

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

—
INSIGHTS INTO THE SWEDISH
PORN INDUSTRY



TALITA

Out of Sight, Out of Mind:
Insights into the Swedish Pornography Industry

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIM

The aim of this report was to reveal the realities of the contemporary pornography industry in Sweden. We first performed a mapping of pornography production and distribution, in order to gain insight to the types of forums that exist, methods used, and content produced. Given previous research on the link between pornography and prostitution, our goal was also to assess the life circumstances of women filmed for prostitution, focusing on their experiences prior to, during, and, when applicable, after leaving the industry (when applicable).

METHOD

We performed a qualitative mapping of pornography production and distribution in Sweden, documenting general trends and observations related to existing forums, methods for recruitment, and content produced. We then interviewed 9 Swedish women who have experiences of being filmed/photographed for pornography production in Sweden. Each interview lasted 1-1.5 hours. Respondents were asked questions about their background (education, work, mental health, exposure to sexual violence), current life situation (age, financial situation, mental health, relationships), experiences in the industry (age of entry, reason for entering, recruitment process, vulnerability to manipulation and violence, perceptions of self and perceptions of men), experiences in other parts of the sex industry, and support measures needed for a woman to exit the pornography industry.

FINDINGS

During the mapping exercise, while two “traditional” porn producers were identified, we found that most pornography production and distribution takes place on online forums where pornographic images and films are bought and sold. Some of these forums actively recruit young women on different social media channels, luring them into the industry with promises of fame and wealth. They also use terms found in popular culture, like “blogs” and “modelling”, which serves to disguise what content they are actually producing.

The in-depth interviews with the women revealed that many share similar background experiences as women exploited in prostitution. They are often young, financially insecure, victims of earlier sexualized violence, and subject to poor mental health. Although the women had clear boundaries, their boundaries were constantly being pushed by men in the industry—pornographers and consumers. The more vulnerable the woman is, the less power she has to say now. The study also found a link between prostitution, strip and pornography, with several of the women having experiences of strip and/or selling sex. Many respondents attested to the challenge they face in leaving the industry, in part stemming from the fear of someone—bosses, family, neighbours, friends—stumbling upon the pornographic images and films which “can never be removed.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Support services

The women overrepresented in the pornography industry are young, financially insecure, victims of previous sexualized violence, and subject to poor mental health. The respondents in this study emphasized how Talita's support services are necessary and should reach out to a wider audience. In order to have a real choice to exit the pornography industry, a range of support services must be made available. We thereby recommend governmental funding targeted towards holistic exit programs that provide further education, job training, accommodation, and psychological support, among other services.

Future research

To our knowledge, this is the first inquiry into the pornography industry in Sweden that has ever taken place. It is therefore paramount for future research to continue to fill knowledge gaps within this field, taking this study's findings into account. Future research should include:

- A quantitative survey comparing background and current life circumstances among the women filmed in pornography
- An in-depth evaluation of PTSD symptom levels among women filmed in pornography
- Implementation evaluation of best practice approaches for outreach and supporting women exiting the pornography industry
- Research focused specifically on the strip club industry, given the link found in this study between stripping, pornography and prostitution.

Legislation

Twenty years ago, Sweden enacted a unique law on prostitution – the sex purchase act. The rationale for criminalizing the sex purchaser, but not the seller, was to protect the “weaker party who is exploited by others who want to satisfy their own sexual needs.” With most women in pornography sharing the same vulnerable background factors as women used in prostitution, and many having experiences in other parts of the sex industry (including prostitution), it is illogical that pornography production and distribution remain unregulated in Sweden. We thereby urge the Swedish Government to initiate a national inquiry on the pornography industry, accounting for both consumption and production harms, and including the new research presented in this report. Introduc

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Introduction</i> | 7 |
| Conceptualizing pornography | 7 |
| <i>Method</i> | 8 |
| <i>Part I: The Swedish porn industry today</i> | 10 |
| <i>Part 2: The woman behind the screen</i> | 21 |
| <i>Push factors</i> | 22 |
| Young age | 22 |
| Financial insecurity | 24 |
| Previous sexualized violence | 26 |
| Poor mental health | 28 |
| <i>Boundaries and bargaining power</i> | 31 |
| Why boundaries are necessary | 31 |
| Boundaries and vulnerability | 35 |
| <i>Pornography, strip and prostitution: all faces of the same industry?</i> | 39 |
| <i>Leaving the industry</i> | 42 |
| Barriers to leaving the industry | 42 |
| Necessary support measures | 44 |
| <i>Summary and conclusions</i> | 46 |
| <i>Applicable laws</i> | 52 |
| <i>Recommendations</i> | 54 |
| <i>References</i> | 56 |

Introduction

Pornography is a contentious subject, stirring strong emotions and rousing public debate. Over the past two years, Sweden has witnessed a growing public discourse on the effects of pornography. These discussions have tended to focus on how viewers are affected by pornography, especially if those viewers are children. Pornography's well-documented harms on viewers demands measures to prevent and limit exposure.¹ Children have a right to be protected from pornography, and society can no longer afford to overlook pornography as a catalyst of men's violence against women in light of the #metoo movement. That said, conspicuously absent from this discourse are discussions raising pornography's adverse effects on "the other side of the screen"—namely, for those involved in its production.

Very little is known about the pornography industry in Sweden today: does it exist? If so, what is its scope? Who are the players involved? And who are the individuals participating in its production? This report aims to reveal the realities of the pornography industry in Sweden by mapping out pornography production and distribution and by interviewing women filmed in the porn industry about their experiences prior to, during, and after the industry (when applicable). The mapping exercise seeks to determine the Swedish pornography industry's scope, forums, and methods. The interviews with women who have been photographed and filmed for pornography production aim to provide insights into their lives before, during and even after their time in the pornography industry. As Talita's support services cater even to women with experiences in pornography, respondents will also be asked what they see as important support measures for women exiting the pornography industry.

To our knowledge, this is the first inquiry into the pornography industry in Sweden that has ever taken place.

Conceptualizing pornography

For many, the word "porn" is synonymous with men's magazines like Playboy and Hustler. But what was once considered porn 20-something years ago is now what we see in pop culture, featured in movies, tv-series and advertisements. The internet has profoundly changed the nature of pornography; it is now characterized by what researchers call the "3A's": *accessible*, *affordable* and *anonymous*.² Pornography is now just a click away, completely anonymous and often free. Type the word "porn" into google and within the span of 0,4 seconds, a total of 2,960,000,000 unique hits (links) appear.

What is it that viewers are exposed to? What is pornography today? Pornography, even within research, lacks a unanimous definition. Researchers Peter and Valkenburg (2011, 2016) provide one well-used definition of mainstream pornography³:

Third-party produced or user-generated pictures or video (clips) intended to sexually arouse the viewer. These videos and pictures typically depict sexual activities, such as masturbation and oral sex, as well as vaginal and anal penetration, in an unconcealed way, often with a close-up on genitals.

Indeed, pornography today often takes the form of so-called “gonzo porn”, where close-up shots of genitals make viewers feel as if they were the ones enacting the sexualized acts. Peter and Valkenburg’s definition above presents the face-value acts typically depicted in pornography. But what Peter and Valkenburg’s definition lacks is a power- and gender-analysis. *Who is doing what, to whom, and for whom* in mainstream pornography?

Previous research locates pornography as a medium characterized by the objectification and degradation of women by men. In a content analysis of pornography in 2010, Bridges and colleagues found that 88% of the most popular rented pornography films contained physical violence like gagging, open-hand slapping, hair pulling and choking.⁴ Nearly 50% of all scenes contained verbal aggression, with women being called dehumanizing and derogatory names such as “whore”, “cunt” and “slut”. Virtually all (98%) of the humiliation and violence was directed towards women, by men. With this in mind, pornography cannot simply be defined as “sexual activities” depicted “in an unconcealed way.” Men carry out actions that harm, humiliate and objectify women. Further, even if the woman is filmed without a male counterpart – for instance filming her own masturbation – she is still creating images and films that are “intended to sexually arouse the viewer”. Who is the viewer? Almost always a man. Pornography is made for men, most often by men, and thus the words said and the actions that take place in pornography aim to appease the male gaze—because this is what sells!

For coherence, this report focuses solely on commercial pornography, whether they are third party or user-generated materials. Thus, the sample of interviewees will be women who have been filmed in commercial pornography, as almost all pornography—even content labelled “amateur”—is in fact made for commercial purposes.

Method

Below, I describe the methods used for data collection and analysis.

I. Qualitative Mapping

To understand the scope of the pornography industry in Sweden, we performed a systematic qualitative mapping of pornography production and distribution. During the mapping, we documented general trends and observations related to forums for distributing or consuming pornographic material, forms and forums for recruitment of women, the methods for recruitment of women for pornographic material and the incitements used to persuade women participate in the production of pornography. Discourse analysis was used to understand not just the words and terms at face value found on these forums, but also the meaning, intention and power dynamics behind those words. Discourse analysis allows one to see beyond the “text”, to capture what the text is intending to say or not say about a certain phenomenon.

II. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted to explore women’s experiences being filmed in the pornography industry. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted either face-to-face, by telephone or in written-form with a convenience sample. The eligibility criterium was that interviewees had been photographed/filmed for commercial pornography. The aim of the qualitative interviews was to collect data regarding participant’s background variables and the conditions they face in the pornography industry as well as their experience of being filmed for pornography production and experience of prostitution, if applicable.

The qualitative mapping exercise helped us reach out to potential interviewees, as we were able to identify the forums where pornographic images and films are uploaded and sold, with women at times advertising an email address. Talita also posted a request for interviewees through their social media channels. Potential interviewees were contacted via e-mail or social media⁵ and asked to participate in the 1-2-hour interview. For the purposes of this preliminary report, 9 women with experiences in pornography were interviewed.⁶ The interviews were conducted in Swedish.

Each interviewee was compensated 300 SEK per hour as compensation for their time. Prior to the interview, they were informed about the study’s aims, its voluntary nature, the anonymization of data, and their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time. Anonymization in this project was particularly important, as participants shared very sensitive and personal information, not only about themselves, but also about third parties. They were also

informed that their participation in the study would not affect their opportunity to access Talita's support, if applicable. A semi-structured interview guide was used to ensure that certain answers were gathered, although with the flexibility of asking follow-up questions. The development of interview questions was inspired by previous research on pornography and prostitution⁷ as well as valuable input from Hanna Olsson, primary investigator for the prostitution inquiry 1977-1980 in Sweden.⁸

The interviews began with questions about the interviewee's current life situation: age, education, work, financial situation, children, interests and relationships. Next, we asked questions about her experiences of pornography: age at entry into the industry, reason for entering, the recruitment process and vulnerability to manipulation or violence. Interviewees were then asked questions about their experiences in other parts of the sex industry (including prostitution and stripping), followed by questions about their mental health and experience of earlier sexualized violence. We also posed questions about their perception of pornography: how it affects their sense of self, their view of men, their relationships and their general well-being. Finally, we asked what support measures and services they think are needed for women to be able to leave the pornography industry.

The phone and in-person interviews were recorded, transcribed and treated as sensitive data. To analyse the interview data, the transcripts were read through several times in order to identify major themes and subthemes that emerged from the texts. Information that applied to the mapping exercise was also organized according to the various pornography production forums and presented in the mapping results below. Quotes used in the report have been translated to English.



PART I

**THE
SWEDISH
PORN
INDUSTRY
TODAY**

Below, I present the players profiting off of the women and men filmed in pornography, who I will call “pornographers”. Traditionally, pornographers were grouped into producers and distributors, but technological advancements over time have increasingly blurred this distinction⁹, with traditionally conceptualized “producers” also distributing pornography, and vice versa.

JOHAN VILDE

Johan Vilde is a Swedish pornography producer in the traditional sense, coordinating pornography film shoots and thereafter owning the rights to the films produced. He is also a distributor, via his online site www.johanvilde.com. According to public information online, Vilde has owned his private firm since 2015. His website hosts “Swedish amateurs in their first porn film mixed with established Swedish porn stars.” The banner on the top of his website portrays a woman being anally penetrated by an unknown man whose face is not shown. Meanwhile, her face is readily visible and turned toward the viewer, with a facial expression indicating pain. On his website, Vilde describes pornography as a quick, easy way to earn a lot of money:

Models wanted!

If you want to take part in a film or if you know some girl that want to take part, send me an e-mail. Girls get very good paid. I film all over the world so it doesn't matter where you live.

New films are added every week.

Three of the interview respondents had been in direct contact with Vilde:

I was in contact with him before. I had emailed him via his website and received an answer relatively quickly. We discussed the price and time/day. He asked me to send him pictures so that he could see what I looked like. He said that everything would happen according to my terms, and that if there was anything I didn't want to do, we wouldn't do it. But he wanted me to do anal and a “gangbang”. He had booked my train tickets and hotel, and I was supposed to get 15 000 SEK. But in the end, I didn't show up to the shoot because something didn't feel right. I had a bad feeling in my stomach and decided not to respond.

He has written to me a million times before and says, “You'll get 10 000 SEK.”

I told Vilde that I was interested and asked him how much money I would get for a film. He said that I could earn 10 000 – 12 000 sek for one film. We film do 3-4 scenes and each scene would take about 25 minutes. He then said that if I was interested, I had to send a portrait and a naked picture if I was interested. He seemed pleased with the picture and then said that there would probably be 2-3 guys filming with me, and that it usually took around 4-6 hours. Everything was set: a guy he works with was going to pick me up at the station, and then take me to the apartment Vilde had rented for the shooting. But before the date we had agreed on, I was warned on facebook by another woman in the branch not go alone to meet with Vilde. She didn't want to say why. In the end, I felt too uneasy about the whole thing and didn't show up.

■ ■ I was warned on facebook by another woman in the branch not go alone to meet with Vilde. She didn't want to say why. In the end, I felt too uneasy about the whole thing and didn't show up."

It is worth noting that the last respondent had been in contact with Vilde only a couple months prior to participating in the interview. In other words, Vilde is still actively recruiting and filming young girls, offering a sum between 10 000 and 15 000 SEK to perform in his films. The women are expected to perform in 3-4 scenes, with each scene taking approximately 25 minutes. Both of the respondents who actually considered taking part in his films followed their "gut feeling" and didn't show up to the filming. It is telling that one of the respondents was "warned" by another woman in the industry about going alone to meet with the pornography producer. In an article from Dagens Arena on the Swedish pornography industry, the journalist mentions how "no one seems to think he [Johan Vilde] is very good" and how she has "read about how several women who have participated in his films were reportedly financially cheated by him. Still, his clumsy homemade clips...remain popular."¹⁰

Vilde seems to assure the women that they will be in full control of what actually happens on set, based on the first interviewee's response. However, in the same article in Dagens Arena, a Swedish woman involved in pornography said that girls tell her that "in order to film in Sweden, you need to be willing to do anything if you want to get any jobs at all", and that films nowadays are "gonzo" and "amateur style". Indeed, an assessment of the titles found on Vilde's website suggests that there are very specific sexualized acts that women are expected to partake in. Below is a sample of titles from Vilde's films found on his website:

SARAH 23 IS PREGNANT. SUCK, FUCK AND FACIAL.
THREESOME WITH TEEN GIRL
ALEXANDRA – FUCKED WITH A HUGE COCK
FILIPPA FISTED AND FUCKED BY THREE MEN
MELINDA ANAL AND ASS2MOUTH
ORGY SEX WITH VILJA: GANGBANG
AMANDA 18 YEARS – DOUBLE FUCK
LINN 18 YEARS – ANAL AND FACIAL
HARD FUCK WITH TEEN GIRL

Notice, how it is only the woman's name (or pseudonym) mentioned in the title, just like it is only the woman's face that is shown on the content available on Vilde's website. As Hanna Olsson writes in the 1977-1980 Swedish prostitution inquiry, "Unlike most other social dramas, the woman is visible. The man exists as a shadow who is imagined, hardly anything more."¹¹ Further, the titles insinuate that these acts are not something mutually exclusive, whereby individuals are engaging in sexual acts with one another. Rather, one man or several men are performing sexualized acts on a woman. The titles empha-

size how young girls (“18-year-old” and “teen”) are exposed to violent sexualized acts: they are “double fucked”, “fucked hard”, “fisted” and “gangbanged”. The fifth title reads “anal and ass2mouth”. So-called Ass-to-mouth (ATM), is an act whereby a man penetrates a woman orally directly after penetrating her anally, without washing his penis. In Bridges and colleagues’ content analysis of the top-rented pornography films in 2011, they found that 41% of all 125 scenes analysed contained ATM sequences.¹² Of significance that scenes showing ATM were eight times more likely to include physical aggression, and three times more likely to contain verbal aggression than the average. The authors argue that this suggests that ATM is an “inherently degrading” practice in pornography.¹³ Further, as Waltman (2014) discusses, “fans” on different pornography forums have even been found to express “excitement” about particularly degrading elements of AMT, for instance when faeces end up in and around women’s mouths during ATM.¹⁴

Vilde also lets visitors make requests for films. He writes:

Visitors can have a say in the content of the films. Do you want to see more of a certain girl we have previously filmed? Do you want to see a specific sexual position more often, or do you want to see the girls get a cum shot in a certain spot? Send us an e-mail with your requests.

Viewers can request certain female “performer”, or which sexualized act should be done to her body, like a “cum shot” on a particular part on her body. That viewers can influence the content blurs the lines here between prostitution – where a man pays a woman to be able to use and have control over her body – and pornography, where men who masturbate to the content can have a say in what the woman is subject to.

Another interesting finding is that the men whom Vilde recruit for his films appear to participate in pornography production without compensation. Sex purchase is defined as person A (a man) paying person B (most often a woman) for “sexual services”. The definition also includes person A (a man) paying person B (most often a woman) so that person C (a man) can access person B’s “sexual services”.¹⁵ If the men who participate in the pornography production are not paid, this would leave no room for “interpretation” as to whether the pornography producer has satisfied the second part of the definition of sex purchase (i.e. paying for one or several men’s access to a woman’s “sexual services”).

K-PROD

Based in Malmö, K-PROD is a Swedish pornography production firm focussing on so-called “amateur pornography”. Note here that the firm makes profits off of “amateur pornography”, the type of porn that many assume is non-commercial. This is simply not true. Just like most other production taking place, “amateur pornography” is a specific genre in the porn industry, in most cases just as commercial as other forms of pornography.

The company says that they “produce nice Swedish porn” and have “experience working with beginners as well as experienced models”. “Reliable”, “serious” and “fun” are their catchwords. On Modell Portalen (www.modellportalen.com), they write that since starting up in 1999, they have worked almost exclusively in Sweden, with the exception of several shoots in Denmark, Germany and England. In Sweden, they say that their photo sessions and film shoots occur mostly in Malmö, Gothenburg or Stockholm, but even in other locations. They even provide the opportunity for filming at home:

If you want to film in the comforts of your home, we bring studio equipment and good lighting – sometimes it feels easiest to be naked in front of the fireplace or in the comfort of your couch! Simply great Swedish amateur porn.

The website further reads,

Do you want to be a porn model? K-Prod is looking for curious girls and couples that like to be the spotlight...We really want to see you in front of the camera...in great sexy, erotic and porn sessions. If you are a girl aged approx. 19-45 and want to try being a naked model or filming amateur porn in serious, safe and fun sessions, we really want to see you in front of the camera! No previous experience required, and there are no appearance requirements. A relatively good-looking body is a plus, but good humour, curiosity and enjoying posing will go a long way! A good attitude and social skills are more important than a traditional model-look, and any previous experience in theatre or acting is a bonus.

Couples that want to be filmed together are also warmly welcomed, or maybe the girl in the couple wants to be filmed with other guys – we produce nice Swedish porn on your terms!

They encourage visitors to check out their distributing website, Swedish Amateurs (www.svenska-amatorer.com), one of the largest amateur porn-sites in Sweden.

Want to join? Get in touch with K-PROD and we will prepare a place in the spotlight...

A sample of some of K-PROD’s film titles read:

SWEDISH PORN SLUT RIDING A SODA BOTTLE

PORN SLUT PLAYS WITH DILDO IN BOTH HOLES

THAI MASSAGE PORN MOVIES

SWEDISH BLONDE AMATEUR LOVES TO SUCK COCK

K-PROD's films label women "sluts" and eroticise women being injected with foreign objects and being bought and sold online and at thai massage parlours—sex purchase, a criminal act in Sweden.

SCANDALBEAUTIES

Scandalbeauties is an online forum where so-called "bloggers" can upload and sell pornographic images and films. A first glance at Scandalbeauties' homepage www.scandalbeauties.com shows profiles of the most "visited" bloggers—women wearing little to no clothing, posing in different sensual positions, like one woman whom you can only see naked from behind, her face completely hidden. In bold, large letters read "BECOME A MEMBER NOW!" and "get access to over 1000 private sex-bloggers" to "see Swedish girls do everything you have ever dreamed of." Scrolling down, visitors are met with images and videos of hundreds of women, with those only accessible by paid memberships blurred out, and the rest freely available to visitors.

The pornography forum has existed in Sweden since 2009 and is a part of Amigo Media AB, a Swedish-registered company owned by Freddie Hall. According to public information collected online about the company, by 2017 Amigo Media AB had a total of 12 employees (all men), 19 620 000 SEK in revenues, and 4,685,000 SEK in profits.

In an article published in 2011, the Swedish site claimed to have 1,2 million visitors per month, with over 200 women and girls selling images and films.¹⁶ Now Scandalbeauties boast that they host over 1000 so-called "private sex-bloggers" and self-label themselves as "Scandinavia's largest online magazine for men."

One recruiter for Scandalbeauties posted a summary of statistics for 2018. Scandalbeauties received a total of 2.8 million unique visitors from 176 different countries, who viewed a total of 131 million minutes of content. The post said, "Thank you for a fantastic year" and "2019 is going to be our best year ever!"

Members can rate the images and films on Scandalbeauties' website. Below is a sample of some of the titles of the films that have received the highest ratings:

EVENING FUCK ON THE TOILET AND CUM IN MY FACE!

SUCK COCK UNTIL HE CUMS ALL THE WAY DOWN MY FACE WITH WARM AND STICKY SPERM AND I LICK MYSELF.

I JERK HIM OFF WITH BOTH HANDS, WITH MY ASS SHOWING AND I LOOK IN THE CAMERA AND MEET YOUR GAZE.

PICTURE OF MY SWEET LITTLE 18-YEAR-OLD PUSSY

REALLY DEEPTHROAT

**(SUPER AMATEUR) SUCKING BLACK DICK, ME AND 2 BLACK GUYS HAVING FUN
SHOVE MY BIG DILDO INTO MY ASS
RIDE MY BIG DILDO ANALLY
MY DADDY KNOWS EXACTLY HOW HE SHOULD TREAT ME. HE SPANKS ME WHILE HE SHOVES HIS COCK
INTO MY PUSSY.
RED AND BEATEN ASS**

Scandalbeauties also hosts a yearly “Scandalbeauties awards”, where members vote on “the sexiest tits of the year 2018”, “the sexiest ass of the year 2018”, “Miss Scandalbeauties” and “Miss Premium”.

An analysis of Scandalbeauties’ social media platforms and advertisements reveals images of limousines, parties, and travel, conveying a seemingly glamorous lifestyle, where women and girls appear to earn “quick money” and travel to exotic destinations. One advertisement shown in the picture below reads “Money instead of likes: Scandalbeauties” and “Why be content with likes? Tag someone you think should begin to blog on SB!”. Reading between the lines, the message is: why not get paid for something you already do? Why not take the small step from receiving likes to actually getting paid for sexualized images and films?

One post advertises Scandalbeauties’ “celebrations” for reaching 10 years since the forum started. The post reads:

Sweden’s sexiest site is coming and partying at Colosseum Nightclub in Stockholm on January 26th. To celebrate Scandalbeauties’ 10 years in 2019, we are traveling around the country and celebrating this with you! Naturally, we are kicking it off in the capital city. We are bringing our sexiest bloggers and our awesome party limousine!

Take the chance to meet the girls and party with us.
Are you our next blog star? Present yourself for our recruiters who will be there during the entire evening! See you on Saturday the 26th of January at Sense Nightclub, Sankt Eriksgatan 51 Stockholm.

Notice how they write “blog star”, what others would typically erroneously call “porn star”? Here we begin to see how the language used disguises what is actually being produced.

On Scandalbeauties, viewers find a range of images and videos, many with women either scantily clad or naked showing their breasts, butts and vaginas. However, there is also a significant number with much more than “nude photos”. Below are some titles revealing the nature of much of the content uploaded onto Scandalbeauties:

**WHEN MY MAN GRABS ME BY THE NECK WHEN HE COMES IN THROUGH THE DOOR . . .
HAVE HAD GREAT HARD SEX. EVEN HARD SPANKS ON MY ASS WHICH YOU PROBABLY SEE
SPERM RUNS OUT OF MY CUNT.**



DÄR SKANDINAVISKA TJEJER
TJÄNAR PENGAR PÅ SEXIGA
BILDER OCH VIDEOS
www.scandalbeauties.com

PENGAR ISTÄLLET FÖR LIKES
SCANDAL BEAUTIES

GUESS WHO HAS GOTTEN SOME COCK TODAY! IS THERE ANYONE HERE WHO IS KEEN ON FUCKVIDEOS?
MY DADDY KNOWS EXACTLY HOW HE SHOULD TREAT ME. HE SPANKS ME WHILE HE PUMPS HIS DICK
INTO MY PUSSY.
VIDEO WHEN I SUCK A MAN 25 YEARS OLDER THAN ME

It should be noted that last title is from a video posted by a young woman who looks younger than 18. She also posted a video where a 43-year old man penetrates her orally, indicating that she is no older than 18, if that.

Scandalbeauties has adopted various methods to reach out and actively recruit potential “bloggers”, for instance by contacting them directly on their social media platforms or hiring young recruiters:

Scandalbeauties tries to convince people to work for them. They say, ‘If you join us, you’re going to make tons of money.’

They advertise on all possible websites, porn sites, flashback, and they hire people to recruit for them.

One of the recruiters from Scandalbeauties contacted me directly on my private facebook page and asked me to blog for them. They want to be the biggest site who can recruit basically whoever [...] so they most often go after and recruit girls who have revealing photos on facebook.

They have now hired young good-looking men, 18-, 19-year-olds, to recruit young women who have just turned 18.

Hiring young men to recruit young women holds parallels to the so-called “lover boy” recruitment method for prostitution typically used in Romania and other Eastern European countries. The traditional “lover-boy” recruitment method consists of a young man seducing a young woman, giving promises of fortune, and building up her trust, which ultimately facilitates her exploitation in prostitution. Here, young good-looking men lure in the young girls, with promises of fame and fortune. During the mapping exercise, one recruiter’s profile identified on social media said that he was a Swedish, 22-year-old “photographer” and “entrepreneur”, an official recruiter for Scandal Beauties.

One of the hashtags he typically uses in his posts are #luxurylife #luxury and #hotellife, showing photos of limousines and fancy hotels.

To apply to become a “blogger” on Scandalbeauties, a woman must first send in several naked photos of herself. Once she is “approved”, she signs a contract with a notice period. It is telling that they have received several accusations of hiring underage girls.¹⁷ In an article in 2011, a 17-year old girl reported having been hired by Sandalbeauties. After sending naked pictures of herself to the recruiters, the girl was directly approved and given a login to her page to upload images and films. The article also said that according to New24’s sources, Scandalbeauties had also “approved” an additional 17-year old girl. On Scandalbeauties’ website, the journalists also found a description of a girl who claimed to be 17 years old.

Not only does Scandalbeauties actively recruit and target young women and girls, the results reveal that they pressure them into uploading pictures and films on a regular basis. When asked what was expected of them from Scandalbeauties, the respondents said:

We are expected to be active and always able to produce more images. We are supposed to be a good face outward.

Scandalbeauties always had requirements, that we had to upload a certain number of posts per week. You have to post a lot to be able to be seen. They play favourites at Scandalbeauties.

They have their favourite girls, top bloggers that earn more money. They deceive people a lot. It is impossible to know how much money your images have actually brought in, and there are many who are manipulated.

When discussing how Scandalbeauties treats the women who “blog” for them, one interviewee said:

They press the girls who blog to do more and more. They push their boundaries, even though the girls make no money! They put a lot of pressure on them. I know and speak to quite a few young girls, maybe 7-8 in total. And they all say the same thing: that they feel pressed. And when I ask them why they are still there, they say, “I know, but he’s now said that”—you know, the game they play all the time, they convince the girls to say. Those who own these websites, like strip club owners, they are often quite charismatic people who say, “you are so beautiful, and I’m going to help you.” It’s awful, but that’s how it is! And you know how people are – we are hopeful, and we think that everything will work out in the end; that this is my chance.

Another interviewee said that she would receive a message reminding her to upload an image or film when she hadn’t uploaded material over the course of one day:

Sometimes they would contact you when they looked through your blog page and noticed that you hadn’t uploaded something within a day.

According to one interviewee, women must upload not just one, but several pictures or films in order to even get paid. Several interviewees also discussed how leaving Scandalbeauties proved a lot more challenging than they expected:

They block your account if they find out that you have gone to another site or if you want to leave. They get to decide a lot. Even if you have money on your account, they block your account so you can't get your money.

Many girls experience that even though they've quit, their blogs aren't taken down when they should be, and sometimes the owners block the girls so that they can't contact them.

For the women who want to leave Scandalbeauties or exit the industry, they risk having pornographic material of them remain online, while the website owners continue to profit off of them without their consent. In the same vein, when the 17-year-old girl mentioned in the article in News24 no longer wanted to blog for Scandalbeauties, she was supposedly threatened by the owners. When asked to comment on the 17-year old's threat-accusations, owner Freddie Hall never responded.

SINNERGIRLS

Sinnergirls is Scandalbeauties' affiliated forum at www.sinnergirls.com. Whereas the content at Scandalbeauties is a mix between naked photos, filmed masturbation, and what would be considered "hardcore", "gonzo" pornography, Sinnergirls is aimed at those who "want to go one step further". On the homepage, the site says, "Become a member now!", "Get access to all private porn-blogs on the site", and "See Swedish girls everything you've dreamed of." Sinnergirls publishes so-called "porn blogs", where titles read:

ANAL SEX THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS
SEX, BLOWJOB, BOOB FUCK, OILED ASS
FUCKED IN DOGGY STYLE, BOOB FUCKED, MOUTH FUCKED, AND I EAT A SPOON OF SPERM
PUSH IT IN ANALLY FOR YOU
VIDEO WHERE I DOUBLE FUCK MYSELF
DADDY'S LITTLE SLUT SUCKS DEEP

According to the interviewees, women uploading content at Sinnergirls receive more earnings compared to Scandalbeauties. One interviewee shared that after she had started blogging at Scandalbeauties, the owners pressured her to switch over to Sinnergirls, which at first did not permit "bloggers" to upload images of them engaging in sexual activities. Eventually, the owners changed the rules, and soon the site was flooded with "gonzo", "hardcore" pornography.

The owners had promised that the site would remain free from hardcore porn, but one day they changed the entire concept without warning us bloggers who were already active on Sinnergirls.

The expectation was that all “bloggers” would accept these new terms and begin to publish more hardcore content: when some of the active bloggers questioned why a girl had uploaded a “sex-film”, the owners said, “If you have a problem with it, then you can stop blogging for us.”

NORDIC FINEST

Nordic Finest is another large Swedish forum where women can sign up to create their own so-called “glamour model blog”. On Nordic Finest’s website, they claim to “feature Scandinavia’s most popular glamour models.” Under their tagline, it says “Join the model team”, followed by links to profiles of approximately 250 women.¹⁸

Like Scandalbeauties and Sinnergirls, Nordic Finest earns its profits by taking a cut of the pay for each image or film that is uploaded onto their website. In contrast to Scandalbeauties, Nordic Finest does not appear to actively recruit female participants through social media and other forums.

Five of the seven interviewees had begun at Scandalbeauties before switching over to Nordic Finest. One interviewee said, “I think all the girls on Nordic Finest have come from Scandalbeauties or Sinnergirls. They realized how manipulative and deceptive Scandalbeauties and Sinnergirls are.” Some interviewees described how they felt less pressured at Nordic Finest compared to Scandalbeauties:

I get to decide myself. Sometimes it can be a long time before I update the site. So, there is no one pushing me to sell anything.

At Nordic Finest you get to control what you do. The only thing is there is a notice period that coincides with how long a subscription you have. My subscription is two weeks, which means that if I quit, it takes two weeks before the blog completely disappears, so that the customers aren’t fooled.

At Nordic Finest you just get a text saying “now it’s been so and so number of days since you’ve posted something,” nothing more than that.

In contrast, another interviewee reported that she received text reminders “all the time” if she hadn’t uploaded an image within a day.

While all interviewees reported how Scandalbeauties recruits particularly young girls, one interviewee found it surprising that Nordic Finest did not check her age when she applied to be a model:

I just had to write my name and upload a picture. It's a bit odd that they didn't check how old I was. I didn't have to fill it in anywhere, and they don't check the information you've filled in.

SINFUL SISTERS

Sinful Sisters is the sister-site to Nordic Finest. "Featuring the most naughty girls from all over the world," Sinful Sister's content is generally more hardcore than Nordic Finest, with women being penetrated either with dildos, objects or by one to several men. One of the respondents estimated that over 50% of the women active on Sinful Sisters publish material that is filmed together with one or several men. At the time of writing the study, there were 91 unique profiles on Sinful Sisters. Many of profiles state that the woman's age is between 18-24 years old.

Typical acts featured on Sinful Sisters are "deep throat", "gangbangs", and "anal." Below is a sample of film titles identified on Sinful Sisters.

6 MINUTES LONG, CUM SHOT IN MY FACE AND MY EYES

SUCK COCK DEEP IN MY THROAT AND LOOK IN THE CAMERA, I START TO GAG. HE THEN FUCKS ME IN MY ASS AND ENDS WITH A FACIAL THAT I LICK OFF.

I SUCK DADDY BEFORE HE TAKES ME FROM BEHIND

FUCKED BY AN UNKNOWN MAN

TIED UP IN BED

HE CUMS SO MUCH I CAN'T SWALLOW

FIRST TIME ANAL

TOILET MOUTH RAPE: GETTING LOCKED IN THE BATHROOM AND FORCED TO SUCK THE MAN'S COCK AND MY FACE FLUSHED IN THE TOILET

As seen in the list of titles above, themes of incest (e.g. "I suck daddy") are evident. The same theme was present not only on Sinful Sisters, but all of the forums. For instance, one of the profiles on Sinful Sisters features an 18-year old girl with visible bruises and the words "Daddy's whore" written on her chest.

Another finding that emerged from the interviews is that many of the men who participate in the films on these forums aren't paid.

The guy doesn't get paid, he just participates.

As discussed in the section about Johan Vilde, this would mean that the website could technically be sentenced for sex purchase.



PHOTOGRAPHERS

Another type of pornographer is “photographers”, who hold photography sessions before selling the pornographic photos to the women who participated in the photo session or otherwise other platforms. The content of these photographers’ portfolios ranges from women posing scantily dressed to documented sexualized acts. Photographers advertise their services on www.modellbilder.se and www.fotosidan.nu, and are active on social media forums like Instagram and Facebook.

One of the respondents tends to work mostly with photographers over the past year. She discussed how she has met a number of photographers who are respectful and “serious”, while others were manipulative:

It was mostly this year that I started having contact with some photographers. I’ve met some that are really good and serious – they have heard the rumours in this branch, and they are aware of them [...] but there are also a lot of photographers who try to cheat and manipulate you, both when it comes to the actual photographing sessions and how the photographs are used online. It can feel extremely objectifying even if it didn’t feel so during the session.

Like Scandalbeauties and Sinnergirls, some photographers actively contact and recruit women for photography sessions:

One photographer wrote me and said, “You know that I can help you be rich and famous. Work for me!”

She said that many photographers write a so-called “model release”, a contract specifying how the photos will be used and where they will be published. Some photographers avoid these contracts, while others simply refrain from following them:

It happens quite a bit. Even if they sign the contract, they plan to just ignore it. They make things up, like “that wasn’t agreed upon in the contract”, or “There’s no way I’ve done that.”



PART II

THE WOMAN BEHIND THE SCREEN

Most people have strong opinions about pornography, and yet few have ever met or spoken with someone who has been involved in the industry. Who, if anyone, can better give a picture of pornography's reality than the actual woman involved in its production? Who are they? And what is their story?

Talita had the utmost privilege of speaking with 9 women about their experiences in the pornography industry. We are very grateful for the time and insights they graciously shared with us during our conversations.

We interviewed a diverse group of women, ranging in age from 21 to 44. The average age of the sample was 29. The women's experiences in the Swedish pornography industry were diverse: one interviewee only uploaded scantily clad and nude photographs of herself or with other women; four posted films of themselves naked and/or masturbating; three uploaded films where they engaged in sexualized acts with one or several men or otherwise filmed "solo". Finally, one woman was forced into pornography by a boyfriend and filmed with one or several men, and this respondent was the only interviewee who had exited pornography during the data collection. A total of five women identified pornography as their primary job/source of income. Of the four who had other main sources of income, three had other sources of income, in addition to earnings from pornography, while the interviewee forced into pornography by her ex-boyfriend had exited the industry. The diversity of experiences helps to ensure sample representativeness, and it means that if there are common themes arising from such a diverse sample, the conclusions are more representative of the entire population of women filmed for Swedish pornography production.

PUSH FACTORS

One of the purposes of this study was to identify the background factors that push and pull women and girls into the pornography industry. After summarizing findings from previous research, we present the current study's results related to that particular theme in the sub-chapters below.

YOUNG AGE

Previous research on the sex industry has found that most women enter into prostitution as youth. For example, in a study among 854 prostituted persons (who had experience in prostitution, pornography, stripping, web-cam, and so on) in nine countries, 47% reported entry into the sex industry before turning 18. Other studies have found similar results.¹⁹

We found that the average age of entry among the 9 women interviewed was 22,6 years old, with a range between 16 and 34. All but one respondent entered the industry under the age of 25. The interviewee who began as a minor began by selling images and films privately on different social media forums, before debuting at Scandalbeauties once she had turned 18. Interestingly, all interviewees were in agreement about how young women and girls are over-represented in the industry:

“ I think there are mostly young girls actually. A lot of young girls.

It's really young girls.

I think there are mostly young girls actually. A lot of young girls.

There are very young girls on Scandalbeauties.

Scandalbeauties recruit very young girls. It's so wrong, because the girls aren't yet 18 years old, they aren't even adults according to the law. I think it's just wrong and I know that they write to so many girls under 18.

They don't care about hold old girls are as long as they look good [...] afterall, it's men that run the website.

Scandalbeauties in particular appears to draw in young women and girls, sometimes below the age of 18, triangulating the results from the mapping exercise above. The question is, why are young girls overrepresented in the industry? Why do pornographers have an incentive to recruit young girls specifically? The sex industry appears to exhibit an age hierarchy, where the younger the woman, the higher her “value”—her “price” on the market. Indeed, “youth has become a strong commercial value for the sex industry and for the men buying sex; the sex industry does not discriminate on age.”²⁰

During the prostitution inquiry of 1977-1980, chief secretary Hanna Olsson witnessed this age hierarchy.²¹ She writes, “A woman who begins selling herself as a young teenager describes herself as ‘lamb meat’. A young and ‘fresh’ woman has a high value on the marketplace...[while] value on the sex market decreases in line with the woman’s age.”²² The following responses align with Olsson’s analysis:

I think I will quit once I turn 30. Then I'll feel too old.

I'll continue until I'm about 30.

This is a profession that you cannot work with for the rest of your life. Eventually you have to move on, and at that point you of course have to find something else that you can live off of.

These responses suggest a shared understanding of the diminishing value of age in the industry. Olsson says, “The sex market’s knockout mechanisms are inexorable. When a woman talked about the street prostitution and her future, she gave a very sharp assessment of both her own and other prostitutes’

situation: ‘Do you think I’m going to do this once I’m 30? No, I know myself and I know I’ll look horrible...I am the type who can say to myself, now it’s enough. You’re too old.’”²³

All 9 respondents problematized how young girls in particular are drawn into the industry. In the statements below, respondents argue that young girls shouldn’t even be allowed to enter the industry:

The young girls shouldn’t be in this branch, they are way too young. I’ve been actually thinking that my branch needs an age-limit, and I would set that at 23 in order to ensure that they can do the job, that they have an understanding of their worth, and that they know that ‘I can do this, I have many legs to stand on’, the older ones are less vulnerable than the young girls who begin when they are 18. It’s too early, it’s far too early to be able to endure our branch. I would like to see a law with an age-limit, 23 or 25, because I think that’s reasonable. They still look young, they have the strength to travel around to different countries, and they want to experience things. But no, not younger than 23. That is too young, they are too fragile for this work.

I don’t think young girls should work in this branch. I myself wasn’t all that old, I was 24, but I was at least comfortable with myself, I knew who I was, but I think that many young people begin too early. They don’t think about what sort of rumours can get started and how people will react.

I think it’s too easy to enter into the branch. It should be more difficult to come in to it. All it takes is sending an email with a few pictures, and then suddenly you have a website where you are making money. I think more information needs to be spread, about what can happen once you actually enter into this industry. It can happen that you don’t realize that people you know go onto your site, like your guy friend. It’s happened to me before.

In the interview with the first respondent, she highlighted the importance of “still looking young” but was at the same time convinced that only a very particular type of woman “has what it takes” to “survive the branch”. In other words, she felt that most young women do not have the prerequisites, although she was not clear about what these prerequisites were. It’s also interesting that these three particular respondents on the one hand had positive things to say about the industry, and yet on the other hand are adamant about the fact that it is “too easy” to enter into the branch, and how there are negative consequences that many young girls are not aware. The importance of reaching out and offering support to young women in the pornography industry was emphasized in the following responses:



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Especially young girls. They should get help to leave early on, before they—before they lose all self-respect and feel that they no longer matter. It doesn't take long before the girls become exploited, and then it can be too late...

It's a lot easier to turn to something else when you are still young. Like in your 20's. But once you have worked with this for 10, 20 years, well ... [...] I know a woman who must have worked in this branch for about 30 years. She is 55 now, and still works as a stripper. She can't do anything else now. It's been too many years, so she feels that she is stuck there.

These respondents maintain that it is much easier to leave the industry while a person is still young, before it is “too late”, before the girls become “exploited”. Over time, a woman may “lose her self-respect”, and perhaps – as seems to be the case for the 55-year old woman – they no longer feel that they have any identity or a social network outside of the industry or are left with no other viable income-generating activities. With older women tending to have less “value” in the sex industry, their situation becomes increasingly precarious as the years go on, a finding validated by the following response from one of the older respondents:

When I first began, I uploaded one picture per week and at that time I had 80,000 new visitors per month. Now, I have to post something every day, several times a day, on twitter, instagram, facebook, snapchat – I have two snapchat and two Instagram accounts. Otherwise, I see directly that the traffic decreases. As soon as I upload something, traffic volume increases, and the selling happens. But it requires more and more – more work for the same amount of money. [...] It's a pain in the ass to have post pictures even when I'm on holiday, especially when I have a bad connection. Yes, I can post things in advance, but then the followers don't see it in “real-time”. And that's when you lose them.

Age not only affects one's “value” on the “market” – it also demands keeping up with constant technological advancements—new apps, new ways of reaching out to potential customers, and so on. These changes over time can leave older, less technologically savvy women unable to compete with younger women's command of internet technology and social media:

Det är jättesvårt att veta hur det moderna samhället fungerar nu. Och det, det får man må jättedåligt, så jag tycker inte att det är värdigt, det var verkligen...alltså jag klev in i det där när det fortfarande fanns pengar, men det var liksom en månad och sedan var det...Tillgång finns det ju mycket som helst. Och det som gör mig galen, jag känner mig mest tråkig jämfört med dem. [...] Och sedan så, jag upplever att jag har missat någonting om hur man får betalt, eller hur betalningar kommer in...ska det vara annonser som man ska tjäna intäkter på, är det det? Och det har ju gått mig helt förbi. Jag förstår inte modern marknadsföring. Och då blir de här tjejerna jättestora så att de kan ligga hemma hela tiden och ta massor bilder, men sedan måste de vara explicit, explicit och fint, och de ska ha så mycket kvantitet som möjligt, så utlämnande som möjligt med andra människor, och sedan blir det snapchat och allting som de får annonsintäkter från, på något plan som inte jag...jag upplever att det är en generationsfråga, att jag har missat hela den digitala vägen på något sätt.

FINANCIAL INSECURITY

Not only do younger women hold a higher “economic value” in the sex industry, they generally face greater vulnerability and less bargaining power. Being young is for instance directly linked to higher economic vulnerability, which in turn increases a young woman’s risk of ending up in the sex industry. The following quote emphasizes how much of the burden of economic austerity measures falls on young people, especially girls: “Today, young people, and especially young women, are directly targeted by the system of prostitution. They are...more vulnerable to the sex industry because of the economic conditions they live in. The austerity measures have hit them directly, they face poverty, refugee youth is left with no resources, and some young people flee their homes, schools or institutions because of different problems and end up in the streets. Exorbitant university fees push students to register as escorts on specialized websites. We have seen recently several countries where pimping websites were proposing to female students to meet a ‘sugar daddy’ to pay for their studies.”²⁴

Even in Sweden where university tuition is free, rising housing prices combined with high youth unemployment²⁵ means that young girls are at greater risk of falling trap to “glamour model” forums like Scandalbeauties and Nordic Finest, or ‘sugar daddy dating’ websites, where young girls “date” rich older men who provide for them economically. The twist in so-called “sugardating” is that the young women are expected to engage in sexual activities in exchange for the man’s economic support—a form of modern-day prostitution. Those profiting from these types of “services” and forums appear to be well aware of young girls’ economic vulnerability, with the Norwegian-owned Rich Meet Beautiful “sugardating” website placing a large trailer with a billboard advertisement directly outside of a Swedish university in 2017 that read: “Hey students! 0 kronor in study loans? Date a sugar daddy.” An article about the incident reflected on how “young women are locked into the sugardating world with promises of a world filled with diamonds, champagne and rounds of shopping.”²⁶ Not so dissimilar from the themes of glamour, money and fame found on pornography forums like Scandalbeauties.

Previous international research confirms financial insecurity as a major push factor into the pornography industry. In a study from 2011 among 134 pornography “performers” in the U.S., 50% reported living in poverty in the preceding 12 months.²⁷ Likewise, the U.S. Attorney General’s Commission on pornography identified the need for money as the primary reason for performing in pornography.²⁸

These findings align with the results of this study: financial difficulties reported as the most common reason for entering pornography. Five of nine of the respondents stated that it was the main reason for entrance:

I needed more money.

The biggest reason is money. It’s very easy money, quick money [...] I had a boyfriend who pushed me into a lot of debt. I think that is why I initially entered the industry. I thought, “you can earn a lot of money, and quickly.”



The biggest reason is money. It's very easy money, quick money [...] I had a boyfriend who pushed me into a lot of debt. I think that is why I initially entered the industry. I thought, "you can earn a lot of money, and quickly."

When I began it was because I like to test new things, and at the same time I knew I could earn money from it. That was the biggest reason to why I started.

Now it feels like everyone who starts is desperate for money.

I was not doing well financially, I didn't enjoy being at my (strip) club, I had been at all the different clubs and there weren't many choices left. I had a colleague who said, "it's a good way to earn money", and that was a time when there was still money in the branch. I posted an image, and the money rushed in.

When I first began, I uploaded one picture per week and at that time I had 80,000 new visitors per month. Now, I have to post something every day, several times a day, on twitter, instagram, facebook, snapchat – I have two snapchat and two Instagram accounts. Otherwise, I see directly that the traffic decreases. As soon as I upload something, traffic volume increases, and the selling happens. But it requires more and more – more work for the same amount of income. But I also think it's because young people are so much better (with technology). They have grown up with it.

Financial insecurity appears to be a strong push factor for entering the pornography industry. The last two quotes allude to and expose the historical development of the industry. When these respondents first began selling images and films online, the money "rushed in." However, with the constant introduction of new social media platforms, the establishment of new pornography forums, and the increase in women entering the industry, competition increases, earnings decline, and women are forced to "work more for the same amount of income." Higher competition places pressures on women to partake in increasingly "hardcore" and violent pornography to make a living, as alluded to in the mapping exercise.

Another respondent said that although her involvement in pornography is not about the money, many other women uploading and selling images and films do it because they are in a financially insecure situation:

I don't have the need for the money that I make on the site. I don't really care about what comes in. But then there are those who are on sick leave or quit school, who really need the money. Then I think that it is easy for them to do the things they earn the most money off of.

Together, these responses illustrate that like other parts of the sex industry, young women with economic vulnerability are overrepresented in the Swedish porn industry.

PREVIOUS SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Although financial vulnerability is certainly a driving factor for women entering into the sex industry, this factor doesn't typically stand in isolation; the sex industry overwhelmingly affects women with *multiple* vulnerabilities.²⁹ Childhood sexual abuse is the most common precursor to prostitution, with studies finding that between 60-90% of individuals exploited in the sex industry (depending on the type of study) have been subject to sexual abuse in childhood.³⁰ Similarly, Grudzen and colleagues' study in 2011 among 134 women filmed for commercial pornography showed that this group had nearly three times greater a prevalence of being exposed to rape in childhood compared to a comparable control group.³¹

We asked the interviewees whether they had been exposed to previous physical, emotional or sexualized violence. Their responses give further evidence to the link between earlier sexualized violence and entrance into the sex industry.

I have had a lot of traumatic events in my life, several rapes, a lot of manipulation, violence. The first rape was when I was 13. He was nagging all the time about sex, and then it all escalated. In the end, you don't dare to say no because you feel threatened, pressed into it. It was really horrible in school because I couldn't concentrate, I didn't have the energy. It was hard realizing "I can't manage this" and eventually I started skipping school to avoid it all. [...] I have also been threatened by a guy who said, "I have this naked picture of you, I'm going to send it to everyone you know." I felt horrible, I had so much anxiety – where will this picture circulate? Who is going to see it? Will my siblings or my classmates see it?

When I was a teenager. It was one of all my ex-boyfriends. What can I have been—16 years old, turning 17. My ex didn't think that girls should be able to experience things in life, except for be inside all day. He was very controlling. He beat me and sexually abused me. I felt brain washed because I kept defending him even when everyone else said he wasn't a good guy. But then I ended up at the hospital and I realized that this needed to stop. Friends and family helped me leave him.

One of my ex-boyfriends nagged and manipulated me into having sex with him. He hit me several times. He forced himself on me, and even offered me to his friends. I had a hard time saying no.

It was a boyfriend I met when I was 20. I moved quite far from home to be with him, so I felt very dependent on him. He was really controlling, sexually violent and extremely aggressive. He isolated me, I wasn't allowed to go see my family, I didn't get to use my computer or phone freely, he was always controlling what I did. I was



I have had a lot of traumatic events in my life, several rapes, a lot of manipulation, violence. The first rape was when I was 13."

psychologically abused by him during the 2,5 years we lived together. He even put me in a lot of debt. I think that's why I entered the industry, or that was at least a part of why I started at a strip club, and then began selling images. I thought, I can quickly earn a lot of money. And that's what I did, so I was able to escape the economic crisis he caused.

The first respondent was sexually abused in childhood, and her reflections on how she “couldn't concentrate”, “didn't have energy” and “couldn't manage” expose the symptoms of trauma she suffered. For the other respondents, their exposure to sexualized violence occurred in their teen years or early 20s by a former boyfriend. They described them as “controlling”, “manipulative” and “sexually violent”, with the one respondent's boyfriend even pimping her out to her friends. Another respondent's ex-boyfriend was psychologically violent during and after their relationship:

I broke up with my ex a couple of years ago. He hasn't really gotten over it. He knows exactly what I do, 24/7. He knows who and how many followers I have on Instagram. If I go out with a guy friend and one of his friends see us, they take a picture and send it to him. He gets angry and I have a tendency to be drawn to quite crazy guys. Now I've gotten over it, but before it was hard. There was a lot of fighting, unnecessary fighting.

Still another respondent actually entered the industry directly through a boyfriend, who manipulated and forced her into prostitution and pornography:

I met a guy when I was 22. Already on the first date, he raped me. Everything escalated very quickly, it was an abrupt entrance into the industry. Over the course of the next 4 months, he held complete control over my life and sold me to other men. He had a website where he sold pictures and films of me. He also sold the films on other forums online.

One interviewee who did not discuss her own personal exposure to sexual violence still agreed that many women have been subject to sexual violence prior to entering the industry. She said,

There is always a reason why people do certain things, why people go beyond boundaries they hadn't planned on breaching.

Reflecting previous research, prior exposure to sexualized violence is common among women in the Swedish porn industry.

POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Previous research has identified poor mental health as a background factor among women filmed for pornography production. In an online survey in 2011 among 134 women currently involved in the commercial pornography in the United States, respondents were found to suffer from significantly more

mental health problems compared to the matched control group.³² In general, the women filmed for pornography reported 7.2 days of “poor mental health” within the past month, compared to 4.8 days for controls, while 33% met criteria for current depression compared to only 13% of controls. Likewise, in the study among 854 prostituted persons in 9 countries – which included women with experience in pornography – it was found that women who had experience being filmed for pornography had significantly more severe symptoms of PTSD compared to the rest of the group.³³

Interviewees were asked questions about their mental health, including symptoms that would indicate PTSD, for instance anxiety, depression, nightmares and suicidal thoughts. Below are some of the responses highlighting a variety of mental health issues:

When I have felt down, that’s when I’ve spent a lot of time on Nordic Finest”

I feel anxious, depressed. I have a low self-image and suicidal thoughts. I’m not doing so well. But I was the same even before I started selling material.

I’ve suffered from loneliness, anxiety and depression, although I’ve experienced that more in the last number of years since my daughter and I were assaulted and received death threats. I’ve been depressed since then. [...] When I have felt down, that’s when I’ve spent a lot of time on Nordic Finest, but that’s when I also don’t put a lot of time into work or the like. I think it’s because when a person feels poorly, you don’t want to work, you just want to be left alone. So, I think it’s easy to be drawn to this branch because you don’t have the energy to work at a normal job, but you can still get money.

I’ve experienced anxiety. There was a lot that happened before I started [in pornography]. I had really difficult teenage years, both in middle and high school. I have had a long history of poor mental health. I try and see this branch as a way to start over. I’ve found something where I can choose when I work, with whom I work with, and if I work with someone I don’t like, I don’t have a contract saying I have to keep working with them.

I have a lot of anxiety. I’ve also suffered from claustrophobia and panic attacks since I was little. I’m going to get tested for ADHD this fall.

The respondents all mentioned anxiety as the number one mental health problem they experienced. Other issues that were mentioned include depression, low self-image, loneliness, panic attacks, and suicidal thoughts. The respondent who had exited pornography said that she suffered significantly from poor mental health not only during the time she was used in pornography, but especially afterward:

I've suffered from a lot of anxiety. Many suicidal thoughts – not that I wanted to kill myself, but that death was somehow very close. Sometimes I just didn't care, at all. And then I began having self-destructive sex. I had always been scared of cutting myself, so sex was the most viable option. Sex with a lot of guys I didn't care about, it almost felt like I raped myself. So, there was a lot of anxiety. I thought I would never find a partner because I was disgusting and worthless. I thought that no one could ever like me. I also had a lot of nightmares. I couldn't sleep. I went around trying to repress my feelings during the day. I had my child to take care of. I was nervous during the days, I was always watching things that happened around me, and I slept beside a knife. It was mostly at night the feelings came up, when I had a lot of nightmares. I was always ready to fight for my life during the two years after I fled.

The description of her symptoms—*anxiety, suicidal thoughts, nightmares, paranoia*—indicates *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*, a common condition among women in the sex industry according to research.³⁴ It was only when the respondent received long-term support in the form of therapy that these symptoms could slowly dissipate over time.

Three respondents consider poor mental health, stemming from a deep-rooted need for affection, as the main push factor leading to many women's entrance into the industry:

I think it's a lot of girls who are struggling a lot - on the inside - and they don't want to show it outwards because they want to be stronger than what they actually are in that moment. It can affect their psyche, and maybe they don't actually want to do what they are doing, but they do it for reasons that they have come up with, or someone has told them that this is the way it is, or maybe it's their only way to get money—things like that.

Sometimes it can be those who are unsure who are drawn into this branch, those who aren't so psychologically strong. These types of people are easier to manipulate. Unfortunately, I think it's many who haven't gotten what they should have from home. I think that adult-, and parent- responsibility has to improve. It's really sad.

“ I think there are many girls in the industry who feel the need to receive affirmation, because they feel horrible on the inside.”

I think that poor mental health, and the fact that you can easily make money off of this, I think the two go hand in hand. And I think that there are many that are depressed and in very low spirits in this branch. I mean, I've been mixed with quite bad peer groups, people who I know are really low and who have slept with many guys. Then again, I have also slept with a lot of guys but it's because I didn't want to have sex with the same person – it would get boring – but I have had many friends who have seriously felt horrible after every time they slept with a new guy. They get some sort of affirmation, but then afterward they feel like shit, and I think it's really easy – when you are always looking for that kind of affection – to come into this branch because you get affirmation in the form of money. You get affirmation and a reward.

Although these respondents did not necessarily apply their above analyses to their own situation, they were adamant about the fact that other women in the Swedish pornography industry are “struggling a lot” when it comes to poor mental health. They reflected on how the human need for affirmation can be exploited, as young women who may in a variety of ways have failed to receive adequate affirmation from the people around them, enter into an industry where they obtain affirmation in the form of money and compliments about their physical appearance. When asking respondents how the industry has affected their self-perception, they responded in the following ways:

I think there are many girls in the industry who feel the need to receive affirmation, because they feel horrible on the inside. When a person is in this branch, you get a lot of attention and approval – like when I felt unsure about myself, and I wanted to receive affirmation about who I was as a person – and maybe then you just do it for the attention, even though you actually don’t even want to be there (in the industry).

If you are in this branch you get a lot of attention, and when you’re as self-conscious as I was, you just want affirmation about you as a person. And that’s why I think many just do it to get affection, even though in reality, they actually don’t want to do it.

I had really low self-esteem before I began (selling images). But once I began, my self-esteem sort of improved. So, in a way, my self-perception has increased positively, rather than negatively. I think it’s influenced me positively on a whole. I was really shy and unsure of myself before, but as soon as I started (selling images), I became much more confident, appearance-wise and so on.

I think my self-perception has improved, like for many years I’ve had a very low self-esteem, self-hatred I would even say, because I didn’t look like everyone else. Why am I ugly, overweight? But my self-esteem has improved during the last couple of years. I’ve become more comfortable with myself. And with the images, I get to decide which ones I use, which ones I’m comfortable with, and I boost myself, “wow I look really good in this photo session”, “I look good from this angle”, things like that.

I look down on myself, but at the same time I receive appreciation for my body. Still, I think sometimes think that I’m less valuable than others...

These respondents all seem to express how they suffered very low self-esteem and were “looking for affirmation” prior to entering the industry. Some perceive that entering the industry has given them a “boost” in self-esteem. The respondent who had left the porn industry raised an interesting distinction between feeling higher self-esteem and increased confidence. For her, many women in the pornography industry may experience a boost of confidence in the industry, but this doesn’t automatically translate into improved self-esteem and self-awareness:

I think that self-esteem can be extremely low even if confidence is high. Confidence says, “I can do this, I am good looking”, and so on. But self-awareness in particular, the understanding that “I’m worth something” – I think that disappears over time, be-

cause you become a product. Sometimes you only realize this years later, maybe when you have a break down and suddenly can look back and see that you weren't actually doing well at all during your time in the industry.

Here, she differentiates between feeling higher self-confidence, especially about one's appearance, and understanding one's self-value. For her, it is possible to experience a sense of higher esteem from men's compliments and money. However, this doesn't ensure inner self-respect or esteem in other areas of Self beyond physical appearance, which are important aspects of self-esteem. This discrepancy is reflected in the following responses:

You get a response but maybe it's not in the type of attention you actually need it right then and there, to actually feel better. In this branch there is a lot of objectification, "You have great tits", "you have a great ass", and things like that. It's seldom you interact with clients who get the impression that you are a nice person, that you have good values.

I think I would need more appreciation from the people around me – more affirmation that I'm good enough, that I'm okay the way I am.

Together, these responses seem to infer that women in the industry receive attention based on their looks (objectification), whereas perhaps the type of affirmation they actually need is something different; affirmation that they are a good person, that they have good values, that they are good enough the way they are.

**BOUNDARIES
AND
BARGAINING
POWER**

So far, the results support previous research showing how young age, financial insecurity, previous exposure to sexualized violence, and poor mental health are vulnerability factors contributing to a woman's entrance into the pornography industry. In this chapter, women's experiences of setting and upholding boundaries are presented and analyzed.

WHY BOUNDARIES ARE NECESSARY

In interviews with prostituted women during the prostitution inquiry of 1977-1980, Hanna Olsson posed the question "what is it you refuse to do?"; put otherwise, what for them was not "for sale." She writes, "What is interesting is that the women set boundaries, regardless of whether they had spoken with someone else about them or not. One would think that a woman would have 'learned' her boundaries when she came into the prostitution environment. That can be the case, but even if that didn't happen, almost all women set clear boundaries."³⁵

During the interviews for this study, many of the women discussed the things they "wouldn't do". Some only filmed themselves or with a partner, refusing to film with some "random guy"; others said that they didn't reveal "everything"; and a number of women said that they would never "sell sex."

Why do women in pornography and other parts of the sex industry have such clear boundaries? Olsson discusses how women in the sex industry must maintain clear boundaries in order to protect their integrity, the innermost essence of 'self'. The logic behind it is, "You buy my body, or parts of it, but you don't buy all of me. I am not for sale."³⁶ Olsson argues that the woman's ultimate defense lies in avoiding anything that is personal; she thus makes a strong distinction between the "private" and the "public" Self.³⁷

Norwegian criminologists Cecilie Hoigård and Liv Finestad identified a variety of different defence mechanisms prostituted women use to protect the private Self, including: "turning off (by thinking about something else or taking drugs/alcohol), establishing physical boundaries (certain body parts may not be touched, for example), limiting time, hiding one's real self (through false names, using different clothing and not talking about one's private life), tricking the client, and avoiding buyers one might begin to care about."³⁸ Avoiding "buyers one might begin to care about" is reflected in the following respondent's thoughts on her experiences with so-called "Live sex cams":

I have contact with some of the men who follow my blog. I used to even do webcam there sometimes, but then I stopped because I realized that anyone could go in and look. One time I knew that the person looking was a friend of mine—I could sense it in the way that he wrote. And I was thinking, 'Why are you even in here?' I stopped webcamming after that.

When I asked her if that situation felt too "close" or "intimate", she agreed. Here, the private collided with the public, entailing a breach of this respondent's boundaries.

The defense mechanism “hiding of one’s real self” through false names or the adoption of so-called “alter egos” seems to be a common phenomenon in the pornography industry, and sex industry in general. One respondent said,

I didn’t know or understand my boundaries, and men took advantage of that. But then I found my alter ego.

Here, the creation of the alter ego allows the respondent to cope with men taking advantage of her, where she protects her innermost self and allows the alter ego to take the brunt of men’s sexual advances. The adoption of the alter ego is one of the mechanisms used to separate the innermost self—the private Self—with the self that sells “sexual services”—the public Self.

In *Being and Being Bought: Prostitution, Surrogacy and the Split Self*, journalist and author Kajsa Ekis Ekman describes how “the two Selves have different life stories. The ‘stage names’ taken by many women in prostitution have only partly to do with the fear of being recognized. They have as much to do with the necessity of making a distinction: he believes that he is meeting a woman with a certain name, but that woman is not me. He will ask for me by a name and call me by this name, but that name cannot touch me, for it signals another. For the prostituted woman, the name becomes a protective barrier and a way to protect away from herself all the unpleasantness: it happened to ‘Antoinette’, ‘Valentine’, ‘Esmeralda,’ not to me. The names are often fluffy, sugar-sweet and unrealistic in order to appeal to a male fantasy world, far removed from the real person.”³⁹

So, who is the “public Self”? What is required of her? The public Self is expected to behave in a way that appeases a male fantasy world; they should be “horny”, “available”, “obsessed with sex”, “crazy about men”. The public Self becomes an object of men’s lust and pleasure; a “sex object” which acts according to someone else’s desires. Olsson writes, “From living according to your own terms to adapting one’s self according to someone else’s desires – this is the ultimate female submission. She becomes the ‘Woman’, a projected being, a response to the man’s sexual fantasies and desires. Being an object means existing for someone else’s purposes, where what is important is not to express feelings and thoughts based on one’s own needs, but rather to respond to someone else’s needs.”⁴⁰

The public Self is thereby not permitted room to respond to her own needs. She is transformed into a purchasable and consumable “object”, viewed and treated as something that exists for the man’s purposes. “To be a ‘sex object’ is to look and behave in such a way that you awaken the desire of men. Social templates defining what a ‘sexy’ woman is are internalized and adopted as one’s own. In a ‘sexist’ culture, these definitions inevitably become essential elements of one’s own identity. This happens in a culture where the value of a woman isn’t found in her own sexuality, but in the actions of being selected, being desirable, having a value for someone else. She becomes the passive vessel with the task of pleasing and being attractive, not demanding reciprocity.”⁴¹

One of the prostituted women she interviewed drew parallels between her early teenage years and being conditioned into a “sex object”. She said, “I’ve always felt like a sexual object. I’ve always played that roll in a way, it was some kind of security. I was sweet with long, painted eye lashes and all that.”⁴² The following responses also reflect this conditioning:

I feel that I as a woman have been raised to be a certain way; I should be good-looking, well-trained, I should be dolled up, I should be this and that. And when I am smart and capitalize on this, instead I am met with disgust by people who consider it a dirty job.

I think that all the women in my branch are attractive according to prevailing norms, they’ve had a certain energy around them that has always attracted sexually interested people. I think it is often those individuals who can see when someone else is interested in them, and because we face high competition, we need to be quick to figure out who is interested. I can imagine that, when someone looks good according to prevailing norms and has a certain sexual charisma, an energy that you can’t really do anything about – it’s just there – you get a lot of attention, and that can be tiring. So, you probably begin to want to package this and sell it. It’s not that interesting, because you experience it all the time, wherever you go. So that’s why you start to package it into a product instead. I consider clients just that – a clientele, that I sell a packaged product to instead of feeling something deeper for another person.

The quote “you get a lot of attention, and that can be tiring” insinuates unwanted sexual advances. What is this woman’s strategy to cope with this sexual harassment? To package her appearance and “sexual energy” into a product, allowing her to distance herself emotionally, to avoid “feeling something deeper.” Again, we see the creation of a boundary between the private and public Self, whereby “the woman attempts “to defend the most important thing: the ability to feel.”⁴³

Both responses above raise the notion of “packaging” and “capitalizing off of” a product. What product? For Olsson, the ultimate consequence of women being viewed as sex objects is the creation of her roll as a “whore”—the “product” that she sells.⁴⁴ Olsson says, “In the prostitution world you sell a lie; the industry is built on the illusion that the feelings are there, that the woman is really horny, that there is something real the man buys, but this isn’t the case. The fantasy figure “sexual whore” does not exist in reality.” The following respondent’s analysis demonstrates this “fantasy figure”:

Porn should could with some type of warning, like on cigarettes or alcohol. That this is a fantasy, it is nothing but a fantasy. There are people that are crazy and they can’t understand that this isn’t real.

It is worth noting that the *fantasy* that she is talking about here is the *roll* that the woman must adopt in the pornography industry—*not* the actual acts of aggression or violence, which are absolutely no fantasy. This roll becomes all the more evident in this respondent’s reflections over her own sexuality:

I'm actually not even a sexual person. I don't like having sex during the time I'm working at strip clubs because it's too much, there is so much sex in the air and I get so tired of it.

Further, asking respondents their perception of men demonstrates how the persona they adopt is contrary to their actual opinions of men:

I've known since I was young, that most men are rotten eggs. This industry hasn't changed my opinion of them. Boys are boys.

I've always thought guys are gross. They think that they are the biggest, best and most beautiful species. I always assume the worst, and then it's up to them to show me the opposite. But that's how it always has been.

A woman involved in both strip and pornography shared:

I look down on men. I have such a damn hard time with most men actually. I've become cynical, really cynical. Because I see what happens in my branch, and I have no respect for them, especially those who buy sex. I have the absolute least respect for those who do nothing more than exploit other people. Strip clubs – I can't really understand the phenomenon either. I don't even believe in my own product. Like, I'm glad that men visit strip clubs so that I can earn money, but I don't understand why someone would come to a strip club, why someone would want to be there. And I see these men, how they actually believe that this is something the stripper actually likes, that this is what she wants to do. You know what I mean? I don't get it. She just does and says exactly what she knows the bastard wants. It's not good at all.

When I asked her whether she felt that she was forced to see the worst part of men, and whether she sometimes felt the need to take a pause to recover, she agreed. She said that she had to take pauses because otherwise she “couldn't take it.” Her statement about how woman involved in strip “does and says exactly what she knows the bastard wants” aligns with “appeasing to the male fantasy world”, and in general these conclusions can be extended to the entire sex industry, including pornography. It makes sense that a woman filmed in pornography would do what the “bastard”—in this case the viewer—wants, because that is how she earns followers, and in turn, an income. It's also interesting how the respondent says that she “doesn't even believe in her own product”, and how it mystifies her that men can believe that the woman stripping actually “likes what she does”, again demonstrating the illusion of the “whore” that is being sold in the sex industry. The lie that she wants to be there on that stage, on that film, in that room. That she is available, horny, sexual, interested, lustful. On the contrary, this “fantasy” figure doesn't exist; it is merely a defense and survival mechanism to protect the woman's inner Self.



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This separation of Self has been witnessed time and again by international research. As Ekis Ekman points out, the tactic has been described as “moving up into the head” in order to “transform herself into a commodity at the same time as she tries to transfer her Self elsewhere”.⁴⁵ Ekis Ekman continues, “Every day, she has to go through the process of transforming her body into a product that will feel as little as possible, and afterwards, she has to attempt to reawaken her body, remind it how to feel.”⁴⁶ This process takes a huge toll on morale, as highlighted by this statement:

It's this constant defense of my integrity and my body. I have to defend it all the time. And that is really draining in the long run.

Over time, this splitting of Self and transformation of the body into a product has dire consequences. Researcher and psychologist Melissa Farley argues that “internalized commodification causes symptoms of complex posttraumatic stress disorder in which there are seismic shifts in the meaning of self and self-in-relation to others. A woman in strip club prostitution explained this process: ‘You start changing yourself to fit a fantasy role of what they think a woman should be. In the real world, these women don’t exist.’”⁴⁷

Psychologists define the mechanism described as “moving up into the head” as dissociation and “feeling as little as possible” as emotional shutdown – symptoms characteristic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Both are avoidance symptoms of PTSD, an attempt to prevent the occurrence of an emotion like fear, anxiety or shame. They are also survival mechanisms that victims of sexualized abuse would have learned. And earlier research has demonstrated a strong link between PTSD and being used in prostitution. The largest study to date on prostituted persons – including women filmed for pornography – found that two-thirds (68%) of the 854 respondents in nine countries met clinical PTSD symptoms equivalent to war veterans, battered women and refugees from state-organized torture.⁴⁸ Notably, the 49% of women who had been filmed for pornography were diagnosed with statistically significantly more severe symptoms of PTSD than women who did not report experiences in pornography.⁴⁹

BOUNDARIES AND VULNERABILITY

Even though women involved in pornography have clear boundaries, their ability to maintain these boundaries is “often inversely proportional to her vulnerability...”⁵⁰ Researcher Max Waltman discusses how multiple vulnerabilities lead to a lack of bargaining power.⁵¹ He says, “Pornography production exploits the inequality and oppression that is present in society in order to recruit people who have few other alternatives in the same way as prostitution

does. Consequently, ‘performers’ also lack strong bargaining power, which is reflected not least in the many harmful actions they must accept – for example, unsafe sex, ass-to-mouth (ATM), violence and aggression.” Waltman refers to Grudzen and colleagues’ study in 2008 among 18 women and 10 men who performed in pornography production, where their unequal bargaining power and vulnerability meant that they were forced to engage in more risky acts to obtain work or access pay.⁵²

Even the older respondents in the present study who allegedly upheld their boundaries noted that many other women, especially younger women, do not have the same capacity:

There are a long of girls I talk to, and they have a lot of difficulties with keeping boundaries – it’s really difficult for them.

The young girls don’t seem to have any boundaries, whatsoever. It feels like they upload anything. [...] I’m horrified to see how these young girls have no boundaries, and that’s what I have to compete with. It makes things difficult, because I’m not a fan of having to upload images.

Now it feels like all girls who enter are desperate for money. You see young girls crossing their boundaries and unable to stand it, and they disappear as fast as they appeared.

One respondent connected the constant pushing of boundaries to the current society we live in, where young people are surrounded by messages about the importance of being seen on social media:

In today’s society we are all about selfies and we learn that we should get as many likes as possible. And I think it is often young people who are most affected by this culture. Their boundaries end up being pushed further and further, and then the next step (selling images) is actually very small. All it takes is for someone to say, “You can earn money instead of likes.”

Indeed, our current culture teaches young girls that they must be seen in a very particular way—sexually. Dr. Gail Dines argues that today’s culture, what she calls “porn culture”, grooms young girls into being “porn-set ready”.⁵³ Pape (2018) writes, “Today, sexualization of girls and women is everywhere: women are depicted and shown as objects in music videos, video games, movies, advertising. This is the environment in which young people grow up, and which sends them clear messages about unequal roles and possibilities for women and men.”⁵⁴ This bombardment of hypersexualized image of women teaches girls that their worth lies in whether or not, as Dines puts it, they are “fuckable.” In other words, the culture socializes girls into sexual objects whose task is to please men. A Danish pornography producer Birka models’ tagline reads “Out of sight, out of mind”, which perfectly echoes our culture’s message being internalized by young girls: if you aren’t seen, you don’t exist—you have no intrinsic value. Thus, being groomed into pornography can happen not only through pornographers, boyfriends and partners, but also through our current culture.

Pornography forums, like Scandalbeauties, feed off of our current culture with terms like “blogs” and “models” taglines like, “why not earn money instead of likes?” The step between posting sexualized photos privately—which is what young girls believe is expected of them based on the hypersexualized media they are bombarded with—and selling these photos publicly is a narrow one, especially if you are in need of money, affirmation, or both.

Our evermore digitalized society has also changed the nature of the sex industry in general. Women engaged in stripping or other parts of the sex industry are driven to have an “online presence”, for instance participating in pornography or “Live webcam.” One of the older interviewees involved in both pornography and stripping disclosed that being filmed for pornography actually goes beyond her boundaries, even though she had previously answered positively when asked whether she can keep the boundaries she’s set:

I’m not actually interested in films, documented material. I’ve realized that it can help my career a little, especially given the society we live in, because people want to see things, they want to know things about me...but over the last 8 months I have faced huge barriers in my private life and difficulty feeling at peace. And maybe it’s because, well, I’ve felt horrible on these forums because it’s beyond my boundaries. My boundaries, they are quite brutal at strip clubs, but when it comes to not being able to choose who looks at my material online – that makes me uncomfortable. It’s hard to navigate this modern society.

This response suggests that even for women who have higher bargaining power compared to others, the lack of economic security in and the ever-changing face of the sex industry means that they too can be pushed to do things they are uncomfortable with.

And, regardless of whether women have clear boundaries or not, they are still subject to pornographers who have a strong incentive to manipulate them and push their boundaries. Indeed, pornographers appear to be well aware of the type of women more easily manipulated and whose boundaries can be pushed, as reflected in the following response:

■ ■ **These men, they go
after the weakest.
There are fucking ugly
fish out there, who groom
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get their way.**

These men, they go after the weakest. There are fucking ugly fish out there, who groom [young girls] and try to get their way.

This is why pornographers tend to seek out, recruit, and profit from women who suffer from financial need, earlier sexual abuse, and other psychosocial problems. One respondent shared her experiences of having her boundaries pushed by some of the photographers within the industry:

I know of many models who show up at a photography session, and it's nothing like what they had agreed upon, it doesn't meet the expectations the woman has had. And in the end it's easy to feel pressed. Some photographers can be jerks who really push you, "you know you want to do this", "this is going to be great", "this is really going to sell". Like, "this is what you want". You can become really manipulated, and it's often these types of photographers that keep contacting you afterward, "this was a great collaboration", "you were really great", who really try to get someone to come back. I know very well that this type of thing is really easy to get caught up in.

When asked whether she thought it more difficult to keep boundaries once you are in the studio, the respondent said,

Yeah, you're a little more vulnerable in the studio. Because even if I'm really clear beforehand – I say, "These are the type of pictures I want" and send a few ideas. But it's much more vulnerable when you are there, they say, "do this", "show this", "behave in this way". And in that moment, it's not as easy to speak up and feel that what you say will be respected.

Here, the respondent reflects on how the intimacy of the studio – when it is only her and the male photographer – makes it difficult for her to adhere to her pre-set boundaries. The photographer knows that the more he can push her boundaries, the more money he can earn.

I have really strict boundaries, I never want to be fully naked in photo sessions. But at sessions the photographers will say things like, "move your underwear just a bit", or "push that over just a little bit" and eventually you are completely naked. I feel really uncomfortable, because from the beginning I've been very clear about my boundaries and what I'm comfortable producing. But these are the types of pictures they want in their portfolio to show to other models who they want to work with. [...] I've also heard that a lot of images are uploaded onto VK site, because there you can show anything, there are no boundaries when it comes to what you can post there. There are also many photographers who sell to private individuals and to websites. That happens quite a bit. I know a photographer who I worked with who was extremely manipulative, there were a lot of pictures and films I wasn't at all comfortable with. So I contacted him and said that I wanted him to remove them because it wasn't what I had agreed on and isn't something I want to be shown. And yet the pictures still ended up in the hands of people who shouldn't have them. It's a lot of pressure.

Beyond this, women are also forced to deal with consumers who have no regard for their boundaries. Below, one respondent reflects over the tension between a woman's clear boundaries and men's sheer disrespect for these boundaries:

No, they don't respect my boundaries. [...] The worst part is that in this branch, you are no longer human. You are just an object that can be bought for money and the man can do what he wants with you. That is what the men believe. And then they discover that that is not at all the case. We have boundaries, and we can't be treated in whatever way. Then the men become offended and rude—you know how offended men get. That is what you have to deal with every day. It is very seldom that I am met with respect. It feels like, this branch is where men show you who they really are. And it's often not a beautiful side.

A number of respondents relayed how “fans” and members on forums like Nordic Finest and Scandalbeauties completely disregard boundaries, for instance by contacting them via their social media profiles or private phone numbers:

“**It feels like, this branch is where men show you who they really are. And it’s often not a beautiful side.”**

I have customers who follow me on social media and I always get messages like, “Can I buy private pictures from you?”, “Can I pay you for a blowjob?”, “Can I buy two hours with you”.

They write messages both on Nordic and on my facebook, instagram kik. They usually request to see bloyjobs. That’s what I get asked most. “Can’t you do this and that?” they say.

I know a woman who has been followed home. I’ve been stalked too – not home, but, being stalked or for example when someone finds you on social media like facebook and writes all the time and contacts you privately—well, this happens a lot in our branch. People don’t understand that this is a job, neither at strip clubs nor on the blogs – the men don’t understand, they are completely disrespectful towards our boundaries.

A number of women in the industry have experiences of consumers becoming stalkers:

I have heard many stories where girls say, “There was someone who followed me home” or “Someone likes my films and won’t stop writing to me and wants to do this and that.”...There’s a lot of men who become stalkers and look up where you live, what your phone number is, follow you on social media and keep track of every little thing you do.

I’ve been stalked before..not followed home, but still.

One respondent described how a man from her home town kept sending her messages, wanting to meet her in person:

Every little thing I post he writes “you’re so beautiful”, “I miss you”, “I love you”. He’s convinced that he will meet me in person and that he’s in love with me. It’s extremely uncomfortable. He hasn’t received a response from me in over half a year now – no attention whatsoever – and yet he still goes in and writes “Have you died your hair?”, “Have you cut your hair?”, “You have great clothes”, “I love you sweetheart.” It’s just wrong. They often become obsessed, and when they realize that the woman is not going to respond, and what they have planned isn’t going to happen, they often become aggressive instead. They affect most of all your private life. It’s like a creepy stalker that knows everything about my life and it makes me so uncomfortable.

When I asked whether she thought that men’s lack of respect for boundaries was more common in this branch, she agreed:

Absolutely, it's more common. And it's often that they turn to girls who they see have a worse self-esteem, those who have a damaged self-image, because it's easier to reach out and manipulate them. They are really vulnerable, and it's often that these men that try to control them psychologically. These men groom the girls. ... They make you feel that you can't just stop responding to them, because there may be consequences –he is the one who decides if there will be consequences or not. ... These men are extremely manipulative; they say, “Of course you want to meet me”, “Of course we will meet up”, “I'll treat you to a beer or coffee”, “It's just a coffee – you are a fantastic girl, of course we should get to know each other”, “You won't regret it.” In the beginning, they seem really nice. Eventually you begin to doubt yourself and you accept his offer, and then everything escalates so quickly. If you've met with them in person, then you are “theirs”. You think, “It doesn't matter what he does or says, everything in the end will be my fault.” It's really a downwards spiral, and often it's this male upper hand that, “well you have actually chosen to meet me, you could have said no” even though you actually had little choice to say no.

As the above responses highlight, women involved in pornography are subject not only to pressure from pornographers, but also “fans” (pornography consumers), who may stalk her, ask the woman if he can perform in a scene with her, request to meet in person, or pressure her into sex purchase. They target “girls who they see have a worse self-esteem, those who have a damaged self-image, because it's easier to reach out and manipulate them.” They control the young women psychologically, writing to them constantly, pressuring them to meet with them, and threatening them with consequences if they do not. The greater the vulnerability the woman faces, the less power she has to say no.

The common denominator to the responses in this chapter is the women's clear attempts to maintain their boundaries contrasted by men in the industry who completely disregard these boundaries. Men who come to strip clubs and “fans” who follow so-called “porn blogs” (i.e. men who consume Swedish pornography) expect more than just a visual experience (pornography) or a limited physical experience (in stripping); they expect and are willing to pay for “full service” (sex purchase). Here we see male entitlement and the male sex right in full force. The male sex right says that men have the sexual right to access the female body; they feel that women are obliged to grant them access



And it's often that they turn to girls who they see have a worse self-esteem, those who have a damaged self-image, because it's easier to reach out and manipulate them.”

to their bodies, especially if the woman is perceived as a “whore”. Because in the sex industry, “no’ does not exist...the concept “whore” is a patriarchal coded fantasy about an individual of lower standing who is sexually available, and who can be used and punished on the man’s terms.”⁵⁵

**PORNOGRAPHY,
STRIP AND
PROSTITUTION:
ALL FACES OF THE
SAME INDUSTRY**

Previous research has suggested a link between pornography and other parts of the sex industry. For instance, in the 9-country study among 854 prostituted persons, Farley and colleagues interviewed individuals with experiences in different parts of the sex industry, including stripping, massage parlours, “escort” sites, and pornography. In total, 49% of all respondents had also been filmed for pornography production.

A number of respondents had experiences in other parts of the sex industry. For one, the mapping exercise revealed that many of the women selling pornography are also involved in stripping. Three of the nine women interviewed had entered into the sex industry through stripping. An additional four women had sold sex, though through different prostitution avenues. One of the young women had experience of a so-called “sugardaddy”, while another had begun selling sex through different online forums when she was 14 years old, prior to her involvement in pornography. When asked what she thought the reason for selling sex was, the respondent replied:

I think it was poor relationships in general. I hung out with certain peer groups where there were a lot of drugs and alcohol. I also had a poor self-image. I thought, “why can’t I earn money off of a man who likes me?” That was how I began.

The respondent also shared how one of the sex purchasers in particular was very violent and sexually and physically abused her.

Another respondent said that she had tried selling sex but “didn’t feel good about it”—it was out of her comfort zone. This particular respondent had entered into the sex industry through stripping and had personally witnessed how many women in stripping get lured into selling “sex”. She spoke of two clubs in Stockholm, Club Privé and Kino, where male visitors are well aware that they can buy sex:

I have a friend who works at one of these clubs, and she says exactly the same thing, that it’s definitely the sex trade there. There are two clubs that are shameful for Sweden. The managers have a method, where they say that they have “no idea what you are talking about” if some journalist or police comes in and asks them about whether sex purchase happens there. Yet girls are literally sold by the same managers. The men [visiting the club] know exactly which girls they can buy, and my friend says that about 90% of the girls at these clubs sell sexual services.

She then disclosed the particular approach and recruiting method Club Privé has used to entice young women in particular:

They drive around with a girl who says that she gets to drive in a limousine every day and get tons of tips when she dances on the stage. But that’s not actually the case. In Stockholm, no one is throwing money at you. You need

to be able to read your clientele, to be good at promoting yourself, no one gets a fixed income. It's definitely this type of marketing that draws in the girls, especially those from the countryside who don't have a job.

Her description of Club Privé exhibits similarities to Scandalbeauties, with their limousines touring all throughout Sweden, claiming that the women who work for them access “fancy”, “luxurious”, “wealthy” lifestyles, where they can travel, live in hotels and be escorted in limousines.

When asked further about what she perceived were the differences and similarities between prostitution and strip, she provided intriguing reflections about how it boils down to who gets to say “no” and who has to say “yes”:

The only link is that they both belong to the erotic branch, but the product itself is fundamentally different. [...] The difference between us and the escort branch is that we are paid to say “no”, and of course that's something we have to say many times, and in many different ways. Women in the escort branch get paid to say “yes”. [...] I would never want to have a job where I, in order to survive, was forced to say “yes”. I could imagine doing it but then I would have to be able to choose my clientele, to be extremely flexible when it came to who I said “yes” to. I feel sorry for those who are trapped in it. And I know that strip club managers are good at saying, “This is a great job for young girls”. They are good at indoctrinating the girls.

For her, the difference between strip and prostitution is that women who strip are paid to say “no” to men who want to pay for sex, while women in prostitution are paid to say “yes”. Although she did not extend her analysis to pornography, in a way pornography can be seen as both a “no” – in the sense that women do not engage in sexual activities directly with a “client” – but a “yes”, as many are literally paid by a pornographer to engaged in sexualized acts with one or several men, while capturing this on film.

Since she had already disclosed that some women who are involved in strip-ping also sell “sex”, I asked her if there are any differences in background characteristics among the women who sell sex versus those who do not. The respondent agreed that the women who sell sex at strip clubs tend to be in more vulnerable positions: they are young, suffering from poor mental health and facing financial insecurity. She also said that when she previously worked at one of these clubs, having a foreign background was a “clear sign” that the woman offered what they call “full service” (i.e. prostitution). This is not surprising, as research locates discrimination based on race and ethnicity as a push factor into the sex industry, with vulnerable minorities being overrepresented.⁵⁶ Again, it is evident how a woman's bargaining power is conversely proportional to her vulnerability. The more vulnerable you are the less power you have to say “no”. As the responses below illustrate, the same goes for women in the pornography industry:

It's well-known in this industry. Many begin as an amateur who takes their own pictures and films and posts them online. Maybe she earns a bit of money, gets some

followers, and then you usually she gets tons of offers, like, “you would earn this much if we met in person for a few hours”, “I’ll pay you so-and-so if you do this.” Many who enter this branch, especially those who start at Scandalbeauties and need the money, see this as a sort of drug. If you get these kinds of offers, and you already have a poor financial situation, you’re pretty much forced to accept these offers. “I can’t pay my rent”, “I don’t earn much so if I meet this guy, it would give me an extra 2,000 SEK.”

I think there are two types of girls. Girls who do what they do and are confident and goal oriented, stable. And then there are girls who are vulnerable and unsure, who can’t really say no and are desperate for the money. Girls who can be exploited, who are easily persuaded.

I know girls who do it [sell sex]. Boundaries are easily pushed and if you can earn for example 5,000 SEK for sex, maybe you go for it.

The quotes above show how susceptible women in the pornography industry are to saying “yes” to sex purchase requests—again, conditional on her vulnerability, and thus, bargaining power. The first response illustrates how young women may transition from selling sexualized pictures, to transitioning to more and more hardcore material, and to finally accepting offers from sex purchasers, consequence to her vulnerability.

The link between prostitution and pornography is especially evident for the respondent who was forced into both pornography and prostitution by her ex-boyfriend when she was 22 years old. Right from the first date, he forced her to sell herself to other men. He had a website where he sold images and films of her, for instance being bought by sex purchasers and “gangbanged” (read: raped) by a group of men.

LEAVING THE INDUSTRY

One of the aims of this report was to investigate the challenges women face when exiting the pornography industry. The barriers women face when leaving the industry, and support services needed to facilitate their exit, are presented below.

BARRIERS TO LEAVING THE INDUSTRY

In Farley et al.'s (2004) 9-country study, the researchers found that 89% of the 854 respondents wanted to leave prostitution (in its different forms) but had no other alternatives to survival. Respondents were asked whether they or other women faced barriers to exiting the pornography industry. Several respondents identified money as a hindering factor:

I would think that it's the money. That is why people work. It's not like we think it's fun to work at a workplace 9 hours a day. Yes, of course, there are people who like it, but most do not. We do it to survive, that's what it's all about. And if you get used to a certain way of living, then it's hard to get away from it. Especially when, say you lack education. Some girls are very smart, some educate themselves at the same time as they work (in this branch), so you do not have to take out a study loan. It depends on the situation, but I think it's mostly about the money.

It's really difficult to leave this job because most of us have children and/or pets to provide for, and other bills and expenses every month, like a car and so on. A regular job, like at a restaurant, doesn't cover these costs, which is probably why many don't want regular jobs, because the money wouldn't be enough.

Another barrier was the fact that the images and films remain online, even after a woman has exited the industry:

▀▀ **There may come a day when you really want to leave this life. The problem is that all the images are still online. You want them removed, but you have absolutely no power to do so. That's when it feels really difficult.**

The perception I have, mostly from Scandalbeauties, is that most girls have had the same attitude as I had in the beginning – that it is still something fun, you get some attention, some kind of response, and, well, it's a bit new and exciting. Then I know that many get stuck in it because they may feel anxiety over “this might not be anything I actually wanted to do.” The images are published, so you can never remove them. Employers, parents, family can stumble across them. I think many people feel they cannot leave because, it's like, the damage has already been done, so to speak. Since they are stuck, they think that they may as well try to make a real career out of it, and that is when they are easily pressured and manipulated. If you stop, you do not have much to go back to, and if you continue, you're already “damaged goods”.

I've been in this industry for a long time, I have a good idea of how it all works. But I don't know how it is for young girls, maybe they feel that they really need the money and they say yes to

filming with people like Johan Vilde. There may come a day when you really want to leave this life. The problem is that all the images are still online. You want them removed, but you have absolutely no power to do so. That's when it feels really difficult.

The understanding I have is that many people stay in the industry because that don't have a choice, they can't quit. It's the fear of applying for a new job, and knowing that, if anyone googles me, images of my boobs will come up directly. Some bloggers have many done things that they regret, that they can't stand for, and then you have to defend yourself, in order to get a normal job. It's discouraging. [...] I think that many who want to exit the industry don't feel like they dare to, because all the images are online for the entire world to see, and you must always defend that, even later on in life.

I definitely think that can be the case. If you enter into something, it can be difficult to quit, especially if you still want to receive that affirmation or attention.

I think it can also be that you can't really stand for what you have done. When you try to live another life and try to move on from your past life, you go around all the time worried, thinking "someone can look this up", you know? My god, like the one girl who joined the police, she must have had a hell of a time. Because you never know what is going to happen in your future. You can get a job where it's really strict, and maybe you don't tell them what you have done in your past. You go around constantly thinking, "what will happen if they find out?" And it can happen at any point in time.

The above responses illustrate how difficult it is to leave the industry due to the fear of others coming into contact with the pornographic images and films left online. Anyone—a friend, neighbour, boss, or child—could stumble upon the images, a reality that discourages women in the pornography industry from even applying for other jobs. The respondents discuss how easy it is to enter into the industry, and how young women in particular might not understand the ramifications of entering the industry until it is "too late". They may regret ever being photographed or filmed. The problem is that pornographers like Johan Vilde own the rights to the images and films, and the forums like Scandalbeauties can refuse to take the images down from their website. Further, the images may have been pirated and posted or sold elsewhere, leaving little opportunity for the women to ever remove them.

The respondent who was forced into pornography by her boyfriend shared about the horror she felt when a man came up to her and asked if she could perform in a porn film with him:

A random man walked up to me in the city one day and asked if I would film a porn film with him. I told him, "no, I don't do that" because at that point I had escaped the boyfriend who sold me. When he said that he had a porn film of me at home, I suddenly understood that the films had spread, and that my ex-boyfriend had profited off of my abuse images even after I had left him. The man said that I had a webpage where a person could buy a ticket to see a gangbang of me if they purchased the film. [...] I had tried to repress it all, but in this instance, it felt like everything was being torn up again. I felt even more vulnerable and violated than when the abuse actually happened because then I knew that anyone could see my abuse. I thought – my

parents, what if they see these images? I wanted to protect everyone I knew because I felt so terribly disgusting. I struggled so much with shame and guilt during that time. I thought it was my fault, and that I was somewhere out there, somewhere, where anyone could see my past.

This same respondent described symptoms of PTSD following her escape from pornography and prostitution. It is worth noting again the high prevalence of PTSD among women in different parts of prostitution in Farley and colleagues' 9-country study. In Talita's experience, leaving the "sex industry" and working through past traumas—both from childhood and from exposure to violence during their time in the industry—is a very difficult and painful process, one requiring a significant amount of time and support. When a person exits, they want to leave that former "life" behind. Yet for women who have been filmed for pornography, leaving that "life" behind is much harder, if not almost impossible, as the images remain online, forever. This could be one explanation for why women filmed for pornography in the 9-country study were found to exhibit significantly more severe symptoms of PTSD than those who had not been filmed.⁵⁷ They know that their images "can never be removed."

In *Only Words*, Catherine MacKinnon meticulously describes the pain that the images remaining online can have on an individual: "You hear the camera clicking and whirring as you are being hurt, keeping time to the rhythm of your pain. You always knowing that the pictures are out there somewhere, sold or traded or shown around or just kept in a drawer. In them, what was done to you is immortal. He has them; someone, anyone, has seen you there, that way. This is unbearable. What he felt as he watched you, as he used you is always being done again and lived again and felt again through the pictures—your violation his arousal, your torture his pleasure."⁵⁸

NECESSARY SUPPORT MEASURES

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate what types of support measures women with experiences in pornography thought they or others would need in order to exit the industry, to help ensure that Talita's support is relevant to this particular target group. Below, the respondents share a variety of measures that they believe are important when assisting a person leaving the pornography industry. A number of respondents identified education and assistance finding an alternative source of income as vital:

I really think education or finding another job is important. Because then, the brain has something else to focus on. When you study, you think about something totally different (than the industry) [...] There aren't very many who are highly educated in the industry. And I think many could absolutely use more education...because then, they would have a chance to do something else.

Maybe in some way helping the girls to get a job, because I've seen that a lot of them do it for the money. Yeah, so help the women get a different job. You would really need money [...] and education too.

The possibility of getting a job despite the fact that you don't have much education.

It has a lot to do with money, but even education, I think... This isn't a job you can work in for the rest of your life, at some point you have to move on. And at that point you have to have some other way to survive. So it's probably those two mainly that I can think of. And maybe accommodation as well. Because sometimes where you live is a contributing factor to why you work with the work that you do. So maybe to be able to move to another town, or I don't know, where there aren't any clubs.

It is interesting that the last respondent raised accommodation as an important support measure. In her opinion, some of the women continue in the sex industry because of their location. This is exactly why Talita eventually opened a safe house and transition apartments as the organization was forming their long-term support program. The founders and trauma therapists Anna Sander and Josephine Appelqvist realized that working through past traumas and transitioning to a new life was impossible if a client's living situation was precarious or closely connected to their exposure to prostitution (e.g. if they lived in a near vicinity to their pimp).

Another support measure raised was the need for "someone to talk to":

More support, someone to talk to. And that the police take you seriously if you report a crime, and don't just close the case without even investigating whether a person is in a bad relationship or is being abused. Many are dependent on their boyfriend...

When you actually leave this branch, you're very alone. In the beginning, you thought "this isn't anything I'm going to regret", "I'm going to stand for everything I do", and then you end up losing a lot of people around you who say, "you don't have self-respect" or "you're going to regret this." So, you lose a lot of the people around you, and when you actually leave the branch, you have no one left, because when you were in the branch you only had contact with photographers, other models, other companies. When you leave this world, you don't have anything left. That's why it's important that girls know that there is support they can access, like women's shelters, or that you have a stable friend you can vent to, "now it feels tough." You need to know that there is support around you that you can access.

You always need someone to talk to. I think it's most important a woman can get all her feelings out, like why she's feeling poorly, and to really have support around her to have the energy. Because when you exit, you are really rock bottom and need others to help lift you up.

When I asked the third respondent what she meant by being at "rock bottom" she said,

When a person really regrets something they are doing or have done, they feel completely horrible, which is why they can experience being at "rock bottom" where they don't see a way out.

Both respondents above discuss how exiting the branch leaves a person feeling “alone”, as their social network consists primarily of other individuals involved in the branch—pornographers, other women involved, etc. Feelings of loneliness, “not knowing where to turn to”, can make leaving the industry disenchanting; this, they say, is why it is so important to have support from individuals or organizations. Another respondent talked about the need to feel “appreciated” and “affirmed”:



It’s great that you’re doing this, much more outreach is needed. And I mean, it must be very difficult to reach out to these girls. In my opinion, you [Talita] need to grow and spread.”

I think I would need more appreciation from the people around me – more affirmation that I’m good enough, that I’m okay the way I am.

One of the respondents even brought up the need for support dealing with potential stalkers when leaving the industry:

When you quit, there are a lot of men who become stalkers and look up where you live and what your phone number is. They follow you on social media and know about everything you do – these types of men are often still around even if you quit. And it’s probably the case that you don’t know how to deal with it, that you can say, “I have a stalker from when I sold naked photos” instead of hearing “it’s your fault, you know what you’ve done.”

All of the respondents were unanimous about the need for support services for women involved in the pornography industry, regardless of whether the respondents perceived their experiences in pornography as more positive or more negative. The responses below highlight this view:

It’s great that you’re doing this, much more outreach is needed. And I mean, it must be very difficult to reach out to these girls. In my opinion, you [Talita] need to grow and spread.

I think that there should be even more special units like Talita who work like you do.

Insisting that Talita should grow and reach out to more individuals testifies to the recognition that many women in the pornography industry are in need of this type of support. Respondents also showed personal appreciation of now knowing that an organization like Talita exists:

Now I know that if I need to talk to someone, I can turn to health clinics or an organization like yours.

It feels great to know that you [Talita] exist.

I know who I can turn to, and now that you have contacted me, I have yet another place where I know I can receive support.

Talita offers a way out of pornography, prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes, into a new life. Our one-year support program is based on a method that we formed from the knowledge we accumulated during our 20 years working with this target group. Our motto is to see the whole person, help her the entire way, regardless of where in the world she has been exploited, and regardless of whether an authority like social services pays for her placement.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Over the last number of years, the Swedish pornography industry has remained in the shadows, with little knowledge available regarding its existence, scope, players, and methods. The aim of this report was to expose the current Swedish pornography industry by mapping out the forums for production and distribution, including the players involved, the methods used to recruit women, and the type of content produced. We interviewed 9 women with experiences in the pornography industry in order to gain insights into their background, the conditions in the industry, and the challenges they face when leaving the industry

At a Swedish event discussing pornography this past summer, the moderator asked, “What is porn today and why is there no Swedish porn production to talk about?”⁵⁹ Our mapping exercise demonstrates that the Swedish pornography industry is still very much alive today; there is much to talk about! Pornographic films and images of hundreds of women and girls in Sweden are freely available or for purchase, at this very moment. A quick browse, however, would not necessarily reveal this finding, as the form of pornography production has changed over time, while the industry intentionally selects language that disguises its true nature.

During the mapping exercise, we identified pornographers Johan Vilde and K-PROD, who film, produce and distribute their own material. These pornographers are active today, and it is clear what the women the film are expected to withstand: “gangbangs”, “fisting”, “double fucks” and “Ass-to-mouth” (an act where a man penetrates a woman orally directly after he has penetrated her anally, with faeces sometimes evident on his penis). The content is characterized by the eroticization of sex purchase, incest, child sexual abuse, and men’s violence against women in general, with titles like “Hard fuck with teen girl”, “Girl fisted and fucked by three men” and “Thaimassage happy ending”. The reports of Vilde financially cheating several women participating in his films and the warning by a woman in the industry about “not meeting Vilde alone” speak volumes to Vilde’s character.

The mapping exercise also revealed that while there are some “traditional” pornography producers left in Sweden (Johan Vilde and K-PROD), most production nowadays exists on forums like Scandalbeauties where so-called “glamour models” can upload and sell pornographic content. While some of the content is free, most has to be purchased by consumers. The women who upload images and films retain a certain percentage of the earnings, and the forums take a 20-50% earnings cut. In a way, we witness the conglomeration of production and distribution, where online distributors indirectly own the production of pornography. Just like a traditional pornography producer, Scandalbeauties actively recruits women, pressures them to post images regularly and engage in more extreme acts (like pressuring women to switch from Scandalbeauties to Sinnergirls) and earns profits off of their images and films. From a “business” perspective, it makes sense: why go through the trouble of

producing pornography – recruiting not only the woman but also the men to be filmed with her, renting a studio and equipment, and developing the film – when you can sit back, travel abroad, and hardly do any work by owning a pornography “amateur” website that continually draws in money? And it is not small amounts of money we are talking about: with 2.8 million visitors from 171 different countries consuming 131 million minutes of content per year, the forum Scandalbeauties alone draws in 4,7 million SEK in yearly profits.

It is also important to note how terms used by pornography forums, like “blogs”, “models”, and “glamour”, all mirror our popular culture. This allows the industry to disguise the actual content of the images and films produced, and the conditions faced by many of the women involved in the industry. The phrase “Why settle on likes when you can make money?” is an ingenious, calculated message formulated by pornographers, intended to appeal to young women already burdened with the societal pressures of being seen. Danish pornography producer Birka Model’s tagline “Out of sight, out of mind” epitomizes the way in which young people are conditioned into believing that their value is measured by whether or not they are “seen” – for instance, how many “likes” or “followers” they attain on social media. This, in combination with the fact that the patriarchal society we live in leaves women constantly bombarded with images of the hypersexualized female body, sheds light on why the step from receiving “likes” for sexualized images to selling the images is a narrow one. Like other parts of the sex industry, where prostitution is disguised under the label “sugardaddy dating” and traffickers are termed “lover boys”, pornography provides another instance of “sugar coating” where exploitation of vulnerability is disguised through terms like “blogs” and “glamour modelling”. Forums like Scandalbeauties have vested interests in normalizing pornography while disguising the industry’s exploitative nature, so that the demand for pornography, and thus their profits, increases.

What is it that Scandalbeauties, Sinfulsisters, Nordic Finest are attempting to normalize? What lies behind their “sugarcoating”? Images of a young woman tied up, gagging from a man’s penis shoved deep into her throat, a blend of makeup and tears running down her face because the man holds her nose to keep her from breathing. A woman who gets cum sprayed in her face, “into her eyes”. Another gets “so much cum in her mouth that she can’t swallow”. These are acts causing significant discomfort and pain to the recipient. Men are carrying out aggressive sexualized acts towards women, who are expected to react to the violence with pleasure.

Article 3 of the Declaration of Human Rights gives every person the “freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.”⁶⁰ This right is absolute; there are no exceptions, regardless of whether the victim consented to what was done to them or not. A woman having her “face flushed in the toilet” directly after having a man’s penis shoved violently down her throat is the quintessence of inhumane, degrading and humiliating treatment. Gagging or suffocating, in some cases to the point of passing out, while a man holds a

woman's nose and violently thrusts his penis into her mouth, while her head is pushed underwater in a toilet bowl, while a man grips her around the neck, restricting her breathing, are all torturous, sadomasochistic encounters which can result in immediate and/or long-term psychological and physical injury. Were they to occur in any other context than pornography, those inflicting the torture would be brought to stand trial.

Why is this type of violence and torture permitted as long as it is within the realm of pornography, in the realm of so-called "sex"? It is certainly no fantasy: these violent acts are being done to very real woman. And it is not sex—because sex requires consent. Many of the scenes in mainstream pornography involve 1) torturous acts that cannot be consented to and 2) an exchange of money; yet consent cannot be purchased! So why would acts that in any other realm be considered violence and torture against women be accepted, eroticized, consumed, and jerked off to?

Torture, violence, inhumane acts, degradation in pornography is thus far protected under the name of "freedom of speech" and justified through the rationalization of the recipients of the violence as "whores". Women in pornography are seen as categorically different from other women because they are believed to both "want" and "deserve" humiliation, punishment and debasement. Her face can be flushed in the toilet, and she can eat her own faeces after the man's penis has been in her anus, because she is shit. She *deserves* to be punished, she wants to be humiliated, she is worth less. A patriarchal fantasy built on a complete lie. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

Who is the woman behind the screen? What was my impression of the women I had the honour of meeting during our conversations? I can say this: she is a fighter, a survivor. She cares deeply for her fellow sisters in the industry. She does everything in her power to survive patriarchy, like women throughout the world. No, there is no "whore"—there are only *women*.

To gain insight into the experiences of women involved in pornography production in Sweden, we interviewed 9 women who have been photographed or filmed for pornography purposes. The potential respondents were approached via forums and webpages identified during the mapping exercise and through Talita's social media channels. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted 1-2 hours.

Participants were asked questions about their background, the conditions they face in the industry, experiences in other parts of the sex industry, and which support measures they thought were important for women who wished to leave the industry. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary and did not affect their opportunity to receive support from Talita, and that results would be anonymized.

Previous research on the background factors affecting a woman's entry into pornography, and impact of pornography production on her physical and psychosocial well-being, has found that the women used for pornography production:

1. are normally young, previously sexually abused, and financially strapped;
2. face exploitative economic arrangements, extremely poor working conditions, serious health hazards, strong temptations to drug use, and little chance of career advancement; and;
3. often suffer substantial injuries to relationships, reputation, and self-image in their personal lives.”⁶¹

This report gives further evidence to these conclusions; young, Swedish women and girls are entering the Swedish pornography industry at ages 18-20 years old. Young age is closely connected to financial insecurity, which was one of the main reasons given for entering the industry. Six of the nine respondents reported being exposed to sexualized, physical and/or psychological violence during their childhood, teenage, or young adult years. This highlights the need for both prevention and support measures targeted to young people in intimate relationships. One notable example of how these multiple vulnerabilities can push a woman into the industry is the one respondent's experience of being sexually, physically, and psychologically abused for 1,5 years by a boyfriend at the age of 20. She said that him leaving her with a significant amount of debt was the main reason she entered into stripping, and later on pornography.

Poor mental health was a prominent theme emerging in the data. Five respondents mentioned anxiety as the number one mental health problem they experienced. Other issues that were raised include depression, low self-image, loneliness, panic attacks, and suicidal thoughts. The respondent who had exited pornography said that she suffered significantly from poor mental health not only during the time she was used in pornography, but especially afterward. The symptoms she described indicate severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Several women also referred to their “very low” self-esteem prior to entering the industry. Entrance into the industry appears to increase self-esteem for some of the respondents. However, as one of the respondents highlighted, there may be notable differences between increased confidence about one's physical appearance and increased self-esteem related to how a person perceives their worth.

During the interviews, the women spoke about their boundaries and how the men in the industry—pornographers and consumers—continually try to breach those boundaries. Why are boundaries important? Because they serve to separate the innermost Self—the “private” Self—from the Self that sells a “product”—the “public” Self. What product? The public Self plays a role that attempts to appease male fantasy—namely, the role as a “whore” who is

always “available”, “horny”, “crazy about men.” But this is simply an illusion. For instance, a number of respondents disclosed how they have no respect for men; others shared how they aren’t even very “sexual”. One of the respondents who also has experience stripping acknowledged that she doesn’t even believe in her own “product”; she can’t understand how men actually think that she wants to be on the stage (stripping). She says that of course she “just does and says exactly what she knows the bastard wants”—that is how she makes money to survive.

Over time, this splitting of Self can have psychological consequences in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or dissociative disorders with symptoms of emotional numbness, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, memory loss and out-of-body experiences. Previous research on different areas of the sex industry, including prostitution, pornography and stripping, found severe PTSD symptoms among the 846 individuals interviewed. A total of 68% met clinical PTSD symptoms equivalent to war veterans, battered women and refugees from state-organized torture. Notably, the 49% who had been used in pornography showed significantly more severe symptoms of PTSD compared to the rest of the group.

The ability for a woman in pornography to withhold her boundaries depends greatly on the level of vulnerability she faces. Many of the respondents noted how the more vulnerable women—young, financially insecure, with poor mental health—are the ones whose boundaries are much more easily pushed. For instance, they may be pressured into participating in more extreme films and/or meeting a “fan” to sell “sex”. At the same time, the results show that even the respondents who reported having clear boundaries and higher bargaining power were still at times forced to engage in things that they didn’t feel comfortable with. For one woman, it was participating in pornography in general. For another, it was having to post images and films several times a day on multiple social media channels even when she was on vacation. For another, it was the vulnerability of the photography studio that made it difficult to say no to the photographer’s demands.

In sum, the findings point to women in the pornography industry facing similar background factors as women in prostitution. Further, the study showed that many women are involved in not only pornography, but also other parts of the sex industry like stripping and prostitution. Three women had entered into the sex industry via stripping. One respondent had sold sex as a child, prior to selling pornography online. Another had “tried” selling sex but didn’t feel comfortable with it—“it was outside of her boundaries.” One young respondent had experience of a so-called “sugardaddy”. Another had been forced into both prostitution and pornography by her boyfriend.

One respondent provided an important reflection regarding the distinction between stripping and prostitution: for her, women in strip get paid to “say no” (to sex purchase), whereas women in prostitution are paid to “say yes”.

Extrapolating the analysis to pornography, women are on the one hand paid to “say no” to sex purchase, but on the other hand at times paid to “say yes” to engaging in sexualized acts with one or several men. What is the commonality here? That men are requesting sex purchase from women, regardless of what part of the sex industry she finds herself in. Pornographers, strip club owners, visitors, consumers and “fans” push and expect women to engage in more extreme sexualized acts and/or sex purchase. Some “fans” even go as far as to stalk the woman, even after she leaves the industry. These men don’t see clear differences between the different faces of the industry, and they don’t seem to be capable of respecting boundaries. Why? Because they act according to their fantasy world, where these women are perceived as “whores” who are always “horny”, “available”, “wanting sex”, and whom men have the “right” to access. The question, then, is who has the power to say “no”, and who must succumb to these men’s demands? The more disadvantages a woman faces – being young, facing financial insecurity, and earlier exposure to sexualized violence – the less power she has to say no. Indeed, a woman’s bargaining power and ability to maintain her boundaries is inversely proportional to her vulnerability.

What happens when a woman wants to leave the industry behind? When it comes to barriers to exiting, many of the respondents emphasized their deep concern over having the pornographic images and films remain online, even after they leave the industry. Anyone—a parent, friend, boss, neighbor or child—can stumble upon these images, at any point in time. For many, the reality of having to live with this fear made leaving the industry seem daunting. They shared how many young girls don’t necessarily know what they are “getting into”, until it is “too late”—the images are already documented and cannot be removed. They have “no choice” but to continue trying to make a “career” in the industry. They also raised the fear of feeling very “alone” if they left the industry, as many of their past relationships were damaged, and most of their current social network consisted of other individuals in the industry. Since Talita offers support to women exiting pornography, one important objective of this study was to determine whether our support services were relevant for the target group. Thus, we asked the women what they thought were important support measures for women wanting to leave the industry. The responses highlighted the need for further education, assistance finding an alternative source of income, accommodation, “someone to talk to” and someone to “affirm and accept the person the way they are.” Talita’s program consists of safe housing/accommodation, trauma therapy (“someone to talk to”), psychoeducation (“affirmation and self-esteem-building”), and case management (e.g. assistance with applying for further education, an internship or a job). It seems that our support measures accommodate to the needs of this particular target group. What is also striking is that the women were unanimous about the need for the type of support that Talita offers. They said that the organization should “reach out more” and “spread its support”.

This report is not based on a representative sample of women in the pornography industry. However, the diversity in respondents improves the sample representativeness. Further, we believe that the results regarding vulnerability,

lack of bargaining power and link to prostitution are underestimated, as women contactable online are likely in a relatively less vulnerable situation and have higher bargaining power compared to other women involved in the pornography industry. It is worth noting that the nature of this report likely generates underreporting, since respondents may be “dependent on the industry to support themselves,” which means that they may refrain from fully disclosing difficult or criminal circumstances like sexualized violence.⁶² It is also possible that some respondents were able to discuss the harms of the industry on other women, but consciously or subconsciously did not connect these harms to their own circumstances.

This report has given further evidence to the vulnerability and lack of bargaining power faced by many women in the pornography industry. Many of the background factors that have pushed women into the pornography industry are the same that push women into prostitution—young age, financial insecurity, previous sexualized violence, and poor mental health. Swedish pornographers are very intentional about recruiting young, marginalized girls. The girls’ vulnerability facilitates manipulation and the pushing of their boundaries. Many are hindered from leaving the industry for fear of the pornographic images and films remaining online, for anyone to see. Something must be done to address this injustice. The question is, what?

APPLICABLE LAWS

In Dr. Max Waltman's PhD dissertation, he maps out a strategy to legally challenge pornography production in Sweden, focusing on the conditions of production.⁶³ He focuses on the applicability of Sweden's prostitution laws, asserting that the Criminal Code already contains provisions that can be applied to pornography production; namely, the provisions of procuring and human trafficking. Procuring is defined as someone who "promotes or in any improper way financially exploits a person who has casual sexual relations in return for payment."⁶⁴ Waltman stresses the fact that this wording makes "no other distinction between customers, performers, prostitution persons or other person; in other words, the provisions refer to two people: (1) one who exploits/promotes, and (2) one who has 'sexual relations in return for payment.'"⁶⁵ Note that it does not necessitate a customer paying for "sexual stimulation"; having "casual relations in return for payment" does not infer that these relations must take place with a paying "customer" (sex purchaser) in order for a third party to benefit off of the person used in pornography. Waltman concludes that, "it...appears that the provision can be applied to pornography production without any need for additional amendments."⁶⁶

Yet according to lawyer Caroline Persson, the chance of a Swedish court regarding a case of pornography production as an instance of procurement is slim (provided that the pornography production itself was not the filming of prostitution or an advertisement for the sale of sexual services). This is because the term "casual sexual relations" in the procurement section 6:12 of the Criminal Code corresponds to what is written in section 6:11 of the Criminal Code, i.e. the prohibition against sex purchase, where sexual relations (which, according to the preparatory works, refers to sexual intercourse or some other sexual act) is the goal.

Current legislation thereby rationalizes the person who pays for sex as those who are seeking sexual relations (for themselves or for another person), which according to Persson is not exactly the situation in pornography production, since everyone who engages in the sexualized acts are compensated. Instead, someone pays to document the sexualized acts and then offers participants compensation for being able to have access to what is documented. Of course, it is possible to argue that it actually concerns payment for sexual relations, but as Persson says, this is not the usual interpretation or what is apparent in the preparatory writings. Therefore, Persson concludes that a Swedish court would have a difficult time making such an interpretation, without support from lawmakers.

Persson's assessment concerns a situation where each person engaging in sexualized acts during pornography production receives compensation. This study, however, indicates that this is not always the case in the Swedish context. Vilde appears to recruit men who participate in his films his without compensation, while respondents report that men who are filmed on sites like

Sinfulsisters do not receive pay. This of course changes the conditions and could provide additional support for Waltman's argument that pornography production is procurement.

There is therefore room to argue that pornography production fits within current procurement legislation based on a purely literal interpretation. However, because the interpretation of section 6:12 of the Criminal Code must always be made within its context of section 6:11, it would be difficult to enforce this in practice.

The production, distribution and possession of sexual abuse images of children (child pornography) is already criminalized in Sweden. For this to be possible, an exception to the protection in the laws of freedom of expression and expression was necessary, resulting in an amendment to the Constitution. In the governmental public inquiry (SOU 2001: 14) which preceded the bill "*A new sex crime law*" (2004/05: 45), the association clause discussed whether it should also include sex clubs and pornography production. The parliamentary committee behind the SOU came to the following conclusion:

"The Committee's assessment: The envisaged extension of the penal provision on procuring entails such significant restrictions on the production and distribution right that it conflicts with the constitutional right of establishment. A penal provision of this kind also means that criminal liability in some cases affects the person who produces such material who enjoys constitutional protection. Such a provision cannot be introduced without amendments to the constitution. The Committee has therefore refrained from proposing any new penalty provision of the kind mentioned in the directives." (Chapters 12 and 13)

So, what do we know is possible to prosecute in court today?

Human trafficking is a crime where someone uses force, fraud or coercion to exploit an individual. One form of human trafficking is forcing a person to participate in the production of pornography. It is therefore absolutely conceivable, according to Persson, that a porn producer could be sentenced for human trafficking, especially if the case involved someone underage. It would also be possible to prosecute a pornography producer for rape or sexual coercion if there was a lack of consent.

There is no criminal law regulation concerning the distribution of pornography at present, apart from the sexual abuse images of children or other material that is already illegal. Yet it is prohibited to display a pornographic image in a public place and to send pornographic material to someone who has not requested it (Chapter 16, Section 11 of the BRB). What these laws mean in practice, in a time where pornography is just a click away in every child's phone, can be further discussed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Support services
Research

This report contributes to research documenting the harms involved in pornography production. The study shows that pornography production is not something that just occurs “over there”, like in Los Angeles in the US, but something that is happening here and now in Sweden, drawing in young, vulnerable Swedish girls.

How should the Swedish government address these glaring realities of pornography production in the Swedish context?

Prostitution and pornography represent two ways to capitalize off of sex. Both phenomena have become industries where the people providing the sexual services rarely are the ones actually receiving the profits. The arguments underlying the implementation of the criminalization of sex purchase could also be applied to pornography production – both in terms of its societal harms and its consequences for the individuals involved.

In line with previous international studies, this report demonstrates that many most women used in pornography come from the same marginalized backgrounds as women in prostitution. Further, the interviews highlighted the link between the prostitution and pornography industries, whereby several the respondents had at some point sold “sex” to a “sex buyer”, and many confirmed that it is not uncommon that women involved in pornography eventually give into selling “sex” due to their precarious situation. Pornography production can also lead to significant mental and physical harms that correspond with the injuries women face in prostitution. In view of this, it is illogical that pornography production is thus far unregulated in Sweden.

That said, the problem is that the current legislation leaves too much room for interpretation, evidenced by the absence of any enforcement of the laws on pornographers thus far. It is therefore imperative to create leeway for legislative updates by means of an inquiry on the harms of pornography commissioned by the Government of Sweden. This inquiry should be comprehensive, measuring and accounting for both the harms of pornography production and consumption. We strongly advocate listening to the voices of those facing the greatest harms caused by the pornography industry—the women used in its production—ensuring their rights to protection and freedom from violence are fulfilled.

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