

# Child pornography – america's secret scar essay

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



The recent history of child pornography in the United States makes chilling reading and it could be apt to describe it as “ America’s secret scar”. The US Department of Justice website states that “ By the mid-80’s, the trafficking of child pornography within the United States had become almost completely eradicated.” (US Department of Justice n. d.) Thirty years ago child pornographers operated under completely different circumstance: it was expensive and very risky to produce films and images; the distribution and purchase of the films and images was impossible to do anonymously. Furthermore, it was almost impossible for paedophiles to find and contact each other to aid the distribution process.

What has changed in the last three decades? The information technology boom and the enormous advances in computer, internet and even mobile phone technology - all of which have contributed to a boom in the making and distribution of pornographic images of children - which is harder to police, crosses international boundaries and has produced an enormous expansion in the sheer number of pornographic images and films available to those who wish to watch them or possess them. The US Department of Justice states that now “ The technological ease and anonymity in obtaining and distributing child pornography has resulted in an explosion in the availability, accessibility, and volume of child pornography”. (US Department of Justice n. d.)

‘ Explosion’ is an emotive word and suggests that child pornography is an escalating and widespread problem.

But the expansion in the ease of distribution of child pornography is only one shocking aspect of this problem, according to the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, information provided by state and federal law authorities states categorically that “ more than half the child victims were abused by someone who had legitimate access to them such as parents, other relatives, neighborhood/family friends, babysitters and coaches”. (NCMEC n. d.) Our children seem not even to be safe near those they should trust the most. This betrayal by those in positions of trust and authority justifies even more perhaps the term “ scar”. Other statistics bring home the frightening reality of what might be happening to our children. In 2005, according to the US Department of Justice there were 109, 531 people missing people in America; over half of these (53. 03%) were children. (US Department of Justice n. d.) One can only imagine with horror how many of these missing children have become the victims of child pornography - and the victims of child pornography are victims many times over. They are victims at the moment the image or film is made and they are re-victimized every time that image or film is watched and passed on to another paedophile.

Who makes child pornography? Why? Some may be involved purely for financial reasons. The American National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimated in 2003 that one fifth of all pornography traded on the internet was child pornography. (NCMEC n. d.) Now the US Customs estimates there are 100, 000 websites that offer child pornography. Apparently, in 2003 it was estimated that the amount of images of children engaged in pornography on the internet had rocketed from 1997 by 1500%.

Child pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry. Every week of every year 20, 000 new images of child pornography are posted on the internet. Surveys show that most paedophiles (91%) are white, unmarried males. (US Department of Justice).

And what are the effects of child pornography? The experience of being victims may traumatize children for the rest of their lives, but there are other worse dangers: according to one survey 76% of those who had sexually assaulted a child had viewed child pornography. (Safe Families n. d.). So in one sense, it is right to see child pornography as America's secret scar. However, my research for this essay led me to the conclusion that it is the world's secret scar since the technology that has allowed it to explode allows international communication. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies all over the world are well aware of the problem and with increased public awareness, we can only hope that it does not remain secret for much longer.

## **References**

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