in relation to financially motivated extortion of children. Do you even need a sexual image of a child to extort them, or can photographic manipulation fill that void? The advancement of technology means sellers, and consumers with an unwavering appetite for sexual images of children, have the opportunity to create and share images of child sexual abuse and exploit victims in ever increasing volumes. How do we tackle these harms?

Private Pre-Emptive IBSA Reporting: Current Risks and Future Potential
Sophie Hawkes, Royal Holloway

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), including the non-consensual distribution of intimate images (NCII), is an exponentially growing issue. Private online reporting and removal tools, such as the Take It Down service run by the NCMEC, can empower victim-survivors, especially young people, who experience threats of the sharing of their intimate images. By pre-emptively reporting images, users could ideally block them from ever being posted on multiple major online platforms with one report, taking power away from perpetrators of sextortion and protecting against the reuploading of known IBSA content. These services rely on sharing "perceptual hash values" (like digital fingerprints) of images with online platforms in order to match IBSA content without sharing the images/videos themselves. However, our research shows that generative AI attacks using consumer-grade hardware can be used to approximately reconstruct images from their hash value, known as "hash inversion". This indicates that the hash values should be treated as carefully as the original images, otherwise vulnerable users' privacy may be put at risk, for example if perceptual hash values of reported intimate images became public as the result of a data breach.
To mitigate this attack, we propose implementing Private Set Intersection (PSI) as an additional layer of protection, to enhance the security and privacy for users whilst maintaining the functionality required to detect and remove IBSA. We

highlight the future potential for private pre-emptive reporting to combat sextortion threats, and the need for user-focused design and greater transparency in IBSA reporting and removal tools.

Judgements of Deepfaking Survivors Differ as a Function of Facial Versus Body Likenesses
Dean Fido, University of Derby

There is notably growth in the use of deepfake technology to create fake, yet indistinguishable from real life, sexual images and videos of others without their consent. Though there is an emerging understanding of the impact to which this has on it's targets, the individuals from which this information comes from is almost entirely those whose facial likeness has been used within the media, with little attention paid to those whose bodies have been used as the canvas. Across 321 participants (Mage = 45.70 years, SD = 15.88; 48.9% female), we explored societal judgements of survivors whose face and/or body likeness had been used to create sexualized videos via a vignette design, which also took into account whether said survivors where sex workers or not. Though perceived criminality did not differ across our conditions, participants allocated more blame and less anticipated impact to the body target, relative to the face target, especially if they were noted in the vignette to be a sex worker. Moreover, when accounting for personality traits, beliefs, and demographics, being male and viewing sex work as 'a choice' and/or 'deviant' predicted greater victim-blame, lower perceived criminality of deepfaking, and lower anticipated harm, with

increased empathy being the only predictor of higher anticipated harm. Results suggest a need to understand the broader impacts of sexualized deepfake abuse for both facial and body targets, and continue to generate public awareness of the impact this form of image-based sexual abuse can have on its survivors.