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It Can't Wait: Exposing the Connections Between Forms of Sexual Exploitation

Dawn Hawkins
National Center on Sexual Exploitation, dawn@ncose.com

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IT CAN'T WAIT: EXPOSING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FORMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Dawn Hawkins

*Senior Vice President and Executive Director
National Center on Sexual Exploitation*

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AT THE NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, we believe that different forms of sexual exploitation and abuse are interconnected, and that to deal successfully with one form of sexual exploitation, we must recognize and understand the links between them all.

I would like to illustrate examples of how forms of sexual exploitation overlap.

Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse and Pornography

Last week an attorney contacted us who is representing an eight-year-old girl raped multiple times by a thirteen-year-old neighbor boy. The young boy, who appears to be addicted to hardcore pornography, actually had his younger siblings and the sibling of the victim “watch” the sexual assault as if it were a play. What should we expect when a 13-year-old with an immature brain has been exposed and conditioned to the extremes of Internet pornography? It seems to me he learned his pornography lessons well and, as a result, it will take years, maybe decades, to unravel the trauma endured by all of these children.

Sadly, this is not an isolated incident. While there is not yet much data on this growing problem, reports of this kind of sexual abuse by younger and younger child offenders are on the rise. I receive Google alerts with news reports on child-on-child sexual abuse around the country almost daily. Last year, reports from England, where they are keeping track, explained, “Allegations of children committing sexual offences against other children have risen 78% . . . in just four years. . . .”¹

A news article from Missouri last year reported:

¹ Damien Gayle, “Claims of Child-on-Child Sexual Offences Soar in England and Wales,” *The Guardian*, February 3, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/feb/03/claims-child-sexual-offences-soar-england-and-wales-police-barnardos> (accessed February 4, 2017).

Child-against-child sexual abuse is more common in Missouri than experts had previously believed . . . Senate Bill 341 . . . [requires] all complaints of children with problem sexual behaviors to be assessed by the state. Before the new law, there was no statewide procedure for handling the problem . . . While experts had believed the number of cases this would affect each year was about 600, the first five months under the new law brought almost 2,000.²

Child sexual abuse often leads to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harm, PTSD, risky sexual behaviors, poor physical health, drug and alcohol dependencies later in life, and a host of other difficult struggles.³ We know that child sexual abuse often predates an individual's entry into prostitution.⁴

I believe that this issue of child-on-child sexual abuse is a pandemic. Tens of thousands of families are hurting and yet we're only barely starting to discuss it. We must quickly prepare for this and do all we can to curb it. We must especially assess the role early exposure to hardcore pornography is playing in turning our young children into sexual offenders.

Sexing and Sex Trafficking

Here's another story. I recently met a young girl who shared with me that after sending her older, supposed boyfriend sexts (i.e., sexually explicit text messages) as he requested, he threatened to share the sexts with her parents, teachers, and friends if she didn't do as he instructed. He went on to sell her for sex again and again to his friends and strangers. This went on for three months before she told anyone what was happening. Based on survivor accounts such as this, we know the use of sexting and so-called revenge pornography, also known as non-consensual pornography, as a form of sexual extortion is sometimes a tactic used by traffickers. Yet, young people receive little education about this and other dangers associated with sexting in our hyper-sexualized world.

One study I read last week in the *Journal of Adolescence* indicated that, "Offline sexual coercion was significantly associated with sending and being asked for a naked image, as well as receiving a naked image without giving permission."⁵

² Joe McLean, "Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse Bigger Problem than Thought in Missouri."

ABC17News, February 8, 2016, <http://www.abc17news.com/news/crime/child-on-child-sexual-abuse-bigger-problem-than-thought-in-missouri/55326827> (accessed February 4, 2017).

³ NSPCC, "Sexual Abuse: Signs, Indicators and Effects," <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-abuse/signs-symptoms-effects> (accessed February 9, 2017).

⁴ Rochelle Dalla, Yan Xia, and Heather Kennedy, "You Just Give Them What They Want and Pray They Don't Kill You': Street-Level Sex Workers' Reports of Victimization, Personal Resources, and Coping Strategies." *Violence Against Women* 9, no. 11, (2003): 1367-1394; Melissa Farley, Ann Cotton, et al., "Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Journal of Trauma Practice* 2, no. 3/4 (2003): 33-74.

⁵ Hyejeong Choi, Joris Van Ouytsel, and Jeff R. Temple, "Association between Sexting and Sexual Coercion among Female Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescence* 53 (2016): 164-68, doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.10.005.

This demonstrates that sexting is sometimes “an online extension of offline forms of sexual coercion.”⁶

Last year, the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department’s Human Trafficking Bureau provided reporters with a comprehensive update on the horrific nature and number of human trafficking cases that involve children and young teens taking nude photos of themselves and sending them over the Internet. They investigated 519 cases involving nude photos of young girls and boys; one in four appeared to be “selfies” produced by the children.⁷

Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

I am reading the book, *Paid For: My Journey through Prostitution*, by Rachel Moran, who shares her experiences in prostitution beginning at age 14. As a minor engaged in prostitution, this means she was a victim of sex trafficking because minors cannot consent to participation in the sex trade.⁸ One of the things she explained is something I cannot get out of my head. She said, “I told all of the men I met my age at that time. I did this for a reason: because it had the almost universal effect of causing them to become very aroused and to climax easily, which was good news for me because it meant that the experience was over with quickly.”

There is a major disconnect in the anti-trafficking movement. We cannot comprehensively combat sex trafficking while disregarding its inextricable connections to prostitution. Most prostituted women entered into prostitution as teenagers and most come from very difficult backgrounds.⁹

Quoting from a speech given by Dorchen Leidholdt, former co-director and now secretary of the board of the Coalition Against Trafficking (CATW):

Prostitution and sex trafficking are the same human rights catastrophe. . . Both are part of a system of gender based domination that makes violence against women and girls profitable to a mind-boggling extreme. Both prey on women and girls made vulnerable by poverty, discrimination, and violence and leaves them traumatized, sick, and impoverished. The concerted

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jim McDonnell, “The Dangers of Sexting: Commentary by Sheriff Jim McDonnell.” *SCVNews.com*, March 13, 2016, <http://scvnews.com/2016/03/13/the-dangers-of-sexting-sheriff-jim-mcdonnell> (accessed February 9, 2017).

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Administration for Children and Families, Office on Trafficking in Persons, “Fact Sheet: Child Victims of Human Trafficking,” August 8, 2012, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/resource/fact-sheet-child-victims-of-human-trafficking#USTrafficking> (accessed March 15, 2017); U.S. Department of Justice, “The Prostitution of Children,” June 3, 2015, <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/prostitution-children> (accessed March 15, 2017).

⁹ Kitty Nixon, et al, “The Everyday Occurrence: Violence in the Lives of Girls Exploited through Prostitution.” *Violence Against Women* 8, no. 9, (2002): 1016–1043; Mimi Silbert and Ayala Pines, “Early Sexual Exploitation as an Influence in Prostitution,” *Social Work* (1983): 285-289; Maureen A. Norton-Hawk, (2001) “The Counter-productivity of Incarcerating Female Street Prostitutes,” *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 22 (2001): 403-417; Melissa Farley, *Prostitution, Trafficking and Traumatic Stress*, ed. (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Maltreat & Trauma Press, 2003).

effort by some NGO's and governments to disconnect trafficking from prostitution—to treat them as distinct and unrelated phenomena—is nothing less than a deliberate political strategy aimed at legitimizing the sex industry and protecting its growth and profitability.¹⁰

Whether it is deliberate or not, one leads to the other and we cannot continue to separate these issues.

Stripping, Prostitution, Pornography, and Sex Trafficking

Not long ago, I read a news article reporting a trafficking bust at a strip club where a strip club owner pressured a 14-year-old to dance and perform sex acts for money.¹¹ There are constant news reports of prostitution happening in the backrooms of strip clubs, or being arranged between dancers and patrons by club managers. Among those of us who work to combat sex trafficking, strip clubs are known hubs for prostitution and sex trafficking.¹² Vednita Carter of Breaking Free, who works with dozens of survivors each year, has explained many times over, “Stripping is a gateway into prostitution, it’s the place where the training begins. Until we as a society recognize all forms of sexual exploitation including ‘stripping’ we will never end the vicious cycle of sex-trafficking and prostitution.”¹³

Fifty-five percent of sex buyers in a study by Dr. Melissa Farley noted that they located women for prostitution in strip clubs,¹⁴ and 90% of the men she interviewed, sex buyers and non-sex buyers, held the opinion that almost all bars and strip clubs in Boston sold minor children in the sex industry.¹⁵

The men buying sex know exactly where to go to find girls for sale; thus, I was shocked when I learned that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security, as well as local governments, are partnering with a group calling itself Club Operators Against Sex Trafficking.¹⁶ Purportedly,

¹⁰ Dorchen A. Leidholdt, “Demand and the Debate,” Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, (2003), <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/Leidholdt%20Demand%20and%20the%20Debate.pdf> (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹¹ John Luciew, “Human-Trafficking Victim Forced to Dance at Pa. Strip Club, Cops Say,” *Penn Live*, July 21, 2015, http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2015/07/human-trafficking_victim_force.html (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹² National Human Trafficking Hotline, “Hostess/Strip Club-Based,” <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sex-trafficking-venuesindustries/hostessstrip-club-based>, (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹³ Vednita Carter, “Strip Clubs: Where Prostitution and Trafficking Happen,” Prostitution Research & Education, October 7, 2013, http://prostitutionresearch.com/pre_blog/2013/10/07/strip-clubs-where-prostitution-and-trafficking-happen (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹⁴ Melissa Farley et al., “Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Don’t Buy Sex: ‘You Can Have a Good Time with the Servitude’ vs. ‘You’re Supporting a System of Degradation,’” annual conference Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Boston, MA, July 15, 2011, <http://www.prostitution-research.com/pdfs/Farleyetal2011-ComparingSexBuyers.pdf> (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “HSI, Club Operators Forge Partnership to Combat Sex Trafficking: News Release” June 15, 2014, <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/hsi-club-oper->

strip club operators are now partners in the fight against trafficking across the United States because they claim to be on the watch for sex trafficking and are participating in local anti-trafficking awareness campaigns.¹⁷ This represents a bizarre failure on the part of government officials to recognize that the strip club industry's business model is firmly founded on sexual objectification of dancers, be they male or female. Why are we collaborating with the very people who are responsible for selling women and men for sex?

Our organization, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, works to highlight the public health impacts and harms of pornography. In that role, I have had the opportunity to talk with dozens of female porn performers and I can tell you that nearly all of them shared with me stories of deception, threats, and violence that were used to either coerce them into pornography, stay in porn, or provide sex acts outside production of porn films. Traffickers and pimps are using pornography to advertise prostitution and to traffic women.¹⁸ Survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking regularly share that in the course of being prostituted, the sex acts were frequently recorded, distributed, and uploaded to the Internet.¹⁹ Further, females who consume pornography are at greater risk of being a victim of sexual harassment or sexual assault.²⁰ As my theme suggests, there are clear links between stripping, prostitution, pornography and sex trafficking.

The casual way we treat stripping, prostitution, and pornography has greatly increased the problem of sex trafficking. We cannot begin to solve the problem of sex trafficking and yet ignore raw commercial sexual exploitation.

ators-forge-partnership-combat-sex-trafficking (accessed March 12, 2017); Citybizlist, "County-wide Effort to Fight Human Trafficking Takes Effect January 1 With New Poster Campaign of Hotline Number," January 6, 2016, <http://southflorida.citybizlist.com/article/325772/county-wide-effort-to-fight-human-trafficking-takes-effect-january-1-with-new-poster-campaign-of-hotline-number> (accessed March 12, 2017); PR Newswire, "Adult Entertainment Industry Partners with Department of Homeland Security to Educate San Diego on Anti-Human Trafficking," January 17, 2017, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/adult-entertainment-industry-partners-with-department-of-homeland-security-to-educate-san-diego-on-anti-human-trafficking-300391819.html> (accessed March 12, 2017).

¹⁷ John Rogers, "Strip Clubs Team Up with Authorities to Bust Sex Traffickers," *The Seattle Times*, February 1, 2014, <http://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/strip-clubs-team-up-with-authorities-to-bust-sex-traffickers> (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹⁸ Melissa Farley, Kenneth Franzblau, and M. Alexis Kennedy, "Online Prostitution and Trafficking," *Albany Law Review* 77, no. 3 (2014), http://www.albanylawreview.org/Articles/Vol77_3/77.3.103920FarleyFranzblau20Kennedy.pdf (accessed February 9, 2017).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Silvia Bonino, Silvia Ciairano, Emanuela Rabagliette, and Elena Cattelino, "Use of Pornography and Self-Reported Engagement in Sexual Violence among Adolescents," *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 3, no. 3 (2006):265-288; Leslie Gordon Simons, Ronald L. Simmons, Man-Kit Lei, and Tara E. Sutton, "Exposure to Harsh Parenting and Pornography as Explanations for Males' Sexual Coercion and Females' Sexual Victimization," *Violence and Victims* 27, no. 3 (2012): 378-395, doi: 10.1891/0886-6708.27.3.378.

Pornography, Sexual Violence, Incest, Child Sexual Abuse and Racism

Let me elaborate a little more on pornography.

Common themes in mainstream, hardcore pornography today include teens and children, incest, racism, slavery, rape, and extreme violence (which is almost always against the female performers).²¹ Many young people are exposed to this kind of material before puberty, and many are consuming it regularly. Yet, we attempt to solve child exploitation and sexual violence without connecting this dot.

Mainstream companies like Verizon, Comcast, and Amazon are hardcore pornography distributors.²²

Last week, we reviewed the titles and descriptions of films offered through subscription by Comcast.²³ We found themes suggestive of incest, child sexual abuse, racism, and sexual violence.²⁴ One of the many incest-themed movies was called “Stepfamily Sex Therapy.” The description for this film reads, “Here’s the ultimate stepfamily mash-up packed with stepmom, stepdad & stepdaughter interracial orgy mash ups including filthy pecker-hungry aunts, horny old uncles and perverted friends next door.”

How many people are sexually abused by step-family members and suffer life-long anguish? This is the worst hell for many, and yet pornographers and Comcast are putting it out there like it is harmless fun and completely normal.

A few other examples of mainstream pornography sold by Comcast include the following titles:

- *Ivory Daughters Do Bros – Mad Dads Watch*
- *Gangbang Ambush 3*
- *Easy 18-Year-Olds in Public*
- *18YOs Blindfolded & Slammed*
- *Sweet Babysitters Drenched in Spunk*
- *Stepdaddy Creampied by Crack*
- *Babysitter Luvs My Wife*

²¹ Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked our Sexuality*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010); Chyng Sun, Ana J. Bridges, Jennifer A. Johnson, and Matthew B. Ezzell, “Pornography and the Male Sexual Script: An Analysis of Consumption and Sexual Relations,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2014) 1-12, doi: 10.1007/s10508-014-0391-2; Ana J. Bridges, Robert Wosnitzer, Erica Scharrer, Chyng Sun, and Rachel Liberman, “Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update,” *Violence Against Women* 16, (2010): 1065-1085.

²² National Center on Sexual Exploitation, “12 Leading Facilitators of Sexual Exploitation,” <http://endsexualexploitation.org/dirtydozen-2017> (accessed February 9, 2017).

²³ Associated Press, “Comcast Now Has More Internet Subscribers than Cable Subscribers,” *New York Post*, May 4, 2015, <http://nypost.com/2015/05/04/comcast-now-has-more-internet-subscribers-than-cable-subscribers> (accessed February 9, 2017).

²⁴ National Center on Sexual Exploitation, “The Dirty Dozen List 2017: Comcast,” <http://endsexualexploitation.org/Comcast> (accessed February 9, 2017).

- *100 Nasty Face Blasts 2*
- *Lewd, Young Whites Do Black Stepbros*
- *Daughters & Black Stepmoms Share BroMeat*
- *Ten Cute Girls Tainted by Black Meat*
- *Teen Anal Ravage*
- *Tight and Tiny Amateurs*
- *Young Asian Girls*

Much of the language used to describe these films indicates simulated rape with young girls. By consuming pornography with “young,” “babysitter,” and “teen” themes, of course adults are developing a taste for sex with younger and younger children! With themes such as “gangbangs,” “slamming” and “anal ravage,” of course America has a sexual violence problem!

Notice, too, the implicit racism in titles like “Ten Cute Girls Tainted by Black Meat.” Here, sex with Black men “taints” the females involved and Black men are dehumanized as meat.

Comcast even defended their sale of pornography in a letter to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation arguing that these films are a benefit to their consumers.²⁵

It doesn't have to be this way, especially as our federal, constitutionally upheld obscenity laws prohibit companies from selling this material. Our Department of Justice has refused to enforce these laws though, and, as a result, millions of children and families are experiencing immeasurable harm.

Sexual Harassment and Violence in the U.S. Military: The Link to Pornography and Strip Clubs

Our military has the welcome sign out for women, but our military men are constructing a sexually exploitive culture for them. There is a major cyber-based sexual abuse scandal in our Marine Corps that has just exploded.²⁶ The number of reports of sexual assault in our military continues to indicate a serial problem in their ranks.²⁷ While Congress has held multiple hearings on this issue and many groups have been mobilized to combat this problem, there are two things that we think are defeating their effectiveness in addressing sexual assault in the military.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Caitlin Yilek, “DOD Investigating Hundreds of Marines for Sharing Nude Photos of Female Colleagues,” *Washington Examiner*, March 5, 2017, <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/589511/Royal-navy-bans-pornography-x-rated-material-porn> (accessed March 12, 2017); Bill Chappell, “Sharing of Nude Photos of Female Marines Online Prompts Pentagon Investigation,” NPR, March 6, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/06/518767235/sharing-of-nude-photos-of-female-marines-prompts-pentagon-investigation> (accessed March 12, 2017).

²⁷ Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Department of Defense, “Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military: Fiscal Year 2015” http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY15_Annual/FY15_Annual_Report_on_Sexual_Assault_in_the_Military.pdf (accessed March 12, 2017).

First, the military is not addressing the consumption of pornography by its personnel. Pornography promotes sexual scripts which condition men to use, abuse, and objectify women. Yet, the Navy sells hardcore pornography at their base exchanges. We have also heard from military personnel that some military bases, especially overseas, provide free, unhindered Internet access to violent porn.²⁸ Second, many U.S. military bases are surrounded by numerous strip clubs and we currently allow our military members to frequent those strip clubs.

These are not isolated problems, but contribute to the growth and perpetuation of a sexually exploitive culture.

Sexual Assault on College Campuses: Ignoring the Consequences of Commercial Sex

When our former U.S. President and the U.S. Congress rightly appointed commissions and held hearings to address sexual violence on college campuses,²⁹ the solutions focused largely on teaching consent, a great thing, but completely ignored the fact that many of those 18-21-year-olds have been accessing pornography, with its raw, brutal, debasing, violent, and hate-filled themes, since before puberty.

Dr. Mary Anne Layden conducted a survey at a prominent New England private university where 1 in 4 of the college males (ages 18-21) said they had already visited or planned to visit a prostituted woman.³⁰ What does it mean when our college men see no problem with purchasing a woman? Surely that callous disregard for women's dignity will spill over into their actions with young women on their campus.

Again, these are not isolated problems.

A Call to Address the Full Spectrum of Sexual Harm

I want to keep highlighting the links between these horrific realities, because the terror and the trauma of sexual exploitation experienced by so many of our fellow Americans is great. In closing, my plea to you today is that we stop addressing these issues as if they are separate problems.

America is suffering from systemic sexual exploitation. Evidence supports the fact that child sexual abuse, prostitution, pornography, sex trafficking, sexual violence, etc., are not isolated phenomena occurring in a vacuum. Rather, these and other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation overlap and reinforce one another. We call on our federal government to stop approaching these issues as separate

²⁸ Jeanette Steal, "Does Playboy Belong in Modern Military," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 31, 2013, (accessed March 12, 2017), <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/military/sdut-magazines-military-stores-sales-2013jul31-story.html>.

²⁹ Tanya Somanader, "President Obama Launches the 'It's On Us' Campaign to End Sexual Assault on Campus," The White House, September 19, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog-/2014/09/19/president-obama-launches-its-us-campaign-end-sexual-assault-campus> (accessed February 9, 2017).

³⁰ Mary Anne Layden (Director of Education, Department of Psychiatry Center for Cognitive Therapy, University of Pennsylvania Health System) unpublished data, 2015.

problems and to start looking for solutions that encompass and address the seamless connections between all forms of exploitation.

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation has developed *The Freedom from Exploitation Agenda* to present Congress and the executive branch with robust and vital recommendations that powerfully combat sexual exploitation, protect human rights, and preserve human dignity.

We call on our elected officials, bureaucrats, human rights activists, and concerned citizens to join with us in addressing the *full* spectrum of sexual harm.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Dawn Hawkins, National Center on Sexual Exploitation



Dawn Hawkins is a passionate defender of human rights who has dedicated her life to fighting against societal harms that threaten the dignity of others. Her energy, creativity and mobilization skills have revived the anti-pornography movement. As Senior Vice President and Executive Director of National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), Mrs. Hawkins has developed a national strategy uniting conservatives and progressives, women's rights, child advocacy, and religious groups, including bipartisan political leadership, to work together raising awareness about the pandemic of harm from pornography. Her initiatives have led to sweeping changes of policies that foster exploitation at targets such as Google, Verizon, and the Department of Defense. Through her leadership, NCOSE has grown a network reaching hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Mrs. Hawkins has appeared on many local and national television programs, including Fox & Friends, CNN and Good Morning America. She regularly authors articles and speaks around the country addressing the harms of pornography and all forms of sexual exploitation and what can be done to curb the growing public health crisis resulting from pornography.

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