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New Study: Most Pimps Were Trafficked, Abused As Children

by [Amanda Kloer](#) · September 20, 2010

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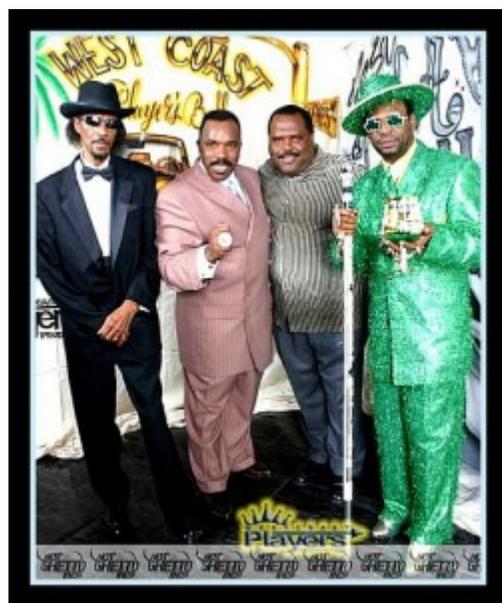
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A new research study from the DePaul College of Law sheds light on a rarely examined subject: pimps. Researchers interviewed 25 pimps from the Chicago area, and what they found was surprising. Most of the pimps they spoke with were both trafficked into the sex industry as children and trafficked kids themselves as pimps, forming a vicious cycle of exploitation that can span generations.

Researchers Brenda Myers-Powell and Jody Raphael issued a 91 question survey to 25 pimps in the Chicago area. [The results](#), while imperfect by the authors' own admission, shed some light on how pimps start pimping, how many women they generally control, and what the modern pimping industry looks like. The interviews included both men and women and people from all races. The results are surprising.

Of the pimps interviewed, 76% were sexually abused as children and 68% were sold for sex themselves

before pimping. Every single one of the women interviewed were in the commercial sex industry before pimping. The average age of onset into commercial sex was 15, making the majority of pimps interviewed former child sex trafficking victims. Most of them also reported physical abuse, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse in their home while growing up. Nearly half ran away from those abuses, directly contributing to their entry into the commercial sex industry.

But the news wasn't all sympathetic. The pimps in the study certainly weren't struggling to make ends meet; they earned between \$150,000 and \$500,000 a year. To do this, they sold up to 30 women at a given time. To keep their "inventory" fresh, they were constantly rotating women out and looking for new faces and bodies to bring in. And for most of the pimps, that meant finding what the buyers wanted -- younger and younger girls. They shared specific strategies for targeting young, vulnerable girls and runaways. Some talked about feeding girls liquor and drugs until they became compliant. Over half of them took all the earnings from at least some of the girls and women they controlled.

This study demonstrates that exploitation in the commercial sex industry is cyclical and sometimes multi-generational, just like domestic violence or child abuse. Therefore, providing care to both male and female victims of child sex trafficking and sexual exploitation not only fulfills an ethical duty to those victims, it will help stop the cycle of exploitation and prevent the next generation of victims from becoming pimps.

Photo credit: [bert23](#)



[Amanda Kloer](#) is a Change.org Editor and has been a full-time abolitionist in several capacities for seven years. Follow her on Twitter [@endhumantraff](#)



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