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Production and Active Trading of Child Sexual Exploitation Images Depicting Identified Victims

RESEARCH TEAM

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IN COOPERATION WITH

National Center for Missing
& Exploited Children®

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DATASETS

1) HISTORICAL

- Actively traded cases involving identified victims: July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2014
- 518 cases involving 933 identified victims

2) MODERN

- All cases involving identified victims: July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2014
- 1,965 cases: one offender and one victim
- 633 cases: multiple offenders and/or victims

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) has access to unique data about child exploitation images, particularly those involving identified victims and offenders and reported by multiple law enforcement agencies.

Through the cooperation of NCMEC, and with the financial support of Thorn, we were able to extract data from NCMEC databases to address multiple research questions.

The primary objective in this project was to develop knowledge to assist law enforcement in identifying victims of child sexual abuse material and intervening to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse.

In this study, the first of its kind, we were able to analyze data from two different datasets: (1) a historical dataset that encompassed all

actively traded cases involving identified victims from July 1, 2002, to June 30, 2014 (518 cases involving 933 victims); (2) a modern dataset encompassing all cases involving identified victims from July 1, 2011, to June 30, 2014 (1,965 cases involving one offender and one victim, and 633 cases involving multiple offenders and/or victims; only a small minority of these cases were actively traded). The historical set allowed us to examine trends over time, whereas the modern dataset had more information due to a more comprehensive law enforcement submission form implemented in 2011.

Report Highlights

- 1** The most notable historical finding was a trend toward more egregious sexual content over time, with more cases involving explicit sexual conduct in later years. In contrast, there were no obvious trends in terms of child victim age or gender.
- 2** In cases involving a single victim and single offender, actively traded cases were associated with having prepubescent victims. Actively traded cases were also associated with more egregious content in terms of sexual activity, and more likely to involve familial offenders, particularly nuclear family members.
- 3** While most cases involved male offenders who were unrelated to the child, cases involving female offenders, younger children, or more egregious content were more likely to involve familial offenders.

These results have implications for law enforcement investigations regarding adult-created child pornography cases through a better understanding of the relationships between child, offender, and offense characteristics.