

# THE 'SEAMLESS FABRIC'

Commercial sexual exploitation poses a growing threat to America's youth—and pornography leads the way

by Stephen Adams

**I**t all came down to a floral-print bedspread in Room 21 at the local motel. It was missing—and so was Emily Sander, 18, of El Dorado, Kan. Find the bedspread, police figured, and they'd probably find Emily, who disappeared Nov. 23, 2007, a Friday.

*Room 21 at the El Dorado Motel was a mess. An employee said it looked like there'd been some sort of "altercation" there. Police found a large quantity of blood on the bed and carpet.*

Meanwhile, Israel Mireles failed to show up for work on Saturday at a nearby Italian restaurant where he was a waiter. Mireles, a 24-year-old resident alien from Mexico, had been staying in Room 21 at the El Dorado Motel.

"Foul play" became the operative theory. "All we're saying is we're looking for that bedspread, and it's something we'd like to find," police Capt.

Justin Phillips told reporters.

Emily had been last seen wearing low-rider jeans and a "Don't Mess With Texas" T-shirt—leaving a bar around midnight that Friday with a man matching Mireles' description. Her car was still parked at The Retreat bar. Yellow police tape went up around Room 21, now officially a crime scene.

Over the next few days, a massive na-

tionwide search began, with local rescuers employing dogs, planes, divers and underwater equipment to search for Emily's body. Police released a photo of the floral bedspread to help in the search. On Tuesday, Mireles' rental car was discovered in Vernon, Texas, about 350 miles south of El Dorado.

It looked like Mireles might be making a run for the border—along with his

16-year-old pregnant girlfriend. That was not to be the last shocker:

It was also reported that Emily Sander, community college student by day, was something else again by night—an aspiring Internet porn star under the name “Zoey Zane.” News accounts said she’d just told her family a few days before about her secret life and a contract she signed with an Internet porn enterprise.

The Emily Sander case, an unsolved murder mystery with sensational elements of sex and violence, catapulted into a national news story. Finally, on Thursday, Nov. 29, the suspense came to an end.

The bedspread had been found.

## Ugly truths

To some, the commercial sex industry is just like that bedspread—not a quilt fabricated of separate pieces, but a whole cloth, seamlessly interwoven.

In the view of some longtime anti-porn activists, prostitution, pornography, stripping and all other forms of commercial sexual exploitation are just the warp and woof of this same fabric. And that’s why, they say, it’s dangerous not to take pornography seriously, to dismiss it as merely an unpleasant free-speech issue.

In the business of commercial sex, pornography serves as the marketing vehicle. Or, as Alliance Defense Fund lawyer Patrick Trueman, a former porn prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice, testified before a congressional subcommittee several years ago, “Pornography is a powerful factor in creating the demand for illicit sex.”

Some ugly truths: Experts say pornography consumers develop sexual addictions and predilections for kinky types of sex depicted in explicit material. Men then demand this from their wives—or find other, more willing sexual partners. Some young prostituted women learn how to “perform” by mimicking what they are shown in pornography. Many sexual predators use pornography to show children what they want them to do. Virtually all collectors of child pornogra-

phy, some experts say, are also molesters of children.

Something else the porn industry doesn’t advertise is the tremendous overlap among porn stars, strippers and prostitutes. It’s not unusual for the same women to engage in all three. Dr. Barrett Duke, vice president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Lib-

some of the other more degrading forms of sexual exploitation.”

Drug and alcohol addiction eventually becomes a vicious circle for most, he said. It takes drugs and alcohol to numb their conscience, and then it takes more sexual exploitation to support those addictions.

This is not just the view of the religious right. Increasingly, feminists are coming around to this perspective, too.

Dr. Donna M. Hughes, professor of women’s studies at the University of Rhode Island, estimates from her research that at least a third of women in prostitution have been involved in the making of pornography and that patrons of prostitution are twice as likely to be porn users.

“That can be everything from sort of amateur stuff, where a john brings his camera and wants to take pictures, to some of the women who may be stars for a few months in the pornography industry,” Hughes told Focus on the Family. “And where do they go after they’ve had their few months of stardom with a couple of movies? They usually go into stripping, which usually then just turns into prostitution.”

It was Hughes who suggested the “seamless fabric” language.

“The categories we have for things like pornography, stripping, prostitution—we tend to think of them as really separate categories,” she said. “But if you’re actually in the sex industry, they’re quite seamless. There are so many variations that I think our old categories are rather obsolete.”

Feminist researcher Dr. Melissa Farley agrees. “The more distinctions we make about what johns and pimps do, the more we’re letting them win,” she told Focus on the Family. “Just because there’s a camera in the room doesn’t mean it’s not prostitution.”

In her 2007 book *Prostitution & Trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections*, Farley quoted Roger Young, a retired Nevada FBI agent who participated in major pornography investigations: “What happened to common sense? The fact that there is a camera filming the prostitution doesn’t

## PORN = STRIPPING = PROSTITUTION

**P**rostitution is legal in some parts of Nevada, but despite what some think, not Las Vegas. Nevertheless, Sin City may be the clearest place to see the Seamless Fabric in action, as documented by Melissa Farley in her book, *Prostitution & Trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections*.

Some excerpts:

“There is a crossover of people involved in legal prostitution and illegal prostitution and back again. Similarly, Web-based video and print pornography are inseparable from the rest of the sex industry, with the same kinds of crossovers from prostitution to pornography to sex trafficking. Some Nevada legal brothel pimps have declared their economic interest in ‘cross fertilizing’ prostitution with other legal adult businesses such as strip clubs, Internet sites and pornography. ‘The Girls of Cheetah’s’ is pornography made at a Las Vegas strip club.”

“A law enforcement investigation in Las Vegas located a multi-use sex industry operation that included online prostitution. Looking like a small office complex from the street, it blended pornography production with escort prostitution. The pimp/pornographer rented 5-6 offices on Tropicana Avenue which functioned simultaneously as Internet pornography, cyber-peepshow prostitution, and a location out of which women were pimped to Las Vegas hotels and to an illegal brothel.”

“Webcam video and escort prostitution sites have recently merged with adult dating sites. Since 2000 there has been increasing prostitution advertising on dating Web sites with the major dating Web sites now largely consisting of locations where johns seek women who they presume to be prostituting. Adultfriendfinder, for example, features gonzo [amateur] pornography of women seeking dates for prostitution in dozens of countries and every state in the United States.”

erty Commission, views it as a continuum.

“If you look at the progression of women who begin in the pornography industry, maybe they’ll start out in the strip clubs or something like that, and they stay there for a while,” Duke told Focus on the Family. “But as they move further along in this sexual exploitation timeline, as they become older and of less interest, they end up moving into

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Trafficking of persons exists in two distinct types: labor trafficking and sexual trafficking.
- Sexual trafficking is the recruitment, transport *within national or across international borders*, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.
- Sexual trafficking is accomplished by means of fraud, deception, threat of or use of force, abuse of a position of vulnerability or other coercion.
- The U.S. State Department estimates at least 600,000 to 800,000 human beings are trafficked across international borders each year. *Numbers within national borders are much higher.*
- Among trafficking victims, 80 percent are women and girls, 50 percent are children and 70 percent are forced into sexual servitude.
- UNICEF reports that around the world, over 1 million children enter the sex trade every year, and approximately 30 million children have lost their childhood to sexual exploitation over the past 30 years.
- Annually, an estimated 14,500 to 17,500 women and children are trafficked into the United States.
- Despite an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 sex slaves in the U.S., fewer than 1,000 victims have been assisted through the efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement since 2001, when services for trafficking victims were first made available.
- In February 2001, Interpol announced that human trafficking generates \$19 billion annually.
- The United Nations claims that the trafficking of human beings has surpassed the drug trade to become the second largest source of money for organized crime, after the illegal arms trade.

*Many thanks to the Salvation Army's Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking for compiling this research and providing citations. [www.iast.net](http://www.iast.net)*

change the fact of the prostitution. Pornography is essentially a crime scene surveillance tape. You can't say to someone, hey, let's go rob a bank, but if we film it, then it won't be robbery."

"Pornography is men's rehearsal for prostitution," Farley told Focus on the Family.

Pat Trueman, who has dealt with numerous sexual predators and addicts, confirms this view from his own experience. "They'll all tell you, they got into pornography, and that led them to the strip club," he said. "And that led them to the prostitute. ... They get into pornography, they get into sex, they get into using trafficked women."

The other ugly truth: While estimates vary, experts told Focus on the Family that the average age of entry into prostitution has fallen to 12 to 14 years. The seamless fabric of the commercial sex industry represents a huge and growing threat to America's youth.

## A 'cruel world'

El Dorado, Kan., is a town of 12,000 people about 30 miles east-northeast of Wichita. El Dorado (locals pronounce it "el doh-ray-doh") has been home to notables including cartoonist Mort Walker, presidential biographer William Allen White and serial killer Dennis Rader, aka the BTK strangler.

And Emily Sander—"nude model and nationally reported murder victim."

Searchers spotted the floral-print bedspread in a ditch off U.S. 54, about 50 miles east of El Dorado. Lying nearby, over a steep embankment, was the body of a young woman matching Emily's description.

Emily Sander's identity was confirmed by a forensic orthodontist. An autopsy was performed and the results sealed, along with the police report and all other facts of the investigation. A warrant was issued for Israel Mireles on charges of capital murder, rape and aggravated criminal sodomy.

El Dorado Police Chief Tom Boren disavowed any connection between Emily's death and her alter ego, would-be porn star Zoey Zane. In fact, he said, false leads connected to that Web site were seriously hampering the investigation.

Nevertheless, FBI agents and Internet crime experts were called in to assist in the investigation. A local reporter who worked the story told Focus on the Family it was inconceivable that Emily's general lifestyle didn't have something to do with her murder.

Shocked classmates organized a candlelight vigil in Emily's memory at the com-

munity college while the family made funeral arrangements. Friends eulogized Emily Sander as fun to be around, ambitious—a girl who wanted to be in movies. One said she did porn because she needed the money for school.

Clement Sander, her paternal grandfather, described brown-haired, blue-eyed Emily to Focus on the Family as a "cute little girl" who played volleyball in high school in Texas and did so well in school that she graduated a semester early. She had recently acquired some tattoos and piercings.

At the candlelight vigil, Sander offered some advice: "All I can say to you young folks out there is to be careful. It is a cruel world."

Intense news coverage of the Emily Sander case set off a debate about sensationalism and tabloid journalism. Some objected to calling an 18-year-old girl who'd been in the business just a few months a "porn star." Others accused the news media of lurid exploitation, saying they had no business exposing Emily's dirty laundry.

One report suggested big bucks were involved, claiming that Emily's Web site had enlisted 30,000 subscribers paying \$39.95 a month to view sexually explicit Zoey Zane material. Even a small share of that haul—nearly \$1.2 million a month—would still be tens of thousands of dollars, huge money for a teenager.

Others contended that those dollars actually were shared by a number of girls who were part of the same porn enterprise, all capitalizing on the same thing—a growing

interest in younger women, and the younger the better.

## Growth market

Experts told Focus on the Family that higher-end dollar figures were not outside the

## A TALE OF TWO MAYORS

Both Las Vegas and Atlanta have serious problems with child prostitution, but their mayors' approaches could hardly be more different.

While Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin and her administration have been ramping up enforcement activities to combat prostitution, Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman has been famously quoted as dreaming of a series of "magnificent brothels" for his city, if prostitution can be decriminalized.

*New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert condemned Las Vegas as the worst place in America for the treatment of women. He wrote, "If you peel back the thin, supposedly sexy veneer of the commercial sex trade, you'll quickly see the rotten inside, where females are bought, sold, raped, beaten, shamed and in many, many cases, physically and emotionally wrecked."

For that, Goodman threatened to break Herbert's head with a baseball bat if he ever sets foot in his town again.

In Atlanta, Franklin launched a "Dear John" campaign to raise awareness about minors in the sex trade through print and broadcast public service announcements. Her administration also established a Child Exploitation Unit and an Anti-Trafficking Unit within the police department. Legislation was passed making trafficking a felony, while Franklin pushed for harsher sentences for johns and pimps and creation of a "john school" for men caught trying to solicit a prostitute.

Franklin took specific aim at craigslist.com, which she termed "Atlanta's primary source" for advertising prostitution, as in other cities. She sent a letter last year to founder Craig Newmark and James Buckmaster, chief executive officer, asking them not to segregate these solicitations in one "Erotic Services" page, but to eliminate them altogether.

Buckmaster wrote back that the company shares Franklin's concerns and it would consider the matter, but to date, craigslist policies have not changed.

much more attractive to go online. They can make far more money online and reach more customers via the Internet pay-per-view site than working at a local dive, dancing at an exotic bar/strip club."

Earlier this year the anti-trafficking organization Shared Hope International issued a report saying: "American children are victims of the sex trade, and they are being trafficked within the United States."

The numbers are disturbing. Estimates range from 100,000 to 300,000 minors sexually trafficked in the United States each year. Many are runaways or "throwaways"—kids neglected or abandoned by their families—who trade sex for survival.

The problem is particularly acute in "hub" cities for sexual traf-

ficking, such as Atlanta and Las Vegas. Since 1994, Shared Hope has documented nearly 1,500 sexually trafficked minors in Las Vegas coming from 40 states—as many as 400 on the streets at one time.

Former Congresswoman Linda Smith founded Shared Hope International 10 years ago to expose the growing problem of domestic minor sex trafficking. Smith told Focus on the Family pornography is a prime gateway for children to become exploited.

"When they start, they think they're in control," she said. "But once they get into the porn industry, that girl is going to be in trouble. She will become a forced prostitute in most cases if she continues. Now, it could be one act that somebody convinces her to do, and she wishes she hadn't. But once that's out there, she's victimized over and over again by people seeing her moment of vulnerability—or maybe stupidity."

The U.S. State Department estimates that of the 600,000 to 800,000 persons sexually trafficked across international borders each year, 70 percent are forced into "sexual

servitude"—and half of them are minors.

## Curb the demand

Daniel Weiss, media and sexuality analyst for Focus on the Family Action, laid major blame on the tolerance of porn, which in turn fuels demand for illicit sex.

"There is no difference between porn, prostitution and sex trafficking," Weiss said. "Together they form a seamless fabric of exploitation and abuse. If we ignore the threat of pornography, as is happening today with law enforcement agencies throughout the nation, we allow the sexual exploitation of women and children in the criminal sex industry to flourish."

Lisa Thompson of the Salvation Army agrees: "I think we need to completely retool how we're conceptualizing pornography," she told Focus on the Family. "Pornography is prostitution for mass consumption."

When the Salvation Army was founded by William and Catherine Booth in the 19th century, a major part of its original ministry to the downtrodden of London was rescuing "fallen women" from prostitution. That's still part of its mission.

Thompson, the Salvation Army's liaison for Abolition of Sexual Trafficking, challenges people not to discount the plight of adult women. Considering the falling age of entry into prostitution, she said, that 22-year-old street prostitute may have been victimized nearly half her life. "She's grown up in prostitution," Thompson said.

The Salvation Army works with communities and law enforcement agencies to provide support services for "survivors" of prostitution. But Thompson said "the church has really got to step up" and start dealing with this issue in a big way—prevention programs for children, more sex-addiction treatment programs for adults.

She noted that one of the biggest sex-trafficking cases in recent years involved girls and women being trafficked out of Toledo, Ohio, along truck routes across America. Two of the girls—cousins, 14 and 15—were abducted right off the street in Toledo and forced to become truck-stop prostitutes.

"If Toledo, Ohio, is a hotbed for recruitment of prostitution, it's time for the heartland of America to wake up," Thompson said. "I mean, we're not talking about Vegas or New York City or Atlantic City—places that we associate with vice. We're talking about good old apple-pie middle America."

Thompson and others are convinced that

realm of possibility for a girl like Emily, citing the hundreds of thousands of dollars involved in the notorious Justin Berry case.

Justin was a California teen who made headlines in 2005 and 2006 with revelations in *The New York Times* about subscription-based porn Web sites in which he performed from the age of 13. He was molested by more than one of his subscribers and was called to testify before a congressional subcommittee about the problems of teens in porn.

Cases like Emily's and Justin's highlight a new avenue for teen exhibitionism and exploitation—the Internet. John Shehan, director of Exploited Children Services at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, said it's a big problem and growing.

"As more and more teens realize how they can exploit technology, we are going to see more cases like this [Emily Sander] and cases like Justin Berry," Shehan said. "I think we'll see more and more of a transition from the real world—underage teens using fake IDs or whatever for exotic dancing/stripping—to the online arena. I think in a teen's mindset, it's

# CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND EXPLOITATION

- In 2004, Internet Watch Foundation found 3,433 child abuse domains; in 2006 there were 10,656.
- Of known child abuse domains, 54 percent are housed in the United States.
- The fastest-growing demand in commercial Web sites for child abuse is for images depicting the worst type of abuse, including penetrative sexual activity involving children and adults and sadism or penetration by an animal.
- File-sharing program Gnutella has 116,000 daily child pornography requests.
- In a study of arrested child pornography possessors, 40 percent also sexually victimized children.
- Of those arrested for child pornography crimes between 2000 and 2001, 83 percent had images involving children aged 6 to 12; 39 percent had images of children aged 3 to 5; and 19 percent had images of infants and toddlers.
- According to a National Children's Homes report, the number of Internet child pornography images has increased 1,500 percent since 1988.
- Approximately 20 percent of Internet pornography involves children; more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week.
- Child pornography is estimated to be a \$3 billion-a-year industry.
- Research indicates that one in five girls and one in 10 boys is sexually victimized.
- Between 100,000 and 300,000 American youths are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation.

*Thanks to Enough is Enough for compiling this research and providing citations. [www.enough.org](http://www.enough.org)*

just arresting women doesn't work, and results in victimizing them all over again. They want to see more resources aimed at helping the girls, and more pressure on the demand side of the sex trade—the buyers and users.

"It is a severe injustice when American girls are held in physical and mental slavery and then punished for the crime that is committed against them," said Shared Hope's Linda Smith.

firming the sinister nature of this growing market for teen porn as a gateway to child porn and pedophilia. "For some of these men [in one study], the teen sites were just a stepping stone to the real thing, as they moved seamlessly from adult women to children," Dines said.

"We've got a whole generation of men now who are aroused by [images] that look like children," Dines said. "We've never before brought up an entire generation of boys

## Going to war

Barrett Duke longs for a righteous revival that halts the moral free-fall in America and sends pimps and pornographers "back into the shadows."

"We've got to find a way," he said. "The good people in this country are going to have to say 'we've had enough.' The good people of this country have got to start fighting back."

That fight, Duke said, should begin with pornography. "In a lot of ways, pornography is the gateway to most of the sexual deviancy that we're seeing in this country."

And the church should lead the fight. "It's time for pastors to start calling sin 'sin,' start calling pornography 'sin' and start developing programs in churches that can help men—and women—caught up more and more in pornography," Duke said, "and begin to provide help groups, counseling and other kinds of services to help make people aware of sexual addiction and help them come out of sexual addiction."

But it may get darker before the dawn.

Dr. Gail Dines, a professor of sociology and women's studies at Wheelock College in Boston, has written and spoken on what she calls "pseudo" child pornography, the "barely legal" type of porn that appeals to fantasies about sex with children. She points to studies con-

firming the sinister nature of this growing market for teen porn as a gateway to child porn and pedophilia. "For some of these men [in one study], the teen sites were just a stepping stone to the real thing, as they moved seamlessly from adult women to children," Dines said.

on pornography. The average age of downloading their first pornography is about 11 years old."

Ernie Allen, president of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, cited a study showing 42 percent of 10- to 17-year-olds are exposed to unwanted online pornography in the course of a year. "I mean, that's millions of kids," said Allen.

To Linda Smith, the battle has become very personal. Besides her relationships with a number of girls Shared Hope has helped to rescue, she's also concerned for young boys she says are being lured by the sex industry. She said Shared Hope has confirmed reports by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children that some Internet pornographers are using misleading domain names, spam, pop-ups, tracking and other high-tech tricks directed at boys 8 to 12 years old.

"We found over 5,000 sites with key words and phrases that are associated with selling to kids, and in those it's very clear they're marketing the images to boys," she said. "I just cried, 'That's the age of my grandsons. They're after my grandsons.' They all play sports, and they all go online, and they all play these games, and they're typing them and sending them porn."

Smith likens the fight against sexual exploitation to the long battle over smoking in public. It took time to change public perception, but ultimately the tide of opinion changed.

"We're intending to go to war against the victimization of our children," Smith said. \*

## TAKE ACTION

For additional information and to get involved, contact:

**Pure Intimacy** Focus on the Family's online resource for anyone struggling with pornography, intimacy, addictions or homosexuality.  
[www.pureintimacy.org](http://www.pureintimacy.org)

**Shared Hope International**  
P.O. Box 65337, Vancouver, WA 98665  
(866) HER-LIFE (437-5433)  
[savelives@sharedhope.org](mailto:savelives@sharedhope.org)  
[www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)

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