



The High Price of Pleasure: Unmasking the Porn Industry's Human Cost

Marshall Ballantine-Jones

One of the central characteristics of God - and thereby an imperative of ours as his image bearers - is his affinity for the outcast and vulnerable. As Moses describes him: *"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing"* (Deuteronomy 10:18, NIV 1984). Again, the Psalms ascribe similar properties to God with *"Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked"* (Psalm 82:3-4, NIV 1984).

These qualities are consistently applied to his people, for example *"Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow"* (Isaiah 1:17, NIV 1984) and *"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16, NIV 1984). So there should be no surprise in Jesus's provocative words in Luke 17:1-2: *"Jesus said to his disciples: 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin'"* (Luke 17:1-2, NIV 1984). Jesus not only has a heart for the vulnerable - he despises their exploitation and harm, and assigns strict judgment to those responsible for that harm.

These reflections intersect with pornography production and consumption. There are many reasons why pornography is wrong - and as a researcher in the area, I observe that most discussion about its use in Christian circles focuses on either the harm it contributes to the user (spiritually, physically and emotionally) or to relationships - especially marriage. The primary secular anti-porn voices seem to focus on the social implications of sexualised culture - particularly the sexualisation of women. Hence 'misogynistic' porn culture is often painted as the true evil, while leaving space for ethical pornography insofar as gendered harms are minimised and consent is abundant.

But one perspective is largely ignored in the conversation - one which, were we to understand it more deeply and place alongside the Scriptures, should invoke a reaction not dissimilar to Jesus in Luke 17. I speak of the plight of the performers.

It is 2025, and I am browsing online news sites for interesting content-today, I am in the finance section. There, I find a success story about the latest OnlyFans performer: a 32-year-old Australian tradie who left his \$1,200-a-week job to launch an OnlyFans account, where he now earns significantly more producing pornography. He has since bought his own home, gained financial stability and no longer has to start work at 5 am. Pornography, it seems, is proving financially sound. In a similar story in *The Australian's* Weekend Magazine, I meet an Aussie man called the "Girthmasterr" - praised for his sensitive, respectful approach and natural appearance. He insists he only participates in rougher scenes after receiving "enthusiastic consent" from his co-stars. One female fan says he "breaks through" because people "really want to get to know him". Unsurprisingly, he also earns an astronomical income and is an international star. Stories like these appear regularly in mainstream media, promoting OnlyFans as a lucrative and respectable career path [1].

For those unfamiliar with OnlyFans, it is a subscription-based social media platform launched in 2016 that allows creators to share exclusive content-such as photos, videos, and live streams-with paying subscribers. Users pay monthly fees, tips, or pay-per-view charges to access this content. While creators don't have to produce pornography, most content on the platform is adult in nature. Some content may be live streamed, similar to other webcam

platforms, and the site also includes private messaging and various pre-recorded material, offering viewers flexibility. OnlyFans synergises well with social media.

Much of the mainstream media would have you convinced that modern pornography work is a wonderful, safe, and enticing lifestyle choice. It almost sounds ethical. It promises to cut out the middleman, reduce the chance of abuse, offer autonomy, copyright protection, and deliver amazing income.

To illustrate its appeal, a recent social media phenomenon has captivated millions of young females – the Bop House. Founded in December 2024 by OnlyFans creators Sophie Rain and Aishah Sofey, the Bop House is a Florida-based collective of eight young women who blend viral social media content with explicit OnlyFans material. Together, they boast over 33 million combined TikTok followers and reportedly earn between \$12 million and \$15 million monthly, representing a new influencer-driven model in adult content creation. However, the collective has drawn controversy over the youth of its members and the blurred boundaries between their mainstream social media presence and adult content [2]. The TikTok content presents the Bop House as a fun, cute, trendy sorority house – like the Playboy Mansion without the creepy Hugh Hefners. They share trendy dances, pyjama parties, freedom, and money, creating enormous interest and demand among young females. But if you only follow their TikTok videos, you would likely be unaware of the extent of the pornographic content the Bop House members produce behind their OnlyFans paywall.

What does the research reveal about OnlyFans and the broader pornography industry – and, most importantly, what is the reality of performers' experiences?

Pornography production is a massive industry, with a few major websites, like PornHub, generating astronomical revenue from subscriptions and ads, though exact figures are undisclosed and unreliable. Estimates place it between \$100 billion and \$180 billion annually [3], and approximately 1.25 billion pornography users worldwide [4]. Despite this, most performers see little of the profits. Hosting companies take 20-50% of earnings, and in traditional porn production, there are no income standards or contracts. Many performers are exploited, blackmailed, and deceived, while much of the content available online

generates no revenue for them. Most self-producing performers (e.g., on OnlyFans) fail to make significant money, with only top earners profiting. The average OnlyFans creator earns around \$150 to \$180 per month, but after accounting for taxes, expenses such as equipment and marketing, and the platform's 20% commission, many creators likely earn less than they spend, especially when treating content creation as a business rather than a hobby [5].

Earnings on the platform are highly skewed: the top 1% of creators generate about 33% of all revenue, and the top 10% take home nearly 75%, leaving the vast majority with very little income [6] [7]. Industry data and commentary indicate that many creators, particularly those in the bottom 10%, struggle to make a profit or even cover costs, with break-even or losses being common [8]. Factors such as existing audience size, niche, content quality, posting frequency, and marketing efforts heavily influence earnings, meaning only a small minority achieve significant profitability while most earn a modest side income or less [9][10].

A recent study of 120 pornography performers [11] revealed further insights into this exploitation. Most (78%) created self-produced web-cam content, but 77% also participated in third-party pornography, and 72% engaged in conventional prostitution, indicating that few web-cam performers work exclusively in that field. The study found that 95% had experienced childhood trauma, including sexual abuse (88%). During production, performers faced ongoing abuse, including verbal abuse (87%), rape (65%), physical assault (56%), third-party control (56%), and online harassment (57%). Additionally, 84% showed signs of clinically significant PTSD, 69% had attempted suicide, and 67% struggled with the permanent online presence of their content.

Ironically, the so-called "pornography industry" lacks basic industry standards such as insurance, wages, sick leave, or job security. The power imbalance between producers and performers is extreme, and regulations (e.g., condom use) are often fiercely opposed if they affect profits. For example, lobby groups opposed the 2012 Measure B in Los Angeles, which proposed condom use for male actors [12].

Research shows performers are often exploited, with higher rates of depression, anxiety, abuse, poverty, STIs, and substance abuse, and are more likely to engage in same-sex or

bisexual relationships [13-15]. Many report coercion, manipulation, and threats threatened [16, 17]. Pornography production is linked to prostitution, with performers vulnerable to exploitation, human trafficking, and child sexual abuse. Some children and women who are trafficked and prostituted are used for the production of pornography without consent [13, 18, 19].

Additionally, the permanent online presence of their work traps performers in their past, with no control over its ongoing distribution, leaving them defined by stigma even if they leave the industry. This is a form of slavery.

For example, about 10 years ago I read a newspaper article about John Bobbitt. John Bobbitt became famous in 1993 when his wife sliced off his penis. It got surgically reattached, and in the aftermath, he became a curiosity to pornographers, who convinced him to make some X-rated movies. The article's headline referred to John breaking his back in a recent car accident. It then immediately retold his history in porn.

This article basically used his current accident as clickbait to triumph in his adult industry past. But then I read the final sentence: "*Last year he said he had put his wild ways behind him and had become a devout Christian*" [20]. This really shook me, because while we the news-consumer are having our fill of gossip, walking down memory lane of another's titillating or debased past, he's moved on. He has become a Christian and wants nothing to do with that past. He is now a brother to me. His slate has been wiped clean by our great Saviour – his sins removed 'as far as the east is from the west'.

But the world won't let John forget his past. As late as 2024 there are more articles about John Bobbitt, always retelling his porn past. Given that the average female porn performer's career lasts less than six months and up to 30% leave after a single shoot [21], it stands to reason that much, if not most, of the pornography consumed features individuals who have since sought to move on from that chapter of their lives, wishing not to be defined by their past involvement.

OnlyFans creators use a range of mainstream media strategies to promote their content and grow their audience. As with the Bop House, they often produce safe-for-work content on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, allowing them to discreetly promote their OnlyFans pages while complying with platform guidelines. By participating in viral challenges and sharing interests like cooking or fitness, creators expand their follower base and direct attention to their profiles. Cross-promotion and collaborations, including revenue-sharing and shoutouts (public mentions or acknowledgments broadcasted online), help models reach new audiences and increase their visibility. Media coverage highlighting creators' earnings or career changes further normalises and sparks curiosity about OnlyFans. Celebrity endorsements also play a key role by attracting media attention and lending credibility to the platform. Additionally, some creators invest in tailored promotional services involving analytics, SEO and paid advertising to boost subscriptions.

Central to these strategies is community engagement, where creators build parasocial relationships by interacting with fans on mainstream platforms, fostering loyalty and driving traffic to their OnlyFans accounts. This multi-platform, cross-promotional approach combined with authentic connection-building reflects a shift towards a hybrid model of digital labour that blends social media influencing with adult content creation [22, 23][24][25, 26]. Ultimately, this method increases the content creator's reach, benefiting their business, but it can also be potentially deceptive to consumers. By engaging audiences through social media personalities and personal interactions, consumers may be led to believe in a genuine relationship, often unaware that the social media presence primarily serves as a marketing tool to promote adult content sales – or even that the creator produces adult content at all.

An insider's exposé of OnlyFans recruitment strategies reveals how a combination of manipulative tactics and polished social media marketing conceals the harm experienced by young women, softening public perception and endearing naive audiences to the porn production business, thereby reducing scrutiny and public pushback. OnlyFans recruitment agencies employ aggressive and targeted social media strategies to attract young, vulnerable women, often from lower socio-economic backgrounds, by presenting themselves as supportive communities offering financial independence. These agencies actively recruit via

platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, and niche forums, utilising hashtags and direct messaging to identify potential models.

The onboarding process includes intrusive questionnaires that assess willingness to produce explicit adult content, with a content “levels” system that increasingly mandates nude or highly explicit material. Models face significant pressure to escalate the explicitness and degradation of their content, with promises of increased followers and earnings contingent on compliance. Agencies prioritise younger-looking women, promoting them under “barely legal” or “teen” branding to maximise profit, sometimes misrepresenting ages to appeal to subscribers. The agency environment systematically erodes personal boundaries, normalising extreme requests from subscribers and emotional manipulation to boost revenue. Creators are encouraged to abandon previous careers and personal relationships, fostering parasocial “girlfriend experience” dynamics that deepen subscriber attachment and spending. This exploitative framework, as recounted by a former insider, reveals a dark underside to the platform’s public image, highlighting the psychological toll on creators and raising critical concerns about the commodification and exploitation of young women in the digital/online sex economy [27][28].

The reality for porn performers is a far cry from the PR pieces in *The Australian*. As for Mr Girthmasterr – colleagues of mine did some research of his content. There is no distinction between what he does compared with the old porn. He chokes girls without consent, doesn’t use condoms, and so forth. There is nothing new under the sun.

The pornography industry as a whole, as demonstrated by OnlyFans, invests millions in mass media to manipulate consumers and groom new generations of performers, all driven by profit. It perpetuates a cycle of exploitation, harvesting misery from those caught within its system. This is not new; the industry’s harmful practices have long mirrored those of historic producers, leaving a devastating legacy of abuse, trauma, and destruction while desensitising society to violence and exploitation. There is no truly “ethical” pornography. Only a few reap vast financial rewards, while countless performers suffer.

Meanwhile, consumers who privately engage with this content cannot escape the reality that their pleasure often comes at the direct expense of others. Research shows that pornography consumption correlates with increased sexual objectification of women [29, 30], demand for trafficking [18, 19], and normalisation of violence [31, 32]. The industry's deep entanglement with human trafficking, coercion, and abuse underscores the urgent need for greater awareness, accountability, and systemic reform.

A Christian response

For Christians, the pornography industry demands a resolute response. Using or condoning pornography, even "ethical" variants, contradicts Jesus' teachings, as it exploits vulnerable performers for personal pleasure. The libertarian claim of "consent" is flawed - performers often face coercion, abuse, or desperation, undermining true consent. As Psalm 82:3-4 (NIV 1984) urges, "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed." Christians must reject pornography to protect the vulnerable.

Christians should also show love to performers, supporting recovery services for those in the sex industry – like the Salvation Army [33], Anglicare [34], or Anti-Slavery Australia [35], and offering hope through a Saviour who restores the broken-hearted.

Moreover, Christians must confront systemic evil, challenging the pornography industry and its enablers. They should call out newspapers spreading propaganda, consider boycotting social media platforms promoting pornographic content, and lobby local members for change.

Finally, Christians must teach youth a better vision: the dignity of humans as God's image-bearers, the sanctity of the body, and the honour of marriage. By challenging their online behaviours and empowering them to resist societal pressures, Christians can foster a safer, more loving world, protecting society's most vulnerable.

[Marshall Ballantine-Jones, CEO of DigiHelp Publishing and Founder of Resist Ministries, specialises in research and education focusing on adolescent exposure to pornography and social media. He is an ordained Anglican minister and served in various Sydney parishes over](#)

the last 26 years. He holds a PhD from the University of Sydney's Medical Faculty. In addition, he holds degrees in Political and Social Thought, Economics, Business Systems, and Theology, and is a sought-after speaker, writer, trainer, and consultant.

References

1. Tansy Harcourt, "Meet Girthmasterr: The Aussie bloke winning over Gen Z on TikTok and OnlyFans", *The Australian*, 2 Nov 2024
2. Kyle Phillippi, "The Bop House Is an OnlyFans Paradise That Pulls Millions Per Month", *Vice*, 10 February 2025
3. Austin, Daryl, "The adult industry is booming. Here's what you need to know about porn and addiction", *USA Today*, 24 November 2024.
4. MEAD, D. and M. SHARPE, *The global health implications of compulsive sexual behaviour disorder*. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 2023. **12**.
5. BBC News, "How OnlyFans changed sex work forever", *BBC*, 2023.
6. Business Insider, "How much money OnlyFans creators make, according to 6 creators", *Business Insider*, 2023,
7. Influencer Marketing Hub, "How Much Do OnlyFans Creators Make?", *Influencer Marketing Hub*, 2024.
8. The Guardian, "OnlyFans: the reality of making money on the site", *The Guardian*, 2021.
9. Rolling Stone, "The Reality of Making Money on OnlyFans", *Rolling Stone*, 2022.
10. Vox, "OnlyFans and the illusion of easy money", *Vox*, 2021.
11. Donevan, M., L.S. Jonsson, and C.G. Svedin, *The experience of individuals filmed for pornography production: a history of continuous polyvictimization and ongoing mental health challenges*. *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry*: p. 1-10.
12. Dines, G., *Chapter Two "There is no such thing as IT": Toward a Critical Understanding of the Porn Industry*. *The Sexualized Body and the Medical Authority of Pornography: Performing Sexual Liberation*, 2017: p. 21-36.
13. Grudzen, C.R., et al., *Comparison of the Mental Health of Female Adult Film Performers and Other Young Women in California*. *Psychiatric Services*, 2011. **62**(6): p. 639-45.
14. Coyne, K.M., et al., *Sexual health of adults working in pornographic films*. *International Journal of STD & AIDS*, 2009. **20**(7): p. 508-509.
15. Griffith, J.D., et al., *Pornography Actresses: An Assessment of the Damaged Goods Hypothesis*. *Journal of Sex Research*, 2013. **50**(7): p. 621-632.
16. number23. *Horrible Truths Of The Adult Film Industry*. 2015 May 7, 2015; Available from: <http://anonhq.com/horrifying-truths-adult-film-industry/>.
17. Tarrant, S. and Ebscohost, *The pornography industry: what everyone needs to know*. First ed. 2016, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
18. Crawford, M., *International Sex Trafficking*. *Women & Therapy*, 2017. **40**(1-2): p. 101-122.
19. Louis, K., *Pornography and Gender Inequality-Using Copyright Law as a Step Forward*. 2017.
20. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2832884/John-Wayne-Bobbitt-breaks-neck-car-wreck-driver-jumps-red-light-ploughs-pick-truck.html>

21. Beyond Fantasy. Porn Industry Statistics. Beyond Fantasy; 2023. Available from: <https://beyondfantasy.com/stats/>
22. Bonifacio, R., et al., *Self-Promotion Practices and Context Collapse Management of Adult Content Creators on OnlyFans*. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, 2025. **9**(1): p. 1-21.
23. Lippmann, M., N. Lawlor, and C.E. Leistner, *Learning on OnlyFans: User perspectives on knowledge and skills acquired on the platform*. Sexuality & culture, 2023. **27**(4): p. 1203-1223.
24. Business Insider. OnlyFans Entrepreneurs Explain Their Social Media Strategies. 2021. <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-onlyfans-sex-work-entrepreneurs-social-media-strategies-monetize-subscriptions#:~:text=The%20OnlyFans%20community%20is%20intensely,with%20accounts%20outside%20of%20themselves.%22>
25. Coneybeare, E., *Behind the Paywall: Community, Labour, and Information Sharing on OnlyFans*. The iJournal: Student Journal of the Faculty of Information, 2024. **9**(2): p. 75-83.
26. Hamilton, V., et al. "Nudes? Shouldn't I charge for these?": Motivations of New Sexual Content Creators on OnlyFans. in *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems*. 2023.
27. Victoria. "I recruited girls to sell themselves on OnlyFans. Here's why I left." Collective Shout, 23 Oct. 2023. https://www.collectiveshout.org/why_i_left_onlyfans
28. Adelaide Now. "Former recruiter Victoria Sinis exposes dark side of OnlyFans." 2023. <https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/business/work/at-work/disturbing-recruiter-exposes-dark-side-of-onlyfans/news-story/aece70a686deb644541aa1cedef1cf1b>
29. Wright, P.J. and R.S. Tokunaga, *Activating the Centerfold Syndrome: Recency of Exposure, Sexual Explicitness, Past Exposure to Objectifying Media*. Communication Research, 2013. **42**(6): p. 864-897.
30. Peter, J. and P.M. Valkenburg, *Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Internet Material and Sexual Preoccupancy: A Three-Wave Panel Study*. Media Psychology, 2008. **11**(2): p. 207-234.
31. Bonino, S., et al., *Use of pornography and self-reported engagement in sexual violence among adolescents*. European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 2006. **3**(3): p. 265-288.
32. Wright, P.J., R.S. Tokunaga, and A. Kraus, *A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies*. Journal of Communication, 2016. **66**(1): p. 183-205.
33. <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/our-services/fighting-modern-slavery-exploitation/>
34. https://www.anglicare.org.au/media-centre/news/supporting_recovery_program/
35. <https://antislavery.org.au/>