

## **Sexuality and Social Work Conference 2016**

### **Multifaceted Stigmatization as a Risk Factor for Re-Victimization. The Special Case of Sexually Abused Girls in Out-Of-Home Care**

*Cornelia Helfferich, Barbara Kavemann*

Different effects of sexual abuse in childhood on sexuality, relationship, psychic development and social recognition are observed in the international literature. Furthermore, the results of our own research show, that some of these sequelae – together with institutional responses – lead to a threefold social stigmatization of adolescent girls: as a victim of sexual abuse, as having been taken into care and as showing a pattern of sexual communication and interaction which generally is regarded as morally problematic. Most research does not take into consideration this social stigmatization as a direct and indirect consequence of sexual abuse and neglects the importance of gendered power and dominance in the girls' sexual relationships. Our question is, how Social Work interpretes the sexual behavior and whether it, in consequence, perpetuates the social stigma or offers adequate support to the girls. Professional Social Work lacks concepts to deal with these challenges in a critical self-reflective manner and by this contributes to the higher risk of re-victimization.

The aim of the research project “Re-Victimization of sexually abused girls in out-of-home care” is a deeper understanding of the processes of risk and protection. Qualitative, semistructured in-depth-interviews with 38 sexually abused girls and young women in out-of-home care were carried out for to learn more about sexual scripts, coping strategies, perception of sexual risks, relationship and agency. The project is carried out by Women's Research Institute for Social Sciences at the Research- and Innovation-Group at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Freiburg – (FIVE; Cornelia Helfferich, Barbara Kavemann) and is funded by the Fed. Ministry of Education and Research (program „Research in Relation to sexual violence against children and young people in pedagogical contexts”). The quantitative part of the study – a short term longitudinal study on the further development of the participants – is carried out by the German Youth Institute (Heinz Kindler)