

SECONDARY TRAUMA AND PARENTING PRACTICES IN
INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN TASK FORCE
INVESTIGATORS

by

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ABSTRACT

Investigating cases of child pornography requires daily exposure to sexually explicit material involving children and may have negative implications on the mental well-being of those in this line of work. Although much research has focused on job-stress and burnout in this profession, there is not enough evidence to understand if this secondary trauma is carried home, whether parenting behaviors are influenced by it, or if these associations differ by gender. This study aimed to identify whether work exposure to sexually explicit material involving children is associated with secondary traumatic stress symptoms among 212 Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force workers and whether these symptoms were associated with participants' parenting behaviors and concerns about their children's use of the internet. Participants completed measures from the Internet Parenting Style Instrument, Concern about Information Disclosure Scale, the Warmth and Involvement sections of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire, and the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale. Secondary trauma was found to be associated with participants being less likely to stop their children from using the internet when secondary trauma levels were elevated. Secondary trauma was also found to be associated with participant's concern about their children's disclosure of information online such that reported concern was higher if secondary trauma levels were elevated. The associations between secondary trauma, stopping behaviors, and concern about information disclosure were both moderated by gender; the associations were stronger for mothers compared to fathers.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

α	Cronbach's index of internal consistency
B	Unstandardized regression coefficient
β	Standardized regression coefficient
df	Degrees of freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data
$df1$	Degrees of freedom between groups
$df2$	Degrees of freedom within groups
F	Fisher's F ratio: a ratio of two variances
M	Mean: the sum of a set of measurements divided by the number of measurements in the set
n	Sample size
p	Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
R	Correlation coefficient
R^2	Correlation coefficient of determination; percentage of response variable variation explained by a linear model
t	Computed value of t -test
$<$	Less than

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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement officials who investigate cases of child pornography and other forms of child sexual abuse are required to interact with children and families who have been through extreme trauma, and this profession involves exposure to some of the worst facets of life that humanity has to offer (Ohaeri, 2003). Unfortunately, professionals who work in this field do not experience these situations sparingly, as the requirements of their job involve frequent exposure to disturbing material on a daily basis (Figley, 2002). The resulting stress from this type of work often takes a psychological and emotional toll on the individuals who work in this field, such as experiencing emotional distress from working with and hearing accounts from traumatized victims (Figley, 2002). Investigators in this line of work are exposed to sexually explicit material depicting abused children on a daily basis, and this direct and indirect exposure to the child victim's trauma (e.g. interviews, images, and audio/video files) has the potential to negatively impact these professionals' functioning. Prior research indicates that individuals who are exposed to trauma indirectly may experience similar clinical symptoms as victims of direct exposure, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from vicarious traumatization (Dursun, Sener, Esin, Ançi, & Sapmaz, 2014). The construct of vicarious traumatization, or secondary traumatic stress, is a common theme among professionals who work in helping capacities, especially investigators of child pornography and child sexual abuse, as they are not directly experiencing the trauma but are indirectly exposed to the traumatic experiences of the children they are working to protect.

INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

Since its invention, the internet has had profound effects on the lives of individuals across the world; however, advancements in technology and the ease of acquiring information online has also led to an increased potential for abusing the internet and utilizing it as a tool to commit crimes. For example, one study indicated that some internet sites devoted to child pornography can receive up to one million views per month (Wortley & Smallbone, 2012). Similarly, in a study on a national sample of 1,713 offenders who were arrested for child pornography, 83% possessed images of prepubescent children, and 80% possessed images depicting sexual penetration of a child, with 71% possessing images showing sexual contact between an adult and a minor (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2005). The same study revealed that almost half of the arrested offenders possessed more than 100 graphic images and 14% possessed more than 1,000 (Wolak et al., 2005). Additionally, 21% of these offenders possessed pornography that depicted violent acts such as bondage, rape, or torture of a child (Wolak et al., 2005). Broken down, 53% of these cases involved child pornography possession or distribution, 31% involved child sexual victimization, and 16% involved online solicitation of a minor (Wolak et al., 2005). Of the 1,713 arrested offenders, nearly all were male, with less than 1% of female offenders making up the sample (Wolak et al., 2005). With the internet making it easier for perpetrators to commit crimes, law enforcement officials have had to devote more time to investigating crimes committed online, as well as establishing specific agencies to combat specific crimes that have manifested through use of the internet. These agencies require their investigators to view thematic and

sexually graphic material involving underage children, which may have implications on the psychological and emotional well-being of these investigators.

A renowned agency specifically devoted to the investigation of child sexual exploitation is The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). The NCMEC was established in 1984 in response to a string of child abductions that occurred in the five years prior to its establishment and works directly with law enforcement agencies to combat kidnappings, child trafficking, and child sex abuse, ultimately working to reunite lost children with their parents (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018d). With technological advancements occurring at unprecedented rates and crimes beginning to move from the physical realm to the digital realm, The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children established the CyberTipline in 1998 as an avenue for internet service providers and public civilians to report suspected cases of child sexual exploitation (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018b). Since its inception, the CyberTipline has received over 28 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation, with 8.2 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation received in 2016 alone (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2016). The CyberTipline also pinpoints patterns that develop in various online threats to children. One trend that has gained traction in the face of recent technological developments is “online enticement.” Online enticement blankets the exploitative behaviors that occur online, such as sextortion, where potential child victims are groomed by predators to take sexually explicit images, participate in sexually graphic conversations online, or meet face-to-face for sexual purposes. Online enticement occurs across various platforms, including social media, instant messaging applications, and video game consoles (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018c). The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children also runs the

Child Victim Identification Program (CVIP) which is a tool utilized by various agencies in the analysis of collected evidence during child exploitation investigations (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018a). This tool, launched in 2002 after analysts repeatedly saw images containing the same child victims during their investigations, has similar mechanisms to facial recognition software and helps identify both new instances of suspected child sexual exploitation victims and child victims that have already been identified in prior investigations. Since its inception in 2002, CVIP has reviewed over 192 million images and videos depicting child sexual exploitation (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2016).

SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

The term “secondary traumatic stress,” coined by Charles Figley (1995), encompasses the psychological and emotional toll that professionals in a caring or helping capacity experience due to the nature of caring for those who have experienced, or are currently experiencing, emotional distress. Secondary traumatic stress is defined as “the natural, consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from the knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other” or “the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (Figley, 1995, p. 10). Essentially, secondary traumatic stress encapsulates the negative effects experienced by professionals due to indirect exposure to traumatic events (Figley, 1995). Secondary traumatic stress symptoms are similar to those seen in PTSD, which include avoidance of trauma reminders, compartmentalizing stress reactions, re-experiencing the trauma through intrusive thoughts about prior traumatizing events, and increased arousal when reminders of trauma cases are present (Ludick & Figley, 2017). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, PTSD is classified as a trauma- or stressor-related disorder where a person is exposed to traumatic events and experiences persistent re-experiencing of the initial trauma, as well as avoidance of trauma-related triggers and the presence of functional impairment (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). While PTSD can result from direct exposure to work-related trauma, as in the case of military personnel in combat, indirect exposure to trauma, such as listening to primary accounts of trauma, can also lead to a diagnosis of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Secondary Traumatic Stress in Various Professions

Unfortunately, instances of secondary traumatic stress are not isolated to one specific profession. This construct has been investigated with numerous working populations, such as social workers and therapists (Bell, 2003; Ben-Porat & Itzhaky, 2009; Canfield, 2005). As quoted by the theorist: “The mechanism of secondary traumatic stress accounts for work-related stress experienced by social workers, psychologists, physicians, first responders, some administrative groups and others who work or live with the traumatized” (Ludick & Figley, 2017, p. 112). Stipulations central to the theory of secondary traumatic stress related to helping professions involve the given dosage of “evocative reality,” which encompasses the frequency and longevity of direct exposure and interaction with traumatized victims to reviewing interviews and written documents containing detailed facets of the victim’s trauma history (Ludick & Figley, 2017, p. 113). One study found that 37% of assessed workers in the field of child protective services who interviewed child victims experienced clinical levels of secondary traumatic stress (Cornille & Meyers, 1999). Similarly, in a study on the correlates of secondary traumatic stress in child protective services workers, aggregate mean scores on a scale measuring levels of secondary traumatic stress were moderate, with 34% of participants meeting core clinical criteria for work-related PTSD (Bride, Jones, & MacMaster, 2007). In another study exploring compassion fatigue and burnout among child protection workers in Colorado, participants were found to be at a significantly higher risk of compassion fatigue due to the nature of their work (Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006). The effects of secondary traumatic stress also extend to the realm of healthcare. In a study investigating the prevalence of secondary traumatic stress among emergency nurses, it was found that 75% of sampled emergency nurses experienced at least one symptom of secondary traumatic stress within the week prior to the

study (Morrison & Joy, 2016). Each of the aforementioned studies indicate that various populations of individuals across a wide-range of professions may be at risk of developing PTSD or experiencing symptoms related to secondary traumatic stress, and this exposure to secondary traumatic stress could have implications on the mental health and daily functioning of these professionals and their ability to adequately and successfully perform their work.

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Investigators of Child Abuse

Charles Figley's original framework of secondary traumatic stress focused on the accumulation and transmission of trauma in therapists, firefighters, disaster workers, police officers, and other professions involved in assisting trauma victims (Ludick & Figley, 2017). Since then, the secondary traumatic stress framework has highlighted the importance of including individuals whose professions involve viewing, reading, or thinking about traumatic material rather than solely focusing on those who are directly exposed to traumatic themes; in the realm of law enforcement, this includes child advocates, attorneys, jurors, judicial system workers, and others (Ludick & Figley, 2017). With respect to law enforcement officials, numerous hours and efforts have been devoted to studying the prevalence of work-related stress and burnout in individuals who work in a law enforcement capacity (Perez, Jones, Englert, & Sachau, 2010). A frequently researched work-related stressor in law enforcement samples has been exposure to traumatic events and the incidence and prevalence of PTSD (Figley, 1995; Perez et al., 2010).

Prior research has indicated that professionals who work in the field of computer forensics and investigate child pornography cases report poor psychological well-being, as well as higher levels of secondary traumatic stress symptoms and workplace burnout (Perez et al., 2010). "Empathic ability," which is often a requirement for professionals to engage in this type

of work successfully, “can become burdensome if the intake of disturbing information is not managed” (Ludick & Figley, 2017, p.113). In a study on a sample of federal law enforcement investigators to quantitatively assess the presence of burnout and secondary traumatic stress, participants completed measures that gauged exposure to disturbing media (i.e. images, videos, and forensic interviews), burnout, and intentions of ending their career as a result of their work (Perez et al., 2010). The participants’ job-related requirements included searching computers and other technological devices for evidence of criminal activity and spent seven to eight hours every day searching for such files (Perez et al., 2010). Findings from this study indicate that employees whose work requires them to view disturbing content were experiencing significant rates of burnout and suggests they may be at higher risk for developing secondary traumatic stress symptoms. The findings also suggest that the longer professionals work with and are exposed to such content, the more likely they are to develop and report instances of burnout and secondary traumatic stress symptoms (Perez et al., 2010). Similar results were found in a study examining how work exposure to child pornography affects Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force agents and affiliates in a sample of 511 agencies. Researchers found that 45% of respondents noticed problems arising from work exposure to child pornography, with approximately 40% believing that more mental health services were needed in their agencies (Wolak & Mitchell, 2009). Furthermore, in a study documenting the hazards of investigating internet crimes against children, it was found that digital evidence handlers who had more frequent exposure to materials involving the sexual abuse of children reported increased levels of secondary trauma and more frequent initiation of coping behaviors such as distraction by focusing on unrelated tasks when at home (Burruss, Holt, & Wall-Parker, 2017). Additional research has shown that secondary traumatic stress is exacerbated in instances where the helping

professional experiences prolonged exposure to evocative materials while accomplishing tasks required of their job (Ludick & Figley, 2017).

These findings offer scientific insight on the poor psychological well-being of professionals in the field of law enforcement who investigate child sexual abuse/pornography cases in relation to their reported levels of stress and exhaustion as well as their levels of secondary traumatic stress. Fortunately, not all aspects of this profession are negative. The aforementioned study also indicated that law enforcement officials who work with protecting child sexual abuse victims feel their work is important and that they are making important contributions to humanity (Perez et al., 2010). Similarly, 71% of ICAC Task Force agents and affiliates who investigate child pornography reported that they found great satisfaction in their work because it helps children (Wolak & Mitchell, 2009).

Secondary Traumatic Stress and Family Functioning

As discussed previously, the stressful experiences that law enforcement officials endure throughout their careers have the potential to negatively impact their psychological and emotional well-being. However, very little research has focused on how this kind of work affects their interpersonal relationships and whether these effects translate to negative familial interactions. Much research has focused on the spillover effects of law enforcement officials' work on their families, such as how shift scheduling can alter family functioning (i.e. day and night shift and marital stress) and the psychological effects of being in the line of duty, such as officer hypervigilance both on- and off-duty (Craun, Bourke, & Coulson, 2015). Although these studies offer insight into how work in the field of child exploitation affects professionals' families, few studies have explored the implications this kind of work may have between these professionals and their own children.

In a particular study analyzing the impact of investigating internet crimes against children on interpersonal relationships, it was found that higher levels of secondary traumatic stress increased respondents' reported discomfort levels in expressing intimacy with their own children (Craun et al., 2015). This same study (containing a predominantly male sample) revealed that several respondents felt their interpretation of expressing intimacy with their children (i.e. hugging, tickling, etc.) changed after being exposed to sex offenders engaging in these same behaviors in order to groom their underage victims (Craun et al., 2015). Specifically related to police work, research has indicated that female police officers are likely to engage in "danger-protection" parenting practices that arise from their own experiences as police officers in an attempt to prevent their own children from becoming victims or offenders of various crimes. Reported practices included setting strict, authoritarian rules, omniscient monitoring and supervision of their children (i.e. use of GPS tracking devices, keystroke loggers on computers etc.) and carefully monitoring self-disclosure about work to their children (Agocs, Langan, & Sanders, 2015). These studies highlight the stressors law enforcement officials and their families experience as a result of the traumatic nature of this line of work; however, these studies do not provide detailed information about the association between secondary traumatic stress and parenting behaviors among investigators of child abuse or how the association may differ between mothers and fathers.

PTSD and Parenting

While there is limited information in the literature on the association between secondary traumatic stress and parenting practices among investigators of child abuse, there is a wealth of information on the connection between parenting practices and PTSD which may help bridge the gap. Parental exposure to traumatic experiences and the presence of parental PTSD have been

linked to heightened levels of parental distress and decreased parenting satisfaction as well as problematic parenting behaviors, such as lower levels of parenting satisfaction, emotional distance towards children, and a higher risk of child abuse and incidence of PTSD and anxiety in children (Berz, Taft, Watkins, & Monson, 2008; Cross et al., 2018; Ruscio, Weathers, King, & King, 2002). Research on the relationship between PTSD and parent-child relationships has been found in a wide range of populations, but the majority of the research focuses on veterans and their families. Prevalence rates vary, but research has indicated that approximately 22% of service members returning home from Iraq and/or Afghanistan may have PTSD (Chesmore, Piehler, & Gewirtz, 2018; Seal et al., 2009), and PTSD symptoms in veterans can have implications on their family functioning. In addition to negative outcomes for their spouse or partner, veterans' children can also be affected. Parental PTSD has been found to negatively impact parent-child relationships and lead to negative parenting practices (Gewirtz, Polusny, DeGarmo, Khaylis, & Erbes, 2010). Similarly, National Guard members who were deployed during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts who experienced greater PTSD symptoms were more likely to self-report poorer parenting behaviors such as greater likelihood of utilizing harsh disciplinary actions (Chesmore et al., 2018). PTSD symptomatology in deployed and returning veterans has also been found to be associated with negative parenting outcomes. Low satisfaction in parenting, increased aggression toward children, low warmth and engagement, and emotional distance from children have all been found to be related to the emotional numbing symptom of PTSD; with poorer, disengaged parent-child relationships being associated with the avoidance symptom of PTSD (Davidson & Mellor, 2001; Duranceau, Fetzner, & Carleton, 2015; Lauterbach et al., 2007; Samper, Taft, King, & King, 2004; Sherman, Gress Smith, Straits-Troster, Larsen, & Gewirtz, 2016).

Research has documented poor child outcomes as related to parental PTSD as well, such as internalizing and externalizing behaviors, increased hostility, and attachment difficulties (Danielson, Hankin, & Badanes, 2015; Leen-Feldner et al., 2013; Maršanić, Margetić, Jukić, Matko, & Grgić, 2014). A qualitative study involving veteran parents with PTSD yielded similar results, with participants self-reporting their children's problematic behaviors, such as conduct issues and poor academic performance with beliefs that these issues arose due to the participants' own PTSD (McGaw, Reupert, & Maybery, 2018). The same study also provided insight from the perspective of the traumatized parents, who expressed concern for how their own PTSD was affecting their children, with detachment, child behavioral problems, and inappropriate role modeling being major concerns; some seeking mental health support for their own children as a result (McGaw et al., 2018). Related to gender differences, a study examining the moderating effect of PTSD on a parenting intervention for military families yielded results that indicated paternal PTSD significantly moderated the effects of parenting interventions in that "the interventions were less effective for fathers who met clinical levels of PTSD" (Chesmore, et al., 2018, p. 123). Findings from this study indicate that fathers with clinical levels of PTSD displayed smaller improvements in effective parenting skills compared to fathers without clinical levels of PTSD (Chesmore et al., 2018). Specifically, this study suggested that fathers with clinical levels of PTSD were more likely to engage in harsher disciplinary actions related to their children's emotional and behavioral problems (Chesmore et al., 2018). Chesmore et al. (2018) also suggest that "emotion regulation is crucial to effective parenting" and the parenting difficulties found in fathers with PTSD may be due, in part, to the disruption of emotion regulation found in PTSD (p. 130).

The body of literature involving how PTSD affects the parenting behaviors of veterans offers insight into the mechanisms of PTSD symptomatology and how it is implicated in the manifestation of negative outcomes in the children of traumatized parents. Although the same mechanisms can be hypothesized to apply to law enforcement officials who investigate and protect child sexual abuse victims, the literature is slim on data providing such associations, especially concerning the mechanisms of secondary trauma.

Gender Differences and Traumatic Stress

Research on the prevalence and incidence of traumatic stress among varied professions often looks at the profession through a holistic lens; however, it is imperative to consider the gender differences in traumatic stress expression in the epidemiology of PTSD. Research on gender differences in traumatic stress expression indicate that women are consistently at a higher risk of experiencing PTSD than men, with women experiencing higher rates of PTSD within the general population (Breslau, Davis, Andreski, Peterson, & Schultz, 1997). Prior research has also indicated that women may be more than twice as likely to develop PTSD compared to men (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). More recent research attributes the high risk of PTSD development in women to the types and severity of traumatic events they are more likely to experience (i.e. sexual assault, child sexual abuse), age at time of trauma exposure, levels of dissociation, and greater initiation in alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism (Olf, Langeland, Draijer, & Gersons, 2007; Tolin & Boas, 2008).

Interestingly, some research conducted on populations within the field of law enforcement have yielded results that do not follow the gender-specific risk of PTSD. A study on gender and age differences in PTSD and depression among a population of local police officers indicated that between genders, depression was more prevalent in women than men (22%

compared to 12.1%); however, gender differences in the prevalence of PTSD were less conclusive, with 36.6% of female participants meeting criteria for PTSD compared to 34.5% of male participants (Darensburg et al., 2006). Similarly, research on specific sub-populations of professions with stressful workplace environments (i.e. deployed combat veterans, emergency first responders, and police officers) yielded similar results that indicate a more impartial risk for the development of PTSD among men and women (Hodgins, Creamer, & Bell, 2001; Pole et al., 2001; Street, Gratus, Giasson, Vogt, & Resick, 2013; Vogt et al., 2011).

THE PRESENT STUDY

Previous research has been devoted to investigating such topics as compassion fatigue, workplace burnout, and secondary traumatic stress across a variety of helping professions. Pertaining to law enforcement officials, previous research has explored the development of secondary traumatic stress and significant burnout as a result of their experiences in the workplace. There has also been extensive research on the development of PTSD from direct exposure to traumatic events such as combat exposure and the resulting negative implications on individuals' parenting practices and their personal well-being. However, the present literature is slim on secondary traumatic stress among child abuse and child pornography investigators and how the development of secondary traumatic stress carries over to parenting behaviors, and how the association between secondary traumatic stress and parenting may differ between mothers and fathers. Due to this gap in the present literature, the goal of the present study was to analyze whether working in a profession that is part of, or related to, investigating internet crimes against children influences how law enforcement officials parent their own children. Specifically, the present study examined whether workplace exposure to disturbing material correlates with secondary traumatic stress, and whether secondary traumatic stress is associated with parenting behaviors, such as warmth, involvement, and monitoring their children's use of the internet.

In the present study, employees of both state and federal law enforcement agencies across the United States who serve various job roles related to legal cases involving child pornography completed measures that assessed secondary traumatic stress, general parenting behaviors such

as warmth toward their children and involvement in their children's lives, and parental behaviors relating to their children's internet use, as well as reporting levels of secondary traumatic stress symptoms.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of the literature, the present study contains the following three (3) hypotheses, with two (2) sub-hypotheses:

1. Frequency of exposure to sexually explicit/thematic material at work will be correlated with reported levels of secondary trauma such that higher frequency of exposure will yield higher levels of reported secondary trauma.
2. Secondary traumatic stress will be associated with warmth and general involvement with their children such that their reported warmth and involvement will be lower when secondary traumatic stress levels are elevated.
 - b. Gender will moderate this association, such that this association will be stronger for fathers
3. Secondary traumatic stress will be associated with parental internet monitoring behaviors such that their reported internet monitoring behaviors and concern about information disclosure on the internet will be higher when secondary trauma levels are elevated.
 - b. Gender will moderate this association, such that the association will be stronger for fathers

METHOD

Participants

Participants for the current study included law enforcement officials working agential or forensic examination capacities from across the United States and were affiliated with state and federal Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces. The sample consisted of both sworn law enforcement agents and civilian employees involved in the collection, interaction and analysis of disturbing media related to child pornography and protecting child sexual abuse victims. Estimates from the State of Alabama's ALEA (Alabama Law Enforcement Agency) Office estimate that there are approximately 4,000 to 5,000 professionals across the country currently working in this field. Data were collected from 359 law enforcement officials across a period of seven months from initial survey dissemination. Of the 359 responses collected, 147 were removed from analysis as they did not meet inclusion criteria. The final sample size was 212.

Inclusion Criteria. Participants in the current study were included regardless of how long they have held their current job position, and no age restrictions were placed on the current study's participants. Respondents were required to meet the following criteria: a) have at least one child between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18), and b) have at least some involvement in the process of child pornography investigations.

Sociodemographic Data. Data were collected from 359 participants. After sorting participant responses that did not meet the inclusion criteria, 147 data points were removed from analysis, yielding $n = 212$. Of the 147 participants removed from analysis, 103 participants were

removed as they reported they did not have any children between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18). 44 participants were removed because they reported they were not in any way involved in the investigation process, and thus were not exposed to explicit material. Participants were majority Caucasian (88.7%; $n = 188$), and majority male (65.1%; $n = 138$). A majority of the sample had at least a bachelor's degree (66%; $n = 140$), with 83% ($n = 176$) of the sample having an annual household income above \$75,000 (See Table 1). Participants' job requirements, which were grouped and analyzed as the manner in which participants were exposed to explicit material (See Table 2) included executing search warrants (93.4%; $n = 198$), searching electronic devices (85.4%; $n = 181$), interviewing child victims (62.7%; $n = 133$), and interviewing alleged perpetrators (81.1%; $n = 172$). As evidenced by the sample values for each type of exposure to explicit material, a majority of the study's participants were required to perform multiple duties throughout the process of these investigations as a part of their work routine. Frequency of exposure to explicit material was also assessed, and of the participants surveyed, a majority of the sample (52.4%; $n = 111$) were involved in the investigation process and exposed to explicit material on a daily basis (See Table 2). Participant age and length of time spent in the profession were not assessed.

PROCEDURE

The University of Alabama's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved of the study and all related amendments. The initial contacting agency was the State of Alabama's ICAC Task Force commander. Alabama's commander received an email link to access an anonymous survey to disseminate throughout the state's agency. The first page of the survey outlined the study's procedure and was used to gain implied consent. Once disseminated throughout the State of Alabama's agency, the anonymous survey link was then posted on both the federal and state ListSERV (an application devoted to distributing emails and pertinent work-related information to ICAC task force agents and related agencies across the country through an electronic mailing list) by a Special Agent Senior with the State of Alabama's ICAC Task Force. Additional recruiting was performed by the State of Alabama's ICAC Task Force commander at a national ICAC task force commander's meeting in Arizona with the purpose of recruitment of agents in the western United States. Alabama's commander presented a brief presentation to the attending commanders with an outline of the study's purpose as well as the anonymous survey link. Afterwards, attendees responded to the anonymous survey once the seminar was complete. Data were collected for a period of seven months from the date the survey was first administered. Participants were not given any compensation for their participation in this study.

Measures/Materials

Demographics. Participants were asked to report the age of their youngest and oldest child, as well as how many children they had between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18). If participants had more than one child between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18), they were

asked to think of the child who had the most recent birthday in order to answer the questions that followed. Participants were then asked to report this child's age and gender (See Table 1).

Participants were also asked to report their current job/work duties, including search warrants, searching electronic devices, interviewing child victims, and interviewing alleged perpetrators (See Table 2), as well as how frequently they were involved in these duties, either daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week, or never (See Table 2). At the end of the survey, participants were asked to report their own gender, ethnicity, educational background, and annual household income (See Table 1).

Internet Parenting Style Instrument. Parenting behaviors relating to children's internet usage were assessed using the Internet Parenting Style Instrument (IPSI) (Álvarez, Torres, Rodríguez, Padilla, & Rodrigo, 2013). The Internet Parenting Style Instrument consists of 25 items and utilizes a 5-point Likert-scale with the following anchor points: 1 = never; 5 = always. Items within the measure are broken down into five categories: supervision, stopping internet usage, internet usage rules, communication about internet use, and supporting the child with internet use. Sample supervision items include "I am around when my child surfs on the internet" and "I use special software to block certain internet sites for my child." Sample stopping internet usage items include "I stop my child when they visit a less suitable website" and "I stop my child when I see they are chatting online." Items about internet usage rules include "I limit the time my child is allowed on the internet" and "I limit the type of websites my child is allowed to visit." Items relating to communication include "I define internet rules together with my child" and "I talk with my child about the dangers related to the internet." Items gauging support include "I sit together with my child at the computer to surf on the internet" and "I show my child how to surf safely on the internet." Respondents were asked to rate each item on the 5-point scale with how

true to them they believed each item to be (See Appendix A). Internal consistency for each subscale of the Internet Parenting Style Instrument ranged from acceptable to excellent, with Cronbach's α coefficients from 0.65 – 0.91 (See Table 3).

Concern about Information Disclosure Scale. The Concern about Information Disclosure Scale is a scale that was formulated specifically for this study and was adapted from the Actual Information Disclosure subscale of the Restrictive Mediation Measure (Shin & Kang, 2016). The Actual Information Disclosure subscale was originally developed for children to self-report on their own tendency to disclose personal information on the internet. For the purposes of the present study, this subscale was modified to assess parents' perceptions and concerns about their children's disclosure of information on the internet. This revised scale includes three (3) items on a 5-point Likert-scale with the following anchor points: 1 = never, 5 = always. Items include: "I am concerned that my child may send personal information to someone they have not met face-to-face," "I am concerned that my child may send photos or videos of themselves to someone they have not met face-to face," "I am concerned that my child is sharing their passwords with friends," and "I am concerned that my child will be the victim of an internet predator" in order to tailor this scale to the population being surveyed. Participants were asked to rate each item on the 5-point scale based on their level of agreement with this item (See Appendix B). Internal consistency for the Concern about Information Disclosure scale was good, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.85 (See Table 3).

Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ). The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire assesses important aspects of parenting practices that have been shown to be related to disruptive behavior problems in children (Shelton, Frick, & Wootton, 1996). The APQ consists of six separate scales. For the purposes of the present study, only the Involvement and Positive

Parenting subscales were utilized. The Involvement portion of the APQ consists of 10 items on a 5-point Likert-scale with the following anchor points: 1 = never; 5 = always. Sample items from this scale include “I have friendly talks with my child” and “I talk to my child about their friends.” Participants were asked to rate each item on the 5-point scale based on how true to them they believed each item to be (See Appendix C). Internal consistency for the Involvement portion of the APQ scale was good, with a Cronbach’s α coefficient of 0.80 (See Table 3). The Positive Parenting portion of the APQ consists of six (6) items on a 5-point Likert-scale with the following anchor points: 1 = never; 5 = always. This scale was used as an assessment of parental warmth towards their children. Sample items include “I let my child know when they are doing a good job with something” and “I praise my child if they behave well.” Participants were asked to rate each item on the 5-point scale based on how true to them they believed each item to be (See Appendix D). Internal consistency for the Positive Parenting portion of the APQ scale was good, with a Cronbach’s α coefficient of 0.82 (See Table 3).

Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale. Trauma related to the participants’ profession was assessed using the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004). The STSS measures facets of secondary trauma in relation to workplace stress and consists of 17 items on a 5-point Likert-scale with the following anchor points: 1 = never; 3 = occasionally; 5 = very often. Minor wording changes were made to STSS items in order to tailor each item to the present study’s population (e.g. scale items refer to “cases” instead of “clients”). Sample items from the STSS include “It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma(s) experienced by the child victims” and “I thought about my work/job (or certain cases) when I didn’t intend to.” Participants were asked to rate each item on the 5-point scale based on how often each item occurred to them in the seven (7) days prior to participating in the study (See Appendix E).

Internal consistency for the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale was excellent, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.93 (See Table 3).

RESULTS

All data analyses were completed using IBM's SPSS Statistics Software, v.24. Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations were conducted with all study variables prior to testing hypotheses. Pearson correlations were performed to test Hypothesis 1, with the variables of work exposure and total secondary traumatic scores entered into the model to test for significance. Regression analyses were performed to test Hypotheses 2 and 3, as well as to test for moderation by gender for Hypotheses 2a and 3a. If evidence of moderation was found, tests of simple slopes were performed to examine the strength of these associations.

Descriptive Statistics

Average scores on the Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) were approximately 35 points (minimum possible score = 17; maximum possible score = 85) with a standard deviation of 12.4 points. Six (6) participants reported no secondary traumatic stress symptoms, and the remaining 206 participants reported STSS scores between 18 and 80. STSS scores were not correlated with work exposure or with any of the parenting measures. The two subscales in the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ) were significantly correlated with each other ($r = 0.50$). Subscales within the Internet Parenting Style Instrument (IPSI) were all significantly correlated with each other, ranging from 0.56 to 0.68 (See Table 3).

Hypothesis 1

To test Hypothesis 1, Pearson correlations were used to examine the association between participants' frequency of exposure to explicit material at work and their reported levels of secondary traumatic stress to assess whether increased frequency of exposure to explicit material

was associated with increased levels of secondary traumatic stress symptoms. Unexpectedly, workplace exposure to explicit material was not significantly correlated with secondary traumatic stress symptoms (See Table 3).

Hypothesis 2 and 2a

To test Hypotheses 2 and 2a, regression analyses were used to examine the associations between secondary traumatic stress and parental warmth and parental involvement, and whether these associations would be moderated by participant gender. With two separate regression analyses, traumatic stress (centered), participant gender and the interaction between participant gender and traumatic stress were entered into the model. Child gender, child age, and work exposure were also entered into the model as covariates.

Parental Warmth. The overall regression model for parental warmth was significant [$R = 0.29$, $F(6, 116) = 2.92$, $p < 0.05$] and accounted for 8% of the variance in the dependent variable (See Table 4), however, inconsistent with the hypotheses, neither secondary traumatic stress nor participant gender were significantly associated with parental warmth. There was also no evidence of moderation with a nonsignificant interaction. However, covariates of child age and frequency of workplace exposure were significantly associated with parental warmth such that participants were more likely to display warmth towards younger children ($p = .009$) and were also more likely to display warmth towards their children if they reported higher frequency of exposure to explicit material at work ($p = .012$) (See Table 5).

Parental Involvement. The overall regression model for parental involvement was significant [$R = 0.37$, $F(6, 184) = 4.77$, $p < 0.01$] and accounted for nearly 14% of the variance in the dependent variable (See Table 4); however, inconsistent with the hypotheses, secondary traumatic stress was not significantly associated with parental involvement and there was no

evidence of moderation with a nonsignificant interaction. However, there was a significant association between participant gender and parental involvement, such that mothers were more likely to report being involved in their children's lives compared to fathers ($p = .000$).

Furthermore, regarding covariates, child age was significantly associated with parental involvement such that parental involvement was higher for younger children ($p = .009$) (See Table 6).

Hypothesis 3 and 3a

To test Hypotheses 3 and 3a, regression analyses were used to examine the associations between secondary traumatic stress and five (5) types of parental monitoring behaviors (internet supervision, stopping behaviors, defining internet rules, communication, and support) and concern about information disclosure online, and whether these associations would be moderated by participant gender. With six separate regression analyses, traumatic stress (centered), participant gender, and the interaction between participant gender and traumatic stress were entered into the models. Child gender, child age, and work exposure were also entered into the models as covariates.

Internet Supervision. The overall regression model for internet supervision was significant, and accounted for nearly 36% of the variance in the dependent variable [$R = 0.60$, $F(6, 174) = 15.53$, $p = <0.01$] (See Table 4). Inconsistent with the hypotheses, there was no significant association between secondary traumatic stress and engaging in internet supervision behaviors. There was also no significant association between participant gender and internet supervision, and there was no evidence of moderation (nonsignificant interaction). However, covariates of child age and work exposure were found to have significant associations with internet supervision. Child age was found to have a negative association with internet

supervision, such that respondents were more likely to supervise younger children ($p = .000$). Work exposure was found to have a significant association with internet supervision, such that respondents were more likely to engage in internet supervision if they reported more frequent exposure to explicit material at work ($p = .040$) (See Table 7).

Stopping Internet Usage. The overall regression model for stopping internet usage was significant and accounted for nearly 50% of the variance in the dependent variable [$R = 0.70$, $F(6, 116) = 18.05$, $p = <0.01$] (See Table 4). In support of the hypotheses, there was a significant association between secondary traumatic stress and stopping behaviors. However, participants were less likely to stop their children from using the internet if their secondary traumatic stress levels were elevated ($p = .006$), which was opposite than expected (See Table 8). There were no significant associations between participant gender and stopping behaviors. However, there was evidence of moderation with a significant interaction between participant gender and trauma ($p = .003$). To understand this moderation, a test of simple slopes was performed. For women, there was a significant negative association between trauma symptoms and stopping behaviors: ($\beta = -.345$, $p = .006$). For men, there was no significant association: ($\beta = .108$, $p = .206$). This finding was also opposite than expected.

When analyzing the covariates included in the model, child gender was found to have a negative association with stopping behaviors, such that parents were more likely to stop their daughters from using the internet ($p = .020$). Additionally, child age was also found to have a negative association with stopping behaviors, such that parents were more likely to stop younger children from using the internet ($p = .000$). Work exposure was found to have a significant association with stopping behaviors, such that participants were more likely to engage in stopping behaviors with more frequent exposure to explicit material ($p = .013$) (See Table 8).

Internet Rules. The overall regression model for defining internet rules was significant and accounted for nearly 42% of the variance in the dependent variable [$R = 0.65$, $F(6, 141) = 16.22$, $p < 0.01$] (See Table 4). Inconsistent with hypotheses, there was no significant association between secondary traumatic stress and defining internet rules. There was also no significant association between participant gender and internet rules, and no evidence of moderation (nonsignificant interaction). However, covariates of child age and work exposure were found to have significant associations with defining internet rules. Child age was found to have a negative association with internet rules, such that respondents were more likely to define internet rules with younger children ($p = .000$). Additionally, work exposure was found to have a significant association with internet rules, such that respondents were more likely to define internet rules with their children if they reported more frequent exposure to explicit material ($p = .023$) (See Table 9).

Internet Communication. The overall regression model for internet communication was significant and accounted for 25% of the variance in the dependent variable [$R = 0.50$, $F(6, 128) = 6.89$, $p < 0.01$] (See Table 4). Inconsistent with hypotheses, there was no significant association between secondary traumatic stress and internet communication. There was also no significant association between participant gender and internet communication, and there was no evidence of moderation (nonsignificant interaction). However, when analyzing the covariates included in the model, child age and work exposure were found to be significantly associated with internet communication. Child age had a significant negative association with internet communication, such that respondents were more likely to offer verbal support for younger children using the internet ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, work exposure was found to have a significant association with internet communication such that respondents who reported more

exposure to explicit material through their work were more likely to report communicating with their children about the benefits and dangers of using the internet ($p = <0.05$) (See Table 10).

Internet Support. The overall regression model for internet support was significant and accounted for nearly 27% of the variance in the dependent variable [$R = 0.52$, $F(6, 163) = 9.54$, $p = <0.01$] (See Table 4). Inconsistent with hypotheses, there was no significant association between secondary traumatic stress and internet support. There was also no significant association between participant gender and internet support, and there was no evidence of moderation (nonsignificant interaction). However, when analyzing the covariates included in the model, child age was found to have a significant negative association with internet support, such that respondents were more likely to offer internet support for children who were younger ($p = .000$) (See Table 11).

Concern about Information Disclosure. The overall regression model for concern about information disclosure was significant [$R = 0.27$, $F(6, 176) = 2.27$, $p = <0.05$] and accounted for 7% of the variance in the dependent variable (See Table 4). In support of study hypotheses, there was a significant association between secondary traumatic stress and concern about information disclosure, such that participants were more likely to report being concerned about their children's disclosure of personal information on the internet when their secondary trauma levels were elevated ($p = .050$). There was no significant association between participant gender and concern about information disclosure. However, there was a marginally significant interaction between trauma and participant gender and concern about information disclosure ($p = .080$) (See Table 12). To understand this interaction, a test of simple slopes was performed. For women, there was a significant positive association between secondary trauma symptoms and

concern about information disclosure ($\beta = .262, p = .006$). For men, there was no significant association ($\beta = -.026, p = .778$). This moderation was opposite than expected.

DISCUSSION

Previous research has indicated that law enforcement officials who investigate cases of child sexual abuse may be at a higher risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress as a result of the requirements of their job, but only a few studies have documented this finding and even fewer have investigated the potential carryover effects of secondary traumatic stress on parenting behaviors in this population. Using a sample of 212 Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force investigators, this study assesses whether there was an association between exposure to explicit material at work and symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and whether secondary traumatic stress was associated with parenting behaviors (i.e. warmth, involvement, internet monitoring behaviors, and reported concern about their children's disclosure of information on the internet), particularly for fathers.

Hypothesis 1

In light of the present body of literature pointing to greater instances of job stress and burnout among law enforcement officials, it was hypothesized that participants who reported greater frequency of exposure to explicit material at work would also report higher levels of secondary traumatic stress (STS) symptoms. Contrary to expectations, secondary traumatic symptoms were not significantly associated with frequency of work exposure to sexually explicit material. While there were a range of secondary traumatic stress symptoms endorsed by this sample ($M = 35.2$, $SD = 12.40$), symptoms were unrelated to frequency of exposure. Although these findings were unexpected, they point to a possible mechanism of desensitization that may come into play the longer these professionals are exposed to sexually explicit material. Similar

mechanisms of desensitization, commonly referred to as habituation, are often employed in therapeutic capacities by the use of prolonged exposure therapy in order to desensitize a traumatized individual's reactivity to trauma triggers (Wangelin & Tuerk, 2015). Related to the population in question, the findings may be reflective of participants becoming desensitized to the graphic or traumatizing nature of viewing sexually explicit images and videos through prolonged exposure to such material as a requirement of their job, with approximately 50% of the sample reporting daily exposure to such material.

Hypothesis 2 and 2a

It was expected that participants who reported higher levels of secondary traumatic stress symptoms would also report less warmth and involvement with their children. Based on the literature indicating that fathers in this particular field report more discomfort in expressing intimacy with their children, the present study also expected the association between secondary traumatic stress, warmth, and involvement to be moderated by gender, such that the relationship would be stronger for fathers compared to mothers.

Parental Warmth. While the overall regression model for parental warmth was significant, neither secondary traumatic stress, participant gender, nor their interaction were significantly associated with parental warmth, thus not supporting the hypothesis. However, findings did indicate that child age and frequency of exposure to explicit material were significantly associated with respondents' reported warmth towards their children; with child age's association being negative and frequency of exposure's association being positive respectively. While parental warmth is to be expected with younger children, finding that greater workplace exposure to sexually explicit material could predict parents' warmth levels towards their children hints to a possible protective mechanism that parents in this field may utilize in

response to commonalities that typically land children in situations that make them prime targets for child predators. Similar to sex trafficking victims, runaways and those lured by false promises tend to be prime targets for human traffickers (National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018e). As such, children who do not receive proper care or attention at home tend to search for it through other avenues; typically online. In light of this, these findings may be reflective of parents in this field displaying more warmth towards their children as a protective factor to ensure their children receive the care and attention they need at home rather than feeling the need to satisfy these needs from outside sources.

Parental Involvement. Similar to parental warmth, the overall regression model for parental involvement was significant, but secondary traumatic stress was not significantly associated with parental involvement, thus not supporting the hypothesis. However, participant gender and child age were significantly associated with parental involvement, such that mothers reported being more involved in their children's lives compared to fathers, and involvement was higher with younger children. These findings follow the trend of previous research in the realm of parenting that indicate that mothers tend to be more involved with their children and often engage their children more frequently than do fathers (Dayton, Walsh, Oh, & Volling, 2015; Musick, Meier, & Flood, 2016).

Hypothesis 3 and 3a

With prevalence rates of child pornography on the rise in the face of technological advancements, it was hypothesized that participants who reported higher levels of secondary traumatic stress would also report engaging in more frequent internet monitoring behaviors and report more concern about their children's disclosure of personal information online. Following the literature that informed Hypothesis 2a, the present study also expected the association

between secondary traumatic stress and parental internet monitoring behaviors and concern about information disclosure online to be moderated by gender, such that the association between secondary traumatic stress and monitoring would be stronger for fathers.

Internet Supervision. While the overall regression model for internet supervision was significant, neither secondary traumatic stress, participant gender, nor their interaction were significantly associated with internet supervision, not supporting the hypothesis. However, findings did indicate that child age and frequency of exposure to explicit material were significantly associated with respondents' reported internet supervision behaviors; with child age's association being negative and frequency of exposure's association being positive respectively. As with the findings for Hypothesis 2, it can be expected for parents to supervise younger children while they are using the internet, more so than older children. However, finding that greater workplace exposure to explicit material could predict parents' internet supervision behaviors may highlight a similar protective mechanism as the one mentioned when discussing the findings for Hypothesis 2. Parents in this field may engage in these behaviors as a preventive measure to ensure their children are not visiting less-than-suitable websites or are not engaging in dangerous online activities that may lead to contact with an internet predator. This makes more sense when taking into account their encounters with child victims and questioning what series of events may have found these children on the receiving end of sexual abuse.

Stopping Internet Usage. In support of the hypothesis, secondary traumatic stress was found to have a significant association with internet stopping behaviors, but the association was negative. These results were perplexing in that the expectations were for participants who reported higher levels of secondary traumatic stress to also report higher frequency of stopping their children from using the internet. Finding that participants who report higher secondary

traumatic stress were less likely to stop their children from using the internet may be indicative of the avoidance mechanism of secondary traumatic stress (similar to that found in PTSD) playing an active role in the participants' thought processes when confronted with their children's internet use. As such, prior research has focused on anxiety sensitivity and cognitive avoidance in patients with PTSD, with common findings indicating that individuals with PTSD report an aversion to situations that may lead to physiological arousal, with examples of those being associated with anxiety or fear (Simpson, Jakupcak, & Luterek, 2006). Connecting this research to the findings of the present study, it would make sense for participants who report greater secondary traumatic stress levels to be less likely to intervene and stop their children from using the internet. Specifically, participants with elevated secondary trauma levels may actively avoid stopping their children from using the computer in order to completely avoid inserting themselves into a situation that may serve as a PTSD trigger since computers and other technological devices are the main focal points in the child pornography field. The association between secondary traumatic stress and stopping behaviors was stronger for mothers, which also follows previous research findings on gender differences in PTSD symptom expression which indicate that females are more likely to have greater reactivity to emotional cues (Murphy, Elklit, Chen, Ghazali, & Shevlin, 2018). As such, the indications of moderation may be reflective of this research in that mothers may purposely disengage from stopping their children from using the internet, thus not inserting themselves into a situation that would involve them confronting an emotionally charged trigger for their trauma symptoms.

Results also indicated that child gender was negatively associated with stopping internet usage such that participants were more likely to stop their daughters from using the internet compared to sons. This finding is consistent with the trend within the realm of child exploitation

where a majority of child victims are girls, with previous statistics published by The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (2016) indicating that 62% of offenders arrested for child pornography possessed pictures that were comprised of mostly female victims. Additionally, child age and work exposure were both found to be associated with participants stopping their children's internet usage. Participants were more likely to stop younger children from using the internet, which is also consistent when considering published statistics that indicate that 83% of offenders arrested for child pornography possessed images of children between the ages of 6 and 12, and 58% possessed images of children ages 5 and younger (The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2016). Following the trend of the present study's findings, seeing that work exposure was associated with participants stopping their children's internet usage was not surprising as a majority of the study's participants reported daily exposure to sexually explicit material. As such, it is understandable that parents in this field would be more likely to stop their children from using the internet when considering the prevalence rates of child pornography; especially when parents in this field are aware of how widespread child pornography is and how easy it can be for child predators to make contact with potential victims.

Internet Rules. While the overall regression model for defining internet rules was significant, neither secondary traumatic stress, participant gender, nor their interaction were significantly associated with defining internet rules, not supporting the hypothesis. In addition, as with stopping internet usage, child age and work exposure were found to have significant associations with defining internet rules. Participants were more likely to define internet rules with younger children, which follows the trend of previous findings. With young children making up a large portion of the percentage of child pornography victims, it would make sense

for parents to work with their children to ensure they understand the rules for using the internet in order to prevent them from engaging in hazardous behaviors that could lead to negative consequences. Additionally, parent's work exposure being associated with defining internet rules may be connected to preventive mechanisms that parents engage in to prevent their children from doing risky behaviors when using the computer; such as going to an inappropriate website or talking to a stranger.

Internet Communication. Although the overall regression model for internet communication was significant, no significant associations between secondary traumatic stress, participant gender, nor their interaction were found. Again, child age and work exposure were both found to have significant associations with internet communication. As with the previous variables, parents were more likely to communicate with younger children about the benefits and dangers of using the internet compared to older children. This can also be connected to the statistics of younger children making up a large portion of child victims, with parents engaging in communication with younger children in order to ensure they understand the ins and outs of internet use to do what they can to prevent any adverse consequences. Additionally, work exposure's association with defining internet rules was expected. Due to the frequency of exposure and seeing how children become victims of sexual abuse, parents with daily exposure to explicit material involving children may engage in communicating with their children as a result of their experiences with child victims in the workplace.

Internet Support. While the overall regression model for internet support was significant, neither secondary traumatic stress, participant gender, nor their interaction were found to be associated with internet support. However, child age was found to be significantly associated with internet support. Participants were more likely to offer internet support (i.e.

answering questions) for younger children. This follows the same trend of previous findings in the present study that parents in this field are more likely to be available to and be more involved with children who are younger. Offering support for younger children is common practice as younger children are learning how to navigate their world on their own and learn through instruction.

Concern about Online Information Disclosure. In support of the hypothesis, secondary traumatic stress was significantly associated with concern about online information disclosure. Participants with elevated secondary traumatic stress levels were more likely to report being concerned about their children disclosing personal information online. There was also a marginally significant interaction between secondary traumatic stress and gender, indicating that the association between secondary traumatic stress and concern about information disclosure was stronger for women than men (opposite than expected). Participants being concerned about their children's disclosure of information online may reflect an active role of the anxiety/arousal component of PTSD playing into their children's use of the internet. It is common within the realm of child pornography for predators to engage in online solicitation while posing as an adolescent in order to gather information from potential victims, with 97% of cases originating with a law enforcement entity involving online solicitation to an undercover agent (The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 2016). Additionally, finding that women were more likely to report concern about their children's disclosure of information online follows the trend highlighted when discussing stopping internet usage. As the research states, it can be expected for mothers to be hypersensitive to fearful or anxiety provoking situations (Simpson, Jakupcak, & Luterek, 2006). This may give further support for the active role that the anxiety component of PTSD plays in the thought processes of mothers within this field.

IMPLICATIONS

Consistent with previous research findings in related fields (Cornille & Meyers, 1999; Menashe, Possick, & Buchbinder, 2012; Pistorius, Feinauer, Harper, & Stahmann, 2008), professionals who investigate child pornography may be impacted in their personal lives and their parenting behaviors. The present study offers additional support to this body of research with the association between secondary traumatic stress and participants' (particularly mothers) decision to stop their children's use of the internet, as well as their concern about their children disclosing information online.

Regarding the themes that appeared in these findings, it is important to acknowledge the need for additional mental health services to be made available to professionals in this field; especially when considering the variability of secondary traumatic stress symptoms, internet stopping behaviors, and concern about information disclosure reported by the sample. This need becomes more apparent with previous research on this population yielding similar conclusions. When studying a sample of ICAC Task Force agents from 511 agencies, 45% of respondents reported problems arising from their exposure to child pornography, with 40% reporting a belief that more mental health services were needed in their agencies (Wolak & Mitchell, 2009). In the State of Alabama, ICAC Task Force agents have an on-staff psychologist available to them but are only required to meet with the psychologist twice a year for one hour. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2016), psychotherapy for individuals with PTSD can last between six (6) and twelve (12) weeks or longer. For those dealing with secondary traumatic stress or PTSD, the state mandate of two meetings per year may not be sufficient. Additionally,

The National Institute of Mental Health (2016) also mentions that support from family and friends can be an important facet to the recovery process of an individual with PTSD. With a need for more mental health initiatives within these agencies, more required psychologist visits may be necessary while simultaneously involving the agent's family members in the process. This may, in turn, help the family/children understand their parent's behavior and the thought processes that lead to those behaviors.

Another important finding in this study was that work exposure alone, regardless of secondary traumatic stress symptoms, had significant direct effects on professionals' parenting behaviors, particularly for younger children. Previous research on child welfare workers who work with traumatized children has highlighted a possible bolstering mechanism in which, through exposure to traumatic situations, parenting behaviors are enhanced (Menashe et al., 2012). Consistent with findings that professionals who work with children may be prone to higher levels of anxiety related to child-rearing (Menashe et al., 2012), it appears parents in this field may be hypersensitive to situations that could potentially lead their child to becoming a victim of sexual abuse, and possibly unconsciously engaging in preventive measures to protect their children. With a majority of parents reporting daily exposure to sexually explicit material involving children, these parents carefully construct boundaries around their child's use of the internet by: supervising their children when they are using the computer, communicating with their children about the benefits and dangers of the internet, offering support to their children when they need it, and stopping their children's internet use when these boundaries are broken. It is important to consider the need for parenting instruction and/or parenting classes for parents who investigate child pornography. While the availability of such classes tailored to this population is unclear, research on general parenting classes indicates such learning opportunities

can yield stronger parenting skills, greater knowledge on child development, and lowered parenting stress levels for those who complete them (Scudder, McNiel, Chengappa, & Costello, 2014). For professionals who investigate child pornography, classes that teach them how to properly separate and healthily manage the family and work realms could be beneficial to the mental well-being of these professionals, especially when acknowledging the relationship between their own children/parenting to the child victims they work to protect.

LIMITATIONS

Regarding the present study, there are a few limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, due to participants working in federal and state law enforcement capacities, requirements for the study's continuation included anonymity of respondents due to security clearances and regulations. So, due to these restrictions, demographic questions were not able to include a location that would offer insight to geographical differences. Additionally, initial data collection was to be completed with agencies contained within United States provinces. In light of this, the ListSERV through which the surveys were distributed unknowingly contained email contacts of affiliate agencies outside of the United States, with surveys reaching entities in Norway, Brazil, Great Britain, and Canada. As such, the prevalence of child sexual abuse crimes vary by country, as well as the availability of governmental assistance in combatting these crimes. Similarly, parenting practices and beliefs vary widely by country due to societal and cultural influences as well as geographical location. Thus, due to the anonymity of respondent data, respondents' country of origin may have implications on the data collected and the study's results. Also, due to the nature of the survey's distribution, the calculation of survey response rates was not possible as the survey was distributed throughout both federal and state agencies both within and outside of the United States. Although there are an estimated 4,000-5,000 professionals in the field, it is impossible to know how many were contacted.

Another limitation relates to the formatting of the questionnaire used to collect participant data. While the demographic portion of the survey was thorough, an additional component that gauged the length of time in which participants were involved in the field could have provided

useful information when analyzing associations with secondary traumatic stress symptoms. Additionally, the inclusion criteria for the study were incorporated into the survey's formatting such that if participants selected that they did not have any children or did not have children between the ages of 5 and 18, the survey then concluded with no further data collection. With secondary traumatic stress symptoms being the last cluster of questions in the survey, no data on the presence of secondary traumatic stress were collected from participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria. Having this data for the 147 participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria could have provided a more complete picture of the prevalence of secondary traumatic stress within the sample and may have contributed to the generalizability of the findings.

Lastly, neither participant age nor length of time in the field were incorporated into the demographics questionnaire. Having information on participant age could have provided a clearer picture on whether parenting practices differed between younger and older parents. Similarly, gathering information on the length of time participants have been employed in this profession could have provided a more vivid picture of the spread of secondary traumatic stress symptoms within the sample and possibly contributed to the discussion of the mechanism of desensitization that was mentioned when discussing Hypothesis 1.

CONCLUSION

In light of the previously mentioned limitations, this study brings additional findings to the slim body of literature assessing the relationship between investigating child sexual abuse and the parenting behaviors of the professionals who perform these investigations. As such, the present study offers several important contributions to the literature. The evidence from the present study suggests that professionals in this field report a wide range of secondary trauma symptoms, and their parenting behaviors are both directly and indirectly affected by prolonged exposure to sexually explicit material involving children. Additional research analyzing the parenting behaviors of professionals in this field is suggested, with a focus on parent-child dynamics to assess the effects of this type of work on children of those who work in this field.

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Table 1

Participant Demographics Frequencies and Percentages

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Race		
White, not Hispanic	188	88.7
Hispanic	13	6.1
Black or African American	7	3.3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.5
Asian	1	0.5
Other	1	0.5
Decline to Answer	1	0.5
Participant Gender		
Male	138	65.1
Female	74	34.9
Child Gender		
Male	103	48.6
Female	104	49.1
Highest Level of Education		
High School Diploma or GED	34	16.0
Associate's Degree	38	17.9
Bachelor's Degree	94	44.3
Master's Degree	40	18.9
Doctoral or Professional Degree	6	2.8
Annual Household Income		
Less than \$25,000	1	0.5
\$25,000 to \$50,000	14	6.6
\$51,000 to \$75,000	18	8.5
\$76,000 to \$100,000	46	21.7
\$101,000 to \$150,000	85	40.1
Over \$150,000	45	21.2

Table 2

Type and Frequency of Exposure: Frequencies and Percentages

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Type of Exposure		
Search Warrants	198	93.4
Searching Electronic Devices	181	85.4
Interviewing Child Victims	133	62.7
Interviewing Alleged Perpetrators	172	81.1
Other	32	15.1
Frequency of Exposure		
Daily	111	52.4
2-3 Times Per Week	38	17.9
Once a Week	63	29.7

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1. STS Total	-									
2. Work Exposure	-.07	-								
3. Parenting-Warmth	-.07	-.16*	-							
4. Parenting-Involvement	-.09	-.08	.50**	-						
5. Parenting-Internet Supervision	.04	-.09	.35**	.38**	-					
6. Parenting-Stopping Internet Use	.12	-.14	.39**	.37**	.67**	-				
7. Parenting-Internet Rules	.03	-.06	.35**	.43**	.75**	.68**	-			
8. Parenting-Internet Communication	-.09	-.18*	.56**	.60**	.56**	.56**	.65**	-		
9. Parenting-Internet Support	-.01	-.05	.40**	.46**	.68**	.58**	.67**	.66**	-	
10. Parenting-Concern about Information Disclosure	.10	-.13	-.05	-.00	.11	.12	.19*	.08	.07	-
Cronbach's α	.93	-	.82	.80	.77	.65	.84	.91	.85	.85
Mean	35.20	1.77	25.31	40.90	13.20	7.80	17.54	46.21	9.27	9.41
Standard Deviation	12.40	0.88	3.01	5.06	3.84	2.19	5.16	7.62	3.24	4.70

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Multiple Regression Summary: Child's Age, Child's Gender, Work Exposure, Total Trauma Score, Participant Gender, and Interaction as Predictor of Outcome Variable *x*, with Gender as Moderation

Outcome Variable (x)	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	df1	df2	<i>p</i>
Parental Control: Stopping Internet Use	0.704	0.496	18.05	6	116	0.000**
Parental Control: Defining Internet Rules	0.647	0.419	16.22	6	141	0.000**
Parental Control: Internet Supervision	0.597	0.357	15.53	6	174	0.000**
Concern about Information Disclosure	0.273	0.074	2.27	6	176	0.039*
Parental Internet Support	0.517	0.267	9.54	6	163	0.000**
Parental Internet Communication	0.503	0.253	6.89	6	128	0.000**
Parental Warmth	0.290	0.084	2.92	6	197	0.010*
Parental Involvement	0.372	0.138	4.77	6	184	0.000**

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

Table 5. *Regression analysis for variables predicting parental warmth.*

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Warmth	(Constant)	25.50	.74		34.42	.000**
	Child Gender	-.11	.42	-.02	-.26	.793
	Child Age	-.14	.05	-.19	-2.63	.009**
	Work Exposure	.62	.24	.18	2.55	.012*
	Trauma Total	-.00	.03	-.02	-.06	.877
	Participant Gender	-.64	.45	-.10	-1.42	.158
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	.03	.04	.08	.71	.478

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 6. *Regression analysis for variables predicting parental involvement.*

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Involvement	(Constant)	43.33	1.30		33.32	.000**
	Child Gender	-.78	.72	-.08	-1.09	.278
	Child Age	-.25	.10	-.19	-2.64	.009**
	Work Exposure	.75	.42	.13	7.79	.075
	Trauma Total	-.05	.05	-.11	-.91	.363
	Participant Gender	-2.91	.77	-.27	-3.79	.000**
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	-.01	.06	-.02	-.14	.887

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 7. Regression analysis for variables predicting parental control: internet supervision.

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Control: Internet Supervision	(Constant)	16.67	.89		18.74	.000**
	Child Gender	.14	.48	.02	.30	.764
	Child Age	-.60	.07	-.58	-9.31	.000**
	Work Exposure	.57	.28	.13	2.07	.040*
	Trauma Total	.01	.03	.03	.30	.764
	Participant Gender	-.15	.53	-.02	-.28	.777
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	-.00	.04	-.00	-.03	.974

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .0$

Table 8. Regression analysis for variables predicting parental control: stopping behaviors.

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Control: Stopping	(Constant)	10.80	.58		17.98	.000**
	Child Gender	-.70	.30	-.16	-2.37	.020*
	Child Age	-.38	.04	-.62	-8.94	.000**
	Work Exposure	.44	.17	.18	2.53	.013*
	Trauma Total	-.06	.02	-.35	-2.83	.006**
	Participant Gender	-.48	.33	-.10	-1.46	.148
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	.08	.02	.37	3.08	.003**

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 9. Regression analysis for variables predicting parental control: internet rules.

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Control:	(Constant)	24.60	1.33		18.56	.000**
Internet Rules	Child Gender	-.69	.70	-.07	-.99	.326
	Child Age	-.97	.10	-.64	-9.49	.000**
	Work Exposure	.92	.40	.15	2.30	.023*
	Trauma Total	-.02	.05	-.05	-.39	.697
	Participant Gender	-.55	.78	-.05	-.70	.485
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	.01	.06	.02	.20	.842

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 10. *Regression analysis for variables predicting parental communication.*

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Communication	(Constant)	51.96	2.48		21.00	.000**
	Child Gender	-2.15	1.23	-.14	-1.74	.084
	Child Age	-.92	.18	-.41	-5.18	.000**
	Work Exposure	1.75	.70	.20	2.52	.013*
	Trauma Total	-.05	.08	-.09	-.58	.562
	Participant Gender	-1.23	1.35	-.07	-.91	.366
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	-.06	.10	-.09	-.64	.524

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 11. *Regression analysis for variables predicting parental support.*

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parental Support	(Constant)	11.99	.79		15.09	.000**
	Child Gender	.16	.44	.02	.35	.730
	Child Age	-.45	.06	-.51	-7.32	.000**
	Work Exposure	.43	.26	.12	1.68	.094
	Trauma Total	-.01	.03	-.03	-.22	.830
	Participant Gender	-.31	.48	-.04	-.63	.530
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	-.01	.04	-.04	-.29	.774

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 12. Regression analysis for variables predicting concern about information disclosure.

	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Concern about Information Disclosure	(Constant)	9.77	1.32		7.40	.000**
	Child Gender	-.79	.70	-.08	-1.12	.265
	Child Age	-.10	.09	-.08	-1.05	.296
	Work Exposure	.68	.40	.13	1.69	.092
	Trauma Total	.10	.05	.26	1.98	.050*
	Participant Gender	-1.19	.76	-.12	-1.56	.121
	Trauma & Gender Interaction	-.11	.06	-.24	-1.79	.080

Note: Participant Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 0.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Appendix A Internet Parenting Style Instrument

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
I am around when my child surfs the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I watch when my child surfs the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I control what my child watches on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I use special software to block certain internet sites for my child.	<input type="radio"/>					
I stop my child when they visit a less-than-suitable website.	<input type="radio"/>					
I stop my child when I see they are chatting online.	<input type="radio"/>					
I only allow my child to surf the internet on specific days and times (e.g. Only on Wednesday afternoons).	<input type="radio"/>					
I limit the time my child is allowed on the internet (e.g. only one hour per day).	<input type="radio"/>					
I limit what my child is allowed to do on the internet (e.g. no chatting allowed).	<input type="radio"/>					
I limit the types of websites my child is allowed to visit.	<input type="radio"/>					
I determine that my child can only contact people via the internet they already know personally.	<input type="radio"/>					
I define internet rules together with my child.	<input type="radio"/>					
I explain internet rules together with my child.	<input type="radio"/>					
I talk with my child about what they do on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I talk with my child about who they meet on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I talk with my child about the benefits of the internet (e.g. looking up information, playing games, contacting friends/family etc.).	<input type="radio"/>					
I talk with my child about the dangers related to using the internet (e.g. viruses, violation of privacy, anonymity of strangers, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>					
I listen to my child when they tell me what they did and/or found on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
My child asks me questions when they encounter technical problems when surfing the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
My child asks me questions when they are surprised about things they see/find on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
My child asks me questions when they don't understand things on the internet (e.g. difficult words, foreign language, difficult procedures, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>					

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
I discuss with my child the things they found/will find on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I sit together with my child at the computer to surf on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I show my child how to surf safely on the internet.	<input type="radio"/>					
I show my child "child friendly" websites (e.g. library, songs, crafts, games, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>					

Appendix B
Concern About Information Disclosure Scale

	Not at all Concerned	Mildly Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Moderately Concerned	Extremely Concerned	Not Applicable
I am concerned that my child may send personal information (e.g. names, addresses, phone numbers) to someone they have not met face-to-face.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned that my child may send photos or videos of themselves to someone they have not met face-to-face.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned that my child is sharing their passwords with friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned that my child will be the victim of an internet predator.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix C Involvement Scale

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
I have friendly talks with my child.	<input type="radio"/>					
I volunteer to help with special activities that my child is involved in (e.g. sports, Boy/Girl Scouts, fundraisers, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
I play games or do other fun things with my child.	<input type="radio"/>					
I ask my child about their day at school.	<input type="radio"/>					
I help my child with their homework.	<input type="radio"/>					
	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
I ask my child what their plans are for the next day.	<input type="radio"/>					
I drive my child to the activities they are involved in.	<input type="radio"/>					
My child helps plan family activities.	<input type="radio"/>					
I attend PTA meetings, parent/teacher conferences, or other meetings at my child's school.	<input type="radio"/>					
I talk to my child about their friends.	<input type="radio"/>					

Appendix D Positive Parenting Scale

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
I let my child know when they are doing a good job with something.	<input type="radio"/>					
I reward or give something extra to my child for obeying me or behaving well.	<input type="radio"/>					
I compliment my child when they do something well.	<input type="radio"/>					
I praise my child if they behave well.	<input type="radio"/>					
I hug or kiss my child when they have done something well.	<input type="radio"/>					
I tell my child that I like it when they help around the house.	<input type="radio"/>					

Appendix E Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often	Not Applicable
I felt emotionally numb.	<input type="radio"/>					
My heart started pounding when I thought about my work/job (or certain cases).	<input type="radio"/>					
It seemed as if I was reliving the trauma(s) experienced by the child victims.	<input type="radio"/>					
I had trouble sleeping.	<input type="radio"/>					
I felt discouraged about the future.	<input type="radio"/>					
Reminders of my work/job (or certain cases) upset me.	<input type="radio"/>					
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often	Not Applicable
I had little interest in being around others.	<input type="radio"/>					
I felt jumpy.	<input type="radio"/>					
I was less active than usual.	<input type="radio"/>					
I thought about my work/job (or certain cases) when I didn't intend to.	<input type="radio"/>					
I had trouble concentrating.	<input type="radio"/>					
I avoided people, places, or things that reminded me of my work/job (or certain cases).	<input type="radio"/>					
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often	Not Applicable
I had disturbing dreams about my work/job (or certain cases).	<input type="radio"/>					
I was easily annoyed.	<input type="radio"/>					
I expected something bad to happen.	<input type="radio"/>					
I noticed gaps in my memory about my work/job (or certain cases).	<input type="radio"/>					
I wanted to avoid working on certain cases.	<input type="radio"/>					

Appendix F
IRB Certification Form



Office of the Vice President for
Research & Economic Development
Office for Research Compliance

January 24, 2018

Tricia Witte, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Human Development & Family Studies
College of Human Environmental Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870160

Re: IRB # EX-18-CM-006 "Parenting Practices of Law Enforcement Officials"

Dear Dr. Witte:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.101(b)(2) as outlined below:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

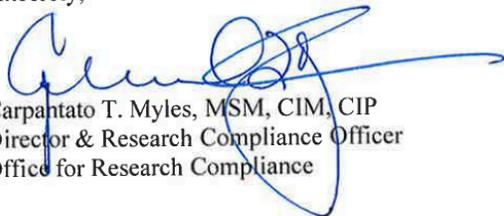
Your application will expire on January 23, 2019. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed stamped consent form to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Carpentato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office for Research Compliance

358 Rose Administration Building | Box 870127 | Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127
205-348-8461 | Fax 205-348-7189 | Toll Free 1-877-820-3066

Information Sheet for a Non-Medical Study
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM

Study Title: Parenting Practices of Law Enforcement Officers

Researchers: Jonathan Stewart, B.A., Dr. Tricia Witte, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Dr. Robert Laird, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Alabama

What am I being asked? You are being asked to participate in a research study. You qualify for this study if you are 1) at least 18 years old, 2) work with the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC), and 3) have at least one child between the ages of 5 and 18.

What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn? The purpose of this study is to learn about parenting practices and job stress for individuals working in the field of Internet crimes against children.

What will I be asked to do in this study? If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey.

How much time will I spend being this study? This study involves one online survey that should take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study? The main risk for completing this survey is that you may experience minor discomfort disclosing sensitive information. If you are not comfortable answering a particular question on the survey, you are free to skip the question. If at any time you become uncomfortable and feel that you cannot continue, please feel free to stop filling out the survey at any time.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study? There are no direct benefits from participating in this study.

How will my privacy be protected? This is an anonymous online survey that you can take in a private setting on your own time.

How will my confidentiality be protected? There will be nothing for you to sign so your survey responses can remain anonymous.

What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices? Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to this study but you do have the choice not to participate in this study.

What are my rights as a participant in this study? Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is your free choice to participate. You can refuse to be in the study with no penalty. Furthermore, if you start the study, you can skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering or stop at any

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 1-24-18
EXPIRATION DATE: 1-23-19

time. You will not receive any penalty for choosing to withdraw or choosing to not participate in this study. The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board (“the IRB”) is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that those involved in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being executed as planned.

Who do I call if I have questions or problems? If you have questions about the study right now, please ask them. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study – either before you take it or after you are finished -- please call Dr. Tricia Witte at 205-348-8147. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a person in this research study, call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348- 8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html or email us at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu. After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the UA Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127.

What do I do if I do not want to participate? If you do not want to complete the following survey, simply close the survey on your computer.

How do I agree to participate? Simply proceed with the survey if you would like to participate.

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CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 1-24-18
EXPIRATION DATE: 1-23-19