



# Bound and Intertwined: The Link between Pornography and Human Trafficking

## (Part 2)

By [Bill Woolf](#)

**Editor's note:** *This is a two-part article addressing the human trafficking of children and the link between it and the consumption of pornography. In the first article, we discussed how the viewers of pornography can, and do, become the consumers of*

*sex trafficking. This second article discusses how pornography is a tool being used by traffickers to desensitize and manipulate young people into commercial sex trafficking scenarios, along with ways that we can combat this issue and better protect children from sexual abuse.*

The issue of sex trafficking is a growing problem. Unfortunately, it is being fueled by the culture of sex that we live in today.

Pornography is a gateway into the exploitive and life-taking world of sex trafficking. As Victor Malarek noted in his book, *The Johns*, "The message is clear: if prostitution is the main act, porn is the dress rehearsal."<sup>1</sup> The power of pornography and its relationship to sex trafficking is disturbing and frightening. Not only is it driving the client base, or demand, of the sex trade, but it is also influencing our youth and making them more vulnerable to becoming victims of sex trafficking.

Pornography is available, literally, at the click of a button. Without safeguards put in place by parents or others providing internet access to children, young people can find pornographic images and videos with little to no effort using any device with online capabilities. I once interviewed a 14-year-old boy, who told me

that his curiosity was first sparked when he was watching an innocent video on YouTube. The video was that of teenagers playing pranks on each other. One of the teenagers pulled down the pants of another exposing his buttocks, which was enough to spark the intrigue and interest of this young teen. Acting on impulse and curiosity, he began searching the internet; six months later he was addicted to pornography.

The availability of these types of images and videos has leaked into mainstream culture and it has become commonplace for teenagers to share what they have found with others.

Pornography has become the main source of 'sex education' for our younger generations; the primary lesson being that sex is recreational and people are a disposable commodity. Not only does pornography reinforce this false ideology, but it subscribes to a doctrine that teaches the greatest physical pleasure is derived from impulsive sexual intercourse with a stranger. Young people are being indoctrinated with views that they are simply a commodity and that their existence and self-worth are based around their sexuality. While this is factually incorrect, this is what the culture of sex teaches our youth. This primes them to be persuaded and coerced into a life of commercial sex. If their self-worth is dependent on their sexuality (how sexually desirable they are), what better way to show themselves how valuable they truly are than to have someone pay money for their sexuality? Now our children can put an actual dollar amount to their self-worth, right? This is certainly the line that the traffickers are selling to our youth, reinforced by the pornography industry where 'actors and actresses' are alleged to make millions of dollars and are 'famous', glamorizing the lifestyle.

The most direct link between pornography and trafficking is that in many cases pornography is sex trafficking. Let's first look at the definition of pornography. According to Webster's dictionary, pornography comes from the words *porne*, meaning "prostituted woman" or "prostitution", and the word *graphos*, meaning "writings".<sup>2</sup> Therefore, a simple understanding of the word itself proves that the two are intertwined. The definition of commercial sex trafficking in the United States is when "a commercial sex act

(sex in exchange for something of value) is induced by force, fraud, or coercion."<sup>3</sup> One might allege that force is not being used in the production of pornography. However, certainly there are plenty of documented cases in which fraud and coercion are used. Donna Hughes highlights statements made by former 'porn stars': "I was threatened that if I did not do the scene I was going to get sued for lots of money", "[I] told them to stop but they wouldn't stop until I started to cry and ruined the scene", "He told me that I had to do it and if I can't, he would charge me and I would lose any other bookings I had because I would make his agency look bad."<sup>4</sup> These threats placed on young and naïve people are clearly coercive in nature. According to the United Nations, whether or not they felt they consented to the filming "becomes irrelevant whenever any of the 'means' of trafficking [force, fraud, threat of force, etc.] are used".<sup>5</sup>

## **What can we do?**

To effect real change, society needs to combat that which has become commonplace and the 'norm'. Additionally, as noted in the 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report by the U.S. State Department, "Rejecting long-held notions such as 'boys will be boys' and sending the clear message that buying sex is wrong is not just a task for governments, but will require partnerships throughout society, including the faith and business communities."<sup>6</sup> It is vital that our communities stand up and raise awareness on this issue. We cannot hope to reduce the instance of trafficking of persons and children, if we do not reduce the consumption of pornography. Each of us has a role in combatting the trafficking that is going on in our communities. For those who are still are not sure if trafficking is occurring in their community, Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, reminds us, "The only way not to find this problem in any city is simply not to look for it."<sup>7</sup> Simply hosting a public awareness campaign like that of the [Just Ask Trafficking Prevention Project](#) at your local parish or school can effect real change in addressing the issue and preventing young people from being exploited.<sup>8</sup>

**Endnotes:** 1. Victor Malarek. "The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It". Toronto, Key Porter. 2009. 2. "Pornography" Merriam-Webster Online. Retrieved October 21, 2017. 3. United States Department of State. "2013 Trafficking in Persons Report". Retrieved October 21, 2017. 4. Hughes, D. "Sex Trafficking of Women for the Production of Pornography". Citizens Against Trafficking. Retrieved October 21, 2017. 5. FAQs. UNODC. Retrieved October 21, 2017. 6. United States Department of State. "2013 Trafficking in Persons Report". Retrieved October 21, 2017. 7. "Sex + Money: A National Search for Human Worth". Produced by Morgan Perry and directed by Joel Angyal. 2011. DVD. 8. For more information on hosting a public awareness campaign to combat trafficking please email [info@justaskprevention.org](mailto:info@justaskprevention.org)