Everyday Trafficking of Women and Girls: Incest, Prostitution, and Pornography

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Preface

Writing this paper has been for me an unraveling of my own experience, which closely relates to the experiences of many survivors of incest. For years my father subscribed to *Playboy*, often reading it in my presence until I was older and conscious enough to share with him my discomfort with his doing so. He prides himself on having stopped reading this particular magazine, but continues to treat all women, including my sister and myself, as sex objects. Pornography has affected me in very personal ways, as it does all women. Furthermore, my father uses money to silence and control my mother, my sister, and myself. My family is exemplary of the ways in which men control women in traditional patriarchal families.

When fathers raise daughters by sexually abusing them, they prepare girls for futures in prostitution. In this paper, I hope to illustrate the connections between prostitution as it is conventionally defined, and prostitution as it relates to women’s relationships to fathers, brothers, boyfriends, husbands, and other men. One crucial similarity between prostitution and other instances of sexual abuse is the frequency with which each occur, and the widespread social acceptance which allows each crime to flourish.

I began writing this paper with the view that pornography, prostitution, and trafficking, although interrelated, could be analyzed separately. My approach now is similar to the approach of the recent Demand Dynamics conference entitled “Pornography: Driving the Demand for International Sex Trafficking,” which was held in Chicago from March 13 to March 15, 2005. The approach of radical feminists, as evidenced in this conference, is to show that drawing distinctions between trafficking,
pornography, prostitution, and sexual abuse more generally is harmful. Sex trafficking includes pornography, which is a form of prostitution and often begins with sexual abuse in the homes of women and girls. It is harmful to attempt to divide the interrelated experiences of women into distinct categories. Another central theme in this conference was to focus on demand. I hope to maintain this focus throughout the paper, while also discussing the ways in which prostitution harms women.

It is important that women understand the connections between the lives of women who are in prostitution and the lives of women who, under conventional analysis, are not. As articulated by the women of WHISPER (Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt), a national organization of survivors founded in the 1980’s, “we escaped the brutality of the patriarchal family only to find ourselves at the mercy of pimps, panderers, and procurers, who have built a multi-million dollar industry selling what our fathers and husbands stole from us originally” (in Leidholdt and Raymond 1990, 79).

The primary research focus of this paper is women in street-level prostitution in Detroit, Michigan, where I was able to conduct research as an intern for Alternatives for Girls (AFG). I worked primarily with outreach staff, going on shifts in which AFG staff drive a marked van and visit women on the street. We began each late-night shift at a gas station/truck stop, where we consistently found several women. The women, we understood, turned tricks inside semi trucks at the gas station. Most of them looked for the AFG van, seemingly grateful to see us, and often willing to share with us their most recent experiences and pressing concerns. Besides interactions with women during

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1 The summer internship at AFG was the most in-depth, first-hand experience I have had with women in prostitution. Most of my research, as presented in the paper, is secondary, relying on the writings of women who have had the opportunity to do long-term research involving in-depth interviewing of survivors.
outreach shifts, my primary source for the stories of women in Detroit is a panel on prostitution that was held at AFG on July 28, 2004. It is because of AFG that I was able to speak directly with women in prostitution and to see, from the safety of the outreach van, some aspects of street prostitution. It was also very helpful to speak with my co-workers and participants of AFG’s programs.

While I originally viewed street prostitution as particularly harmful and dangerous for the women involved, I have since learned that although women in street prostitution face many dangers, it is important to note that women in other forms of prostitution face similar, if not identical dangers. In other words, it is one of the many myths around prostitution to suggest that street prostitution is dangerous while other forms of prostitution are safe and even enjoyable for the women involved.

Later in this paper, I will address AFG’s approaches to prostitution as compared with Breaking Free, a feminist, Afro-centric social service agency located in predominantly African-American neighborhoods in St. Paul and Rochester, Minnesota. I recently interviewed, Vednita Carter, the founder and executive director of Breaking Free. She shared with me her criticism of AFG’s “harm reduction” approach. Vednita Carter argues rightly that women are worth more than a mere reduction of the harms posed by prostitution. AFG’s method of telling women that they have chosen prostitution as “sex work,” even if it is accompanied by suggesting alternatives and necessary resources, is indeed a disservice to women in prostitution. All efforts to work with women in prostitution must begin with the stance that prostitution not only includes violence, but is inherently violent, denying women their human right to bodily integrity.
Incest, an incredibly common occurrence in families, often leads to or reinforces prostitution. In some cases, incest is prostitution. Prostitution is part and parcel of men’s war on women. Prostitution and incest, as mutually reinforcing, systematic crimes against women and girls, depend on secrecy. The best way to eliminate prostitution and incest, then, is perhaps as simple as exposing their pervasiveness and the depths of the harm they pose for women’s lives. As Louise Armstrong writes in *Kiss Daddy Goodnight*, “It’s almost as though, if we do talk about it, someone’s game is in jeopardy. Almost as though a commonsense, listening-based awareness might blow the whole thing” (1987, 8).
Introduction

Prostitution is socially accepted sexual abuse committed overwhelmingly by men against women. The existence of prostitution, as legitimized sexual abuse, rests upon the belief that male sexual violence is inevitable. Defense of prostitution also assumes that its occurrence is limited, and thus can be contained. This is far from the truth, however, as prostitution is increasingly promoted in the family and in forms of mainstream objectification of women, especially pornography. Prostitution perpetuates a sexuality based solely upon the gratification of men at the expense of women’s bodily integrity, and thus human dignity. Prostitution is common, hardly taboo, and women can work to overcome it by making visible the harm involved in prostitution. This can be done by exposing the connections between prostitution and other forms of male violence against women.

Prostitutes often bear the brunt of the most extreme forms of woman-hate. Sexual murder, the most permanent of all acts of male violence, is committed overwhelmingly by men against prostitutes in particular. In her article “The Sexual Politics of Murder,” Jane Caputi offers historical background on the war on women. This war particularly assaults women of color and all women in prostitution. The failure of police officers to protect or defend the women most vulnerable to sexualized murder reveals the extent to which women in prostitution are systematically devalued. Casualties against prostitutes continue like everyday business, rendering men’s extreme violence a seemingly unstoppable, even accepted, force.

According to Caputi, sexual murder is the ultimate expression of sexuality as a form of power. Borrowing Mary Daly’s term gynocide, Andrea Dworkin defines sexual murder as “the systematic crippling, raping, and/or killing of women by men... the
relentless violence perpetrated by the gender class men on the gender class women... under patriarchy, gynocide is the ongoing reality of life lived by women”” (in Caputi 1989, 439). While gynocide is a crime men commit against all women, Jane Caputi and other feminists expose that prostitutes and all women of color are even more likely targets of men’s most hateful act toward women: sexual murder. Caputi reports that from 1985 to 1989, 39 women in San Diego County categorized as “prostitutes, drug addicts, and street denizens,” had been killed. Around this time in Los Angeles, police were investigating the murders of 69 prostitutes and the killings of 30 other women in what they called “street murders” – gender neutral (1989, 439). Not only do police routinely fail to address serial murder of women, they also fail to recognize sexual murder as a gendered crime.

In order to justify physical, verbal, and sexual abuse of women, men deem women “whores.” The story of Sylvia Likens teaches us that violence against women and girls is acceptable, especially if they are in prostitution. Sylvia’s 16-year-old body was found in 1965 in Indianapolis, Indiana, on a dirty mattress in the back bedroom of Gertrude Baniszewski’s house. Sylvia had been imprisoned and tortured to death, starved and mutilated, covered with bruises and cigarette burns. Across her abdomen, her torturers had carved “‘I am a prostitute and proud of it’” (Millett 1991, 1). Sylvia’s torturers sought to justify their violence by naming Sylvia a whore. The experiences of women in prostitution are consonant of the experiences of women as a group. Evelina Giobbe of WHISPER writes, “... the prostitute symbolizes the value of women in society. She is paradigmatic of women’s social, sexual, and economic subordination.” Her status is the

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2 We must note that the leader in Sylvia Likens’s torture was a woman. “No system of oppression operates without collaborators” (Millett 1991, 5).
basic unit by which all women's value is measured and to which all women can be reduced (Leidholdt and Raymond 1990, 77).

Prostitution is the system in which men, who have systemic economic privilege over women, are able to sexually exploit women for money. In other words, prostitution rests upon women's financial\(^3\) dependence upon sexually abusive men. Often, the first such man in a woman's life is her own father. If the family is the chief institution within patriarchy, as Kate Millett notes in *Sexual Politics*, it is because the family teaches boys how to be boys and girls how to be girls. "The chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes..." (Millett 1970, 35). It is the family through which men are able to season boys as sexual predators and girls as sexual prey. If the abusive father does not prey upon his daughter or the little girl next door, he is instead complicit in his son's sexual abuse of his daughter or the girl next door. The family is often the first site at which girls learn they are inferior to men and boys. "Her initiation into the patriarchal order begins with the realization that she is not only comparatively powerless as a child, but that she will remain so as a woman" (Herman and Hirschman 1977, 740). Prostitution guarantees such inferiority for the rest of girls' lives into, and throughout, womanhood.

It becomes clear in many stories of incest that taking money in exchange for sexual exploitation is a survival mechanism. Taking money from the men who have it becomes a desperate attempt by women and girls to maintain some semblance of survival, often construed as power or control. As one survivor, Effie, describes her brother's sexual abuse for which he eventually began to pay her: "I thought there was

\(^3\) Depending on the situation, women and girls may have other feelings of attachment to their abusers, including emotional attachment. I do not mean to deemphasize this point here, but will return to it throughout Chapters One and Two.
something about being paid as a prostitute that somehow made something positive out of my feelings of worthlessness” (in Driver and Droisen 1989, 84). No amount of money, however, can erase a woman’s experience of sexual abuse. Effie reflects upon her entry into prostitution with men other than her brother: “I could somehow turn my position around and see myself as the powerful one who was using men. But, of course, it wasn’t really that way because they were the ones with the money and I was the one who was risking my life and losing my mind” (in Driver and Droisen 1989, 84).

Prostitution renders the women who are its victims emotional and psychological amputees. Amongst the manifestations of permanent damage to survivors of sexual abuse are a number of health problems in addition to complex mental and emotional injuries. Melissa Farley, the director of Prostitution Research and Education in San Francisco, has compiled information on both psychological and physical effects of prostitution on women. Amongst chronic health problems for women in prostitution are: pelvic pain, difficulty swallowing, asthma, trembling, vomiting, paralysis, hearing problems, nausea, chest pain, skin problems, dizziness, and stomach aches. Chronic health problems women experience more frequently after getting out of prostitution include injury due to violence (e.g. head injury), pain/numbness/swelling in hands or feet, vision problems, trouble with balance or walking, allergies, irregular heart beat, loss of feeling on skin, vaginal and/or breast pain (Farley 2003, 65). In their survey of prostitution in nine countries, Farley and her colleagues found that 68% of survivors met the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Vednita Carter notes that Ruth Parriot’s study of 68 prostitute women in the Twin Cities found the most common health problem to be violence itself (in Hughes and Roche 1999, 287).
Women and girls who survive prostitution and other forms of sexual abuse are forever robbed of some of the most central elements of human life. There is no way of regaining what is lost at the hands of sexual abusers, whether they are brothers, fathers, boyfriends and husbands, or paying “customers.” As Toby Summer writes in her article “Women, Lesbians and Prostitution: A Workingclass Dyke Speaks Out Against Buying Women for Sex,” “…Healing is an empty and desperate gesture towards that which we do not have: freedom to be equal, creative and as safe as men are safe. I know that some damage is permanent; that is one of the reasons to stop what happens to women” (in Penelope and Wolfe 1993, 234).

Women must demand to live in a world in which male domination, particularly men’s sexual abuse of women and girls, no longer determines the fate of so many. Sexual abuse guarantees for women a kind of social death at least, and physical death in the many cases of sexual murder. As one survivor states in a multi-country study of prostitution, “‘Why commit suicide? I’ll work in prostitution instead’” (in Farley 2003, 53). So long as male violence shapes any woman’s life, it will affect the fate of all women.

For those who survive to understand the connections between incest and other manifestations of abuse, girls’ survival to womanhood seems, itself, a kind of miracle. Prostitution is central to women’s subordination. Its eradication, along with all other forms of sexual abuse, is central to a future in which women are able to live fully human lives.
1. The Family as Training Ground for Prostitution

Implicitly, and explicitly, we give men permission in this society to exploit others to soothe their sexuality. Can we be very surprised then, when that permission is extended to include their own children? Or are we surprised? Are we, as a society, in collusion? (1987, 231).

Louise Armstrong, *Kiss Daddy Goodnight*

...After a while I used it for my advantage... When I was little, after he would do it, I would say, ‘Well, could I have a brownie?’...I was no different than a prostitute (in Armstrong 1987, 49).

Pamela, father-daughter incest survivor

The women and girls who survive incest are often the same who later endure prostitution. In *Father-Daughter Incest*, Judith Lewis Herman cites a survey of 136 street prostitutes, in which 25% reported having been molested by fathers or “father figures” (2000, 30). Feminists expose that men’s sexual abuse begins early, training women and girls for lives in prostitution.

It is not always clear, however, that, in many ways, the sexual abuse of girls is prostitution, defined as men’s sexual use of girls and women in exchange for material benefits. One woman, Celia, stated during a panel on prostitution held at AFG: “I think I was introduced to the idea that I could exchange sex for money or favors probably at age five” (pers.comm. July 28, 2004). Celia was referring to over a decade of her life during which her uncle raped her continuously and rewarded her with things she needed but could not get from her low-income parents: (e.g. school books, athletic equipment). In many ways, Celia’s uncle served as a father figure. Eventually, Celia returned to the survival mechanism she learned at age five and entered prostitution.

Through socialization, many women and girls learn that if they have nothing else, they can always use their bodies, exchanging sex for the most basic of needs. In
Backstreets: Prostitution, Money and Love, a study of prostitution in Norway, authors Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad suggest that gender socialization is itself fuel for women’s entry into prostitution. “We believe that all women in our society have at some time, most likely many times, come up against the notion that our greatest asset is our body. It is one of the more common images of women which makes prostitution possible…” (Finstad and Hoigard 1986, 18). A French prostitute, D., explains, “‘For a girl, a woman, when she’s in a fix, she’s always got one thing left that’s worth something – her body. In the end, you can see what a woman’s worth – her body’” (in Finstad and Hoigard 1986, 50). Girls often learn from fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and brothers that, as females, their bodies can be used for material gain.

When survivors are materially rewarded for coping with sexual abuse, incest operates as prostitution. “The father, in effect, forces the daughter to pay with her body for affection and care which should be freely given. In so doing, he destroys the protective bond between parent and child and initiates his daughter into prostitution” (Herman 2000, 4). One woman in Herman’s study shares a story in which she had asked her sexually abusive father if she could borrow 50 dollars. His response to her was that she could make that in one night, “‘and all you do is lay back and enjoy your work.’” The woman, Rita, explains, “‘It was at that point I knew that if we had stayed together, he would have raised us girls to be his prostitutes, and he would have been our pimp’” (in Herman 2000, 168). Through incest, girls learn that to get a brownie, to get a new shirt, Daddy must get something too. As one survivor remembers her father stating, “‘You have to give a little to get a little’” (Armstrong 1987, 83). From stories like these, we see the role some fathers play as pimps to their daughters. The abusive fathers who do not
pimp their daughters directly instead contribute to prostitution by socializing daughters to view their bodies as mere mechanisms for sexual exploitation, as commodities to exchange for material needs and benefits.

Through incest, girls learn, often for the first time, that they are mere commodities, interchangeable and marketable. “The road to prostitution is a process in which the women’s experiences cause a breakdown in their respect for themselves, for other women, and also for men” (Finstad and Hoigard 1986, 19). One survivor of prostitution, Jane, states, “...lots of women are prostitutes because they’ve lost respect for men. Like me with my dad. I saw how he treated women. He played around with other women behind Mama’s back the whole time. And all the whippings he gave me. If things had been OK I never would have started”” (in Finstad and Hoigard 1986, 19). Sandy, an incest survivor, shares her experience with her father, who sexually abused her and then moved on to a friend: “...he’d give her ten dollars for a quick feel... Money was money. And we’d talk about it. She’d tell me everything. And I’d say, ‘How much did you get?’ And we thought that was pretty cool. Here was my dumb father giving her money just to feel her boobs...’” (in Armstrong 1986, 66). Sandy’s story illustrates the ways in which men treat women as commodities in cases of incest and infidelity, trading one woman or girl for another.

In prostitution, women are sold as commodities, interchangeable and indistinguishable. One survivor, Janet, reflects upon her years in prostitution, telling a story of women she saw at her father’s after-hours bar. According to Janet, if one woman was “bogue,” or in need of drugs, her friend would “turn her trick for her so that she could get drugs and go back to work” (pers.comm. July 28, 2004). In other words, the
john will take any woman – substitutes will do just fine. Indeed, incest and prostitution are both systems of dehumanization, institutions in which men and boys treat women and girls as property that can be bought, sold, and rented out for hours at a time. One mother states, “He didn’t see our daughter as a person. She was his. He didn’t see it as incest” (in Armstrong 1987, 61).4

In some cases the interactions between perpetrator and survivor are so subtle and covert that even survivors may not recognize the harm. In both incest and prostitution, men use female bodies, the bodies of women and girls, in order to meet their sexual desires. In a 1992 talk on prostitution at Kalamazoo College, feminist theorist and activist Kathleen Barry emphasized that in prostitution, men invoke the “active participation” of the girl or woman. For many women and girls, there is comfort in the familiar, even if the familiar is abusive. As Herman writes, “The actual sexual encounter may be brutal or tender, painful or pleasurable; but it is always, inevitably, destructive to the child” (Herman 2000, 4).

Within incest, as in prostitution, people of unequal social status interact, making any discussion of consent on the part of the relatively powerless woman or girl senseless and harmful. One survivor, June, connects her abuse with her ability to “consent” later in life. Recalling her stepfather’s sexual abuse, which began at age three, June states, “I feel this man’s actions contributed to me not having a mind of my own and not being able to say no to men” (Armstrong 1987, 117). Another woman, Tess, describes her brother’s abuse toward her:

4 Similarly, a typical defense for prostitution is that it allows married men to explore extra-marital sex without “really” cheating. In other words, the woman in prostitution is not human enough to be considered a threat to the wife whom the john is deceiving.
I mean I had to agree to it... Because he was so big. And like I would have done anything to get contact with my brother. I was much younger. And no one ever wanted to bother with me. We lived in a very isolated life... I was dependent on my brother - there was no one else to play with. I would have done anything (Armstrong 1987, 182).

The bottom line in the numerous stories like Tess’s is that women and girls have so little social value within patriarchal society that they seek recognition in any number of desperate and devastating ways. Within patriarchy, it seems women and girls deserve little of anything. “The girls are just something to raise like a race horse,”’ says Tess. “You keep them tied up until the right stud comes along and then you mate them’” (Armstrong 1987, 186). The only way Tess felt she could get anyone to “bother” with her, was to comply with her abusive brother’s sexual demands. When women and girls are taught that their value is based on their pleasing men sexually, women and girls will believe that they cannot refuse the demands of men and boys. If women and girls exist for sex, we cannot say no to it. Imagine a doorman saying no to opening the tenant’s door.

Defenders of incest, like defenders of prostitution, insist that women and girls consent to these acts of sexual violence. Much more overwhelming than any consideration of women’s and girls’ “active participation,” or anything resembling “consensual” sexual activity, is the extent to which women do not participate in sexual abuse at all -- mentally, physically, or emotionally. A better way to conceptualize women’s participation in sexual abuse, similar to prostitution, is play-acting or pretending. As one survivor of prostitution states, “It was about the role that I was playing. Each time I could be somebody different...I should have been an actress” (field notes July 28, 2004). Survivors of incest often explain the need to become someone else, and pretend to be somewhere else, during sexual assault. “I would just lie there” is a
common description amongst survivors of incest. Many discuss pretending to sleep until theirs fathers had finished their assaults. In one family, the daughter would laugh while her father molested her. The girl’s sister and mother found ways to ignore the father’s sexual abuse, keeping eyes fixed on the television, for example (Armstrong 1987, 79). In order to survive, incest survivors have to pretend something else, pretend to sleep, pretend to find it funny that Daddy is biting their breasts, pretend that ten dollars has made it all worth it.

Survival mechanisms amongst survivors of incest and prostitution range from play-acting and numbing to creating a whole new self, as is evidenced by the stories of women in prostitution. Women in prostitution utilize different costumes and “street names” in order to present another self in prostitution. One survivor states: “‘Besides, this body isn’t the same body – the one the client gets isn’t the real one, it’s not mine’” (Hoigard and Finstad 1986, 63). For the most part, both girls and women implement similar survival strategies for sexual abuse in childhood and for prostitution in later years. During the intake process for women who come to AFG for services, the case worker, Amy Winebarger, asks the women a series of questions. These range from questions about material needs to emotional and mental factors in the women’s lives. Amy compiled information from 27 women’s intakes from 2003 to 2004. Most of the women interviewed said they lied and told johns (or “dates”) they are attractive despite the fact that these men repulsed the women. Over half of the women had fantasized about causing physical harm to johns.
Most of all, survivors relate an inability to feel. Such numbing begins as a survival tactic, but continues throughout the women’s lives, stifling the possibility of emotions in life. June writes,

Like I can’t deal with feelings at all. I’m insensitive to smells, to flowers. I’m insensitive to anything of any beauty or pleasure. And I think I could maybe pinpoint that it’s a cover-up. When I see a beautiful, beautiful rainbow it’s so pretty, but I can’t put it into my functioning. It makes me want to cry or scream or tear it apart (Armstrong 1987, 129).

Sexual abuse often ruins women’s abilities to experience even the smallest joys in life. Additionally, women in prostitution experience humiliation, depression, difficulty concentrating, alienation, loss of sexual pleasure, hopelessness, desperation, flashbacks and nightmares, as well as a general sense of fear. The feeling of “dirtiness” is perhaps the strongest and most harmful amongst survivors. As Effie, an incest survivor, states, “I began cutting my arms with razors sometime in my teens. The ‘dirt’ I felt had been put inside me was in my blood and, in my worst moments, I felt I could get the dirt out by cutting my arms and letting the blood out” (in Driver and Droisen 1989, 84).

In the *Prostitution of Sexuality*, Kathleen Barry outlines four stages of dehumanization that occur through prostitution. These stages within prostitution -- distancing, disengagement, dissociation, and disembodiment -- socially construct the sexual exploitation of women. They also serve as survival strategies, allowing women to survive the objectification that is central to prostitution.

Distancing, according to Barry, is a process in which women separate their sense of themselves (their own human, personal identity) from the act of prostitution. This process begins with geographic relocations⁵ and extends to psychological dissociation.

“Distancing begins with separation of self from family, home, and worlds of social

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⁵ Distancing through relocation is amongst the most primary techniques pimps use in recruiting women for prostitution. Please see the stories of Linda Marchiano (or Linda “Lovelace”) and Ebony from Detroit, which I outline in the next chapter.
legitimacy" (Barry 1995, 30). Women and girls take on new names, and often get forged identity papers, a detail necessary for girls who need proof of being over 18 years of age.6

Disengagement involves emotional distancing and is similar to what teenagers, lovers, and wives report in objectified sex. Disengagement is the tactic of “not being there.” This stage allows women to fawn over the very men for whom they feel contempt, if anything at all. Disengagement is also the process by which women split themselves up, “differentiating parts of the self for sexual commodity” (Barry 1995, 32). This is the stage in which women feel they are able to make choices in prostitution. According to Barry, disengagement forces “distinctions between non-choices” (Barry 1995, 33). Without the appearance of choice, Barry writes, prostitute women could lose themselves entirely. This is the extent to which women can act within prostitution. However, disengagement, as self-acceptance of exploitation, intensifies the abuse of prostitution (Ibid. 1995, 33).

The third stage introduced by Barry is dissociation, a means of survival often found in survivors of several types of abuse, and it is especially evident in the testimonies of incest survivors. The result of this survival tactic is that many women do not remember their abuse. Finally, women enter the stages of disembodiment and dissembling. This is the process in which women and girls must appear emotionally and sexually involved in prostitution and incest, despite actually dissociating mentally. “Distancing one’s self in order to become disembodied and then acting as if the experience is embodied produces sex in prostitution” (Barry 1995, 35). One way of dissociating is to abuse drugs.

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6 Many of the women with whom I spoke in Detroit named lack of identification papers as a central problem, perhaps one of a woman’s largest barriers to exiting prostitution.
Women report using drugs in order to deal with the inherent violence of prostitution. One woman said "sometimes you couldn't be high enough...I had to be ripped to do it" (pers.comm. August 29, 2004). In the AFG study, most of the women said they used crack cocaine and alcohol, over half used marijuana, and several reported using pills (speed, diet pills, ecstasy, attivan, valium, etc.), heroin, and various others (acid, crystal methadone). Another woman reported her own rage over how "even after that, I went right back and stood on that corner... Raped anally, and get right back out there" (field notes July 28, 2004). She reported that she was missing a finger because of violence from johns. She had been stabbed in the head, and had scars from jumping out of cars. Drugs allow women to continue lives in prostitution despite the frequency and intensity of trauma and violence they experience. Carter notes that drug abuses "provide fleeting moments of escape, only to become addictions that magnify the horror in which they are trapped" (Hughes and Roche 1999, 287).

The fact that many women report having fantasized about physically harming or even killing johns further reveals that these women are not involved in what is commonly viewed as a loving or even "consensual" act between individuals. Instead, these women are continuously subject to male violence. In time, however, many women pursue a reversal of the harms men have repeatedly inflicted upon them. One woman said she could only endure the act of prostitution so long before she would want to kill the john. She would look for the nearest razor so that she might slash his throat. One woman told us during an outreach shift that she had been raped that day, and that she wanted to "bite his dick off." She said she was surprised that there was no known female serial killer out on the streets. "I sure could be one," she said (pers.comm. July 22, 2004).
What is common in the stories of survivors is that they feel one thing, emotionally, and must ignore the feeling in order to allow violation on or in the body. She feels a man doing do to her what is supposed to be a loving and intimate human act. She instead feels violence and feels she would like to kill him. She feels the cool night air on her nearly bare skin, but says she does not get cold anymore. She experiences rape in one moment and in the next finds herself in the same situation with the next john, wondering if it might occur again, wondering if it even matters, if she even matters. One woman had been beaten so badly by a john that she had been in the hospital. When I met her, her face was swollen, she had apparently lost weight, and she was so weak that she barely made it to the outreach van. Not long after, we were told she was back out on the streets.

Another survival mechanism shared by survivors of prostitution and incest is the romanticization of sexual violence and prostitution, as though one had chosen and even enjoyed abuse. Annabelle’s story illustrates this link between pornography, incest, and the women who defend both systems of abuse. “We are real open and free together and like to look at sex magazines and take pictures of each other naked, and he likes garter belts and heels and hose and special bras and pants and all” (in Armstrong 1987, 136). Annabelle shares that she and her father would re-enact pornographic scenes:

What I do is wear my old school uniform with knee socks and all but with the skirt hemmed up real, real short so my pants almost show and wear my hair in braids with bows and have a sucker and talk like a real little girl like he says and call him Daddy instead of Dad. Sometimes we take all afternoon if it’s raining out and we play like it is the first time again. Sometimes we play like I am a bad girl and he spanks me with my pants down and then makes me do oral love to him like for more punishment and sometimes we play this game like I am a strange little girl and he gets me in the bedroom and rapes me but really we are just playing. I don’t like the rape one so much unless I am real hot. Or sometimes we play like I am a strange school girl and he gives me some beer and I play half passed out and he undresses me and does everything to me. What I think is Dad liked me for sex more when I was real young and we play like I am [young] again (Armstrong 1987, 141).
Annabelle’s words encompass the essence of it all: the sex of non-participation; young girls, short skirts, and intoxication; incest, rape, and pornography. This is prostitution, as an institution built upon male sexuality, as sexualization of violence, in its most elemental forms.

Incest survivors like Annabelle participate in their abuse by identifying with, justifying, and even celebrating their victimization. Herman elaborates on this when noting that survivors sometimes refer to themselves as “bitches, witches, and whores because the incest secret formed the core of their identity” (2000, 97). As one woman, Sandra, said, “‘I’m nothing but a little dressed-up whore.’” These women present themselves as the possessors of magical powers, particularly the power to attract men. As Sandra says, “‘There’s nothing I haven’t done! I’ll see how far I can go leading a guy on. I have the upper hand in the situation. I get them to the point where they say, I love you. Then I say, ‘Chalk another one up,’ ” (in Herman 2000, 97). This woman was repeatedly beaten, exploited, and deserted by her “lovers,” and, as Herman explains, “her boastfulness served as a defense against feelings of utter helplessness” (2000, 98).

Annabelle’s story, one of the most graphic, devastating, and yet celebratory, further illustrates this point.

The stories of women like Annabelle, June, and Tyresha illustrate the complexity of incest, and how, like prostitution, women and girls may participate actively. June says,

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7 I use the term “male sexuality” not to suggest that male sexuality is biologically determined and thus inherently violent. However, I hold that sexuality has always been equated with violent, male sexuality so that these characteristics remain inextricable. According to Women Against Sex, A Southern Women’s Writing Collective, sex is women’s oppression. “Sex is what men say it is. It means what men say it means. Its practice is how men practice it. It is what has to remain in place no matter what. Otherwise, patriarchy will fall” (in Leidholdt and Raymond 1990, 140). “Genital arousal represents the literal incarnation of women’s political subordination...” they write, “…if it doesn’t subordinate women, it’s not sex” (Ibid. 1990, 143). Women Against Sex attribute their astute work to the anti-pornography movement, which recognizes that men have used pornography to construct sex. In other words, pornography is sex.
“Now this is odd. I willingly went to his house after I’d moved away from home, and I
had to get really, really very drunk. And we had a sexual affair. And then one more time.
The second time I didn’t get drunk” (Armstrong 1987, 122). While working for a sex
crimes prosecutor in Philadelphia, I witnessed a similar case in which a 14-year-old,
Tyresha, testified against her foster father, who had been raping her. He would show her
pornographic websites, molest her, and take her shopping as a reward. Sometimes,
Tyresha would initiate sex with her foster father. She also, we were told, had an older
boyfriend during the time of the trial. When the judge decided to not charge the defendant
with rape to the first degree, I questioned his verdict. In response, behind closed doors
and post-trial, the judge told me that the young woman was “promiscuous.” In other
words, her active participation in her sexual abuse somehow diminished the harm and
was justification for reducing the charges against her perpetrator. In many cases, the
active participation of women and girls is taken as consent and results in lifting charges
entirely. Each of these stories exemplifies the complexity of incest, and the harm that
results from the assumptions of consent. If girls learn what sex is through incest and other
forms of sexual abuse, it becomes difficult to argue that, once eighteen, women can
consent to sex. Women’s earliest sexual experiences are often non-consensual by
definition.

The pervasiveness of prostitution and incest, as sexual abuse, suggest that lack of
consent is itself the requirement for men’s sexual gratification. According to the study in
Norway, there are far more “peepers,” or men who drive around and look at women in
street prostitution, than there are actual johns, or men who actually pay for sex with the
women. Peeping women on the street serves as a sort of “foreplay” for the actual
prostitution interaction. It may also be conceptualized as “live” pornography, or playing “freely with living pictures” (Hoigard and Finstad 1986, 92). One of the women shared that most of the men drive around masturbating while looking at the women on the street. The men report that this scene is so exciting because, in their minds, they can have any one of the women they see. All they need, they say, is money. In other words, according to these men, the women have already said “yes” to sex by virtue of standing on street corners. That money makes “consent” no longer necessary is apparently orgasmic to men driving past women on the street.

While men often view payment as an acceptable replacement for a woman’s consent, the use of girls in prostitution further illustrates the extent to which lack of consent enhances men’s sexual experiences. Hoigard and Finstad watched women stand on the street for hours, waiting for johns to come along. When a couple of “stray schoolgirls” stopped under an underpass during a rainstorm one afternoon, however, four men stopped immediately (1986, 87). One survivor used her incest history to attract men. Christine states,

Every time guys found out about it, it turned them on. I’ll never know why. I read this book about a Victorian prostitute, Nell Kimball. She talked about how her customers always wanted to know how she got into the trade. They didn’t want to hear the real nitty-gritty story. They wanted to hear something horrible, how she was used, how she was led astray. I guess even then men were turned on by their own cruelty (Herman 2000, 99).

Another woman in prostitution in Norway describes her interactions with a “regular:”

“He’s the kind who only wants to talk. I’m supposed to be his daughter or something. So he talks to me about morals and lectures me” (in Finstad and Hoigard 1986, 52).

In the 1980’s, Women Against Pornography compiled a slideshow of instances in which mainstream pornography promoted incest and the sexual abuse of girls more generally. One cartoon in Hustler, for example, depicts a young woman with an older
man in a convertible. Across the back bumper are the words “Just Molested.” Another series entitled “Chester the Molester” features an old overweight white man who has tied up three young white girls. In another cartoon, a father is penetrating his daughter, who says, “Daddy, not only is what you’re doing illegal, it’s being done badly.” The girl is smiling, aiding Hustler’s promotion of incest. The point of this cartoon is clear: incest is okay, provided the girl enjoys her father’s sexual prowess. A 1976 issue of Playboy features a frightened, innocent, topless woman dressed in white and surrounded by stuffed animals and dolls.

The WAP slideshow makes explicit connections between the most mainstream pornographic magazines and the sexual abuse of girls. Professor Gail Dines, author of Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality, notes precisely how mainstream such magazines are. Playboy circulates 3.4 million dollars each month, while Hustler produces 1.4 million dollars each month. While the two magazines are often equated, Dines notes, they have played different roles: Playboy has been portrayed as “soft core,” while Hustler has been cast “hard-core” pornography. In other words, while Playboy presented itself as a “respectable” or “quality” magazine, Hustler positioned itself as a periodical aimed at lower-working-class white men. Dines writes, “Herein lies Hustler’s brilliant marketing strategy: no man is meant to see himself as the implied reader; this allows a man (of any class) to buy Hustler while keeping safe denial-distance from its images of semen, feces, child molesters, degraded women” (in Morgan 2003, 310). While Hustler and Playboy portray themselves differently, it is useful to note that even the “soft-core” Playboy magazine infantilizes women and thus promotes child sexual abuse.
The use of adult women in pornography hardly detracts from the focus on young women and girls. Prostitution and pornography reinforce one another in the sexual exploitation of women and girls. As one survivor, Jane, shares, "I have a little-girl style too. Then I make myself up to look discreet and innocent. And I wear a wig, the kind with bangs" (in Finstad and Hoigard 1986, 54). Jane's statement illustrates the ways in which women and girls become someone else in prostitution. Women become girls again, as in the case of Annabelle. If the father likes to see pornography made with little girls, and likes to pay for sex with women in wigs and schoolgirl uniforms, it is likely that he is also going to look at his daughters as sexy things as well.

What men do to women in pornography and prostitution they do because, supposedly, they cannot do the same things to their prudish wives. We usually fail to mention what men can do or want to do with their daughters. According to incest survivor Katherine Brady, "My father used the pictures to justify his abuse and to convince me that what we were doing was normal. The idea was that if men were doing it to women in the pictures, then it was OK for him to do it to me" (in Russell 1993, 43). Later in her life, Brady writes, her husband did the same, introducing her to new forms of pornography, and, once again, reducing her to sex.

Incest and prostitution are both protected by secrecy, by a society in which a false social value of repression has reigned supreme in the dominant discourse. A fundamental myth about sex in general is that it is private, separate from the public (or the political) sphere, and, thus, not discussed in public. Michel Foucault criticized this notion with regard to Victorians in his "Repressive Hypothesis," the assertion that sexuality is something about which people do not speak. Foucault questions whether "repression"
indeed exists. While creating an illusion of “repression,” the powerful, “procreative couple” is actually producing a discourse on what kinds of sex are legitimate. The actual discourse of what constitutes “sexuality,” then, is a site of power. It remains invisible and is maintained by the discourse on “sexual repression.” Foucault’s analysis, although compelling, ignores men’s power over women. When one takes into account patriarchal power, one notices that men dominate, and women are the class of people to whom men have sold a “single locus of sexuality” as “the truth” about sex. Women are the class of people to whom a “single locus of sexuality” has been sold as the “truth” about sex. Prostitution and pornography protect this dominant (and thus invisible), male notion of sexuality.

When women and girls speak openly of the complexities of their abuse, men use this speech to their advantage. It is important, for men, that their responsibility for abuse is hidden, along with the harm it causes for women. Perhaps the most far-reaching instance of this repression of women’s speech on abuse is the rise in pornography at the same time as the feminist movement gained momentum and influence. Susan Brownmiller writes in her memoir of the women’s movement *In Our Time*, “By a miserable coincidence of historic timing, an aboveground, billion-dollar industry of hard- and soft-core porn began to flourish during the seventies simultaneously with the rise of Women’s Liberation” (1999, 295). Feminists organized against pornography, noting that the purpose and effect of pornography was to undo the feminist work of speaking up about violence against women by turning this violence into “sex” and calling it the “sexual revolution.” The strategy of pornographers was and continues to be to claim to be
in opposition to sexual repression, not women’s liberation. Such claims conceal the inherent misogyny of pornography.

Incest, like prostitution, is all around us, yet treated as though taboo and thus rare. “The concept of repression might be more aptly invoked to describe the social response to the reality of incest” (Herman 2000, 21). Rosaria Champagne notes in *The Politics of Survivorship*, “Incest is the oldest taboo. It also is a very ordinary part of many children’s lives: one out of every three girls; one out of seven boys” (1996, 14). The appearance of the incest “taboo” does well to keep incest, and its survivors, in the closet. “A true taboo is a true deterrent. Sexual abuse of child by parent, it would seem, then, is not a taboo. Talking about it is the taboo” (Armstrong 1986, 7). Instead of serving as a deterrent, Champagne notes, the incest taboo allows sexual abuse to continue:

The taboo against incest has become a social myth as well, one that strategically simplifies the impact... It is only harmful if the abuse meets standards of high frequency and duration; it happens only in bad homes. The taboo further suggests that the perpetrator is sick, deranged, alcohol- or drug-addicted (1996, 35).

The taboo conceals perpetrators. Despite their crimes against women and girls, perpetrators remain invisible as abusers and instead appear to be successful doctors, Catholic priests, “pillars of the community.”

A recent story in *the New York Times Magazine* illustrates the ways in which incest and pornography are incredibly common and interconnected. Most strikingly, this story is an example of the ways in which the incest “taboo” conceals perpetrators. In the article “The Making of a Molester,” Daniel Bergner portrays Roy as the real victim in the case of his sexual abuse of his stepdaughter. The article names the Internet as the cause of Roy’s “deviant” acts, naming him a “cybermolester” as though his molestation of his stepdaughter were somehow unreal.
Roy emphasizes his wife’s complicity rather than his own abuse, stating that it was not until his wife pointed out her daughter’s adolescent body that he began to have sexual thoughts about the girl, 11 at the time. For punishment, Roy attends group therapy with other child molesters. The group, in some aspects, resembles a yoga class: the men learn to relax, letting their “awareness” come to their chests. The therapist’s job is to give the men methods to keep their lives under control, to “keep themselves from molesting again. This technique is one way. ‘Center your attention on the steady beating of your heart’” (Bergner 2004, 28). The technique, it seems, is to have men feel at peace with themselves despite their abusive behavior. Admitting to what they have done is also the requirement for “graduation” from the program, which could lead to a reduction in probation. Roy has been sentenced to 20 years with 35 years probation. Roy explains his actions: “‘touching my wife’s daughter and her best friend sexually, touching them through their clothing between their legs, around their waist, moving my hand into the top of their waistband. I also moved my hand under their shorts up to their panty lines. I used games that were called ‘Chase’ and ‘Spider’ to manipulate them into feeling safe with me’” (Bergner 2004, 28). During these “games,” Roy molested his stepdaughter and her friend.

Bergner’s narrative points to the Internet as the source of the abuse: “The erotic became explicit, Roy said, when they were in separate rooms, at separate computers” (Bergner 2004, 30). His stepdaughter was 12. She sent him an instant message asking him what he was doing. He offered her a compliment, comparing her to her brother and saying she was a “‘really good little girl.’” She replied, saying she was instead a “‘bad girl’” (Bergner 2004, 30). From this line, Bergner writes, Roy was “smitten.” Roy’s next
step was to begin monitoring the stepdaughter's online conversations: "His stepdaughter's romantic explorations, confided to her friend, became his pornography" (Bergner 2004, 30). At one point, Roy told the girl to come to his home office and see what he would like to do with her. She went and found a video that Roy describes as "'a man rubbing his penis on a girl's vagina that's been shaved'" (Bergner 2004, 30). Roy's solicitations continued, until the stepdaughter reported him. Contrary to his claims that the Internet compelled Roy to abuse his stepdaughter, Bergner found police reports stating that some of the "troubling touches, through clothes," began when she was in second grade. Throughout this story, Roy is presented as the victim of addiction to the Internet and pornography, not the perpetrator of sexual violence. Male power remains invisible in this context.

One result of invisibilizing Roy's abusive behavior and instead presenting him as a victim is that he has maintained his position as supervisor at a telecommunications repair company. His colleagues are to monitor his computer use so that he is not again tempted by the Internet. "Everyone at his job is aware of his crime. He has made a point of answering everyone's questions... At Roy's job, the element of personal forgiveness goes beyond employment... He said that he was engaged to be married again -- to a bookkeeper at the company..." (Bergner 2004, 28). In other words, Roy gets to move on with his life. Survivors of incest express long-lasting effects of abuse: the inability to feel, to love, to be at peace. For the men committing the crimes, however, recovery seems to come quickly, and with great benefits. A question remains: When will the disruption of the lives of women and girls, caused by sexually abusive men, matter enough to hold perpetrators accountable?
Bergner points to possible causes of sexual abuse, such as biology, an abuser’s own childhood, aspects of “isolation” in his current life, or “the powerful arrival of the Internet into the world of Eros” (2004, 31). He concedes that he could not find many answers amongst professionals like psychiatrists, psychologists, researchers and clinicians. Feminists have more accurately presented patriarchal sex-right as an inextricable element of sexual abuse. For those of us who see society as one stratified by gender, explanations for male violence do not require elaborate science experiments. Explaining, and ending, sexual abuse requires a consciousness of men’s power over women, and an effort to listen to women and girls, who know best what men have done to shape their lives.

Bergner’s thoughts remain focused on the perpetrator and restricted to scientific studies of “sexually deviant” individuals, a focus that will be ineffective in efforts to end sexual abuse. A professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Dr. Fred Berlin, explains that there is an aversion to studying such “vile people” as child molesters. It appears the Roy is not so vile, however, as he remains a supervisor at his previous job, where everyone knows he molested his stepdaughter. He is also engaged to be married once again. Finally, Roy must take the Abel Assessment for Sexual Interest, a test all men convicted of molestation must take during treatment. The test measures what age group men find most attractive by showing them pictures of children from various age groups. The results were that Roy was attracted to adult females and “very slightly more so” to females in the adolescent category. According to Roy’s therapist, this assessment placed him within the realms of “ordinary male sexuality.”
To recapitulate, Dr. Berlin says there are few studies of child sexual abuse because perpetrators are considered too “vile.” Roy’s therapist, on the other hand, declares that it is perfectly normal for middle-aged men like Roy to be “slightly more” attracted to adolescent girls than to women. “The minimal preference for adolescents over adults was, he said, a cause for some worry, given Roy’s crime. But in itself the strong erotic response to adolescents was entirely normal” (Bergner 2004, 33). This preference for younger and more vulnerable members of the already less powerful female sex, is, apparently, no problem at all. Furthermore, it could not be tied to male power, patriarchal socialization and patriarchal constructs of what is sexually appealing, the professionals suggest. Also worth noting is the therapist’s comment that “the difference between me and my guys is a very thin line.” Bergner pipes in: “He doesn’t mean that he’s on the edge of doing what they have done, only that the potential may lie within all of us” (Bergner 2004, 33).

Finally we see a more accurate portrayal of the fear involved in studying such a supposedly taboo subject. The fear lies in discovering that child sexual abuse is not taboo at all. The potential lies in all men, Bergner admits. Perhaps the supposed “fear” in studying sexual abuse lies in a fear of unveiling its fundamental role in patriarchal society. The incest taboo prevails in such efforts to explain sexual abuse as a “deviant” act, rather than one that patriarchal society sanctions. The harm and pervasiveness of incest remains hidden within the framework of incest as “deviant” behavior.

It would be inaccurate, today, to suggest that the US is completely silent about incest and other forms of sexual abuse. What most people remain silent about, however, is the extent to which incest is a pervasive means by which, overwhelmingly, men and
boys violate girls, as girls. Most research on incest has focused upon father-daughter incest. However, Diana Russell's 1978 survey of 930 women in San Francisco actually found uncles to be the perpetrators in most of the reported cases of incest. Fathers committed incest in 24% of cases, while uncles did so in 25% of cases (Russell 1986, 216). Brothers were perpetrators in 13% of cases, cousins in 16%, and grandfathers in 6%. Some feminists argue that brother-sister incest is the most common form of incest. In *Healing the Incest Wound*, Christine Courtois notes that father-daughter incest is believed to be the most commonly reported type, while incest between an older brother and a younger sister has been thought to be the most commonly occurring type (1988, 73).

While social acceptance of sexual abuse vis-à-vis prostitution renders it increasingly harmful, a similar acceptance of incest between brothers and sisters appears to prevail, making this form of abuse particularly damaging for survivors. In many cases of brother-sister incest, Courtois notes, the brother resembles the incestuous father and may have an abusing father on whom he models his sexually predatory behavior (Ibid. 76). Russell and Courtois both note that the myth of brother-sister incest as non-damaging must affect underreporting of such incidences. Russell notes "... brother-sister incest... suffers more than any of the others from the stereotype of mutuality" (1986, 271). Unless there is a significant difference in age between a brother and his sister, the brother is too often considered a "peer" and thus unlikely or unable to sexually abuse his sister. Russell found that the average age difference between brothers and sisters in cases of incest was seven years. Regardless of this finding, she notes, even a one-year age difference between siblings has enormous power implications (1986, 292). Precisely
because it is the most discounted form of incest, brother-sister incest may be seen as amongst the most harmful for women and girls.

Russell’s study suggests a stronger connection between pornography and father-daughter incest as opposed to other forms of incest. Forty three percent of the survivors of father-daughter incest reported having been asked to pose for pornography, while 21% of survivors with perpetrators other than fathers report the same. Thirty-one percent of survivors of father-daughter incest reported having been asked to enact pornographic pictures/movies/books as compared with 13% of survivors with non-paternal perpetrators (1986, 254). Pornographers must also endorse the “myth of mutuality” surrounding brother-sister incest, and thus promote father-daughter incest more vehemently. Indeed, “the relationship between father and daughter, adult male and female child, is one of the most unequal relationships imaginable” (Herman 2000, 4). It follows, then, that pornographers would exploit this relationship in particular, thriving on sexualized inequality as they do.

Incest is not the rare form of abuse that the term “taboo” suggests. Rather, it is central to patriarchal family structure and thus central to socialization. Pornography is one way in which abusive fathers and other male relatives and authority figures learn to sexually abuse women and girls. Through this exploitation, men and boys concretize the social inferiority of girls. Sexual exploitation of girls continues later in women’s lives as they enter prostitution, often pimped by husbands or boyfriends.
2. The War on Women: Sexual Murder, Pimping, and Prostitution

I might not live to see Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday... The fear I'm living with is horrible.

Survivor of prostitution in Detroit, after sharing with AFG workers that one of her friends, also a prostitute, had been killed by a john recently.

Pimping and procuring are among the most ruthless practices of male power and sexual dominance (1995, 218).

Kathleen Barry

By not caring about the lives of women in prostitution, and by normalizing their abuse, states and societies kill women in prostitution. “The state creates the conditions in which the woman is prostituted, sanctions force against her to effect her prostitution by systematically ignoring it…” (Dworkin 1983, 180). Women in prostitution are the bedrock of what radical feminists have named the “war on women.” The “everyday” collective experience of women is one of war and terror. The stories of women in prostitution illustrate clearly this “world war on the basis of sex going on for millennia” (MacKinnon 2002). In this chapter, I hope to further convey the ways in which prostitution dehumanizes women. While I argue that prostitution is sexual violence against women, it is also useful to note the horrendous uses of physical violence against women and girls in prostitution. Male violence against women in prostitution, coupled with the stigmatization of women in prostitution, reinforces the notion that women, especially “whores,” are subhuman.

Violence against women and girls in prostitution is consistent with pervasive violence against all women. As Dworkin and many other radical feminists point out, the difference between violence against women in prostitution and other forms of violence

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8 MacKinnon notes in her article “State of Emergency,” “Letting die, we are told, can be killing, but letting men abuse women seems virtually never to be acknowledged as abusing women” (in Hawthorne and Winter 2003, 469).
against women (e.g. battering, rape, and incest) is that in prostitution a woman has multiple abusers. The difference between abuse of prostitutes and related crimes against women, then, is a matter of degree. Like the harms posed by the “myth of mutuality” surrounding brother-sister incest, the offense of prostitution is increased by its widespread acceptance in society. This acceptance is especially clear in states where prostitution is legal, in the multi-million dollar porn industry, and in the numerous proprostitution efforts. It is impossible to distinguish between prostitution and violence against women.

The current stage of men’s war on women, according to Jane Caputi, is the age of sex crime. This stage began with Jack the Ripper, the unidentified killer of 1888 who murdered and mutilated five prostitutes in London. Patriarchal culture enshrined Jack the Ripper as a mythic hero. Ted Bundy, who was convicted in 1979 of the murders of three women and is suspected to be responsible for 47 more, also enjoyed a great deal of heroization. A poster advertising his final interview read: “A Man with Vision. A Man with Direction. A Prophet of Our Times…. Bundy: The Man, The Myth, The Legend” (Caputi 1989, 446). Glorification of serial murderers of women serves a two-fold function, according to Caputi: “to terrorize women and to empower and inspire men” (1989, 445). In men’s war against women, men are the brave warriors of the patriarchal state. Women, on the other hand, are seemingly inconsequential casualties.

9 As Kathleen Barry notes, “women’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation is an institutionalized social system” (1995, 317). Prostitution is socially validated, institutionalized sexual exploitation.

10 Bundy’s case also exemplifies the centrality of pornography as an initial step in the objectification that makes sexual abuse and murder possible. One of Bundy’s interviewers shares: He told me that long before there was a need to kill there were juvenile fantasies fed by photos of women in skin magazines, suntan oil advertisements, or jiggly starlets on talk shows. He was transfixed by the sight of women’s bodies on provocative display... (Caputi 1989, 447).
A recent *New York Times* article presented several cases of serial murder, which, according to the article, have received little public recognition: the 60 Freeway Killer, the Santa Claus Strangler, and a former pizza delivery man who the police say is responsible for the murders of at least 16 prostitutes, making him the most prolific serial killer in the history of Los Angeles. “These cases,” writes LeDuff, “barely rate a mention in the local newspapers” (*NY Times* January 29, 2005). LeDuff’s analysis typically fails to name maleness as a general trend in sex crimes. However, this article provides further evidence that sexual murder, and the men who murder, is in fact normal rather than exceptional. It is, indeed, exceptional cases such as those involving pregnant white women\(^\text{11}\) or black male murderers that tend to receive the most attention. As Caputi points out, the men who do make the news provide an important function to patriarchy by promoting the myth that their crimes are exceptional enough to merit media attention. She writes, “we might further recognize Bundy as a martyr for the patriarchal state, one who, after getting caught, had to pay for his fervor, the purity of his misogyny, and his attendant celebrity with his life” (Caputi 1989, 449). Bundy’s attention allowed the invisibility of scores of other men who stood by him in his misogyny.

Another reason male perpetrators of sexual murder and other instance of violence against women remain invisible and unaccountable is that police officers\(^\text{12}\) tend to criminalize women in prostitution rather than the johns who exploit them. Police are often violent to the women as well, and thus worsen rather than mitigate what is already a

\(^{11}\) For example, the recent case in which Scott Peterson murdered his 27-year-old wife, Laci Denise Peterson, received national attention. I propose that this exposure can be explained by the fact that the Laci was pregnant (as evidenced by constant mention of the “unborn child”), and thus had more societal value than might another woman in sexist society. Not surprisingly, Peterson subscribed to a pornographic television station.

\(^{12}\) Dominant societal views of prostitutes are consistent with such treatment – police are not the only culprits in the systemic stigmatization and criminalization of women in prostitution.
disproportionate amount of violence in their lives. During AFG outreach shifts, our discussions from the AFG van were often interrupted by police horns and red lights flashed over the women’s bodies. Sometimes even EMS vehicles appeared to take pleasure in honking at the women. “The last resort for escape is to go to the police. But this is hardly an option for women who know they are legally and morally condemned by those from whom they would seek help. Indeed, police brutality of prostitutes is periodically reported by women working the streets” (Barry 1995, 213). The primary complaints of women with whom we spoke on outreach shifts often surrounded the threat of arrest. One survivor reveals the hypocrisy of police harassment, however, saying “Some of [the police] were my best tricks” (field notes July 28, 2004). In fact, some police run their own after-hours clubs where prostitution occurs, says AFG caseworker Amy Winebarger.

While criminalizing women in prostitution, hypocritical police remain complicit, if not directly involved, in prostitution and other forms of violence against women. During the time of the Jack the Ripper killings, police assured the community that many people hated prostitutes and they would continue to arrest the women. Once “innocent girls,” or non-prostitutes, became the next victims of the serial murderer, the police expressed concern. In South Central Los Angeles in the 1980’s at least 17 women, identified by police as prostitutes, were murdered in a primarily African-American neighborhood. All but three of the victims were African-American. The police waited until ten women were killed before notifying the public that a serial murderer was operating. There were four more murderers before police formed a task force.
Caputi points out a particular function served by identifying murdered women as prostitutes: "When the police or press describe the murdered women as prostitutes, it lulls nonprostitute women into a false feeling of safety. It plays upon sexist and frequently racist prejudices to mute the seriousness of the murders, and – most effectively – it diverts the blame to the victim" (Caputi 1989, 452). As seen in the Jack the Ripper killings, police deflect their responsibility to women in prostitution: "The police can do nothing as long as the victims unwittingly connive at their own destruction. They take the murderer to some retired spot, and place themselves in such a position that they can be slaughtered without a sound being heard" (Caputi 1989, 452). One police officer shares that "There is nothing that carries [such] risk with it, in peacetime, as streetwalking prostitution" (Caputi 1989, 452). The fact that a police officer uses the term "peacetime" to describe a time in which a man is murdering up to 50 women indicates the widespread, historical disregard for women's lives, especially women in prostitution. On the other hand, we learn from the story of Aileen Wuornos, "When a prostitute kills a trick, the john, it is as if the world might come to an end" (Barry 1995, 45). Wuornos killed six violent tricks, and was sentenced to death five times in the state of Florida. Male dominance ensures that violence against women is minimized in importance, while the few instances of violence committed by women are exaggerated, even in cases of self-defense like Wuornos's.

The low societal value of prostitute women's lives is such that they may be murdered, only to find that no one notices they are gone. "Systematic sexual exploitation reduces the value of female life to that of 'throwaway women' who are like no-deposit, no-return bottles or cartons disposed and unaccounted for" (Barry 1995, 44). In 1992,
nine prostitute women in Detroit were strangled and left in empty buildings. Their bodies were nude, and they were bound and gagged. By the time some of the bodies were found, they had been badly decomposed, having been in abandoned buildings for over six months (Barry 1995, 47). Amy Winebarger explains common views of women in prostitution: “Who cares about them anyway? They’re worthless to a lot of people. They just want them off the street. They’d rather see them dead or in jail than have to drive by, have them in their neighborhood” (Winebarger, pers.comm.). One woman stated at the exiting prostitution support group that once after an overdose, she had been found in a dumpster.

Violence within prostitution, like prostitution itself, is so common as to be expected. One night on outreach in Detroit, we heard gunshots behind us during a shift. I was alarmed by the shots, and wanted to get out of the area immediately. After talking about this occurrence later on, I found that the shots barely startled my co-worker and the women with whom we had been speaking. Gun shots, then, are a regular occurrence for many women walking the streets of Detroit. Speaking of violence at the AFG panel, one woman said “I’m missing a finger because of it” (field notes July 28, 2004). She had scars from jumping out of cars, being stabbed in the head. Another woman mentioned the typical “ho cut,” an act of violence committed by pimps in order to punish women and girls who are “disloyal.” The cut is typically a large one across a woman’s face, intended to show others that she has upset her pimp.

Pimps and tricks effectively enslave, beat, and in many cases, kill women by isolating them from society. One of the first steps in recruiting, then, is to distance
women and girls from their networks of support. Linda Boreman’s\textsuperscript{13} story, as she tells it in her autobiography \textit{Ordeal}, illustrates men’s world-wide, historical war on women. More specifically, her story exemplifies husbands’ and boyfriends’ roles in pimping women. Linda met Chuck Traynor during a time at which she was desperate to move out of her parents’ home. Traynor almost appeared a hero to Linda, who thought him to be generous and respectful at first. He took her out shopping, having her home by her unusually early curfew of 11:00. She writes, “Chuck was behaving like a gentleman with me. Lighting my cigarettes, opening car doors, listening to what I said” (Lovelace 1980, 17). Eventually, Traynor took the opportunity to invite Linda to move in with him. He offered her a way out of her abusive mother’s household. Once Linda moved in, Chuck told her that he would be “taking care of her” from then on, and that she should stop communicating with her family (Lovelace 1980, 22). He then forced Linda into marriage, prostitution, and finally pornography.

Linda Boreman’s story is one of terror. She writes, “Every day I either got raped, beaten, kicked, punched, smacked, choked, degraded, or yelled at… There was always a gun pointed at my head. Even when no gun could be seen, there was a gun pointed at my head” (Lovelace 1980, 51). From her autobiography, we find several key concepts to understanding prostitution, including the ways in which pimps and johns enslave women by use of violence and terror; the dissociation implemented by survivors; the manipulation used in recruitment; the difficulty in exiting; and, not least, the difficulty in speaking out against what men do to women vis-à-vis prostitution. Lastly, we must note that Chuck Traynor’s gross violence is hardly unusual in the world of prostitution. As one

\textsuperscript{13} Lovelace was Linda’s prostitute name, and the name under which she published \textit{Ordeal}. Her birth name was Boreman, and this later changed to Marchiano when she and Larry Marchiano married. She returned to using Boreman after her divorce from Larry Marchiano and before she died in 2002. She was 53.
of Boreman's peers said to her: "'I know a dozen Chucks...a hundred Chucks...'

(Lovelace 1980, 60).

One survivor with whom I worked at AFG, Ebony, shared with me a similar story of recruitment into prostitution. For her, recruitment into prostitution was rapid, occurring in less than seven hours. At age 18, she was standing at the bus stop during winter, when a man came by in a car and offered to give her a ride. He tried two or three times, telling her it was cold out and that he was not going to hurt her. After all, he had a baby in the car with him. He was safe, he told her, and she went with him. He then proceeded to make several stops, telling Ebony that she was now part of the "family," and was not going anywhere. He told her not to worry about her belongings: he would get new ones for her. One of the stops he made after picking up Ebony was the mall, where he bought her high heels and a bikini outfit. He then took her back to a hotel where several other young women were also staying. 14 His use of control was evident immediately, as he ordered another young woman to wash Ebony's hair. If she did not, he would "smack the shit out of her" (pers.comm. Aug. 31, 2004). His next move was to provide Ebony with alcohol, which she had never drunk before. After Ebony had had a significant amount of alcohol, she found herself dancing at an illegal after-hours club.

Ebony became an alcoholic. She says, "I didn't want to be there. I was depressed" (pers.comm. Aug. 31, 2004). Another way Ebony made money for her pimp was by hustling goods on the street. Her pimp told her how much money to make, and kept it himself, thus ensuring her dependence upon him. Ebony's pimp was extremely violent, and used her for sex while selling her to other men as well. He did this with all of the

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14 Ebony's story exemplifies the disproportionate numbers of Black women and girls in prostitution. She and all of the women with whom she lived were women of color.
other women with whom Ebony lived, telling each one she was his special “girl” so that the women would resent each other and thus remain isolated and unable to resist him.

The man who pimped Ebony also took pictures and thus made pornography of her and the other women in the after-hours club.

The strategies pimps used to recruit Ebony and Linda Boreman are rather typical: “Suddenly he appears, he is friendly, he offers to buy her a meal and, later, he gives her a place to spend the night. She hears compliments for the first time in ages, as well as promises that he will buy her new clothes and have her hair done” (Barry 1995, 204).

Dworkin and MacKinnon note in Pornography and Civil Rights that the method pimps use in recruiting women like Ebony is hardly original: “Pimps roam bus stations to entrap young girls who left incestuous homes thinking nothing could be worse” (1988, 43).

Finstad and Hoigard point out that the women they interviewed did not typically use the term “pimp,” but called these men “special friends” instead. In Detroit, AFG workers ask women if they have “someone looking out for them,” a misleading description given the strategies of control and terror pimps use in order to enslave women in prostitution. Marchiano’s work, for example, describes the extent to which her pimp, Traynor, kept hold of her, always watching, always making sure she could not possibly escape his enslavement.

An estimated 80% to 95% of all prostitution is pimp controlled (Barry 1995, 198). As Finstad and Hoigard point out, many men in pimping relationships with women in prostitution encourage the women to prostitute, and either benefit from or

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15 In Detroit, I spoke with few women who acknowledged that they had pimps. Given pimps’ tactics of control, this is not surprising. The pimps, my co-workers shared, moved the women around often, especially during times of great police control. Many women throughout the summer of 2004 noted that police control had increased due a special news report on prostitution in Detroit and due to Detroit’s preparations for hosting the Super Bowl and thus clearing the streets of prostitutes.
survive on her earnings. Using this definition, it is likely that many of the women AFG serves do have pimps in their lives. Finstad and Hoigard also suggest that many women would not admit to having a pimp, as it suggests even further that they are “being used.” “Denying that you have a pimp thus becomes a way of expressing that your own experience does not coincide with the stereotypical pimp-prostitute relationship” (Finstad and Hoigard 1992, 135). Carefully defining pimps also allows women to believe that their boyfriends are distinguishable from the violent pimps they know or conceptualize.

According to Barry, the issue facing all women in sexual relationships today is the question of whether or not relationships are based on sexual exploitation or intimacy or love. She calls for a wider definition of pimps. “…All prostitution is sexual exploitation, and so every relationship that sustains it is abusive: with a customer, with a pimp or ‘my man,’ or with a boyfriend or husband.” (Barry 1995, 218).

The fact that these women allegedly love men despite their being abused by them does not make the abuse any less real or severe. “The pimp’s foundation of power rests solely on the fact that she feels that she needs him” (Finstad and Hoigard 1992, 161). One woman said, “He’s the only thing I live for. He’s all I got” (Finstad and Hoigard 1992, 170). Vednita Carter describes a survivor who came to her organization, Breaking Free. This survivor, Joline, had a pimp who died of a drug overdose. Carter writes, “Although he was physically, sexually, and mentally cruel and abusive to her, she felt that part of her died with him” (Farley 2003, 219). Joline used drugs on a daily basis, and eventually began cutting herself with a knife. As Vednita Carter writes, “It is often difficult for Black women to escape prostitution because it often requires that she abandon her home,
flee from an abusive husband, boyfriend, or pimp who has coerced her into turning tricks for his benefit” (in Farley 2003, 221).

Criminalization reinforces the role of pimps. “The double standard of American legal practice – where the customer and the pimp go free and the women are hauled in – serves to provide the necessary foundation for the extensive pimping…” (Finstad and Hoigard 1992, 161). One woman we spoke with during an AFG shift said that her pimp really looked out for her. The only example she gave of his supposed generosity was that he got her out of jail when necessary (pers.comm. July 18, 2004). For one survivor, Melinda, prison was a temporary escape from her pimp. She states, “I got busted left and right. I knew if I’d get convicted that would be one way I could get away from my man for maybe four months. I could get away to regroup my mind to deal with another year”” (in Barry 1995, 200). For many women in prostitution, even prison is preferable.

If we are to make connections between crimes against women, we must also make connections between the men who commit such crimes. Narrow definitions of pimps, we must remember, exist alongside narrow conceptions of prostitution, rape, incest, and other crimes against women. Circumscribed notions of what constitutes bodily harm against women allow men to harm them more often, in more ways, with impunity. Their crimes go unnoticed and unnamed. A more inclusive definition of the pimp would allow a better understanding of the extent to which men benefit from women’s exploitation vis-à-vis prostitution.

Another reason to expand our notion of the pimp is the extent to which racism has shaped conventional notions of the “American pimp.” White racism has hidden the white men who compose the foundation for prostitution, but who benefit from conventional
views of prostitution as being that which occurs outside the "gentleman’s club," and outside the studios of Hustler, Playboy, and Penthouse. Indeed, the prevalence of black women in prostitution has its roots in slavery, in which white men made sure that the bodies of black women were always accessible for their sexual exploitation. It would, however, be inaccurate to suggest that Black men have no responsibility in perpetuating prostitution. After all, men in general contribute significantly to prostitution. To portray Black men as the main force behind prostitution is both unfair and prejudicial.

Considering the extent to which all pimps control women raises questions about the differences between trafficking and prostitution. In the following section, I will discuss feminist efforts to blur the false distinctions between trafficking, child prostitution, prostitution, and pornography. Making visible the harms within each system and their inextricability is foundational to the eradication of the sexual exploitation of women.
3. Prostitution and Pornography: Brothers in Sex Trafficking

In her analysis of sex trafficking in Europe, Dorchen Leidholdt defines trafficking as the movement of girls and women for purposes of sexual exploitation, usually from developing countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa into the sex industry of developed countries; as well as the movement of girls and women from Europe’s rural areas into its industrial centers. “From this angle,” she writes, “it is apparent that much of what is thought of as generic prostitution is in fact sexual trafficking” (in Elman 1996, 83). Dissemination of pornography is also a form of trafficking, as Dworkin and MacKinnon note in their anti-pornography ordinance (1988, 44). Feminist efforts to end prostitution recognize that distinctions between prostitution and trafficking are not only false, but harmful in the struggle to end the sexual exploitation of women.\(^\text{16}\)

Naming all forms of prostitution as trafficking would require opponents of trafficking in women and girls to oppose all forms of prostitution. Another important goal in broadening definitions of trafficking would be to make clear that “child prostitution” and “adult prostitution” are inextricable. As evidenced by the numerous instances of infantilization of women and even promotion of incest in mainstream pornography, the “adult” industry rests upon the sexual exploitation of girls and women. Proponents of prostitution often distinguish between “free and forced prostitution,” child and adult prostitution, and prostitution and pornography. At the 2005 Demand Dynamics

\(^{16}\) In my attempt to blur distinctions between prostitution and trafficking, I intend not to diminish the harm of trafficking but rather to emphasize its relationship to prostitution, and thus to emphasize the harms women face in prostitution. As Leidholdt notes, “Organized and accepted prostitution within the borders of a developed country paves the way for organized trafficking of women from developed countries” (in Elman 1996, 89). One difference between prostitution and trafficking, for example, is that in cases of trafficking women often speak a different dialect or do not speak the language in the country to which they have been trafficked.
conference, several speakers dismantled such deceptive distinctions. Julie Bindel, for example, discussed false distinctions between trafficking, adult prostitution, and child prostitution. Bindel developed the first re-education program for users of women in street prostitution in the United Kingdom. She has also developed and delivered training courses on combating trafficking for local activists in the Balkans and the EU destination countries.

"Trafficking," Bindel argues, has become a buzz word, appropriated by conservatives and proprostitution organizers who attempt to appear feminist. As Bindel notes, distinctions between prostitution and trafficking perpetuate the notion that there are good and bad (i.e. legitimate and illegitimate) victims of prostitution,\(^\text{17}\) rather than seeing all forms of prostitution as forms of violence against women. Bindel also notes that trafficking and sex with children are already legally and socially condemned, and thus do not provide a compelling focus for any debate over prostitution. According to Bindel, kidnapped women, or those women who are victims of trafficking as it is conventionally defined, are in the minority of women in prostitution. Focusing on the minority allows people to see prostitution as acceptable or contained, rather than seeing that it is the norm.

\(^{17}\) A clear illustration of this persuasive idea is the recent episode of the talk show *The View*, on which Jeanette Angell, author of *Call Girl*, was a guest. The hosts of the show discussed Angell’s involvement in prostitution for most of the hour, and spoke directly with her for only about ten minutes of the show. The hosts compared her to a murderer, and asked continuously how she justified having sex with married men and why she did not choose another “job.” In her own defense, she emphasized that she was in an escort service and not street prostitution. Her reason for entering prostitution, as she provided, was that her boyfriend left and she needed to pay rent without his assistance. The show exemplified the ways in which sexist and classist views toward women in prostitution divide women from one another, the ways in which men escape any accountability for demanding prostitution, and the false distinctions between types of prostitution, as Angell implied that prostitution vis-à-vis an escort system was safer than street prostitution.
Dominant discourse around prostitution and trafficking accepts the former as “free prostitution” and the latter as “forced prostitution.” Any consideration of the tactics used by pimps reveals that prostitution often requires coercive recruitment. The following example of a strip club “manager” illustrates the degree to which young women are coerced into even the most socially accepted forms of prostitution. At another conference on prostitution, Reverend Al Erickson presented an interview with a former manager of Déjà Vu, a strip club found in Kalamazoo, Lansing, and Detroit, Michigan and in other states as well. In the video, entitled, “No Bigger Lie out There,” manager David Sherman discussed his ability to recruit young women in college. These women, he noted, were away from their home towns, away from family and friends. The strip club, he said, seemed to provide a network of people who praised the women, telling them they were pretty and would make money. With homeless women and girls, he said, recruiting was “no challenge at all,” since he provided the women a place to stay and “a shoulder to cry on.” These women, he said, would do whatever he wanted in order to keep a place to stay (Erickson 2004).

The “manager,” better described as a pimp, would give women jobs as waitresses, and then take the job away but tell them dancing was still an option. He described the process as taking “baby steps,” getting them up on stage, sometimes in clothing at first. Eventually, he would manipulate the women into taking off their clothes. From here, he would begin to implement other means of control. For example, he would require

17 This anti-feminist conference was held in September of 2004 in Toledo, Ohio. It was deceptively named the “First National Conference on Prostitution, Sex Work, and the Commercial Sex Industry: The State of Women’s Health.” This was certainly not the first conference on prostitution; naming it such ignores the work of radical feminists over the last 30 years. Furthermore, feminist perspectives on prostitution were almost completely absent. One of the only anti-prostitution presenters was survivor Anne Bissell, who wrote Memoirs of a Sex Industry Survivor.
meetings with the women, which he taped, and would discuss things as trivial as how much toilet paper they could use. He stated that he knew this would instill a belief amongst the women that, if he controls my toilet paper, he controls me, and I cannot leave. The women, isolated from the beginning, have what they think are legitimate jobs, and are coerced, if not violently forced, into prostitution. Déjà Vu is but one of countless strip clubs, and is typically dubbed "adult entertainment" rather than prostitution or trafficking for men.

Trafficking and pornography reinforce one another in direct ways. At the Demand Dynamics conference, Kenneth Franzblau of the international human rights organization Equality Now shed light on some of the worst instances of sex trafficking, or international sexual slavery. Pornography is central in the promotion of such instances "sex tourism," which in turn is used in the creation of pornography. As one website, dexterhorn.com suggests, men can make their own "home movie" for $65. The home page states plainly: "Our adult videos and adult DVDs point the way." Dexter Horn, who essentially traffics women via the Internet, has compiled a "gentleman’s guide" to "sex and adventure worldwide." In this guide, Horn explains that in order to make pornography, the john will have to "trick" the woman by hiding the camera so that she is unaware he is making pornography of her.

On Dexter Horn’s site, and countless others, racism is used to promote sex trafficking. Sexualizing Asian women in particular, he makes claims about Asian culture to suggest that prostitution is simply the fate of "poor, desperate" Asian women. He states that every single woman in Thailand is either for rent or for sale, and that this is

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20 Leidholdt writes, "...prostitution often does not require overt physical coercion or verbal threat since the system of domination perpetuated and enforced by sex industry businessmen and buyers is intrinsically coercive" (in Farley 2003, 172).
"perfectly normal in Thai society." In other words, Asian women (and girls) are desperately waiting for old Western men to come and rescue them from poverty. To be more specific, Horn shares the range of possibilities for johns willing to travel: “Bangkok hookers, Filipina virgins, Latina busty babes,” women from the Brazil, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Amsterdam, and Germany. One of the effects of racism, both domestically and internationally, is to deflect attention away from the white men who make up much of the demand for prostitution. “What is seen as the eternal dimension of prostitution – why it must always exist -- is that the will of women to prostitute themselves will always exist” (Dworkin 1983, 180). Furthermore, as Annalisa Enrile of the GABRIELA Network noted in her discussion of racism in pornography, traffickers use cultural myths to infer the consent of women and girls (Enrile 2005).

The basis of such racist and sexist myths is that all women, especially poor women of color, consent to prostitution. Dexter Horn’s home page states that he will help men find sex with “consenting adults.” The site also features six nude to nearly-nude Asian women positioned on an ocean bluff. The women look very young and fearful. Despite the obligatory claim of “consenting adults,” the site promotes child prostitution, a theme consistent throughout pornography. One set of pornographic films, for example, is entitled “Thai Teens in Heat.” One film tells the story of “Wheelchair Tom,” who “scores with underage girls.” These instances of pornography illustrate the consistent themes of sexism, racism, exotification of poverty, and exotification of youth. Dexter Horn and other traffickers also promote the notion that any man (even “Wheelchair Tom”) can and will be adored and sexually served by a beautiful young girl, especially of Asian descent.
In his talk, Kenneth Franzblau emphasized the use of sadomasochism and slavery in sex trafficking or “sex tourism” (Franzblau 2005). Another website, slavefarm.com, promotes the sexualization of torture. The website home page features several pictures of women tied up, ropes around their breasts, their arms tied behind their backs as men rape them orally. Women’s legs and feet are tied down; their vaginas held open with tape, nipples clamped. One photo features a “slave ready to make ketchup – there are carrots and tomatoes placed between her legs. One woman is crouched over and tied, “ready to be whipped.” The only face exposed in any of the photos is the one of a woman on whom a man is ejaculating. Some of the pornographic titles and advertisements include “tied hard and tormented,” “female slaves for sale,” “hog tied.” One advertisement states that an “all purpose slut,” age 28 and sterilized, is ready for a “new owner” and will be “yours to abuse.” On this site, traffickers enter women [and girls] into auctions. Advertisements state that “owners” can “train slaves to your own style.” Women are to be rented or sold, boxed and shipped elsewhere.

If there was any doubt with regard to the dehumanization of women in prostitution and pornography, it is erased when considering enterprises like Slave Farm. Franzblau points out that these acts are termed “protected speech.” Furthermore, acts committed over the Internet go unpunished, despite the fact that, as Franzblau states, the travel agent in cases of “sex tourism” is no less than a sex trafficker. As Dworkin writes, “For men this way of life would be seen clearly as a deprivation of human freedom; for

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21 Law professor Margaret Baldwin, Esq., who also spoke at the conference, addressed the role of the Internet as scapegoat for pornographers. Punitive restrictions placed on internet use by men who perpetrate sex crimes leave the pornographers and their websites unaccountable, she argues. The Internet has become what Baldwin calls the “super private sphere,” or a sort of “state of nature.” As its role increases in the use of trafficking, the Internet is conveniently viewed as somehow unreal or separate from those people who use it to promote sexual exploitation of women and girls. It is Roy the molester who did the molesting and Dexter Horn who did the pimping, not the Internet.
women it is appropriate to what they are—women. These women are not missed; in fulfilling this sexual function, it is not thought that they are wasted” (1983, 179).

Prostitution is lethal for women, emotionally and mentally if not physically as in the many cases mentioned above. Current governmental efforts to stop trafficking, however commendable, promote the false distinction between prostitution and trafficking, invisibilizing once again the grave harms of prostitution.

Whether in the narratives of Ebony in Detroit, Linda Boreman, or the women of Déjà Vu, we see that coercion and movement are both necessary to the woman’s recruitment into prostitution. Movement may not be across borders, as is usually a requisite in definitions of trafficking, but it is in many cases across state lines, and necessarily involves some sort of separation between a woman or girl and her network of support. “The bulk of the sex industry involves pimps and other sex industry entrepreneurs controlling women and girls, often by moving them from places in which they have family and friends into locations in which they have no systems of support” (in Farley 2003, 178). In sum, Leidholdt states, “Creating distinctions between prostitution and trafficking protects business as usual in the sex industry” (Ibid. 178).

The distinction between prostitution and trafficking is implemented through silence on the issue of prostitution while addressing trafficking, so that in many instances one’s support for prostitution is invisible. Leidholdt writes about her experience at an international conference on trafficking in women, held in France. All of the participants, she writes, were instructed that the topic at hand was trafficking in women, and prostitution was not to be discussed. Leidholdt later discovered that this distinction and silence on prostitution was a strategy to further the agenda of the Dutch government, who
had funded the conference. The position of the Dutch government was that the sex industry could be a benign and lucrative source of income for countries and women, if prostitution were made legal (in Farley 2003, 169). Opponents of trafficking often simultaneously defend prostitution, as though one could exist without the other.

Nicholas Kristof, an Op-Ed writer for the New York Times, has devoted several of his recent editorials to the topic of trafficking in Cambodia. In January of 2005, for example, Kristof wrote, “Sex Slaves? Lock Up the Pimps.” “Optimism and sex trafficking don’t usually go together,” he begins. “Yet, despite the widespread belief that sex slavery is intractable and inevitable, it isn’t. Look, prostitution itself will probably always be around, but we could largely stop the buying and selling of the teenagers who are routinely held in bondage in brothels from Calcutta to Belize” (NY Times Jan. 29, 2005, A31). While we may commend Kristof for his attention to girls and women in sex slavery overseas, we must demand that he see the connection between trafficking and prostitution. Both trafficking and prostitution allow men to enact their particular desire to sexually abuse women and girls of color, women and girls in extreme poverty, and girls who are extremely young. Both promote pornography, which ensures that all women are sexualized. To say that prostitution is inevitable is, in effect, to support trafficking.

Relative to prostitution, trafficking is high priority for many governments and non-governmental activists. This prioritization, however, rests upon a distinction between prostitution and trafficking, or a superficial distinction between “free and forced” prostitution. If prostitution is to become priority, then, what is necessary is a re-defining of prostitution in a way that encompasses its many forms, from Déjà Vu in Lansing to street prostitution in Detroit to brothels in the US and Southeast Asia. It is also necessary
to re-conceptualize prostitution as a form of trafficking, so that efforts to end trafficking also address the eradication of prostitution and pornography. Distinctions made between child sexual exploitation, trafficking, and prostitution are detrimental to the fight against prostitution and thus detrimental to women’s lives. To defend prostitution and pornography is indeed to defend trafficking of women and girls and to reinforce a society in which fathers and other male authority figures sexually abuse girls.
4. Working with Women: Alternatives for Girls and Breaking Free

In this chapter, I will provide a comparison of Alternatives for Girls in Detroit and Breaking Free in St. Paul, Minnesota. I argue that Breaking Free provides a positive, feminist model for an effective anti-prostitution program. One important distinction between these two organizations is difference in size. AFG has many programs, including a shelter for young women, prevention programs, and, more recently a “youth street outreach program.” Breaking Free is extremely small in comparison with AFG, having only a tenth of AFG’s staff. Despite this difference in size and resources, Breaking Free manages to conduct outreach as well as to support women exiting prostitution. Another defining component to Breaking Free is their housing program, which offers permanent housing for women exiting prostitution. Other services they provide include advocacy, case management, community organizing, educational support groups, public policy/expert testimony, training, and a mentoring program. On weekends, they offer relapse prevention and 12-step programs.

AFG emerged in 1987 when a group of southwest Detroit residents, clergy, and business people began to share concerns about the increase in drug use, homelessness, prostitution, and other “street activity” amongst girls and young women. The organization began as a volunteer-run, five-bed emergency shelter in a neighborhood church. AFG now has 50 employees, and a new building completed as a result of a $4.5 million capital campaign. The mission of AFG is as follows: “to help homeless and high-risk girls and young women avoid violence, teen pregnancy, and exploitation; and to help

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22 Declining property value was likely another concern for the founders of AFG. One of my internship supervisors shared with me that she moved to the suburbs largely because she was often witnessing prostitution on her street (namely police round-ups of prostitutes) in the city of Detroit.
them to explore and access the support, resources, and opportunities necessary to be safe, to grow strong, and to make positive choices in their lives.” AFG’s partners include Bank One, Comerica, Family Independence Agency, and Michigan Women’s Foundation.

On outreach shifts, AFG workers provide condoms, and speak with the women. AFG workers seem to play an important role in the lives of these women, being people the women can trust, people who care about the women and listen to what they have to say. During the panel held this summer, for example, one woman said, “They really did care about me. Out on the street, we think nobody else cares about us. We are ostracized. People treat us like we are the things that are on the corner, a nuisance... but that van showed me that maybe I am someone” (field notes July 28, 2004). This woman explained that AFG came looking for her, asking people if they had seen her. When the staff was told by other women on the street that she was pregnant, they asked if she had been to a doctor. Originally, she said, “They didn’t judge me. They didn’t offer any opinions.” They offered her condoms, a sandwich, and asked how things were going for her that evening. Around the third time AFG saw her again, they began talking to her about alternatives, about changing her life. “No matter what I wanted to do, they would be there for me,” she said. Her description illustrates the goals of the street outreach program, Safe Choices, which provides women with condoms, food, and a “help card” with a list of services and phone numbers. The rationale of this program, AFG workers explained to me, is not to encourage prostitution, but rather to provide services for women and to build rapport with them so that eventually they might utilize some of the resources available to them through AFG and other agencies.

The exiting program, entitled the “New Choices” program, prepares women with tools to “achieve personal and economic independence.” According to their report, New Choices focuses on building life skills and leadership capability. Workshops offered through this program include “Healthy Bodies” (fitness), money management, legal rights, support group, and others. During my time assisting with New Choices, I picked women up from their homes, brought them to AFG, where they would write down their goal for the day. They then would have workshops for the rest of the day, with a break for lunch provided by AFG workers and volunteers. At the end of the day, participants wrote down another goal to be completed for the rest of the day. While at AFG, women have the opportunity to obtain clothing, showers, hygiene items and condoms. They are also able to practice working on computers, with assistance from AFG workers if they wish. I then would drive women home at about 3 p.m. each day, in time for those with children to get them from school.

The exiting program at AFG is 18 weeks in its entirety, broken into three 6-week sessions. Attendance is a factor in the graduation requirement, which implicitly prepares women for future employment. The program, funded by the Michigan Women’s Foundation, is “becoming a model program whereby women arrested for prostitution can be directed to New Choices participation rather than sentenced to jail.” One of the six-week sessions of the exiting program prepares participants for peer leadership so that they can assist other women in exiting prostitution. One survivor, who was in prostitution for 26 years, now works for AFG, and provides inspiration to other women still on the street. During a few outreach shifts that I did with her, women began crying, remembering being in the same treatment programs with her in the past. Survivors’
participation, then, is integral to the exiting program, as other women know them from the streets of Detroit, and see that it is possible to exit prostitution.

While the language used in the programs “New Choices” and “Safe Choices” are problematic in that they imply women have chosen street prostitution, these programs have the potential to be extremely beneficial to women in prostitution and those who have begun to take steps toward exiting. One woman explained during the panel, for example, that the atmosphere at AFG motivated her to stop using drugs. She saw a crack pipe in her purse, threw it on the floor, and stepped on it, making a conscious decision to formulate a plan. She entered treatment on her own. Now, she says, she can walk past the dope house. While a shelter for women would be very beneficial, AFG’s shelter is restricted to girls and women ages 16-20.24

It is possible, and in fact necessary, to provide services to women in prostitution without promoting prostitution as “work” or “choice” for women. This is what Breaking Free does. Breaking Free is a fairly new program, beginning in October of 1996 as a non-profit organization serving women and girls in prostitution as well as battered women who have been involved in the criminal justice system. Breaking Free is Afro-centric and was established to overcome the sexual exploitation of African-American women and girls. Breaking Free focuses of African-American women, but also works with women of other races and ethnicities. Breaking Free is located in a two-story house, much smaller than AFG’s new facility. Vednita Carter says the house provides an informal and comfortable space for the women and girls seeking assistance. The mission of Breaking Free is “to assist prostituted and battered women and girls involved in the criminal-justice

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24 Community support for only a girls’ shelter as opposed to an entirely necessary shelter for women of all ages illustrates the common division between good women/victims and bad women/non-victims (as discussed in Chapter 3 of this paper).
system to escape violence in their lives.” Their slogan is “Empowering women to speak and act for their own freedom” (in Hughes and Roche 1999, 291).

Breaking Free has four primary goals: to convey to members of the community that prostitution is an act of violence against women; to educate the community about the devastating effects of commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls; to provide supportive services to women and youth used in the sex industry that will help them escape violence and exploitation; and to operate within a culturally appropriate and age and gender-specific context. This final goal is one of the primary differences between Breaking Free and AFG: While they both serve primarily African-American women and girls, only Breaking Free operates in an African-American led, radical feminist context. Breaking Free partners with the Minnesota Resource Recovery Center as well as the office of refugee resettlement. Survivor Doris Johnson completed treatment, entered the housing program, volunteered for a year, and is now hired full time. She provides case management and also does outreach.

Breaking Free offers support groups daily, one at noon and one in the evening. They provide food for the women who attend. Women are court-ordered to come to these groups. There is also a support group for battered women each Tuesday. Breaking Free also provides clothing, furniture, bus tokens and bus cards. Breaking Free serves approximately 400-50 women per year. Vednita Carter shared that having a shelter in addition to the permanent housing program would be ideal for the program.

While Breaking Free’s outreach program is similar to AFG’s, Doris and others who speak with women in prostitution tell them that they deserve better. AFG, on the other hand, aims for remaining neutral with regard to prostitution or laughing with the
women about their “dates.” While AFG’s approach may provide a simpler way for outreach staff to connect with the women, Carter and her colleagues transcend such efforts by taking a genuinely feminist, anti-prostitution stance, and sharing it with the women they reach. Rather than following the common harm-reduction model, Breaking Free adheres to “harmlessness,” suggesting to women “stop harming oneself and others” (in Hughes and Roche 1999, 292). Another central component of Breaking Free’s effort is building community between women. A recent auditor told Carter that their program was exceptional in the apparent sense of community between the women served by Breaking Free.

The first element of the 10-12 week exiting program at Breaking Free is discussing dynamics of prostitution, violence, and self-esteem. The women discuss prostitution as paid rape. Vednita Carter says the strength in taking this stance is that it takes the blame off of the women, where it is typically placed in sexist and racist society. In a recent support group, the women watched a new film entitled Woman Thou Art Loosed. This film depicts a common story amongst the women served by Breaking Free. The protagonist, Michelle Jordan, is an African-American woman who is molested by her stepfather and later is prostituted in a strip club. Eventually, she kills her abuser and is sentenced to death.

The fundamental differences I hope to highlight in looking at these two agencies are grounded in the organizations’ philosophies. One is Afro-centric, feminist, and anti-prostitution. AFG, however, refrains from calling itself a feminist organization, and refers to prostitution as “sex work” rather than violence. Another central point I wish to critique

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25 Vednita Carter holds that johns pay women merely to appease their conscience after rape (pers.comm. March 25, 2005).
is one of AFG’s six core philosophies: that “The family is the most effective social service system possible.” They note that if the family is abusive, this is no longer a viable option of support. However, if the woman or girl is in prostitution, we know that she likely comes from a sexually abusive home, so that any reliance on the family is problematic. Carter estimates that 90% of the women she serves have been sexually abused as children. At a recent group of 13 women, almost all said that had started prostitution at age 10 or 11. One woman said her mother sold her into prostitution.

While at first glance these two organizations may appear to be quite similar, Breaking Free’s approach of discussing prostitution as violence against women is rare and extremely important. AFG’s terminology regarding “new choices” perpetuates the ways in which patriarchal society blames women in prostitution rather than focusing on the men who demand prostitution. Breaking Free speaks out not only about sexism but about racism as well, focusing on prostitution as an extension of slavery.

Before I conclude with my thoughts on solutions to ending prostitution, I will outline the solutions Breaking Free envisions in order to make the harms of prostitution more visible. First, pimps and tricks must be identified and held accountable for their sexual exploitation of women and girls. Second, more data on the realities of prostituted women’s and girls’ lives must be compiled by advocates, survivors, and researchers who understand prostitution and frame it in the context of systematic sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Breaking Free notes rightly that many researchers today are uninformed on the realities of women’s and girls’ lives. Those activists and authors who promote prostitution as “work” or “sexual liberation” must be challenged. A third solution posed by Breaking Free is an anti-prostitution national coalition. Vednita Carter
notes, “The oppressive systems and institutions that deliver women and girls into prostitution can hardly be relied upon to help her escape without a revolution in approach and resources for women and children” (in Hughes and Roche 1999, 289). Drug treatment centers, battered women’s shelters, sexual assault programs, mental health professionals and health care providers must come together to provide a “continuum of care” for survivors of prostitution. Finally, Breaking Free envisions education for service providers, teachers, lawyers, the media, police, and others regarding the inherent harms of prostitution.
Conclusion

The men as a body politic have power over women and decide how women will suffer: which sadistic acts against the bodies of women will be construed to be normal... Perhaps incestuous rape is becoming a central paradigm for intercourse in our time. Women are supposed to be small and childlike, in looks, in rights; child prostitution keeps increasing in mass and in legitimacy, the children sexually used by a long chain of men — fathers, uncles, grandfathers, brothers, pimps, pornographers, and the good citizens who are the consumers; and men, who are, after all, just family, are supposed to slice us up the middle, leaving us in parts on the bed (1987, 194).

Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*

Making the connection between the sexual exploitation of girls and sexual exploitation of women is crucial. Dominant societal views tend to speak out against “child pornography,” gender-neutral, as though it can be separated from the explicitly misogynist pornography that saturates US culture. Organizations that work with women in prostitution must be aware that most women in prostitution have survived sexual abuse as girls and continue to endure sexual abuse as women in prostitution.

Organizations for women, such as battered women’s shelters, exiting programs, and rape crisis centers, must begin working together and demanding of one another that they remain consistent in their advocacy for women.26 To remain consistent in advocating for change in women’s lives is to take a stance against prostitution and pornography. Similarly, anti-prostitution organizations must state their support for all women’s rights, especially the right to abortion. Vednita Carter estimated that 60% of the women with whom she worked had children. According to a survey conducted last summer at AFO, nearly all of the women said they had children. Thus, women’s control over reproduction, or lack thereof, is clearly tied to the systemic sexual exploitation of women and girls.

A local example of a group that falls short in its holistic advocacy for women is the Michigan Battered Women’s Clemency Group, which does admirable work in

26 Women’s Studies classes and programs must also maintain this consistency when advocating feminism.
fighting for the rights of battered women who have been incarcerated for killing partners in self-defense. Sadly, this group partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and also has a pro-pornography coordinator. If coordinator Carol Jacobsen were to conceptualize prostitution as violence against women, she would be forced to see the contradiction in supporting pro-prostitution efforts like Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE).

Diana Russell recently sent me the proceedings on the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, held in 1976. She holds that this event should be used as a model for change, and that an effective strategy would be to hold a national tribunal on pornography in which survivors present testimonies. In the US, the closest feminists have come to organizing in such a way is the hearings on which the MacKinnon-Dworkin anti-pornography, civil rights Ordinance is based. These hearings, and the Ordinance which followed, have had monumental significance in feminist struggle against pornography.

The Ordinance would allow those harmed by pornography to pursue civil action. It states,

Any person who has a cause of action, or their estate, may seek nominal, compensatory, and/or punitive damages without limitation, including for loss, pain, suffering, reduced enjoyment of life, and special damages, as well as for reasonable costs, including attorneys' fees and costs of investigation (Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988, 55).

The ordinance recognizes that pornographers are motivated largely by money. While the harms women and girls cannot be undone by monetary compensation, this compensation would be a reversal of pornographers' largely financial aims. Furthermore, this action would “recognize that something that belonged to the victim was wrongly taken from her” (Ibid. 55).
Through prostitution and incest, men and boys rob women and girls of bodily integrity. There is no compensation for this, yet it is central to women’s abilities to live fully human lives. Prostitution is always sexual abuse, never acceptable, and must be denounced in all its forms. I find it frightening that even “feminists” continue to claim that prostitution can be liberation for women.\(^{27}\) When men’s aims are cloaked in feminist language, and presented by women, they are further concealed and thus increasingly harmful. As Andrea Dworkin writes, “It is a tragedy beyond the power of language to convey when what has been imposed on women by force becomes the standard of freedom for women: and all the woman say it is so” (Dworkin 1987, 143).

Prostitution is foundational to women’s lack of freedom. Any person who claims to advocate for the betterment of women’s lives must accept this crucial fact. Feminists must continue the struggles of all the women before them who took the first bold steps in speaking out against all forms of sexual abuse. By exposing what liberation is not: sexual subordination, women and girls can start moving toward truly liberated lives.

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\(^{27}\) The first group to do so was a group of women, many from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), called the Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force (FACT). Representing FACT, Nan D. Hunter and Sylvia A. Law compiled a brief against the ordinance. FACT held that pornography was sex equality and “sexual self determination,” not sexual subordination. The argument put forth by FACT rested upon what they saw in the Dworkin-MacKinnon anti-pornography ordinance: a violation of First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of equal treatment under the law: “The Ordinance Suppresses Constitutitionally Protected Speech in a Manner Particularly Detrimental to Women” (Weisberg 1996, 120).

Furthermore, they write, “In treating women as a special class, it repeats the error of earlier protectionist legislation which gave women no significant benefits and denied their equality” (Weisberg 1996, 126). In other words, women are not a group and should not be treated this way. Starting from such a premise, sexism does not exist. If sexism does not exist, prostitution can be seen as a gender-neutral crime, or, as FACT holds, no crime at all. FACT works against the possibility of women’s equality by denying that women’s inequality is real, and by denying that prostitution and pornography are amongst its most effective vehicles. Many of the ideas put forth by the FACT brief have been accepted by mainstream feminists today, including in academia.
Bibliography


