

# TOXIC

What do Bratz dolls for girls have to do with breast implants for women? What does hip hop have to do with sexual impotence? While the connections may seem farfetched at first, an informed look at our culture reveals that these are all inextricable threads in the vast web of commercialized sex.

Commercialization occurs when corporations take something that already belongs to the people, repackage it in a way that suggests it is now improved, and sell it back to the people at a profit. Bottled water is one example. Sexuality is another—and far more devastating—example. When human sexuality is redefined by revenue-driven CEOs, when the interlocking media industries (advertising, entertainment, fashion, television, the internet) serve it back up to a willing public, all of us lose.

In her 2005 book, *Pornified: How Pornography Is Transforming Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families*, Pamela Paul identified the ways in which the increasingly profitable business of pornography is influencing Western (and by definition global) culture. Far from being an exclusively male problem, pornography is a societal problem because of

its incalculable influence on the culture in which we are inescapably immersed. While it is one of the more obvious expressions of commercialized sex, pornography cannot be viewed separately from other forms of the industry, which include strip-ping, prostitution, and every other form of popular culture that objectifies our bodies, encourages us to sell and/or consume sexuality, and separates sexuality from the context of relationship.

The systematic “pornification” of our lives by powerful corporations that drive popular culture exacts a terrible price on society. In the following pages, we map the continuum, from seemingly harmless children’s products to misogynous, body-punishing pornography. The content is explicit at times, but we cannot afford to proceed with blinkered eyes.

# CULTURE



# THE SEX LIVES OF CHILDREN: A TALE OF CONSUMPTION

BY SHARLENE AZAM

Twenty-five years ago, a balding, middle-aged man approached a 13-year-old girl at a school play and invited her to model in his hotel room. Knowing her father would object, the girl asked her mother to take her.

They met in the lobby of the Hotel Vancouver, where the man told the mother to wait in the bar while he and the girl went upstairs, but the girl asked her mother to accompany her. He wasn't thrilled, but he shot several rolls with her mom in the room.

A few weeks later the girl received a copy of the photos, along with a note indicating that she was "not model material" because she was "unable to take direction." His meaning was clear—she had worn her mother's modest bathing suit rather than a bikini or scanty underwear, and she had refused to peek out from behind the shower curtain or lie on the bed with her legs in the air.

That girl was me. I had allowed myself to be photographed by a complete stranger based on the promise that he could fulfill my fantasy to be gazed upon and admired by the entire world. But I had not been able to do the overtly sexual things he had asked me to do. I had never been naked in front of anyone. I hadn't even kissed a boy.

If this same story took place today, would my 13-year-old self think twice about posing topless or spreading her legs for the camera? Perhaps not, thanks to the currently toxic level of sexual exposure among young girls. Bombarded with images that link a woman's value to her sexual willingness, girls see their role models engaging in graphic, exhibitionist behavior—and being rewarded for it (at least in the short term).

## GIRLS AS CONSUMABLES

The training starts early. Bratz dolls, manufactured by MGA Entertainment for preteen girls (7-12) "who are mostly into music [and] computers," are "fully articulated fashion dolls that provide hip and trendy alternatives to traditional dolls." According to the manufacturer's website, the dolls "are inspired by modern advertising and computer anime images"; sales neared \$100

million in 2001<sup>1</sup>, exerting enormous influence on the body image and focus of the latest generation of girls, a trend that began (and continues) with Mattel's Barbie.

"Things are heatin' up as Chloe takes to the scorchin' sands of Bratz Beach," reads the advertising copy for the "Spring Break" version of the Chloe character doll. "Strolling in the dreamiest bikini around, she's ready for what's sure to be a summer to remember." Chloe comes dressed in a bikini and see-through miniskirt. She sports peroxide-blonde hair and, like all the Bratz dolls, oversized lips and eyes, pencil-thin legs, and a wasp-sized waist.



Paris Hilton, Britney Spears, Jessica Simpson, Christina Aguilera: Anyone who has ever stood in a supermarket check-out line knows that, in addition to conforming to an extremely narrow definition of beauty (identical to that of Bratz dolls), today's female pop icons are sex objects to be alternately exalted, ogled, emulated, critiqued, condemned, pitied, and recycled ... ad nauseum. Even the more respected pop stars—those with actual acting or musical talent, like Scarlet Johansson, Keira Knightley, Avril Lavigne, Cheryl Crow—regularly strike clothing-challenged poses in magazines from *Vanity Fair* to *Maxim* to *Playboy*.



With role models like these, immersed in a culture where sexuality is tied to celebrity status and money, girls are conditioned to feel empowered whenever they are the sexual center of attention.

“At a party or wherever, to get attention, two girls will start kissing and then all of a sudden it’s like everyone is looking and all of the attention is on you. It’s like you’re on fire,” explained one 16-year-old girl interviewed for the documentary film, *The Seduction*, about middle-class girls who trade sex for luxury goods, drugs, and sometimes money.



*Trading on sexuality: Buy an X-Bra, the manufacturers suggest, and you can “get drinks for free” or “turn a ticket into a warning.”*

To maintain that level of attention, many girls are transmitting nude or sexually explicit photos of themselves via cell phone. The practice is called “sexting.”

“It is a way to become famous at their school, because those photos are widely forwarded among students,” explains Joy Becker, a youth counselor at Planned Parenthood in Vancouver.

“I’ve seen everything from your basic striptease to sexual acts being performed,” says Detective Brian Marvin of the FBI Cyber Crime Task Force of Central Ohio.

Girls understand that the most valuable commodities are

youth and beauty, both of which they possess. And they identify as sex objects because being a sex object is about being desirable, getting attention, and feeling powerful.

Twelve-year-old Maddison Gabriel made international headlines when chosen to be the face of Australia’s 2007 Gold Coast Fashion Week. Although Gabriel’s agent says she will not model lingerie, photos of her in heavy makeup and bikinis are online. Gabriel’s mother, who has been criticized for participating in the sexualization of her daughter, has demanded an apology from Australian Prime Minister John Howard who, on a Melbourne radio station, said, “Catapulting girls as young as 12 into something like that is quite outrageous, and I am totally opposed to it.”

Gabriel’s mother’s response: “I believe the prime minister is getting very dodderly. He does not know exactly what 13- and 14-year-old girls are like.”

Advertising and media feed off each other, generating a proliferation of images that are sexually suggestive or blatantly pornographic. These ads, music videos, video games, television shows, internet sites, and teen fiction then become guidelines for acceptable teenage social behavior. Sexual imagery is such a normal part of teens’ daily lives that, regardless of family pressures, disapproving peers, or religious taboos, very young girls are influenced into dressing provocatively, acting sexy, and becoming sexually active.<sup>2</sup>

Drunk, underage girls bare their breasts in *Girls Gone Wild* videos.<sup>3</sup> T-shirts for girls read “Porn Star,” “The Rumors Are True,” and “I Know What Boys Want” across the chest. Sweat pants have “juicy,” “yummy,” and “sweet” emblazoned on the backside. The current brand identity for girls is clear: “I am something to be consumed.”

In a recent ad series for a Tom Ford fragrance, a naked model presses the perfume bottle between her





breasts (in a classic porn pose) and against her hairless crotch, barely covering her genitals. Victoria's Secret model Marisa Miller poses for the 2008 *Sports Illustrated* music issue wearing nothing but an iPod. It is worth noting that in both the Tom Ford ads and the *Sports Illustrated* photos, the models' pubic hair has been completely removed, a grooming practice that is ubiquitous in pornography and that has become increasingly common among young girls and women.<sup>4</sup>

Gail Dines, a professor at Boston's Wheelock College who explores how media images shape gender/racial identities and the role pornography plays in legitimizing violence against women and children, points out that content that was once considered hardcore pornography—images one might find in the pages of *Hustler*, for example—have been successfully mainstreamed by the advertising and music industries. American Apparel has made a multimillion-dollar name for itself by shooting very young women in gritty, *Hustler*-style poses, and Joe's Jeans billboards are all pornographic in tone.



## WHAT EVERY GIRL WANTS?

Girls are sent the message that they should be available for sex and skilled at it. *Adorable* magazine sent their teen subscribers a sex guide entitled *99 Naughty Tricks*, including tips on French kissing and oral sex. *Seventeen* and *CosmoGirl* magazines regularly offer sex advice, often without mentioning a relationship as the context in which the sexual contact might take place. Sex as recreation, sex as inevitable adolescent experimentation, sex as obsession are so pervasive that the editors of the recently released *True Images: The Bible for Teen Girls* (Zondervan) feel it's essential to discuss oral sex, lesbianism, and "dream" guys alongside the study of scripture.



*How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*, Jenna Jameson's bestseller, is a favorite among girls (in spite of its unfiltered recounting of the degradations of her career), as is *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed*, an autobiographical account by teen writer Melissa Panarello, who loses her virginity, has group sex, sex with a married man, and sex with her math tutor, all before her 17th birthday. These are part of what Madeline Bunting of the *Guardian* newspaper calls "fuck lit," a genre which also includes such titles as *Secret Diary of a Call Girl* and *Indecent: How I Make It and Fake It as a Girl for Hire*.<sup>5</sup>

In the pre-teen and teen book market, *Gossip Girl*, *A-List*, *It Girl*, and *Clique* are best-selling series about upscale teens' sex lives, in which everyone has a T-Mobile Sidekick (marketed as "your lifeline to your social life"), a platinum AmEx, and coke-snorting parents who have extramarital affairs. In these books, where fitting in is the priority, even sex is about social positioning and status.

*Gossip Girl* has spun over to television, where the show's  
Continued on page 16.

# Pornography is everybody's problem

BY COURTNY B. DAVIS OLDS

Pornography, like sexuality, is most often deemed a personal moral issue. If the church addresses pornography at all, it does so from a moral standpoint: “Good Christians don’t look at that stuff” or “Pornography is a sin.” But what the church has largely failed to realize is that pornography does not only affect the person viewing it; it negatively affects all of society.

Pornography is pervasive in the United States, a country that produces and consumes more pornography each year than any other<sup>1</sup>, and pornography’s presence—and business—is growing. While approximately 1,300 pornographic films were produced in the US in 1988, that number topped 13,500 in 2005. In 2006, US revenues from pornography surpassed \$13 billion.<sup>2</sup>

With the rise of the internet, pornography has become increasingly easier to obtain and, as a result, is viewed dramatically more often—and by more people. While both men and women consume pornography, its use has a much higher occurrence among men. Seventy percent of all American men aged 18–34 view internet pornography at least once a month; an estimated 50 percent of Christian men in the US look at pornography on a regular basis.<sup>3</sup> But it is not just adults who are viewing internet pornography: 35 percent of boys aged 13–14 report viewing pornographic internet content “too many times to count.”<sup>4</sup> Graphic photographs and videos are only a click away—free of charge—and it doesn’t take many clicks before a person becomes hooked.

People look at pornography for different reasons—to see fantasies acted out, to avoid intimacy in a relationship,<sup>5</sup> to compensate for a perceived lack of sexual fulfillment,<sup>6</sup> to satisfy curiosity. People experience various responses to pornography—sexual arousal, feelings of power and aggression, guilt. But regardless of what drives its use, pornography has serious societal repercussions.

Pornography is, in essence, prostitution for mass consumption—the purchase of another person’s body (or the image of that body) for one’s own sexual gratification. Pornography objectifies women, stripping them of their dignity and reducing them to tantalizing body parts. Men who watch pornography are more likely to describe women in sexualized terms and to expect women to fulfill traditional gender roles than men who do not view pornography.<sup>7</sup> It is not uncommon for

men who view pornography to pressure women to engage in sexual activity, to push them to participate in practices that are depicted in pornography, and to depend on mental images of pornography to achieve and maintain an erection during intercourse,<sup>8</sup> a condition known as Pornographically Induced Impotence.<sup>9</sup>

Pornography takes a serious toll on marriages and families. One commentator goes so far as to state that pornography is “one of the leading causes of family breakdown today.”<sup>10</sup> Statistics support that claim: Two-thirds of the 350 attendees at the 2003 meeting of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reported that internet pornography was a contributing factor in more than half of the divorce cases they had handled in the past year.<sup>11</sup>

Pornography has a number of negative effects on children. Children who are exposed to pornography develop skewed ideas about sex and sexuality, which lead to negative stereotypes of women, sexual activity at a young age, and increased aggression in boys.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, a correlation has been found between children who were exposed to pornography in childhood and adults who are sexually abusive.<sup>13</sup>

Pornography has another direct effect on children: The adult pornography industry feeds directly into child pornography.<sup>14</sup> It is not uncommon for men who view adult pornography to eventually view child pornography.<sup>15</sup> After continued exposure to adult pornography, many men build up a “tolerance”; in other words, boredom sets in, and the images no longer provide the excitement they once did. In the search for greater stimulation, some turn to child pornography.<sup>16</sup> It doesn’t necessarily end there: A recent proliferation of child pornography websites actually endorses incest; with names like *BloodyVirgins*, *FirstTimeVirginSex*, *UseMyDaughter*, *Daddy’sWhore*, *YoungDaughter*, *FirstTimeWithDaddy*, and *DeflorationTV*, these sites assure men that incest is a natural and acceptable relationship between an adult and a child. A 2007 government study of men convicted on charges of internet child pornography use reported that 85 percent of the men admitted to committing acts of sexual abuse against minors, from inappropriate touching to rape.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, more than one expert suggests that if any substan-

*Continued on page 45.*

# Living in a rape culture: The normalization of violence against women

BY KRISTYN KOMARNICKI

We read about rape as a weapon of war in places like Bosnia and the Congo and we are rightly horrified. But how many of us recognize that our own culture actively cultivates not only a tolerance for rape but a virtual obsession with it?

If this sounds like hyperbole, type the words “rape porn” into the search engine Google and watch as over 3.5 million results pop up. Sexualized violence—sex as a vehicle for hurting or demeaning women—is currently the fastest growing segment of the porn industry. “Gonzo” pornography, as it is known, features body-punishing sex where the main attraction is making the women suffer and/or endure humiliation.

The desensitization that leads to this kind of “entertain-

ment” starts at an early age as children are exposed to increasingly violent media. The average US child aged 2 to 17 plays video games for seven hours a week, and the average adolescent boy plays for 13.<sup>1</sup> A full 70 percent of 9- to 16-year-olds have played “M-rated” games; almost half bought the games themselves, while a quarter bought the games with a parent present; only 53 percent of parents say they have ever stopped their children from getting a video game because of its rating.<sup>2</sup> Rape and gynocide are staples of the popular *Grand Theft Auto* game. Diane Levin, author of *So Sexy So Soon* (see resources on page 24), calls the objectification of oneself and others that these games develop in children “com-

passion deficit disorder,” a condition that cultivates cruelty in general and misogyny in particular. Robert Jensen, professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and the author of *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity* (see resources) writes: “People routinely assume that pornography is such a difficult and divisive issue because it’s about sex. I think that’s wrong. This culture struggles unsuccessfully with pornography because it is about men’s cruelty to women, and the pleasure men sometimes take in that cruelty. And that is much more difficult for people—men and women—to face.”<sup>3</sup>

But face it we must, for even if we studiously avoid the



ment” starts at an early age as children are exposed to increasingly violent media. The average US child aged 2 to 17 plays video games for seven hours a week, and the average adolescent boy plays for 13.<sup>1</sup> A full 70 percent of 9- to 16-year-olds have played “M-rated” games; almost half bought the games themselves, while a quarter bought the games with a parent present; only 53 percent of parents say they have ever stopped their children from getting a video game because of its rating.<sup>2</sup> Rape and gynocide are staples of the popular *Grand Theft Auto* game. Diane Levin, author of *So Sexy So Soon* (see resources on page 24), calls the objectification of oneself and others that these games develop in children “com-

pornography industry, we cannot avoid the general culture, and the same fascination with sexualized violence is everywhere we look. Last year the popular TV show *America’s Next Top Model* featured its contestants in a gruesome series of murder-victim poses—poisoned, stabbed, strangled, disemboweled, pushed from a great height, you name it—all magnificently photographed, of course, to highlight the women’s beauty. The show’s judges unashamedly made comments such as “Death becomes you, young lady.”<sup>4</sup> Some viewers protested, of course, but the creators of the wildly successful show were unmoved and, buttressed by powerful advertisers, ultimately proved to be untouchable.

We are apparently so inoculated to images of violence against women that we barely notice anymore. M. Gigi Durham, professor of journalism and mass communication at the University of Iowa and author of *The Lolita Effect* (see resources), has discovered that the tolerance we afford violence is uniquely directed at women. When she shows her students ads that depict beautiful women with logos carved into their flesh or pinned in a supine position and surrounded by several men (implying gang rape), they respond by saying they find the ads “sexy.” When she asks them to imagine a puppy or a young boy in these same situations, Durham reports that her students are repulsed by the idea. “The images of violence are arousing only when the violence is aimed at girls.”<sup>5</sup>

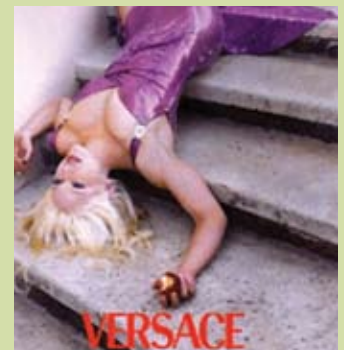
It’s important to note that many women also find these ads “sexy,” at least until encouraged to look more closely and analyze the images’ real message. While the media don’t cause people to run out and immediately rape, maim, or murder, Durham writes that what they do is cultivate dangerous myths that become stubbornly rooted in the culture and “gradually and insidiously shape our ways of thinking, our notions of what is normal and what is deviant, and our acceptance of behaviors and ideas that we see normalized on television, in films, and in other forms of popular culture. The myths are sugarcoated: They are aesthetically appealing, emotionally

at enormous risk.”

Maybe you’re a woman and you don’t feel oppressed by our culture’s insistence on objectifying women. Maybe you’re a man and you don’t feel tempted to think of women as less valuable than men. Even if that is the case, we still need to raise our children in a society that reeks of values that are diametrically opposed to God’s. What can we do?

Dines has a few helpful suggestions: “Frontload! Immunize. Don’t wait till your kid is a teenager to start talking to him or her about these things. Constantly decode the images you encounter. Ask, ‘What’s wrong with that picture? What are they saying in this ad?’ Second, nurture a community for your kids—kids can’t negotiate this on their own. Third, warn your kids about what the corporations and the pornographers really want—your kids’ money. I tell teen boys, ‘Don’t hand your sexuality to the pornographers before it’s even formed. They’ll take it and break it and hand it back to you completely deformed, and you’ll pay for it for the rest of your life.’” (For media literacy aids, see pages 22–24.)

Also, assume your kid has already been or soon will be



addictive, and framed as cutting-edge and subversive. But violence against women is neither edgy nor subversive... media-generated sexual violence against girls highlights and perpetuates a well-established system of brutalization.”<sup>6</sup>

Anti-pornography feminist Gail Dines explains, “When an oppressed group internalizes its oppression, it’s called playing host to the oppressor. Nobody plays host to their oppressor as well as women. Oppressed people need to study the ways of their oppressor. But most women absolutely refuse to study their oppressors. They say, ‘Jump’ and we say, ‘How high?’ Every single woman should know what porn is today, and should try to understand it...otherwise we’re

exposed to sexual violence. Recent studies show that 34 percent of US children aged 10 to 17 experience unwanted exposure to pornography while on the internet<sup>7</sup>; 90 percent of boys aged 13 and 14 report accessing sexually explicit media in the previous year at least once, and 35 percent of them report viewing pornographic internet content “too many times to count”<sup>8</sup>; 87 percent of college-aged men consume pornography, with over a quarter of the men doing so once or twice a week.<sup>9</sup>

If, when you speak out against pornography, people accuse you of being an anti-freedom, sex-hating prude, know that

*Continued on page 45.*

### *The Sex Lives of Children: A Tale of Consumption*

*continued from page 12.*

pilot treats viewers to underage sex in act one, drinking throughout act two, and an attempted rape scene in act three. Other episodes include lingerie sleepover parties and girl-on-girl kissing. CBS's *Swingtown* is another of the growing number of TV shows about wealthy teens: Its first episode features teens smoking pot and reading pornography, adults popping Quaaludes, and a threesome carrying on upstairs while an orgy unfolds downstairs.

The girls on these shows pay very close attention to the

value placed on being “hot” and become addicted to the power that comes from granting or withholding sexual favors. If you want to know just how much things on TV have changed, only 13 years ago the show to watch was *My So-Called Life*, with Claire Danes playing teenager Angela Chase. Each week close to 10 million viewers (more than NBC's *ER* drew last fall) watched “a decidedly middle-class girl whose grievances with the world were confined to an aching crush, the wish that her mother wouldn't insist on well-balanced meals, and her belief that social studies ought to be less boring.”<sup>6</sup> Angela wore baggy clothes, little make up, and had parents who were present.

## Primed for the streets

When learning about the prevalence of pornographic images and the increasing sexualization of children, some say, “Every generation has its way of rebelling and acting out. Most of these kids will grow up and out of it; they'll go to college and buy a house in the suburbs. They'll survive this.”

But a growing body of evidence suggests that many kids do not survive, at least not with their minds, bodies, and spirits intact. With the breakdown of the nuclear family, the widespread availability of the internet, and a culture that increasingly sanctions sexually graphic behavior, we have a toxic cocktail that leads many young people astray—often with tragic consequences.

“I wanted to feel loved. ... I wanted to feel important,” says a 14-year-old girl who started selling herself for sex at the age of 11—on Craigslist. “You could put stuff in your ad like ‘wet and wild,’ ‘fun and sassy,’ things like that to catch their attention, to make them want you,” she told CNN reporters, who were introduced to the girl by the Sacramento, Calif., police who discovered her in an ongoing sting operation to identify child prostitutes and the men who use them.<sup>1</sup> One can argue that this girl—who says she was raped at a young age and raised by a drug-addicted mother and a physically abusive father—was a classic “setup” for this type of thing, and that would be correct. But countless other girls, raised in what most would consider normal, even loving homes, also get caught up in prostitution, for a variety of reasons.

Adults Saving Kids ([AdultsSavingKids.org](http://AdultsSavingKids.org)) is a Christian nonprofit that exists to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of minors. The organization was founded in 1990 by

Rev. Al Erickson, a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, after a close family member got caught up in prostitution. Raped in college—as is an estimated one in four young women<sup>2</sup>—she was unable to access the kind of help that rape victims require for healing and, wracked with guilt and shame, fell into depression. A pimp identified her as a vulnerable target, befriended her, and promised her a good job in California, where he said he was heading. Although family members tried to dissuade her, the young woman soon found herself not in California but in Detroit, with a semiautomatic weapon in her face, drugs forced into her system, and a job that required her to sell her body many times each day.

If this girl, too, sounds like a setup, we might legitimately ask ourselves what girl isn't. By estimates that are widely considered conservative, approximately one in four girls is sexually abused by her 18th birthday.<sup>3</sup> And many girls who are not abused are—by virtue of naiveté, lack of reality-based sex education, low self-esteem (rampant among teen girls), and/or acquiescent (people-pleaser) personalities—much more vulnerable than we might think.

Adults Saving Kids has developed *Wise as Serpents*, a curriculum geared for use with middle-school-aged children with the goal of developing street-smart youth. The curriculum DVD features a former prostitute (Heidi) and a former pimp (Mark), both of whom have turned their lives over to Christ, who clearly explain the series of events and circumstances that led them into the sex industry. Their stories are alarmingly unspectacular.

## BOYS AS PREDATORS

If today's girls are encouraged to view their bodies as powerful tools with which to manipulate others, today's boys are trained to view themselves as entitled to sex, whenever and however they want it. They are also being socialized to be sexual predators by a culture that glorifies pornography and "the pimp as player" image.

In the "lifestyle" promoted by Beverly Hill's Pimps and Ho's, a clothing brand that is all the rage with celebrities and teens, males refer to themselves as pimps and to females as "ho's," "sluts," or "bitches." The "P.I.M.P." video by 50 Cent and Snoop Dogg has bikini-clad women—dollar signs hanging

from their crotches—on leashes attached to diamond-studded dog collars. Further glorifying the profession, *Rolling Stone* magazine honored Snoop Dogg with the title "America's Most Loveable Pimp."<sup>7</sup>

A sample of the lyrics from 50 Cent's "P.I.M.P.": "Bitch choose with me, I'll have you stripping in the street/Put my other ho's down, you get your ass beat." Jay-Z's hit song "Big Pimpin'" goes like this: "I thug 'em, fuck 'em, love 'em, leave 'em/'Cause I don't fuckin' need 'em/Take 'em out the hood, keep 'em lookin' good/But I don't fuckin' feed 'em."

The pimp image has infiltrated mainstream notions of cool to the point where almost everyone is trying to capital-

BY KRISTYN KOMARNICKI

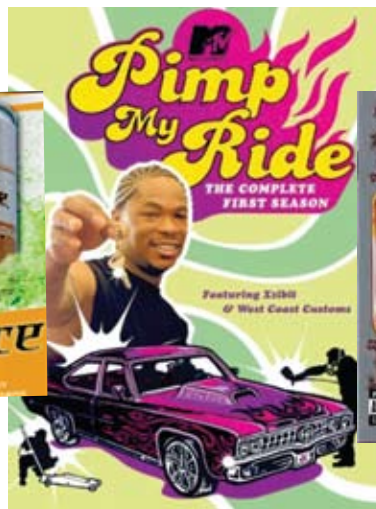
Both came from two-parent homes and were successful in their various endeavors. Heidi was a straight-A student and active in her church youth group. But when she left the idyllic horse-farm setting of her childhood on a four-year scholarship to a city university, she was completely unprepared for the partying and male attention that awaited her. A painful argument with her mother, who told her that because of her drinking she was a bad influence on her younger siblings and would never amount to anything, led Heidi to thinking, "You think I'm bad now, you're gonna see." Heidi remembers that day as a turning point, a vivid shift in her mind. Still a virgin at that point, she set out to change that, making a date with a guy who had a reputation. She changed her mind at one point during the date, but ending up getting date-raped, a situation which was repeated several times over the following months, leaving her raw with shame and self-reproach.

"I was so naïve," she recalls. "There were lots of warning signs, but I didn't see them." She met the man who would later become her husband, someone who recognized an opportunity in her pain. "He told me, 'Well, men are going to do this to you anyway. I'm the only one who loves you—your mother doesn't love you.' He talked about my mother a lot. 'Since it's going to happen anyway you might as well get paid for it. I respect so much more a girl who gets something out of it. Look at all those stupid girls out there who are giving it away for nothing.'" A 10-year career in prostitution, fueled by drugs and maintained by physical and psychological violence, had begun.

Mark was attracted to the pimping life because of the addictive power it offered. Gifted with leadership qualities that allowed him to influence others, he quickly realized that many girls suffer from what he calls "bondage to the spirit of rejection"—something that became a powerful tool for evil in his hands. "In most cases, the father just wasn't there. I would come in and be a father figure—sugar daddy, they call it." He describes looking for girls, aged 13-17, who were hanging out in places they shouldn't have been, then zeroing in for the seduction. Using the money from one girl's earnings to wine and dine a younger girl, he'd build her trust, eventually letting her see him pimp out the other girls but all the while telling her that she was special and would never have to sell herself for him. Over time, he'd begin to complain about money troubles and eventually send some very strong hints that if she didn't prostitute for him, he wouldn't be able to continue supporting her. His approach—used by pimps across the continent—was both systematic and foolproof.

Both Heidi, now a national spokesperson who educates young people in the prostitution/pimping trap, and Mark, now a pastor who trains other pastors in the challenges of ministering to inner-city youth, have dedicated their lives to redeeming their pain in order to help others. Their stories are not isolated incidents, but are played out every day across the country in the lives of countless teens. Growth in child prostitution led to the 2003 launch of the Innocence Lost National Initiative, run by the FBI in conjunction with the Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity

*Continued on page 45.*



ize on it. Inspired by his hit song “Pimp Juice,” Nelly introduced a two-dollar energy drink by the same name, packaged in a flashy gold and silver can. Incredibly, Nelly and the Fillmore Street Brewery, the company that makes the energy drink, recently launched the P.I.M.P. (Positive. Intellectual. Motivated. Person.) Scholarship. The application form states: “Students from all disciplines with no grade point average restrictions to compete in an essay and photography competition concerning how the student plans to ‘upgrade his/her life’ through education, hard work, creativity, heart, and philanthropy.” Students are encouraged to submit a photo of themselves holding the drink.

One group that is trying to combat the corruption of children is the Children of the Street Society, a nonprofit concerned with the growing numbers of children being recruited into the sex trade. Cofounder Diane Sowden frequently visits middle school classrooms, where she minces no words in trying to raise awareness about the evils of recruiting, pimping, and prostitution. “When you wear a T-shirt that says ‘Pimping Ain’t Easy’ or use the expression ‘that’s really pimping’ to describe something you admire, you are promoting child molestation,” she tells the students.

She points out that shows like *Pimp My Ride* on MTV normalize and glamorize the idea of pimping to both kids and parents, and then she jumps to a real-life example to demonstrate just how abnormal and unglamorous the world of pimping and prostitution really is. She turns on the overhead projector, illuminating a photo of a pretty girl with long brown hair against a generic blue background. “This is my daughter Catherine,” Sowden tells the classes she visits. “She was recruited into prostitution when she was in grade 7, the last year that she was in school.” She explains that her daughter was a partier who was introduced to crack by a man in his 20s in their conservative, mostly white suburb. Catherine began selling her body to pay for her addiction and soon had

a pimp—an all-too-common story and one the students can relate to.

Sowden believes that educating boys early may curb the demand side of prostitution. It may also make them more compassionate toward the girls and women who end up prostituted or in pornography.

But compassion is all too rare in young boys today (see “Living in a rape culture” on page 14). When two boys, 13 and 14, were asked for the purposes of this article how they became sexually active, their responses were alarming.

“From the time I was 11 my dad told me condoms come 12 to a box for a reason. He said I could have sex with a girl and then go off and have sex with a different girl,” Matt explained, adding that by the time most boys are 13, there is tremendous pressure on them to lose their virginity. “It’s like such a huge thing if you’re still a virgin by a certain age.”

Laughing, Kyle said that the fastest way to get laid is to say three magic words. “For most girls, if a guy says, ‘I love you,’ that’s enough for her to get naked and do whatever you want. Girls need to know the only time a guy is ever serious about telling a girl he loves her is when he’s at the altar or when he wants to get her panties off. They shouldn’t take it so seriously.”

According to statistics, boys don’t always use pretty words to get sexual with girls. In the United States, 15,000 children and adolescents younger than 18 are arrested for sex crimes each year.<sup>8</sup> Similar statistics hold true in Canada. “From 12 to 19 perfectly normal boys are turned into predators because no one is censoring their behavior. No one stands up to these boys and tells them that they will not be rewarded for taking advantage of a situation,” says Lee Lakeman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers.

“Young men are competitive with each other,” explains Samantha Kearney, a former high school teacher and a counselor at the Vancouver Rape Crisis Center. “One of their

games is to get a girl to agree to have sex with their buddies. We've had guys tell their girlfriend that she has to make herself accessible to all of his buddies."

### A DISTURBING TREND

While most online predators are adult men between 30 and 40 years old, investigators are observing the emergence of a disturbing new trend. Teenagers are now being charged in cases involving the production and distribution of pornography.

In Hamilton, Ontario, a group of 9th-grade male and female students formed "The Safe Sex Club." For two years, they met online after school via webcam and masturbated

for each other. One of the participants said he did it because "I don't have to worry about getting to her house. She doesn't have to worry about getting to my house." The teens used webcams to have virtual sex with a variety of partners.

Detective Constable Douglas Rees of Hamilton Police's Child Pornography Unit became involved when one of the 16-year-old boys allegedly distributed images of his former girlfriend, also 16, engaged in sexual acts. The youth faces charges of possession and distribution of child pornography.

In May of this year, Alex Phillips, 17, of LaCrosse, Wis., was charged with possessing child pornography, sexual exploitation of a child, and defamation after he posted naked

## Follow the money

**Howard Stern** (the world's second-highest-paid entertainer in 2007, just behind Tom Cruise) regularly features porn industry performers on the *Howard Stern Show*. In 2005, Stern signed a deal with **In Demand Networks**, the nation's largest pay-per-view distributor, reaching over 50 million households. In Demand is co-owned by **Time Warner**, which also owns **HBO**, home to recurring pro-porn documentaries, and **WB Network**, the first network ever to employ a porn actor on a regular basis (Ron Jeremy in the reality show *The Surreal Life*). Time Warner also owns *Sports Illustrated*, known for its mainstreaming of nudity in the annual "swimsuit edition," as well as **Warner Books**, which this year published *Boink*, a book produced by the Boston University porn magazine of the same name, for which the editor received a six-figure advance.

In Demand is also co-owned by **Comcast**, the nation's largest cable company, which in 2002 pulled in \$50 million from porn programming alone. Comcast also owns the **E! Network**, home of *The Girls Next Door* "reality" show (starring Hugh Hefner and girlfriends) and various shows hosted by porn star Jenna Jameson, whose bestselling book was published by **HarperCollins**, which is owned by **Rupert Murdoch**, who holds a major share in **DIRECTV**, whose subscribers spend over \$200 million a year in pornography.

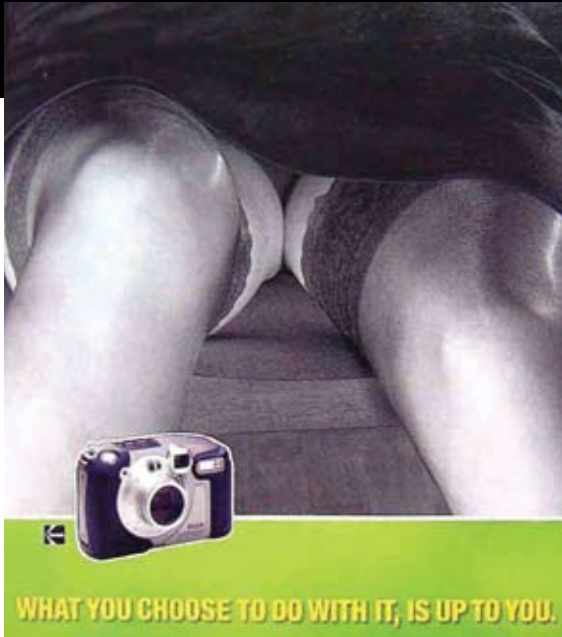
According to Jennifer A. Johnson, sociologist in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, who is researching the organizational network of the online pornography industry, "Only a handful of porn companies are public, the biggest

being **Playboy** and **New Frontier Media** (NOOF on Nasdaq). The vast majority are private companies, which means they do not have to report profits, ownership structure, or partners, making it extremely difficult to determine who owns what.

"It is clear that the online mainstream pornography industry relies on access to mainstream products to move their material to customers. For example, **Verizon** and **AT&T** both bill for adult content and have mechanisms for parents to block adult content from their children's phones, so clearly both of those companies are aware that adult content is traveling over their services and facilitate rather than block it. Porn production sites market themselves as delivering content that can be seen over an **Apple iPod** and/or be played on a **Sony PSP**. Without these mainstream points of delivery, the pornography industry would have a harder time distributing their product to a larger audience."

Is it realistic to expect corporations to take a stand against pornography? It's rare, given that it involves forfeiting enormous profits—but it does happen, and we should do all we can to praise those who do take a stand and urge those who don't to reconsider. A case in point is Best Western Hotels, whose leadership refuses to offer pornography on their pay-per-view channels. Why not write a letter to Best Western praising their decision, and another to **Bill Marriott**, who refuses to give up his hotel chain's porn profits, asking him to do the same, or risk forfeiting your business?

"Your letters can make a difference," insists Michael J. McManus, a syndicated ethics columnist. "If you don't complain, you are the problem."



Could tech-savvy teens become the newest pornographers? “People have preconceived notions of who the offenders are,” explains Connecticut State Police Sergeant Andy Russell, head of their Internet Sex Crimes Task Force. “It’s not the middle-aged guy in the long coat hanging out near a school. Not anymore.”

### CAN ANYTHING BE DONE?

It’s good for us to take an unflinching look at what’s happening in contemporary culture, but it’s only a start. We dare not stop here—neither head-burying nor hand-wringing is a viable option. So where do we go from here?

Is the church doing anything to counteract our pornographic culture? Isolated efforts exist, but in many ways, Christians have largely capitulated—we either stop at critique, turn our heads whenever possible, or become consumers of the stuff (uncomfortably perhaps, but uncritically).

In many ways the battle has already been lost—a whole generation of young people has been subjected to the most relentless barrage of lies about human sexuality. Our most effective tool now is to educate our children to be informed, critical consumers who speak out against corporate attempts to dictate their desires, who get angry enough to take their sexuality back from the pornographers. If enough of us join hands, we can envision a future where pornography is as socially unacceptable as smoking, taken as seriously by the health profession as obesity, and considered as damaging to the fabric of community as drug peddling or racial discrimination.

In addition to serving as professor of sociology and

*Continued on page 36.*

pictures of his 16-year-old ex-girlfriend from his cell phone onto MySpace. In Pennsylvania, state police were dispatched to Allentown’s Parkland High School in January to remove video and photos of two high school girls from the cell phones of at least 40 students. Thomas Hajzus, principal of Peters Township High School in Washington County, said three female students sent pornographic pictures last school year.

In Montreal, a 21-year-old college student recently pleaded guilty to sexual assault and child pornography charges. According to the *Canadian Press*, Simeon Boudreau lured 13- to 15-year-old girls whom he met in online chat rooms to his home and secretly filmed himself engaged in sex acts with them. He then tried to trade the homemade images for child pornography on an internet site frequented by pedophiles.

*Fashion confusion: rape and war or fun and games? Photographer Steven Meisel specializes in sexualizing violence, as in this spread for the September 2007 issue of Vogue magazine.*



## It's everywhere:

An overview of the sex industry's influence on mainstream culture

### FITNESS:

"Cardio Striptease" is a popular class offered by Crunch Fitness gyms around the country. Participants (mostly women) are encouraged to slap their buttocks, use "come hither" gestures, and crawl between each other's legs.<sup>1</sup>

In November 2003, an Oprah show called "Releasing Your Inner Sexpot" taught women how to strip for fitness fun.

### PLASTIC SURGERY:

From 1992 to 2004, breast augmentation procedures in the US saw a 700 percent increase, reports Ariel Levy in *Female Chauvinist Pigs*.

A growing number of women "are now exploring a new frontier—genital plastic surgery," the *New York Times* reports. Plastic surgeons concur that this phenomenon is directly related to exposure to pornography and women's desire to conform to its very particular standards. One Florida-based gynecologist who focuses exclusively on genital cosmetic surgery, has his own website, and advertises in strip club magazines reports that his business quadrupled in 2004.<sup>2</sup>

### FASHION:

Elementary-school-age girls can host their birthday parties at Club Libby Lu (owned by Saks Fifth Avenue), where their guests enjoy makeovers and go home with a unique party favor: a pinup-style picture of themselves.<sup>3</sup>

In 2002, girls ages 13 to 17 spent \$152 million on thongs, or 40 percent of their overall spending on underpants.<sup>4</sup>

In 2003 Abercrombie & Fitch issued a Christmas catalog featuring over 100 pages of college-age models in various stages of undress and sexual contact. One layout—featuring a gathering of wet, naked coeds—was labeled "Group Sex," with a caption reading, "Sex, as we know, can involve one or two,



but what about even more? ... A pleasant and supersafe alternative to this is group masturbation."<sup>5</sup>

From the Pimpfants clothing line you can buy your youngster a basketball outfit that says "Jr. Pimp Squad" or your toddler a T-shirt emblazoned with "My mommy's a M.I.L.F." (popular lingo for Mother I'd Like to Fuck).<sup>6</sup>

### TELEVISION:

In one episode of the popular *Sex in the City* series, a male character is discovered to be videotaping the sex he has with various women, without their knowledge. Far from being outraged, female lead Carrie heads straight over to his place for the thrill of being filmed in the act.

### HIGHER EDUCATION:

Yale University hosted its sixth annual student-run "Sex Week" in February, inviting Steve Hirsch, founder/owner of the porn studio Vivid Productions to discuss his success in the business.

The week's activities included a contest to identify the female student "Who Looks Most Like a Vivid Girl."<sup>7</sup>



From a group of undergrads at Boston University comes

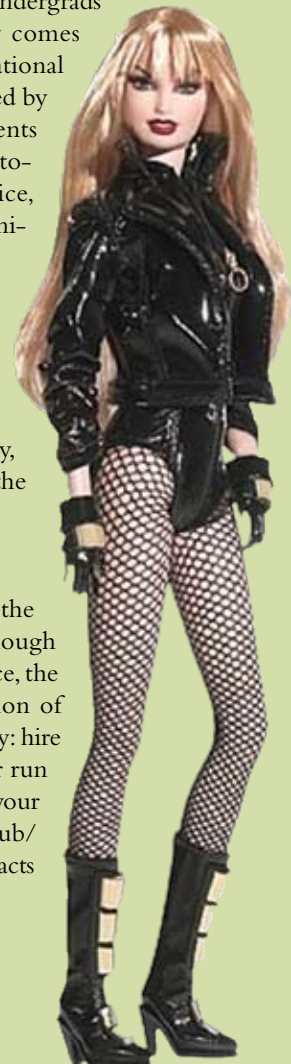
*Boink* magazine, "a national sex magazine published by and for college students that features graphic stories, prescriptive advice, confessions, and nude pictures of real local university students."<sup>8</sup>

### CHILDREN'S TOYS:

Mattel's "Black Canary Barbie," scheduled for a September release, comes outfitted in fishnet stockings, faux-leather motorcycle jacket/bodice, black gloves, and boots (sorry, no pants or skirt); protestors are calling her the S&M Barbie.<sup>9</sup>

### VIDEO GAMES:

*Grand Theft Auto* and *Hitman* are just two of the sexually violent games on the market. Although rated M for a "mature" (18 and older) audience, the games enjoy wide exposure. The latest version of *Grand Theft Auto* proposes this winning strategy: hire a prostitute and then shoot her in the head or run her over with your car so that you can get your money back from her. It also includes a strip club/brothel where your character can solicit sexual acts from female characters.



## Building a broad coalition

The following nonprofit groups represent a wide and growing concern for the way our children are being groomed to be pawns for the sex industry (as consumers, performers, and producers), the way our families are being destroyed by the sex industry, and the way all of us are being systematically desensitized by an increasingly pornified popular culture. Each group is doing valuable work in its chosen area of advocacy and activism, and each deserves the support of Christians who believe in protecting the image of God inherent in humanity.

Please take the time to check out the work these groups do and the action steps they propose. It is only by joining hands across the political and faith spectrum that we can succeed in rousing citizens to an understanding of how devastating the commercialization of sex is to all of us.

**Adults Saving Kids** ([AdultsSavingKids.org](http://AdultsSavingKids.org)) is a Christian organization that seeks to keep kids out of the sex industry (see “Primed for the streets” on page 16).

**Tools:** Prevention through education of children and parents

**Resources:** Excellent curriculum for junior high students; prayer guide; devotional material focusing on sex, manipulation, and objectification of others; specific action ideas for fathers/men; definitions of sex industry terms/types; expositional writing on sex industry myths; and much more.

**Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood** ([CommercialFreeChildhood.org](http://CommercialFreeChildhood.org)) is a secular coalition of healthcare professionals, educators, advocacy groups, and concerned parents who counter the harmful effects of marketing to children.

**Tools:** action, advocacy, public awareness raising, research

**Resources:** a dozen or so campaigns that people can join at any time, along with letters, petitions, and press releases that chart the progress of each campaign; multiple annual summits; legislative news and related action ideas.

**Christians for Biblical Equality** ([CBEInternational.org](http://CBEInternational.org)) is comprised of individuals and church members from more than 80 denominations who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women. Their focus on equality is a necessary starting point for combating the tolerance of pornography and violence against women and children.

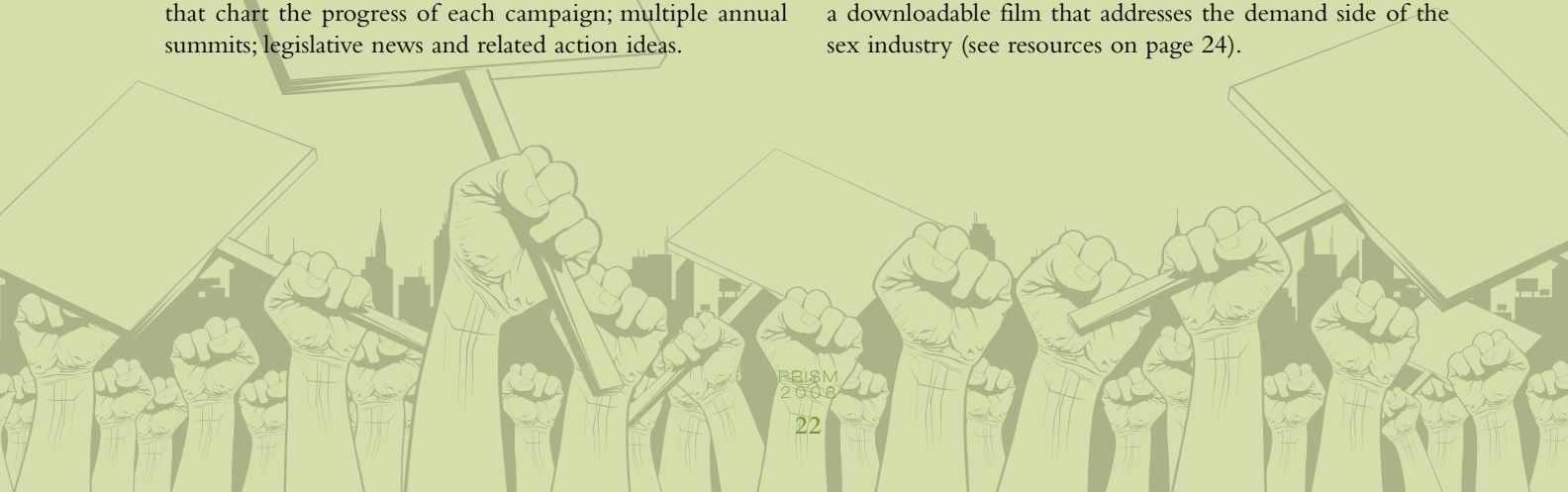
**Tools:** educating the body of Christ through literature and building community support for male and female Christian feminists.

**Resources:** two print publications that promote a biblical view of gender equality and justice in the church, home, and world; online archives of all publications, which include a number of articles that deal with a wide range of issues—sexuality, gender roles, pornography; and an online book store that offers a wealth of relevant titles.

**The Defenders USA** ([TheDefendersUSA.org](http://TheDefendersUSA.org)) is a coalition of Christian men who are opposed to all forms of commercialized sex. They also encourage public discussion and empower activists, political leaders, members of the media, civil society groups, faith-based organizations, and churches to stand against this harmful market.

**Tools:** public awareness raising, the Truck Stop Campaign (an effort that involves joining with the trucking community—common users of prostitution—to travel to stops along the highway, handing out Defender materials, and asking drivers to join them in taking the pledge to become a Defender).

**Resources:** the “Defenders Pledge” (for men who promise to spurn all forms of the sex industry, to hold themselves and their friends accountable for their actions toward women and children, and to do everything in their power to protect children from the destructive sex market); information on how to host an educational event; End Demand, a downloadable film that addresses the demand side of the sex industry (see resources on page 24).



**Concerned Women for America** (CWfA.org) is the nation's largest public policy women's organization, helping bring biblical principles into all levels of public policy. Pornography is one of the six core issues they focus on.

**Tools:** lobbying legislators, holding the US Department of Justice accountable for its promises

**Resources:** rich source of articles and updates on legislative efforts (or, often, lack of efforts) to enforce federal obscenity laws; state-specific and federal legislative action alerts.

**Family Research Council** (FRC.org/the-media) is a Christian organization that supports the vigorous enforcement of existing laws banning the distribution of obscene materials and the enactment of new laws criminalizing the distribution of non-obscene pornographic material to children. It supports efforts by the Federal Communications Commission to increase the fines and penalties for the broadcast of indecent and profane materials, and FRC believes such restrictions should be applied to cable and satellite transmissions.

**Tools:** lobbying, action alerts

**Resources:** internet guide for parents, lectures, legal briefs, fact sheets, and reports dealing with pornography, marketing to children, and broadcast decency.

**Lighted Candle Society** (LightedCandle.org) is a nationwide community of concerned citizens dedicated to the eradication of pornography. They envision a society where pornography is widely shunned and where serious consequences await those that produce and distribute sexually explicit material.

**Tools:** Litigation, scientific research, public awareness raising

**Resources:** information on taking the pornography industry to court; community resources; ways to protect your family from pornography; related websites such as HerStoryLives.com, which features stories of women whose lives have been changed by pornography addiction in their families, and PornographyStats.com, which reports on profit earnings of the industry and research on the effects of pornography; email alerts; and much more.

**Media Awareness Network** (Media-Awareness.ca) promotes critical thinking in young people about the media.

**Tools:** Education of parents, kids, and teachers

**Resources:** Excellent downloadable lesson plans/classroom resources for teachers, and for parents tips on how to talk to kids about media, gain control of the home entertainment playground, and speak out as a consumer.

**Media Watch** (MediaWatch.com) challenges sexism, racism, and violence in the media from a feminist perspective.

**Tools:** Education and action (boycotts, letter campaigns)

**Resources:** several active campaigns (currently against sexualized violence in *Vogue* and *America's Next Top Model*); good collection of lectures, articles, and interviews.

**Morality in Media** (MoralityInMedia.org) informs on the harms of pornography and how we can use the law to protect our communities and children. This interfaith group also works to maintain standards of decency on TV and in other media. Be sure to check out their sister sites, ObscenityCrimes.org, where you can report possible violations of internet obscenity laws, and the National Obscenity Law Center (MoralityInMedia.org/NOLC), which provides legal resources to public officials who want to combat obscenity and "adult" businesses.

**Tools:** Law, public education, grassroots activism

**Resources:** A public inquiry service; various publications to help citizens deal with obscenity in their communities and in the media; annual White Ribbon Against Pornography Campaign (this year Oct. 26 to Nov. 2).

**Stop Porn Culture** (StopPornCulture.org) is dedicated to challenging the pornography industry. Their work toward ending industries of sexual exploitation is grounded in a feminist analysis of sexist, racist, and economic oppression. They affirm sexuality that is rooted in equality and free of exploitation, coercion, and violence.

**Tools:** Grassroots education and activism

**Resources:** Downloadable *Who Wants to Be a Porn Star?* slideshow with presentation tips; educational articles and videos; anti-pornography video blog; No-Porn Pledge.



# Resources

## BOOKS

*Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* by Ariel Levy (Free Press, 2006)

*Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity* by Robert Jensen (South End Press, 2007)

*Not for Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography*, ed. Rebecca Whisnant and Christine Stark (Spinifex Press, 2005)

*Oral Sex Is the New Goodnight Kiss: The Sexual Bullying of Middle-Class Girls* by Sharlene Azam (2008)

*The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It* by M. Gigi Durham (Overlook Books, 2008)

*Pornified: How Pornography Is Transforming Our Lives, Our Relationships, and Our Families* by Pamela Paul (Times Books, 2005)

*So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids* by Diane E. Levin and Jean Kilbourne (Ballantine Books, 2008)



## FILMS

*A Drug Called Pornography* (HarmfulEffectsofPornography.com) corrects the misconceptions that pornography is harmless to its users. It includes the latest scientific facts and interviews with experts who detail the negative effects of porn use.

*Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (MediaEd.org) provides a riveting examination of manhood, sexism, and racism in hip-hop culture. Director Byron Hurt, former star college quarterback, longtime hip-hop fan, and gender violence prevention educator, conceived the documentary as a “loving critique” of a number of disturbing trends in the world of rap music.

*Killing Us Softly* (MediaEd.org) reviews over 160 ads and TV commercials to critique advertising’s image of women. This film fosters creative and productive dialogue, invites viewers to look at familiar images in a new way, and moves them to take action.

*Demand* (EndDemand.org) is an explosive new documentary, featuring investigative footage of the dark and hidden world of sex traffickers, pimps, and buyers. This film exposes the men who buy commercial sex, the vulnerable women and children sold as commodities, and the facilitators of the sale within the marketplace of exploitation.

*The Price of Pleasure* (MediaEd.org) exposes pornography as one of the most visible and profitable sectors of the cultural industries, assuming an unprecedented role in the mainstream of popular culture even as its content has become more extreme, harsh, and overtly sexist/racist. This film places the voices of critics, producers, and performers alongside the observations of men and women as they candidly discuss the role pornography has played in shaping their sexual imaginations and relationships.

*The Seduction* is a documentary by our cover-story writer that looks at middle-class girls who prostitute...and pimp. This disturbing look at teen girls’ casual sexual attitudes is an urgent wake-up call to parents, teachers, healthcare providers, etc. (A copy of this documentary, along with Sharlene Azam’s latest book, see above, can be purchased from the author for \$25. Contact her at [azam\\_sharlene@yahoo.com](mailto:azam_sharlene@yahoo.com) for ordering info.)

*Traffic Control* (TrafficControlTheMovie.com) exposes the reach and influence of the pornography industry. A few snippets from the experts interviewed: “We’re experiencing a mental health crisis and a child abuse crisis of epidemic proportions...This is a community issue. If we don’t collectively decide that this is important, it’s a loser’s game.”

women's studies at Wheelock, Gail Dines is one of the founding members of Stop Porn Culture, a national anti-pornography movement. As a feminist in the academic world, she is a lonely voice in a sector of society that most often views pornography as a freedom-of-speech issue and sex work as empowering to women (in spite of all the research to the contrary). She is also a prophetic voice who is unmasking the "corporate pimps" who peddle and profit from our pornographic culture, to acknowledge the emperor's nakedness, and to reveal the lies that threaten to make us both compliant and complicit. (See "Follow the money" on page 19.)

What troubles her most is the growing sexualization of violence in popular culture (in advertising, video games, toys)—with women being the most common victims by far—and the increasingly violent turn the US pornography industry has taken in the last decade. Dines compares cultural degradation to environmental destruction: "There's a point where it's too hard to go back," she says, "when people have become too robotic, have lost what it means to be human, and are thoroughly colonized by the corporate pimps. It has to stop, now. If we don't do it, there is nobody else out there who is going to."

The smallest voice can make a difference. Dines tells of going into a shopping mall one December with her son, who was 5 years old at the time. "Uh-oh," she heard him say, and looked down to find him pointing at a window display that featured a manikin hanging, gallows-style, from a string of Christmas lights. Dines went straight to the manager of the store and asked that they take it down. The manager defended the display as "edgy" and "artistic." Dines held her

ground, saying, "I represent a group called the National Boycott Alliance, and I'm coming back here tomorrow with a photographer. If that display is still there, we're going to photograph it and put you on our boycott list."

There is no such thing as the National Boycott Alliance—Dines made it up on the spot!—but she knows that it's all about profit and no store wants to be boycotted, especially before Christmas. By the next day the display had been dismantled. "I suggest carrying a clipboard with you when you shop," says Dine, smiling but dead serious. "Managers are very afraid of clipboards!"

Will the church join hands with this growing movement, strengthened and enriched by religious and political diversity, to form a broad coalition to reclaim childhood and promote healthy sexuality?

This will involve, among other things, educating ourselves and others, holding ourselves accountable for the pornography we as Christians consume (and repenting), addressing issues of gender oppression within the church, telling those corporations that profit from pornography that we won't stand for it (and boycotting them when they refuse to listen), collaborating with others who have the same goal (see "Building a broad coalition" on page 22-23 for a list of organizations we can partner with), and using all our available means—even if it's just a clipboard. ■

*Based in California, Sharlene Azam (azam\_sharlene@yahoo.com) writes about teens. She is the author of Rebel, Rogue, Mischievous Babe: Stories about Being a Powerful Girl (Harper Collins, 2001) and Oral Sex Is the New Goodnight Kiss: The Sexual Bullying of Middle-Class Girls, due out this fall.*

*Editor's note: due to space limitations, endnotes have been posted at [esa-online.org/Endnotes](http://esa-online.org/Endnotes).*

### *Pornography is everybody's problem*

*continued from page 13.*

tial progress is to be made in the fight against human trafficking, pornography must also be addressed and combated. According to USAID, an estimated 50,000 persons are held in sexual slavery in the United States alone. The idea that human beings can be bought and sold for personal gain or pleasure is foundational to both the pornography industry and the human trafficking industry.<sup>18</sup> The two industries are linked by more than this foundation, however: they feed into and off of one another. When one industry grows, so does the other—and a greater number of adults and children are victimized by the abuse, deception, and coercion inherent in both the pornography and human trafficking industries.

Because of its wide-ranging and negative effects on women, children, marriages, families, and society at large, pornography cannot continue to be seen as simply a personal moral issue. The church must recognize that pornography is a problem as broad as it is sinister, and we must begin to address it accordingly. ■

*Courtney B. Davis Olds is currently studying theology as a Sider Scholar at Palmer Theological Seminary in Wynnewood, Pa. She lives in Philadelphia.*

To learn more and to access help for pornography addiction, check out any of the following websites:

GirlsAgainstPorn.com	DadsAndDaughters.org
FaithfulAndTrueMinistries.com	HarvestUSA.org
Life-Strategies.org	NewLifePartners.org

*Editor's note: due to space limitations, endnotes have been posted at esa-online.org/Endnotes.*

### *Living in a rape culture*

*continued from page 15.*

you are nothing of the kind. “To criticize pornography is not repressive,” writes Jensen. “To speak about what one knows and feels and dreams is, in fact, liberating. We are not free if we aren’t free to talk about our desire for an egalitarian intimacy and sexuality that would reject pain and humiliation. That is not prudishness or censorship . . . It is to say that people matter more than the profits of pornographers and the pleasure of pornography consumers.”<sup>10</sup>

Dines asserts that speaking out against harmful sexuality makes us no more anti-sex than speaking out against unhealthy fast food makes us anti-eating. We hate pornography precisely because we love sex so much! As Christians, we affirm

the beauty of the body and the sanctity of God’s gift of sexuality. Let us reclaim it, unashamedly. ■

*Editor's note: due to space limitations, endnotes have been posted at esa-online.org/Endnotes.*

### *Primed for the streets*

*continued from page 17.*

Section and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Unfortunately, most of the laws currently on the books make it easier to arrest exploited women and children than to prosecute pimps and johns. Current language in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, for example, requires that convictions can only be made if proof of “fraud, force, or coercion” is available. While fraud, force, and coercion are virtually always at the center of the pimp/prostitute relationship, it is very difficult to find victims of sexual abuse who are willing to take the enormous risk to testify against their abusers, to whom they are pathologically linked.

Phyllis Beatty, executive director of Adults Saving Kids, says, “While the majority of kids aren’t going to grow up to be professional pimps or prostitutes, many of them are growing up pimping and prostituting.” She’s referring to the attitudes, so prevalent among young people today, that would not seem to reflect any strides we may have made (or believe we’ve made) in terms of women’s rights and a healthier, more egalitarian society. “Suburban kids are very influenced by the street culture that is expressed in rap music and movies, where it’s made to sound cool. We hear stories about boys offering their girlfriends to their friends, and girls who assume that they’ll be required to have sex with their dates after the prom. Girls say it’s expected—“Well, he bought me a corsage and dinner, I feel I have to do it.” Isn’t any exchange of material goods for sex prostitution? The fact that so many young boys are exposed (the average age of first exposure is 11), even addicted, to pornography only exacerbates boys’ desires and expectations.

The folks at Adults Saving Kids believe that the exploitation of young people—by the general culture as well as by the commercial sex industry—is successful largely due to misinformation fed to both children and adults. They contend that the best remedy for it is vigorous, hard-hitting, reality-based education. Their curriculum—which features role playing activities, discussion forums, and the stories of Heidi and Mark—seeks to help kids and adults examine what they believe, adjust their attitudes and behavior, and work to prevent young people from being hurt. ■

*Editor's note: due to space limitations, endnotes have been posted at esa-online.org/Endnotes.*