



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Child Abuse & Neglect

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/chiabuneg

The complex experience of child pornography survivors

Ateret Gewirtz-Meydan^{a,b,*}, Wendy Walsh^a, Janis Wolak^a, David Finkelhor^a^a Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824, USA^b Haruv Institute Fellow

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Child pornography
Survivors
Sexual abuse images

ABSTRACT

This research explores the complex experiences of survivors of child pornography production. The study was conducted among a convenience sample of child pornography adult survivors (N = 133), using an online survey which included a series of open-ended questions. Nearly half of respondents reported that they felt the production of sexual images caused specific problems that were different from the problems caused by other aspects of the abuse. Nearly half of the sample worried all the time that people would think they were willing participants or that people would recognize them, one-third refused to talk about the images and 22% denied there were images. The qualitative analysis identified three major themes which emerged from the survivor's perspective as adults: *Guilt and shame*, their *ongoing vulnerability* and an *empowerment dimension the images sometimes brought*. Recommendations for further research and additional implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

Child pornography (CP), also known as child sexual abuse images,¹ has become a serious problem in the United States and worldwide, fostered by the development of online and digital technologies (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2011; Wolak, Liberatore, & Levine, 2014). According to the Federal statutes, CP is the *visual depiction ... of sexually explicit conduct* (18 USCS 2256) involving persons under age 18. Sexually explicit conduct includes acts such as intercourse, bestiality and masturbation, as well as *lascivious exhibition of the genitals or pubic area*. Because the federal statute defines child to include 16 and 17-year-old teenagers, youth under 18 who can legally consent to sexual intercourse (age 16 and older in most states) cannot consent to being photographed in sexually explicit poses. Further, adults who persuade or induce minors to create sexually explicit images are generally considered CP producers. Many states mirror federal law, although there is some variation in the definition of child and the content that is proscribed.

Arrests for crimes involving CP production more than quadrupled between 2000 and 2009. The growth is largely attributable to cases of “youth-produced sexual images” solicited from minors by adult offenders and, despite the increase in youth-produced sexual images, most CP producers arrested in 2009 were adults (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2012). Youth-produced sexual images (often called sexting) add to the challenges of legislative systems which deal with child pornography prosecutions and arrests. Leukfeldt, Jansen, and Stol (2014) analyzed 159 Dutch police files related to images of abuse and exploitation child pornography and found that almost a quarter of the suspects were under 24 years of age. Of that group, 35% were younger than 18 years.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Ateret.GewirtzMeydan@unh.edu (A. Gewirtz-Meydan), wendy.walsh@unh.edu (W. Walsh), Janis.Wolak@unh.edu (J. Wolak), david.finkelhor@unh.edu (D. Finkelhor).

¹ We recognize that many professionals and researchers in the field prefer to use the term child sexual abuse images due to concerns that the term “child pornography” may imply victim compliance or understate the harm to the victims. We use the term child pornography in this manuscript because it is used and defined in federal and state statutes and because it encompasses both images involving child sexual abuse and images that do not depict abuse but are child pornography under U.S. law.

Although a large body of research has examined the effects of child sexual abuse, empirical information about the effects of being photographed or filmed in CP is scarce. In addition, the majority of studies examining CP have focused either on the legislative aspects (e.g. Baker, 2007; Hessick, 2011; Ost, 2002), the perpetrators (e.g. Bourke & Hernandez, 2009; Seto, Cantor, & Blanchard, 2006; Webb, Craissati, & Keen, 2007), or the consumers (e.g. Seto et al., 2015). Limited studies have been conducted among CP survivors themselves, their reaction to the films or images and how it impacted them over their lives (Hunt & Braid, 1990; Silbert, 1989; Svedin & Back, 2003). The present study sought to understand the complex experience of CP survivors, using a mixed methods analysis.

1.1. Child pornography

The vast majority of children who appear in CP have not been abducted or physically forced, but rather manipulated to cooperate (Tyler & Stone, 1985). Quayle and Jones (2003) assessed the characteristics of the children exploited in CP and found the odds of the victims being female versus male were about 4 to 1, and the odds of the images being of White children versus non-White children about 10 to 1. In most cases, victims know the producer, who manipulates them into producing films or photos (Tyler & Stone, 1985). Nevertheless, to be the subject of CP can have serious physical, social, and psychological effects on children (Martin, 2015).

In the late 1980s, Silbert reported on her clinical experiences with 100 survivors of CP who were interviewed about the effects of their exploitation—at the time it occurred and in later years. Referring to when the abuse was taking place, CP survivors described the physical pain (e.g., around the genitals), accompanying somatic symptoms (such as headaches, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness), and feelings of psychological distress (emotional isolation, anxiety, and fear). However, most also felt a pressure to cooperate and did not disclose or report either the crime or the perpetrator (Silbert, 1989). In later years, the CP survivors reported that initial feelings of shame and anxiety did not fade but intensified to feelings of deep despair, worthlessness, and hopelessness (Silbert, 1989). Other studies have observed the sense of shame exhibited by victims. In a 1990 study of 10 young child victims of sex rings that involved pornography, researchers noted that being photographed exacerbated victims' experience of shame and humiliation (Hunt & Braid, 1990). In a review of interviews of victims identified in several CP cases in Sweden, all of the children described how a sense of shame and guilt dominated their feelings at the time of disclosure of the abuse (Svedin & Back, 2003).

Research also illustrates that CP may exacerbate the abuse and trauma (Martin, 2015). The lack of control over the ongoing sharing of their abuse images and the public accessibility of those abuse images can be one of the most difficult aspects of the abuse to overcome (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2017). For children in these images, trauma symptoms do not occur in the aftermath of abuse: the abuse is ongoing with no definable end (Martin, 2015). In two case studies of victims depicted in CP that was distributed online, victims were continually traumatized when they thought about who might be viewing the images online (Leonard, 2010). Similarly, clinicians who worked with 245 CP survivors believe the permanence of the images placed a burden on victims in trying to cope with the abuse and find closure (Von Weiler, Haardt-Becker, & Schulte, 2010). However, information about CP survivors' own experiences regarding the crime and how it affected them at the time it occurred and in later years, is limited.

1.2. The current study

The purpose of this paper was to 1) examine characteristics of the CP crime, such as age when images were first created, the relationship to the perpetrator, whether CP victims were also sexually molested, the length of time the creation of the images lasted, whether images were shared with others and whether the crime was reported; 2) examine whether there are sex differences and characteristics of the CP crime; 3) investigate the impact and reactions to the images shortly after the CP was created; and 4) explore respondents' reflections as adults about being depicted in CP.

2. Method

2.1. Design

This study was conducted as a mixed-methods design, utilizing an online questionnaire that included a series of fixed response questions about the characteristics of the crime as well as a series of open-ended questions about the experience of being photographed or filmed and their reactions to it.

2.2. Procedure

We conducted an online survey of a convenience sample of adult survivors of CP production as part of a larger research project to improve responses to victims depicted in CP. Several victim service organizations and support groups for adult survivors of child sexual abuse agreed to send email invitations with links to the survey to listserv members or to post invitations on their websites. The survey was accessible through Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey data collection system. The survey took 15 min to complete, on average and was open from January 9, 2013 to September 30, 2013. The survey was anonymous, and no data were collected that linked participants to recruitment sources. The University of New Hampshire Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved all procedures and instruments.

Clicking on the link to the survey brought potential respondents to a page that provided information about the purpose of the study, the nature of the questions, and consent (e.g., the survey was voluntary; respondents could skip any questions or quit at any

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات