

THE EFFECTS ON JUVENILES OF BEING USED  
FOR PROSTITUTION AND PORNOGRAPHY

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This paper concerns the sexual exploitation of juveniles. For our purposes here, sexual exploitation refers to pornography and prostitution, although the paper also includes some discussion of incest and other sexual abuse of juveniles because they were factors in the backgrounds of many of the youths interviewed. Prostitution is defined as the exchange of sex for money; juvenile pornography refers to films, videos, magazines, books, or pictures that depict juvenile boys and girls in sexually explicit acts. This paper does not focus on the investigation of pornography, the collector, the distributor, or the viewer of pornography, nor on the pimps, customers, or law enforcement aspect of prostitution. Neither does it concern itself with the controversial issues of prosecution, legalization, or decriminalization. Rather, it focuses on the perspective of the youths and their experiences in being used by adults sexually for commercial and pornographic purposes. Specifically, the paper focuses on the impact of such sexual exploitation on the victim.

The paper is therefore based on self reports from young men and women, boys and girls who have been involved in juvenile prostitution and/or pornography. The findings discussed here are derived from two sources: (1) The results of a two and one half year exploratory study of "The Sexual Assault of Prostitutes", conducted for the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Rape, National Institute of Mental Health, sponsored through the Delancey Street Foundation in which the author was the principal investigator;<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Three volumes describe the results of the study, Grant #RO1 MH 32782-01, in detail. Silbert, Mimi, Sexual Assault of Prostitutes, Volume I: Phase One Final Report; Volume II: Phase Two Final Report; Volume III: Summary Report. National Center for the Prevention and Control of Rape, NIMH, 1982.

(2) clinical experiences with well over a thousand prostitutes and a hundred people who were used to make pornography as juveniles.

Delancey Street Foundation is a self-help residential center which successfully treats prostitutes, ex-convicts, and substance abusers through multi-dimensional services providing individual and group treatment, vocational training, education, and the development of independent living skills for 600 residents in four cities in the country, along with out-reach work for juvenile prostitutes and youths involved with pornography. The residents stay at Delancey Street an average of four years before graduating, completely rebuilding very shattered lives.<sup>2</sup> As President of Delancey Street, I have lived and worked in depth with our residents and the negative short and long term impact of sexual exploitation, as well as the secondary social problems attendant to sexual victimization, for fifteen years. The NIMH research findings corroborate the clinical pictures depicted by several thousand residents with whom I've worked: being used by adults for prostitution and/or pornography is harmful to the juveniles, not only during the distressing period of involvement, but also, and often even moreso, during their future development.

#### I. JUVENILE PROSTITUTION

In recent workshops with people in the helping professions specializing in juveniles, I have asked participants to list those clients whom they found the most difficult to treat. Juvenile prostitutes headed the list.

<sup>2</sup>For more detailed explanation of Delancey Street, see Mimi Silbert, "A Process of Mutual Restitution", chapter in book Mental Health and the Self-Help Revolution, Gartner & Reissman, eds., Human Science Press.

The comments reflected those made for prostitutes in general and were typified by the person who stated, "*I hate to say once a prostitute, always a prostitute, but it seems that way. They say they want out, but nothing you do to help them out works. They run back. They rip you off. They just don't seem to want to change.*"<sup>3</sup>

From clinical experience, as well as from the study results, I believe the exasperation expressed by helpers working with juvenile prostitutes has a great deal to do with a self-destructive pull that develops among prostitute victims of sexual exploitation who have not dealt directly or successfully with overcoming their victimization. Indeed the opposite is true for these young women. Subjected to continuous abuse and victimization over which they have no control, and about which they have no understanding, these youths have developed what I term a sense of psychological paralysis which prohibits their ability to do anything positive about further victimization. They believe themselves unable to change destructive behavior; they become debilitated, self-deprecating, and entrapped in helplessness and hopelessness. Trapped in a self-destructive cycle, they feel themselves to be out of control of their lives. Essentially, they have developed a chronic disorder as a result of their victimization and an inability to separate themselves from the sexual exploitation in order to reestablish a positive life.

<sup>3</sup> Mimi H. Silbert, "The Treatment of Prostitute Victims and Sexual Assault" in Victims of Sexual Aggression: Treatment of Children, Women and Men, Stuart and Greer, eds. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York. This chapter explores in depth the problems of treatment of prostitutes and offers some solutions in detail.

The results of the NIMH study<sup>4</sup> are based on an analysis of 200 women street prostitutes, the youngest of whom was 10, the oldest, 46. Seventy percent of those prostituting were under 21; almost sixty percent were 16 or under, and many were 10 or 11 years old. Seventy-eight percent of the sample reported starting prostitution as juveniles; and sixty-eight percent were 16 or younger when they started prostitution.

A majority of the juvenile prostitutes described family structures with the outward appearances of stability. For example, over three-fourths reported having a religious upbringing; that is, going to church regularly and/or attending a church school. Forty percent were raised by both mother and father. The younger the prostitute, the more affluent and more educated the family. Yet, despite the religious, financial, and other outward appearances of success, the study revealed a number of problems occurring within the family. More than half the prostitutes had parents involved in excessive drinking; in over half the families the subject saw the father hit her mother violently. Only nineteen percent of the subjects reported having any kind of positive relationship with their mother while growing up.

In addition to witnessing violence and feeling a sense of isolation in the family, 62 percent of the subjects were themselves beaten while growing up. Only in one third of the cases was the beating related to something she did. As distressing as these physical abuse situations are, the most damaging psychologically are probably those cases in which the victims couldn't ascertain

<sup>4</sup> A number of articles derived from the study have been published in professional journals. See for example, Silbert, Mimi, "Prostitution and Sexual Assault: Biosocial: Journal of Behavioral Exology, Winter, 81-82. Silbert & Pines, "Juvenile Sexual Exploitation in the Background of Street Prostitutes", Social Work, 1982, Silbert et.al. "Substance Abuse and Prostitution", Journal of Psychoactive Drugs Vol. 14, No. 3. Silbert and Pines, "The Endless Cycle of Victimization", Victimology, Vol. 7.

why they were being beaten or those in which they were being beaten for no special reason. Two thirds of the victims who were physically abused by their families as children stated that the beating was not related to anything that they did.

Sixty-one percent of the women were sexually abused as juveniles by an average of two people each. Victims ranged in age from 3 to 16 with the mean age of victimization being 10 years old. Two-thirds of the victims were sexually assaulted by father figures: Thirty-three percent were abused by their natural father; thirty percent by a step or foster father; four percent by a mother's common law husband. Only ten percent were sexually molested by strangers.

The emotional impact reported by the victims from the abuse was extremely negative. Only one percent felt that they had resolved the experience positively. All other victims reported feeling terrible about the experience, and reported that the abuse negatively affected the way they felt about men, about sex, and about themselves. Almost half of the victims overtly blamed themselves for the abuse, despite the fact that in almost every case either physical or emotional force was used on them. The horror of the incidence of sexual abuse is compounded by the fact that in most cases (91%) there was nothing the victim felt she could do about it, either because she didn't know what could be done or because she was afraid of the repercussions. In about two-thirds of the cases, the victims had never told anyone about their sexual abuse until this study. Of those who disclosed, fifty-eight percent stated that disclosing the sexual abuse had a bad effect on their relationship with the person told. Only one percent told a professional; only three percent reported to the police.

Seventy percent of the women reported that the sexual abuse affected their decision to become a prostitute, "I was only 11 when it happened. I felt sick and disgusted...I wanted to die; I thought everyone could tell what he did to me by looking at me...I thought my mother would think I was crazy if I told her or maybe she wouldn't even have cared; she's like that. She doesn't want to lay her trip on me...He didn't even love me: he just wanted to try something new. Yeh, I wasn't nothing but a new hole to my own father... After I ran away, I tried to get a straight job, but who would hire a 12 year old drop-out who was nuts?...At first when they tried to talk me into prostituting I said no. Finally, I was scared and hungry and lonely. I figured I was already ruined. I couldn't ever go back home after what happened, so what did I have to lose?" Even those who did not score the sexual abuse as affecting their decision to become prostitutes, did reflect the influence the abuse had in their open-ended comments. "My father bought me so who cares who else does?"

The picture which emerges from the data on peer relationships is one of young girls of grammar school age, feeling extremely isolated, lonely, and rejected by a group of peers to which they wanted to belong, moving slowly out of isolation and finding friends among deviant groups, where they do not experience rejection. Isolation following sexual abuse was a common experience among all those in the study.

A distressingly high percentage of the subjects (44%) seriously attempted suicide. In addition, 27 percent reported trying to harm themselves in some other way, or tried to commit suicide more because they wanted someone to know they were hurt than because they seriously wanted to die.

The average age of juveniles starting prostitution was 13. Almost all the juveniles (96%) were runaways prior to starting prostitution. Almost all the subjects (94%) felt very negatively about themselves just prior to starting prostitution. The vast majority felt they had no other options at the time they started prostituting. Basic financial survival was the reason mentioned by over ninety percent of the juveniles for prostituting.

Although there were different types of the prostitution life-style described, one predominant pattern emerged among the juvenile prostitutes. While a number of juveniles were recruited for prostitution by pimps and other prostitutes, many reported that they were recruited by middle-aged women, nurturing in style and appearance. These women would meet them at areas in which they were extremely vulnerable such as bus depots and cafeterias in the Halls of Justice after they had been picked up by the police and released. The women, whom I have labelled "house-mothers", would take the young girls to a cafeteria, buy them a meal, listen to their stories, and offer them a great deal of concern and sympathy. They slowly encouraged the girls into prostitution, not so much by promises of excitement and glamour, but through a continuous process of nurturing, concern, and an offer to care for all their needs. A number of the juvenile prostitutes were working out of "group homes" as "sex rings"<sup>5</sup> in which three to five young girls lived, their meals were provided for, and support and control were supplied by the house-mother. Pimps serviced the entire group, not so much as a lover, but moreso as the business agent and ultimate

<sup>5</sup> Although these "group homes" were not labelled as sex rings, they share many of the factors described in the "Typology of Sex Rings" in Ann Wolbert Burgess, Editor, Child Pornography and Sex Rings, Lexington Books, Massachusetts, 1984.

protector of the group. Over three-quarters of the juveniles stated that they had a pimp at the time of the study, despite the fact that forty-one percent stated that there were no advantages they could name in having the pimp.

Although the pimp's primary function is seen as protecting the prostitute, two-thirds of the youths have been physically abused or beaten by their pimps many times. Indeed, victimization as part of their work is very high. Seventy percent were victimized by customer rape or clients similarly going beyond the work contract. The passivity and helplessness experienced by the victims became evident in the fact that in more than three quarters of the cases of physical abuse by the customers, the women felt there was absolutely nothing they could do about the abuse. Similarly, in over half the cases of those who were beaten by the pimps, they accepted it as a way of life, felt they deserved it, or understood it as a sign of caring. One young 14 year old girl explained, *"It made him feel like more of a man, and I felt it was my duty...I'm used to it by now. They can't hurt me no more."*

Aside from the sexual assault related to their work, well over half of the prostitutes reported that they had been raped since becoming prostitutes, but completely unrelated to their jobs. In the majority of cases, the rapist was a stranger to the victim, the rape involved physical force, and in many cases the victims sustained physical injury. Every single rape victim reported fear, guilt, rage, shock, hurt, depression, relief to be alive, overwhelming helplessness at the time of the rape, and feeling out of control of her own life.



Emotional trauma experienced by sexual assault victims in general appears to be compounded for these victims by two factors: 1) The informal street code of prostitutes precludes the display of hurt or emotional upset or leaning on personal or social support for assistance in resisting such emotional trauma. Most prostitutes felt they could not break that code and therefore dealt with their feelings alone and/or attempted to suppress them. 2) The helplessness generally experienced as a result of rape is exacerbated by a general feeling of powerlessness over their lives. With no options or control over other areas of their lives, they place a disproportionate amount of energy on the ability to control their sexual activities. The negative impact of rape is thus intensified by the fact that it takes this important sense of control from them.

Therefore, despite the violence, and the serious negative physical and emotional impact of the rapes, significantly more than half of those victims never told anyone about the rape until this study. Of those who did seek help, the majority stated that they felt that the treatment that they received was indifferent or not helpful, and that being a prostitute negatively affected the way they were treated.

When asked the advantages of being a prostitute, they mentioned an average of one advantage, with almost everyone citing money for survival as the primary advantage. When asked what the disadvantages are, the respondents cited an average of a little over six disadvantages. For example, *"It is degrading...you develop a total hatred for yourself for being so low, filthy, and dirty. You're like a slave, but like most slaves you don't know how to get out. The horror of opening your eyes and finding someone on top*

*of you...it's hard to forget the faces and the smells. Especially the smells...The only thing to do is not feel anything and pretend you don't care. By now I don't think I'm even pretending. I don't think I care about anything.*" (13 years old) Yet, a sense of entrapment in a hopeless situation emerged when the subjects discussed their options and plans for leaving prostitution at the time of the interview. Although most saw themselves as remaining in prostitution only for a limited period of time, they were unable to set a specific time. They saw no other options, particularly because they were runaways, uneducated, unskilled, and saw adequate employment as the major enabler to leave prostitution. Even when asked to state their hopes, rather than expectations, the juvenile prostitutes, feeling trapped in a degrading life, were simply afraid to hope. As one of them said, *"I've learned not to expect nothing. I just hope I don't end up nuts."* (16 years old)

The patterns reported by the women street prostitutes in the study reflect a picture of both male and female prostitution treated at Delancey Street both through its residential program and through the outreach services offered. Prostitution among boys differs from female prostitution in the portrait of their life on the street. For example, while the females are generally involved with a pimp, the males generally operate independently. While female prostitution has tended to include a higher proportion of minorities in the past, in recent years in the San Francisco Bay Area, the numbers of white girls are increasing and appear to be a majority. Similarly in a reverse way, male hustlers have been predominantly white; recently, more minorities are entering hustling, particularly as more and more street

youths, those in crisis, and those preteens who are experimenting with drugs are also experimenting with hustling.

Because they work without pimps, the male youths tend to be more peer involved, are less professionally organized than the young women, and engage in a more sexually abusive lifestyle although a less physically battered one than the women.

The males described significant amounts of violence and sado-masochistic sex. While there seems to be a great deal of physical violence done to the female prostitute, the males talked more about their being violent in return. Again, this generally focused on sexual violence.

The males, more so than the females, seem to maintain a constant search for the "sugar daddy" or trick who would become a long-term relationship. While a number of the females are looking for a love relationship to pull them out of prostitution, a large number of the males are looking for a lonely man with a lot of money. *"You can play one of those suckers for a pretty long time. They need you. Especially when they're old and they feel pretty desperate, they like us. They like me 'cause I'm real young. They act like it's all this love shit, and you just let them do it as long as they pay. They pay real good. And you can keep it up for a pretty long time. I got a friend who has been playing this one out with a guy for a long time. He's set and that's what I want to be."* (14 years old)

Those male prostitutes who are also part of the gay sub-culture noted that for them, in addition to making money, prostitution offered a sexual outlet. In the last few years, a high percentage of those who are gay and prostituting

primarily to a gay market, have tested positive to exposure to the AIDS virus, and several I have worked with have in fact come down with the disease. Recently the subject of AIDS has increased the numbers of young male gay prostitutes seeking to leave the prostitution life style and is a pervasive fear with which many are dealing.

On the other hand, while their lifestyles as prostitutes may be different, the backgrounds of the males tend to be quite similar to those of the females. Young male prostitutes report similarly troubled family histories. They describe a great deal of parental fighting, drinking, and emotional abuse or neglect. Their relationships with their families are poor, and they describe themselves, as did the women, as isolated among their peers. Although they come from families which appear less stable on the outside than the women did, they show similar and even greater victimization, both physical and sexual. Over three quarters of the males involved in hustling reported that they were victims of juvenile sexual abuse. Half of these were involved in incest. Again, disclosure was almost non-existent. The incest was reported by the child in only one case, and in that situation the disclosure proved to have a negative impact on the relationship with the person told.

## II. PORNOGRAPHIC INVOLVEMENT

The NIMH study did not attempt to research either the effects of violent pornography on sexual assailants or the use of juveniles in child pornography. Yet, as happens in every large research project, especially exploratory research, some unexpected information emerged, important information, that unfortunately was not studied in a systematic manner, but which was significant enough to report. Such was the case in this study with regard to the relationship

between sexual abuse and pornography.<sup>6</sup> From the detailed descriptions the subjects provided to open-ended questions in regard to incidents of juvenile sexual assault in their childhood and to incidents of rape following entrance into prostitution, it became clear that there was a relationship between violent pornography and sexual abuse in the experience of women street prostitutes. Since the relationship between sexual abuse and pornography was unexpected, no questions addressed it directly. Only after the data collection was completed, was the content from all the cases of rape in juvenile sexual abuse analysed for any mentioned relationship between these incidents and pornography.

Out of 193 cases of rape, 24% made unsolicited comments that the rapist alluded to pornographic material. The comments followed the same pattern: the assailant referred to pornographic materials he had seen or read and then insisted that the victims not only enjoyed the rape but also the extreme violence. For example, the following is a typical victim's comments transcribed from the interview describing how the assailant made reference to his prior use of pornography, *"I know all about you bitches, you're no different; you're like all of them. I seen it in all the movies. You love being beaten."* (He then began punching the victim violently.) *"I just seen it again in that flick. He beat the shit out of her while he raped her and she told him she loved it; you know you love it; tell me you love it."* The assailant continued to beat and slap the woman while raping her, repeating his demand that she say that she loved it, just like the woman he saw in the movies. In the majority of cases, there were no distinctive features about the victims, their situations, or the factors of the rape, which could account for the assailants' mentioning

<sup>6</sup>The results reported, along with a review of the literature and discussion, in Silbert and Pines, "Pornography and Sexual Abuse of Women", Sex Roles Vol. 10, Nos. 11/12, 1984.

their involvement with pornography. In 12% of the 193 cases of rape, the assailant mentioned his involvement with pornography as a response to the victim's telling the assailant she was a prostitute.

In 19% of the rape cases, the victims tried to stop the violence of the rape by telling the assailant that they were prostitutes. For example, "*Calm down. I'm a hooker. Relax, and I'll turn you a free trick without all this fighting.*" Rather than assuage the violence, this assertion only exacerbated the problem; the assailants increased the amount of violence in every single case. They became furious at hearing the woman say she was a prostitute. Most started screaming, demanding that she take back what she had said, insisting on taking her by force. In order to reassert their own control, assailants then became extremely violent. In all these cases, the victim sustained even more serious injuries than those victims who did not disclose their prostitution status. This finding supports the contention that rape is an aggressive act motivated by a desire to establish the rapist's power over his victim, rather than a sexual act.

In 12% of the 193 cases, the victims who told the rapist that they were prostitutes not only received more violent abuse than those who didn't tell, but also elicited overt comments from the assailants related to pornography. An analysis reveals that there is a pattern of response among the assailants to the disclosure, characterized by the following four elements: (1) their language became more abusive, (2) they became significantly more violent, beating and punching the women excessively, often using weapons they had shown the women, (3) they mentioned having seen prostitutes in pornographic films, the majority of them mentioning specific pornographic literature, and (4) after completing the forced vaginal penetration, they continued to assault the women sexually in

ways they claimed they had seen prostitutes enjoy in the pornographic literature cited. For example, *"After I told him I'd turn him a free trick if only he'd calm down and stop hurting me, then he just really blew his mind. He started calling me all kinds of names, and then started screaming and shrieking like nothing I'd ever heard. He sounded like a wailing animal. Instead of just slapping me to keep me quiet, he really went crazy and began punching me all over. Then he told me he had seen whores just like me in (three pornographic films mentioned by name), and told me he knew how to do it to whores like me. He knew what whores like me wanted...After he finished raping me, he started beating me with his gun all over. Then he said, 'You were in that movie. You were in that movie. You know you wanted to die after you were raped. That's what you want; you want me to kill you after this rape just like (specific pornography film) did.'"* This particular woman suffered, in addition to forced vaginal penetration, forced anal penetration with a gun, excessive bodily injuries, including several broken bones; and a period of time in which the rapist held a loaded pistol at her vagina, threatening to shoot, insisting this was the way she had died in the film he had seen. He did not, in fact, shoot after all.

Similarly, 22% of the 178 cases of juvenile sexual abuse mentioned in unsolicited comments, the use of pornographic materials by the adult prior to the sexual act. The particular manner in which the adult used the pornographic materials varied. For a few, they used the materials to try to persuade the children with comments such as, *"Now doesn't that look like something that you and I would have a good time doing together? Come on look at that. Doesn't that make you want to come with me?"* Others used pornographic materials to attempt to legitimize their actions. Several victims report that the abuser showed them pictures depicting children involved in sexual acts with adults to convince them the

it was acceptable behavior and that it was something they wanted to do. These abusers for example, "*See the expression on her face; that's exactly how you look at me.*" Others used the pornographic materials to arouse themselves prior to abusing the child. For example, one of the subjects in the study described a primitive movie projector her father had set up in the garage. He used to show himself and his friends pornographic movies to get them sexually aroused before they would rape her. (She was 9 at the time.)

Thirty-eight percent of the 200 women prostitutes interviewed reported that sexually explicit photographs had been taken of them when they were children for commercial purposes, and/or the personal gratification of the photographer. Twenty percent were under the age of 13 when this occurred; the rest of the subjects were under the age of 16 years old. It should be noted that while many of the descriptions were open-ended comments included in their stories, some were responses given to questions of how they earned a living once they ran away from home and before they began prostituting.

It is likely, given the numbers who spontaneously described their involvement with pornography, that the cases of pornographic abuse of children would be significantly higher among the prostitute population if studied overtly.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there is already some evidence indirectly supporting this contention. For example, Baker (1978) mentioned that several authorities have found a close relationship between child pornography and the practice of child prostitution. Rush (1980) mentioned that most runaways can survive only as prostitutes or by posing for pornography. Baker, C.D. "Preying on Playgrounds: The Exploitation of Children in Pornography and Prostitution", Pepperdine Law Review, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1978. Rush, F. "Child Pornography" in Take Back the Night, Lederer, Ed., William Morrow Co., N.Y., 1980.



### III. IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY ON JUVENILE VICTIMS

The following discussion is based on self reports and clinical observation of one hundred (100) males and females who, as juveniles, have been used to make pornography, including hard-core and simulated sexual films, videos, magazines, and photographs. The subjects ranged in age from 6 years to 21; the median age was 14.

Clinical data indicate that being a subject in pornography is disturbing and damaging to the juveniles used. Short and long-term negative effects were apparent in terms of physical, behavioral, attitudinal, and emotional impact on the subjects. The effects of being used to make pornography will be explored in this section during three periods of the victims' involvement: 1) At the time of the exploitation; 2) At the time of disclosure for those who told; 3) Years later, as these people were trying to rebuild their lives. Some few of the juveniles counseled were still involved with pornography.

#### 1) At the Time of the Exploitation

During the exploitation itself, several patterns emerged. Those who were involved with the pornography on a short term basis and had stopped their involvement by the time of the interview, recalled primarily physical and somatic impacts. For example they talked about a great deal of soreness and irritation in genital, vaginal and anal areas. They remembered feeling generally flu-like during the period. They described symptoms such as vomiting, a lot of headaches, a loss of appetite and sleeplessness. Emotionally, most described themselves as extremely moody and unable to continue on with the friendships they had had before because they felt they

were now so different. Those used by adults to make pornography over a longer time described more intense emotional isolation as time passed. They also talked of growing feelings of anxiety, and many experienced direct fear. Clinical observations of those still involved with pornography at the time of the counseling underscored these descriptions. Although the physical symptoms were similar, the emotional withdrawals, isolation, moodiness, daydreaming, and complete sense of hopelessness were far greater when observed clinically than when described by those recalling their own past involvement. That is, a typical emotional description included such comments as *"I remember not paying a lot of attention to teachers and people like that sometimes"*. Clinical observation of youths of similar age and similar type of pornographic involvement showed them extremely noncommunicative, very withdrawn, seriously inattentive, and, highly fearful and/or anxious.

## 2. At the Time of Disclosure

One of the most destructive impacts on juveniles of their participation in pornography is the silent conspiracy into which they feel bound by the offenders. Whether they were paid or not, the participants in the juvenile pornography all expressed an overwhelming pressure to cooperate with the adult, never to tell, that disclosure would not only discredit the offender, but would totally shame and discredit the juvenile, and leave him or her completely isolated. Since many of the victims were already vulnerable because of their need to be included, feel wanted, and cared for, even for those who participated simply for survival money, the pressure of the silent conspiracy had a long term highly negative affect on them, particularly on

their ability to trust others or to feel trustworthy themselves. This conspiracy, coupled in some cases with family backgrounds which left the victims isolated from an adult they could trust with their "secret", accounted for most of the victims' not telling anyone about the exploitation.

Although the majority of the victims never told anyone of their involvement with pornography, disclosure occurred in four cases through law enforcement intervention, and in one case where a young woman told her mother of her involvement in an attempt to have her mother intervene. In two of the cases, although the period immediately following the disclosure was extremely traumatic and stressful, the situation was ultimately resolved in a generally healthy manner. There was a successful prosecution of the offender, and the victims, who were 6 and 8 years old at the time, were provided with treatment. In the other three cases, the period following the disclosure included social pressure on the victims and their having to deal with the negative reactions of others. In one case there was a great deal of fear of retaliation, particularly because the offender was violent and was ultimately not sentenced for the offense. In the fifth case, where disclosure was initiated not by law enforcement but by the victim herself, the mother blamed the girl.

The girl, Audie, was 12 years old when she disclosed her involvement in pornography. Audie had been a victim of incest from ages 9 to 11. and had begun to show severe signs of withdrawal and depression around age 11. The family placed her in a psychiatric ward for observation. One of the psychiatric

technicians in the hospital began taking pictures of the girl, telling her that she could make enough money from the pictures to not have to return home. Initially Audie was terrified of going back to the home not only because she feared further abuse by her father, but also because she feared her mother, the dominant one in the home, would discover what had occurred. She allowed the technician to take the pictures thinking "it didn't matter anyway since I'd already been ruined", and was anxious to go out on her own. However, after he took well over 100 pictures and did not provide her with any money, she began to feel trapped. He then began posing her being tied up using sexual devices, and with the suggestions of violence and beatings, she really became panicked. In a momentary awareness that she was getting herself more deeply involved rather than using the pictures as a way to break free from sexual exploitation, she turned to her mother for help. At first, particularly because she was in a psychiatric ward, her mother insisted that she was delusional. Her mother was extremely angry with her, blamed her, called her "oversexed", and yelled at her for having continual sexual fantasies. The mother reported her upset to the psychiatrist in charge of the case who met with Audie. Because she felt completely boxed in a corner at this point, Audie was able to overcome her fear of retribution by the technician and told the psychiatrist of the incident. As it turned out, the psychiatrist was able to discover the truth of the case, and found that the technician had taken pictures not only of this young girl, but also of a number of

other youngsters in the ward, many involving bizarre, violent, sadomasochistic sexual situations. When the mother was told that the situation was in fact a true one, she was outraged at the hospital, then continued her feelings of shame and disappointment in her daughter and the belief that the daughter was "oversexed". Her mother's response increased her secrecy, withdrawal, and self-blame. Although she was released from the hospital, Audie ran away from home and spent eight years on the street. She entered Delancey Street when she was twenty. She was completely desperate, hopeless, homeless, very angry, and very guilty. Indeed, she had attempted suicide twice, was a heroin addict, felt completely out of control both of her life and of her current compulsive thoughts and behavior, had an extremely low self-concept, and was violent. Although she used sex for money, for attention, and as a way to get what she wanted, she had no emotional involvement with any of her sex partners and, aside from tremendous rages and swings to incredible guilt and self blaming, she had little or no affect.

### 3. Years Later

The long term impact of participating in pornography appears to be even more debilitating than the immediate effects. The initial negative responses of shame, fear, or anxiety develop into extremely negative self-concepts,

sustained shame and anxiety, deep despair, inability to feel, hopelessness, and psychological paralysis.

For example, Mike had participated in making hard-core pornography films for profit beginning at the age of 16. Mike had been in and out of juvenile halls since he was 12, for being incorrigible at home and for other minor juvenile offenses, and he was using drugs by age 15. He had had one girlfriend from age 14 to 16. At 16, while he was in juvenile hall, the girl left him for their drug dealer and began turning tricks on the street. In response, when released from the hall, Mike headed to a commercial pornographer known to the gang he ran with on the streets. He made films for the company for a one year period. During that time his drug problem increased greatly, and he felt the money he was making from the pornography was not enough to sustain his drug habit. He left pornography and became involved in a series of burglaries and armed robberies which had him in and out of prison for ten years. Mike came to Delancey Street at 27, functionally illiterate, unskilled, alone, and wanting to die.

In working through his past to build a new life during his stay at Delancey Street, Mike found his involvement in pornography to be the hardest part of his life to admit. He concealed it for a long time, and when he finally disclosed it, although he experienced an initial relief from its being out in the open, he began having repeated nightmares, and became extremely paranoid, despite the fact that he had had no real problems with paranoia since coming to Delancey Street. He was unable to get into a relationship

for several years, and was obsessed with the fact that everyone scorned him and wanted nothing to do with him because of his "debasement of myself, making myself so low, doing disgusting sex thing after sex thing. I didn't care what or who I put it in. I have no right to touch any decent girl. I mean like I feel bad about what I did to my family and everything and I ripped off an awful lot of people and I know I was a real scumbag for a lot of years. But at least with that I feel like now that I'm helping people and doing good things, a lot of the rest of me can be a person who can hold his head up again one day. But somehow the stuff that I did for (name of pornographer) and that I let them film and that I know people saw, I just don't think I can touch any girl. I don't even mean sex. I mean I can't love anyone good. I'm like an animal. Why would she want to have anything to do with me?" It took over two years of intensely working with Mike to bring him to separate the acts from himself and the past from his future. When he finally entered his first relationship, he had a great deal of difficulty. However, he at least was able to feel some hope and investment in the future of his life. Now, five years after entering Delancey Street, Mike has earned a G.E.D., is a licensed electrician and a diesel truck driver, and has been in a healthy relationship for a year.

Like Mike, most of those who were used as juveniles to make pornography, particularly hard-core pornography,<sup>8</sup> expressed deep humiliation, extremely

The impact on participants in juvenile pornography may differ in accordance with various categories of pornography. Those involved in hard-core pornography in which sex acts, bizarre or violent varieties of sexual intercourse are photographed or filmed, seem to have the most intensive and extensive damage. Those who were used to pose for nudist materials with sexual simulations and implications appear to have somewhat less extensive damage. Because no real study was conducted to differentiate the extent of the negative emotional and attitudinal impact of the pornography on the juvenile victims, these are merely suppositions.

long term and very negative impacts on their attitudes toward themselves, towards sex, towards their intimate relationships with others. An overwhelming sense of unworthiness and dirtiness pervaded virtually all of their pictures of themselves.

Julia came to Delancey Street for help at age 21; she had prostituted in massage parlors for 3 years; she had been used to make pornographic films commercially, but primarily underground pictures and videos for 4 years prior to that.

Julia grew up in a middle-class area in a small city in the Southwest where she attended parochial school until she was 14 years old, when she dropped out of school. Shortly thereafter she ran away from home. Up to that time she had lived at home with her step-father, mother, and three step-brothers. Her step-father drank excessively while she was growing up; her mother worked and was not at home a lot. There was some violence in the home, in which her step-father hit her mother while drunk on numerous occasions and also beat her randomly throughout the years she lived at home.

Julia was sexually abused by one of her step-brothers from the time she was 12 until she left home. *"He and my step-father and one of the other brothers used to watch these pornographic movies out at my Dad's workshop. They were always laughing and making loud noises when they watched it and I wanted to be included. I was in a weird position in the house anyway. I'd call my father my step-father because he isn't really my father. But*



he was the father of the boys and two of them were older than me. Even the younger one was his. I don't know what happened with me. I don't know if I was a bastard or what. I only know he wasn't my father and I used to have to call him step-father and no one would tell me who my real dad was. Anyway, I wanted to see what the movies were that they'd always be watching. So one day my oldest brother took me in and showed me. To tell the truth I could hardly make out what was going on, but as he was watching he became more excited. He started showing the movie a second time and started masturbating and making all kinds of disgusting comments. I wanted to get out of there by then but the workshop door was locked and no one came home in the afternoons until dinnertime. At the end of the second time, he pushed me down and tied my hands with his belt and raped me...He told me that if I told my mom I would be kicked out of the family because I was only there because he and his father and brother agreed that I could stay. I was sobbing and begging him but he told me that we'd do this whenever he wanted and that I better not tell anyone...I didn't tell and that's just what happened. I did what he said and never asked any questions and I never told anyone and I kept feeling sicker and sicker.

One day I was making trouble at school and the nun started screaming at me and saying 'everyone knows what's wrong with you girl'. I knew I hadn't told but I thought everyone must know. I ran home that day and decided I didn't care what anyone did to me. They could kill me but I was never going back to that school...Anyway, with things getting worse at home and having no real friends anymore, I decided to run away to (the nearest big city)...

I was having a hard time surviving, so when he offered to pay me and feed me and buy me some clothes just for letting him take pictures of me, I really thought I had a good deal. After a few months I really thought everything was going to be great. I was sleeping with him, and I didn't care that the cameras rolled and took pictures of us while we made love, because he was the first guy who really seemed to want me. After a while he told me that I was the best he'd ever seen, and he thought I could probably take two or three guys on whereas most girls couldn't do that...I really didn't want to, but it seemed real important to him and I wanted him to be proud of me. He was 33 years old and I knew he had lots of women and I thought if I was the only one who could do this, then I must be really something special to him...

They began to film with with several guys...Then came all the disgusting things; they would just put anything up me, stalks of celery...then it started with the Coke bottles. It became a big deal, how I could get bigger bottles up me than anyone that had worked for them...

By this time I had been with (name) for about three years. He was still supporting me, but he was now beating me a lot, and was spending most of his time with other girls. I was getting completely broken and desperate. I started using drugs about two years into being with him, and now he is no longer asking me to do anything to make him proud. Now he would just withhold my drugs and tell me if I wanted them I'd have to do these things. I needed that dope just to get through the day. I was strung out pretty bad and I didn't care what they put up me and I didn't care how many of them took pictures of it. I really didn't care about nothing... The thing I guess that finally got me out of there is when he brought

another woman he'd been with and told me I had to do it with her for the pictures...I don't know why that was worse than bottles or celery or maybe it was just all of it combined but anyway, I had just had it. So I took off...I was just about 18.

I survived for a couple months although he kept coming after me. The people at the place I was staying at told me not to worry, that they'd protect me. I guess it wasn't so much that I was afraid but more that I thought that he really must want me badly because he kept coming after me. I thought maybe he found out I really was special and would stop beating me up and stop playing around with all those other women. I don't know, anyway I went back with him. Then the same stuff started all over again.

Finally I took off for good. I ripped off one of the guys and had enough money to get myself to (another state). I decided I'd straighten out some. I was still shooting dope, but not as much as I had been. And I swore I'd never let anyone take no pictures of me again...I ended up working in a massage parlor...It wasn't as bad as what I'd been doing. A lot of them were old, you know, kind of disgusting, but at least I didn't have to do all that weird stuff...By then I was so sick of myself and being used by old men...I decided to come to Delancey Street to try to get my life back."

After three years of intensive counseling and work developing her strengths at Delancey Street, Julia still found herself choosing men who did not treat her well, and rejecting men who were good to her. Even after several years of a successful career in interior design, and success and confidence in all

areas of her life, Julia still felt she was "almost compulsively attracted to self-centered guys who used me, and bored by the nice guys." She is still working on feeling worthy of a mutually caring relationship.

These case studies typify many of the adolescents who have been used to make pornography. Over time their self-concepts are eroded. The problems which occurred during the time of the exploitation were made worse as the years passed, particularly because most were unable to disclose the exploitation or to resolve it in any healthy fashion. As a result, they feel horrible, not only about themselves, but about the people around them. They describe feeling desperate about their lives, out of control of both their thoughts and their behaviors, unable to make it in society, and unable to separate the acts they had been involved with from themselves.

It is important to understand how large a role secrecy played for most of these youths. The same feelings reported by victims of physical and sexual abuse were described by juveniles about their being used for pornography. They felt there was absolutely nothing they could do about the victimization. I suggest here that when excessive victimization is coupled with the lack of understanding of the causes of the abuse, as well as a sense of impotence to do anything to change the situation, then a sense of psychological paralysis develops.

Psychological paralysis is characterized by immobility, acceptance of victimization, feeling trapped and hopeless, and the inability to take

the opportunity to change. As I define it, psychological paralysis seems to occur as an outgrowth of extended and repeated situations which lead to "learned helplessness". A growing body of literature in social science has shown that when people (and animals) undergo a series of negative events over which they have no control, the result is learned helplessness.<sup>9</sup> The research on learned helplessness is focused generally on animals and task performance of people. Some literature has explored the relationship between learned helplessness and clinical depression, with a focus on particular groups such as autistic children or battered wives. Learned helplessness has been found to be related to depression and ineffective ways of dealing with events, even positive ones. After people have developed learned helplessness they are less likely to believe that they have control over the success and failure of their experiences, assuming that they are going to fail at tasks that would otherwise have been within their ability.

It is my contention that a sense of psychological paralysis pervades those juveniles who have been used as juvenile prostitutes and to make pornography who claim that they hate what they are doing, who feel that they did not choose to do that, yet who seem to be completely unable to leave the lifestyle, sometimes even when other opportunities are offered. They maintain a belief that bad consequences would occur to them no matter what new steps they would take. They have lost any sense of control over their lives and have accepted feeling trapped and victimized.

<sup>9</sup> Seligman, M. Helplessness "On Depression, Development and Death", Freeman Press, San Francisco, 1979.  
Walker, L.E., "Battered Women and Learned Helplessness", Victimology, 2, 3-4, 1977-78.

Therefore, whatever other controversial issues surround the subject of pornography, it clearly behooves us to make available to juveniles used by adults to make pornography intervention services to help them gain control over their lives. While not all appear to be seriously traumatized at the time that they are involved, the long term effects seem to be extremely damaging for so many, particularly when compounded by other abuses and/or secondary problems.