

**Pornography's  
Effects  
on  
Adults  
&  
Children**

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**Dr. Victor B. Cline**

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# Pornography's Effects On Adults and Children

By Dr. Victor B. Cline

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## Introduction

Whether pornography has any significant harmful effects on consumers continues to be a controversial issue, not only for average citizens but also for behavioral scientists. This is not surprising in light of the fact that two national

commissions--the Majority Report of the 1970 Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography and the 1986 Attorney General's

nity must determine that the material:

- Taken as a whole, appeals to a prurient (sick, morbid, shameful, or lascivious) interest in sex;
- Depicts sexual conduct in a patently offensive manner (i.e., goes beyond contemporary community standards with regards to depictions of sexual content or activity); and
- Taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, and scientific value.

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*In common parlance, it (pornography) usually means "material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal."*

Commission on Pornography--came to diametrically opposed conclusions about this matter.

Some social commentators claim that pornography is mainly a form of entertainment, possibly educational, sometimes sexually arousing, but essentially harmless. Or, they claim, at the very least, that there is no good scientific evidence of harm. Other social commentators claim more dire consequences and give as examples recent cases, played up by the media, of sex-murderers who have claimed that pornography "made them do it."

## Defining Pornography and Obscenity

To ascertain something about pornography's effects, we first need to define it. The word "pornography" comes from the Greek words "porno" and "graphia" meaning "depictions of the activities of whores." In common parlance, it usually means "material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal."

"Obscenity," however, is a legal term which was defined by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1973 *Miller v. California* decision. For something to be found obscene, and therefore unprotected by the First Amendment, a judge or a jury representing a cross section of the commu-

The material has to meet *all three tests* before it can be found obscene in the eyes of the law and its distribution prohibited. This means that something could be regarded as "pornographic" but still not be obscene, such as an explicit sex film produced and used to teach medical students about human sexuality, or a film or book with serious artistic and/or literary value which has some explicit sexual content.

Thus, the Supreme Court has protected a wide variety of sexual matter in movies, books, magazines and in other formats from being prohibited for sale and exhibition to adults (there is a stricter standard with respect to minors). Under the *Miller* test, however, the distribution of pornographic material which is obscene, such as most of what has been called "hardcore," can be prohibited and penalties proscribed.

The distribution of obscenity is prohibited on the federal level and on the state level in over 40 states. While enforcement of obscenity laws has increased in recent years, particularly at the federal level, enforcement is at best sporadic in many parts of the nation.

This lack of enforcement, especially at the state and local levels, may be attributable, in part, to the view of many people and, in particular, public officials that pornography is essentially harmless or, at the least, that there is little or no real evidence of harm.

# Effects On Adults

## Data From Clinical Case Studies

In reviewing the literature on the effects of pornography, there is a variety of evidence suggesting risk and the possibility of harm from being immersed in repeated exposure to pornography. These data come primarily from three sources:

- Clinical case history data
- Field studies
- Experimental laboratory type studies.

Clinical case history data come from the offices of professional health care personnel treating individuals with sexual dysfunctions, as well as from clergy and attorneys who counsel or provide services to sexually troubled individuals. Also, in this category is the evidence provided by sexual addicts affiliated with such national support groups as "Sexaholics Anonymous," or in treatment at such centers as the Institute for Behavioral Medicine at Golden Valley, Minnesota.

As a clinical psychologist, I have treated, over many years, approximately 300 sex addicts, sex offenders, or other individuals (96% male) with sexual illnesses. This includes many types of unwanted compulsive sexual acting-out, plus such things as child molestation, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sado-masochism, fetishism, and rape. With only several exceptions, pornography has been a major or minor contributor or facilitator in the acquisition of their deviation or sexual addiction.

However, where pornography was a contributor or facilitator, regardless of the nature of the sex deviation or addiction, I found a four-factor syndrome common to nearly all of my clients, with almost no exceptions, especially in their early involvement with pornography.

### 1. Addiction

The first change that happened was an addiction-effect. The porn-consumers got hooked. Once involved in pornographic materials, they kept coming back for more and still more. The material seemed to provide a very powerful sexual stimulant or aphrodisiac effect, followed by sexual release, most often through masturbation. The pornography provided very exciting and powerful imagery which they frequently recalled to mind and elaborated on in their fantasies.

Once addicted, they could not throw off their dependence on the material by themselves, despite many negative consequences such as divorce, loss of family, and problems with the law (as with sexual assault, harassment or abuse of fellow employees).

I also found, anecdotally, that many of

to their extreme addiction to the material in terms of having their whole lives consumed by it: sitting for hours masturbating to adult material and needing progressively stronger, heavier, harder material to give them a bigger kick. Like an alcoholic or a drug addict they are looking for that big kick and they need more just to keep them at that level of feeling 'OK.'"<sup>1</sup>

One of my patients was so deeply addicted that he could not stay away from pornography for 90 days, even for \$1,000. It is difficult for non-addicts to comprehend the totally driven nature of a sex addict. When the "wave" hits them, nothing can stand in the way of getting what they want, whether that be pornography accompanied by masturbation, sex from a prostitute, molesting a child, or raping a woman.



An example might help illustrate this problem. Ralph was a sexual addict, married 12 years with three children. He was active in his church and held sincere, high moral principles. He believed in the Ten Commandments and opposed adultery. Yet his particular cycle involved pornography-use, followed by paid sex with prostitutes. After each incident, he begged God for forgiveness and swore

that it would never happen again. But it did, again and again.

my most intelligent male patients appeared to be the most vulnerable--perhaps because they had a greater capacity to fantasize, which heightened the intensity of the experience and made them more susceptible to being conditioned into an addiction.

While any male is vulnerable, attorneys, accountants and media people seemed, in my experience, most vulnerable to these addictions. This is simply an anecdotal impression.

However, Sgt. Bob Navarro, a longtime investigator of the porno industry with the Los Angeles Police Department, has commented, "Believe it or not, the higher their education, the more prone these people are to becoming addicted to this material, and, of course, the more money they have to spend on it...Many people have testified as

that it would never happen again. But it did, again and again.

Since the trigger of each adulterous act was pornography-use, we decided to try to free him from his dependence on this material. I asked him to write me a check for \$1,000, indicating that I would return it if he went 90 days without using pornography. Ralph loved to hang on to his money and was quite attracted to our strategy. "There's no way I'd look at dirty videos or magazines if I knew it would cost me a thousand dollars!" he said.

He managed to resist temptation remarkably well for a while. But on the 87th day, he drove past an "adult" bookstore in an unfamiliar city while on a business trip. He slammed on the brakes, entered the store, and went virtually

berserk for 90 minutes. When I saw him the following week, he tearfully confessed that he had lost his \$1,000. Since he had gone 87 days "sober," I decided to give him another chance.

So we started another 90-day "sobriety" cycle. We both felt that if he could go 87 days, he could certainly make 90 if we tried again, especially if it meant recovering his \$1,000.

This time he went only 14 days before he relapsed. He lost his money, which was given to a charity. He was extremely committed to quit in order to save his marriage and to live in harmony with his religious principles. But that was not the case. In my opinion, even if he had given me \$10,000, he still would have relapsed. When the wave hits them, these men are consumed by their appetite, regardless of the costs or consequences. Their addiction virtually rules their lives.

## 2. Escalation

The second phase was an escalation-effect. With the passage of time, the addicted required rougher, more explicit, more deviant, and "kinky" kinds of sexual material to get their "highs" and "sexual turn-ons." It was reminiscent of individuals afflicted with drug addictions. Over time there is nearly always an increasing need for more of the stimulant to get the same initial effect.

If their wives or girlfriends were involved with them, they eventually pushed their partners into doing increasingly bizarre and deviant sexual activities. In many cases, this resulted in a rupture in the relationship when the woman refused to go further--often leading to much conflict, separation or divorce.

Being married or being in a relationship with a willing sexual partner did not solve their problem. Their addiction and escalation were mainly due to the powerful sexual imagery in their minds, implanted there by the exposure to pornography. They often preferred this sexual imagery, accompanied by masturbation, to sexual intercourse itself. This nearly always diminished their capacity to love and express affection to their partner in their intimate relations. The fantasy was all-powerful, much to the chagrin and disappointment of their partner. Their sex drive had been diverted to a degree away from their spouse. And the spouse could

easily sense this, and often felt very lonely and rejected.

I have had a number of couple-clients where the wife tearfully reported that her husband preferred to masturbate to pornography than to make love to her.

## 3. Desensitization

The third phase that happened was desensitization. Material (in books, magazines or film/videos) which was originally perceived as shocking, taboo-breaking, illegal, repulsive or immoral, though still sexually arousing, in time came to be seen as acceptable and commonplace. The sexual activity depicted in the pornography (no matter how antisocial or deviant) became legitimized. There was increasingly a sense that "everybody does it" and this gave them permission to also do it, even though the activity was possibly illegal and contrary to their previous moral beliefs and personal standards.

## 4. Acting Out Sexually

The fourth phase that occurred was an increasing tendency to act out sexually the behaviors viewed in the pornography that the porn-consumers had been repeatedly exposed to, including compulsive promiscuity, exhibitionism, group sex, voyeurism, frequenting massage parlors, having sex with minor children, rape, and inflicting pain on themselves or a partner during sex. This behavior frequently grew into a sexual addiction which they found themselves locked into and unable to change or reverse--no matter what the negative consequences were in their life.

Many examples of negative effects from pornography-use come from the private or clinical practice of psychotherapists, physicians, counselors, attorneys, and ministers. Here we come face to face with real people who are in some kind of significant trouble or pain. A few examples might illustrate this.

**Deputy Mayor Arrested:** The 46-year-old Deputy Mayor of the City of Los Angeles attended a west L.A. porn theater one afternoon a few years ago. While watching the sex film, he became so aroused that he started to sexually assault a patron sitting

next to him. The individual turned out to be an undercover city vice-squad officer. The Deputy Mayor was arrested, booked, and found guilty in a subsequent trial. This distinguished public servant left the office shamed and humiliated, his career in shambles.

**Marriage Threatened:** A 36-year-old married male, college-educated, a professional and very successful financially, had an addiction to pornography, masturbation and frequenting massage parlors where he had paid sex. He had an excellent marriage, four children and was very active in his church, where he assumed important positions of responsibility. While he felt guilty about his engagement in illicit sex, which was contrary to his religious, ethic, and personal values and had the potential of seriously disturbing his marriage if found out, he compulsively continued to do that which, at a rational level, he did not want to do.

His problem came to light when he infected his wife with a venereal disease. This created many serious and disturbing consequences in his life and marriage.

**Incest:** A 30-year-old single male, religiously active and very committed to his faith, had a history of pornography-addiction. He was too shy and backward to ask adult females on dates. So he developed intimate relationships with his four-and seven-year-old nieces and their girlfriends which culminated in his repeatedly sexually molesting them. The modeling of explicit sexual activity in the "adult" pornography which he consumed helped fuel his sexual appetite and interest in these children.

Because of his guilt over what he was doing, he eventually sought professional help. However, his state had a "disclosure law" which required that he be reported to state officials for his sexual abuse of these children. Because of his cooperative attitude and the fact that he sought treatment on his own, he was placed on probation, received long term psychotherapy and is now living a more normal life.

**Serial Rapist:** I was asked to consult on a case where a Phoenix-Tucson area professional person, president of his firm and head of his church's committee on helping troubled children, was found to be a serial rapist who had violently raped a number of women at gun or knife-point in the Arizona area. In doing the

background study on him, I found him to come from an exemplary background and trouble-free childhood. He was an outstanding student in high school and college.

His wife, children, business, and church associates had not the slightest inkling of his double life or dark side. The only significant negative factor in his life was an early adolescent addiction to pornography which, for the most part, was kept secret from others. This gradually escalated over a period of years, eventually leading to spending many hours and incurring great expense in "adult" bookstores, looking at violent video-porn movies and masturbating to these.

His first rape was triggered by seeing a close resemblance in the woman he assaulted to the leading character in a porn movie he had seen earlier in the day. Reality and fantasy had become extremely blurred for him as he acted out his pathological sexual fantasies.

#### **Most Frequent Consequences:**

However, in my clinical experience, the major consequence of being addicted to pornography is not the probability or possibility of committing a serious sex crime (though this can and does occur), but rather its disturbance of the fragile bonds of intimate family and marital relationships. This is where the most grievous pain, damage, and sorrow occurs. There is repeatedly an interference with or even destruction of healthy love and sexual relationships with long term bonded partners. If one asks if porn is responsible or causes any sex crimes, the answer is unequivocally in the affirmative, but that is only the "tip of the iceberg."

In some patients, I find that there is an almost instant addiction, while with others, it may take 5-10 years of erratic exposure to get hooked. But, like a latent cancer, it almost never disappears on its own or reverses its course unless there is some therapeutic intervention.

## **Pornography's Impact On Psychosexual Development**

**I**t should be noted that other kinds of data which bear on these issues come from therapists who see symptoms of arrested development in the psychosexual growth of the heavy consumers of pornography they are treating.

An example would be psychiatrist Harold Voth, who is on the faculty of the Karl Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, Kansas. Dr Voth sees pornography as typically depicting perverse sex, degradation through sex, violent sex, and transient, meaningless sex—all of which are reflections of incomplete and abnormal human

development. As he notes, healthy mature people do not behave in these ways.<sup>2</sup>

However, he states, there are millions of people who appear manifestly healthy, but who also harbor substantial latent sicknesses which are residues of developmental arrests or abnormal development which may find expression in sexual perversions. Thus, viewing pornography, most of which depicts perverse behavior, activates the developmental sexual arrests which exist in millions of people.

He sees these people as developing a kind of addiction for pornography, thus receiving many exposures to it over time. These pornographic stimuli promote regressive behavior rather than more mature behavior.

Dr. Voth sees such exposure as especially damaging to the young who are on the threshold of entering into an active sexual life. For them, these vital processes should be guided toward greater maturity, not retrogressively toward perversion or transient, meaningless sex. As he states, "Society and individuals alike can only be harmed when we legitimize abnormal behavior."

Dr. Voth also notes that some men become dissatisfied with their wives whom they believe to be inadequate (and vice versa) after viewing the exaggerated sexual prowess as depicted by the typical pornographic movie. He suggests that society has the responsibility to protect itself from itself—that is, from the elements within society which harm it. He sees pornography as appealing to sexuality at its worst, and since mature sexuality is so essential to the heterosexual bond and to family life, he believes steps should be taken to clearly identify pornography as unhealthy with many risks associated with its consumption.

### **TREATING SEX/PORN ADDICTIONS**

**P**orn addictions are usually the precursor of later full-scale sexual addictions. In my experience two things need to happen when treating these psychotherapeutically.

First the addict (and spouse, if they have one) should be treated together by a sexual addiction specialist. They will both need marriage counseling also. Since the innocent spouse is wounded too, she (or he) also needs help. In the process, you also mobilize the innocent spouse to be part of the healing team. You don't neglect them. You all work together. And there is one cardinal rule: "no secrets." Secrets "kill" you. If there is any kind of relapse it must be acknowledged, put on the table and processed in the counseling session. If you hide or lie your illness worsens.

Second – you need to join a weekly support group such as S.A. (Sexaholics Anonymous) with their 12-step program. This is a cousin to Alcoholics Anonymous. It's free. All it costs is your time – maybe an hour and a half a week. In my experience this can be very helpful. And in that group you choose a sponsor – someone with long-term sobriety who you can call to get help, advice and support anytime 24 hours a day. You can usually locate these groups by looking in the telephone book business pages under Sexaholics Anonymous. Or you could call A.A. who can usually tell you where to go.

I find that for this experience to be helpful you need to attend at least 90% of their weekly meetings. If your addiction is particularly virulent or you also have chemical addictions, then you should attend at least two group meetings a week until you start getting your behavior under control. The core of A.A.'s and S.A.'s success in supporting healing is the fellowship and bond that develops between the wounded attendees plus the 12-step program and the influence of the "higher power."

I have found that the average social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist will ordinarily not have the training, expertise or special skills to do sex addiction therapy. This may require you to do some research to locate the appropriate therapist. Even going to an ordinary "sex therapist" won't help either. Most have been trained to help individuals with sexual dysfunctions to "turn on" to healthy sex, not to turn off compulsive addictive sex behavior. One thing you could do to find the right therapist would be to attend a meeting or two of S.A. and ask the other attendees who they have found particularly helpful in counseling.

*Editor's note: A fuller discussion of Dr. Cline's treatment and therapy suggestions can be found at <http://www.moralityinmedia.org/vbctreat.htm>*

## Conditioning into Deviancy

Other cause/effect data come from the conditioning laboratories of investigators such as Dr. Stanley Rachman. In his research, he demonstrated that, with the use of highly erotic pictures, sexual deviations could be created in adult male subjects in a laboratory setting. He was actually able to condition, in two separate experiments, 100% of his male subjects into a sexual deviancy (fetishism).<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the work of R.L. McGuire, author of a study, "*Sexual Deviations as Conditioned Behavior: A Hypothesis*," suggests that exposure to special sexual experiences (which could include witnessing pornography), and then masturbating to the fantasy of this exposure, can sometimes later lead to participation in deviant sexual acts.<sup>4</sup>

The considerable literature on therapy for sex deviates suggests that their sexual orientation can sometimes be changed (reconditioned) with the use of explicit sex films as a therapeutic tool.<sup>5</sup>

If these data are valid, then one must also allow for the possibility that deliberate or accidental exposure to pornography or deviant real life sex experiences can also facilitate the conditioning of individuals into sexual aberrations.

Psychologist Patrick Carnes (currently the leading U.S. researcher on sexual addictions) has published a series of research and data-based books, bringing to national awareness the problem of out-of-control, compulsive sexual behavior. His latest volume documents a host of serious legal, marital, and health consequences of such compulsions.<sup>6</sup>

He found that among 932 sex addicts studied, 90% of the men and 77% of the women report pornography as significant to their addictions. He also found that two common elements in the early etiology of sexually addictive behavior are childhood sexual abuse and frequent pornography accompanied by masturbation.

Rather ironically, Dr. Carnes also found that many therapists (psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers) suffer from sexual addictions and inappropriate "acting out" sexual behavior. As he put it, "One of the discoveries that emerged from our survey is that women addicts seeking help are often sexually abused by their therapists."

Therapists have also found their malpractice insurance rates rising dramatically in recent years, due in part to lawsuits brought against significant numbers of their colleagues who have sexually abused or exploited clients in the course of treatment. This suggests that compulsive sexual behavior is a problem even for practitioners in the therapeutic community.<sup>7</sup>

## All Sex Deviations Appear To Be Learned Behaviors

The best evidence to date suggests that most or all sexual deviations are learned behaviors, usually through inadvertent or accidental conditioning. There is no convincing evidence, to date, suggesting the hereditary transmission of any pathological sexual behavior pattern such as rape, incest, pedophilia, exhibitionism, or promiscuity.

As McGuire explains it, as a man repeatedly masturbates to a vivid sexual fantasy as his exclu-

### National Poll of Mental Health Professionals

**In a national poll of mental health professionals by Drs. M. Lipkin and D.E. Carnes, 254 psychotherapists reported that they had come across cases in their clinical practices where pornography was found to be an instigator or contributor to a sex crime, personality disturbance, or antisocial act.**

**Another 324 psychotherapists reported cases where they suspected such a relationship to exist. While a larger number of other professionals, responding to the survey, had not found such relationships in their clinical practice, the responses of the 578 psychotherapists that did find such a harm-relationship (or suspect same) certainly cannot be ignored or disregarded, especially when a health hazard is involved.**

sive outlet (introduced by a real life experience or possibly pornography), the pleasurable experiences endow the deviant fantasy (rape, molesting children, injuring one's partner while having sex, etc.) with increasing erotic value. The orgasm experienced then provides the critical reinforcing event for the conditioning of the fantasy preceding or accompanying the act.<sup>8</sup>

McGuire indicates that any type of sexual deviation can be acquired in this way, that it may include several unrelated deviations in one individual and that it cannot be eliminated even by massive feelings of guilt. His paper cites many case histories to illustrate this type of conditioning.

Other related studies by D.R. Evans and B.T. Jackson support his thesis. They found that deviant masturbatory fantasy very significantly affected the habit strength of the subject's sexual deviation.<sup>9</sup>

## A Common Pathway To Self Inflicted Sexual Illness

In my treatment of hundreds of primarily male patients with paraphilias (sexual pathology), I consistently have found that most men are vulnerable to the effects of masturbatory conditioning to pornography with a consequence of sexual ill health, because we are all subject to the laws of learning, with few or no exceptions.

In my experience as a sexual therapist, any individual who regularly masturbates to pornography is at risk of becoming, in time, a sexual addict, as well as conditioning himself into having a sexual deviancy and/or disturbing a bonded relationship with a spouse or girlfriend.

A frequent side effect is that it also dramatically reduces their capacity to love (e.g., it results in a marked dissociation of sex from friendship, affection, caring, and other normal healthy emotions and traits which help marital relationships). Their sexual side becomes in a sense dehumanized. Many of them develop an "alien ego state" (or dark side), whose core is antisocial lust devoid of most values.

In time, the "high" obtained from masturbating to pornography becomes more important than real life relationships. It has been commonly thought by health educators that masturbation has negligible consequences, other than reducing sexual tension. Moral objections aside, this may be generally true, but one exception would appear to be in the area of repeatedly masturbating to deviant pornographic imagery (either as memories in the mind or as explicit pornographic stimuli), which risks (via conditioning) the acquiring of sexual addictions and/or other sexual pathology.

It makes no difference if one is an eminent physician, attorney, minister, athlete, corporate executive college president, unskilled laborer, or an average 15-year-old boy. All can be conditioned into deviancy.

The process of masturbatory conditioning is inexorable and does not spontaneously remiss. The course of this illness may be slow and is nearly always hidden from view. It is usually a secret part of the man's life, and like a cancer, it keeps growing and spreading. It rarely ever reverses itself, and it is also very difficult to treat

and heal. Denial on the part of the male addict and refusal to confront the problem are typical and predictable, and this almost always leads to marital or couple disharmony, sometimes divorce and sometimes the breaking up of other intimate relationships.

## **Imprinting the Brain with Sexual Images**

**T**he work of psychologist James L. McGaugh at the University of California, Irvine, needs mention here. His findings (oversimplifying considerably) suggest that memories of experiences, which occurred at times of emotional arousal (which could include sexual arousal), get "locked into the brain" by an adrenal gland hormone, epinephrine, and are difficult to erase. This may partly explain pornography's addicting effect. Powerful sexually arousing memories of experiences from the past keep intruding themselves back on the mind's memory screen, serving to stimulate and erotically arouse the viewer. If he masturbates to these fantasies, he reinforces the linkage between sexual arousal

*The results of this research suggest the possibility of conditioning viewers into associating sexual arousal with inflicting injury, rape, humiliation, or torture on females.*

and orgasm, with the particular scene or image repeatedly rehearsed in his mind.<sup>10</sup>

One might quickly see the risks involved with large numbers of males being exposed to the following film. This 8 mm motion picture film, marketed out of Los Angeles, depicts two Girl Scouts in their green uniforms selling cookies from door to door. At one residence they are invited in by a mature, sexually aggressive adult male, who proceeds to instantly seduce them and subject them to a number of unusual and extremely explicit sexual acts, all shown in greatest detail. The girls are depicted as eagerly enjoying this sexual orgy.

This film is what is usually termed hardcore pornography. This is the kind of pornographic stimulus (here, a film) that the male viewer can play again and again either in the privacy of his home or in his mind for his sexual pleasure.

If the research of Rachman, McGuire, McGaugh and scores of other investigators in the area of human learning has any meaning at all, it would suggest that such a film could be haz-

ardous. It could potentially condition some male viewers into having reoccurring sexual fantasies (vividly imprinted into the brain by the epinephrine) which they might repeatedly masturbate to and then, later, be tempted to act out as sexual advances toward female minors--especially if they were in Girl Scout uniforms.

## **The Research On Aggressive Pornography (Porno-Violence)**

**A**ggressive sexual crimes against women are a very serious and escalating problem in the United States. Recent Senate Judiciary Committee hearings concluded that rape has increased four times as fast as the overall crime rate over the last decade. And, in fact, the United States leads the world in rape statistics with a rape rate four times that of Germany, 13 times as much as England, and 20 times as much as Japan.<sup>11</sup>

In recent years, there has been a considerable body of research on aggressive pornography, much of it found in hard "R-rated" films. Many of these films are also broadcast unedited on cable TV and later are available to children in

nearly every video store in America. The typical film shows nude females, or females in sexually arousing situations and postures, being raped, tortured, or murdered.

The results of this research suggest the possibility of conditioning viewers into associating sexual arousal with inflicting injury, rape, humiliation, or torture on females. Where these films are available on videotapes (which most are), these can be repeatedly viewed in the privacy of one's residence and masturbated to, with the associated risks of negative or antisocial conditioning and behavior, previously noted.

Drs. Neil Malamuth and Edward Donnerstein noted in their research-based book, *Pornography and Sexual Aggression*,<sup>12</sup> that "Certain forms of pornography (aggressive) can affect aggressive attitudes toward women and can desensitize an individual's perception of rape. These attitudes and perceptions are, furthermore, directly related to actual aggressive behavior against women. ...These results suggest, again, that aggressive pornography does increase aggression against

women."

Drs. Malamuth and Donnerstein also found that watching films, depicting a woman as saying that she enjoys being raped, increased male acceptance of interpersonal violence against women and tended to increase the male's acceptance of rape myths (such as believing that women enjoy rape).

These authors conclude, "There can be relatively long-term, antisocial effects of movies that portray sexual violence as having positive consequences" (e.g., the woman indicated she enjoyed being raped, or she said "no" when she really meant "yes" while being sexually assaulted).

The literature on aggressive pornography is rather impressive in its consistency in suggesting a variety of harms or possibility of antisocial outcomes from exposure to this material. This should not be surprising after 40 years of research on film and TV violence arriving essentially at the same conclusion.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Malamuth and associates further found that when college males were exposed to sexually violent pornography, such as rape and other forms of sexual violence, two-thirds of the male subjects, following such exposure, indicated an increased willingness to force a woman into sex acts if they were assured of not being caught or punished.

In similar research by Seymour Feshback and associates, 51% of "normal" UCLA males indicated the likelihood of emulating a sadomasochistic rape (seen in porn material they had been exposed to) if they were assured of not getting caught.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Effects Of The 'Rape Myth' On Pornography-Consumers**

**I**n a study by Mills College sociologist, Diana Russell, it was found that the depiction and dissemination of the "rape myth" (e.g., that most women really enjoy having sex forced upon them) were significant elements in reducing inhibitions to the use of violence, habituating both males and females to the idea of rape and also accepting sexual aberrance as "normal" behavior.<sup>15</sup>

She also found that once the seeds of deviant behavior were planted in the male fantasy, the men were inclined to act out their fantasies. She found that both the fantasies that were acted out, as well as the mere conceptualization of these deviant fantasies as viable behaviors, led to considerable conflict and suffering on the part of both males and females, particularly in their sexual relationships with intimate partners.

## The Effects of Non-Violent Pornography

The issue which has caught the attention of some behavioral scientists doing work in this area is whether it is the violence or the sex that is doing most of the "harm" when it is fused together in so-called aggressive pornography or porno-violence. Some will say, "Just eliminate the violence--the sex is OK."

If we look at non-violent pornography which is totally devoid of violence, we may ask, what about its effects? First, we might indicate several examples of non-violent pornography which most therapists, as well as most ordinary citizens, would not regard as healthy models of sexual behavior:

- Child pornography
- Incest type porn (e.g., mother seducing son, daughter seducing father, older brother seducing younger sister, etc.)
- Sex with animals
- Group sex
- Sex which humiliates and denigrates women and their sex role in man/woman relationships (viewed without overt violence)
- Pornography such as that involving the eager Girl Scout teenagers having two-on-one sex with the adult male, etc.
- Obscene films which present a massive amount of misinformation or gross distortions about human sexuality.

All of the above, while lacking violence, still have the potential of having negative effects on some viewers because they model unhealthy sex role behavior or give false information about human sexuality. Additionally, non-violent porn can contribute to acquiring a great variety of sexual addictions.

Additionally, there exists empirical research on the effects of "adult" non-violent pornography by researchers Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant.<sup>16</sup> This research suggests that when experimental subjects are exposed to repeated presentations of hardcore non-violent adult pornography over a six-week period, they:

- Develop an increased callousness toward women; Trivialize rape as a criminal offense; to some it was no longer a crime at all;
- Develop distorted perceptions about sexuality;
- Develop an appetite for more deviant, bizarre or violent types of pornography (escala-

tion); normal sex no longer seemed to "do the job;"

- Devalue the importance of monogamy and lack confidence in marriage as either a viable or lasting institution, and
- View non-monogamous relationships as normal and natural behavior.

## Pornography's Effect on Sexual Satisfaction and Family Values

In further research by Drs. Zillmann and Bryant on prolonged consumption of non-violent pornography, their subjects, after many weeks exposure, reported less satisfaction with their partner's sexual performance, affection, and physical appearance.

The researchers further found an incompatibility of the sexual values in pornography and the sexual values implicit in enduring intimate relationships, and, in particular, in marriage. The chief proclamation of pornography is great sexual joy without any attachment, commitment or responsibility.

Drs. Zillmann and Bryant found that their subjects (both male and female), after intensive exposure to pornography, had a greater acceptance of pre-and extramarital sex and an enhancement of the belief that male and female promiscuity is natural.

Extensive exposure also lowered their evaluation of marriage, making this institution appear less significant and less viable in the future. It also reduced their desire to have children and promoted the acceptance of male dominance and female servitude.

The authors saw the diminished desire for progeny as reflecting the pornographic projection of carefree and consequence-free, promiscuous sexuality. Children have no place in the short-lived relationship in which this maxim is practiced. This would suggest that the consumption of pornography erodes marital values and the institution of marriage itself.<sup>17</sup>

## 1986 Attorney General's Commission On Pornography

The 10-member panel of the 1986 Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, after reviewing a great volume of clinical and experimental research, concluded unanimously that "Substantial exposure to sexually violent materials (violent pornography)...bears a causal relationship to antisocial

acts of sexual violence....," and, "There is a causal relationship between exposure to sexually violent materials and an increase in aggressive behavior directed toward women."

The members of the Commission also commented, "The evidence from formal or informal studies of self-reports of offenders themselves supports the conclusions that the causal connection we identify relates to actual sexual offenses..."<sup>18</sup>

The Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, in further reviewing the research on pornographic materials which were not violent but did involve degradation, domination, subordination and humiliation (of women), concluded, "Substantial exposure to materials of this type bears some causal relationship to the level of sexual violence, sexual coercion, or unwanted sexual aggression in the population so exposed...as well as the incidence of various non-violent forms of discrimination against or subordination of women in our society."<sup>19</sup>

## 1970 Presidential Commission On Obscenity & Pornography

If we look at field studies of pornography's effects, we might cite evidence going back to the 1970 Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, the Technical Reports of which I carefully reviewed and later wrote and edited a book entitled, *Where Do You Draw the Line?*<sup>20</sup>

In a sophisticated study, financed by the Presidential Commission and published in Volume VII of its Technical Reports, Drs. K.E. Davis and G.N. Braucht assessed the relationship between exposure to pornography and moral character, deviance in the home and neighborhood, and sexual behavior. In their study, impressive in its rigorous methodology and statistical treatment, Drs. Davis and Braucht, while finding a "positive relationship between sexual deviance and exposure to pornography at all ages of exposure," also found that "exposure to pornography is the strongest predictor of sexual deviance among the early ages of exposure subjects."

In this early age of exposure (to pornography) subgroup, "the amount of exposure was significantly correlated with a willingness to engage in group sexual relations... (and other) 'serious' sexual deviance; and there were trends for the

number of both high school heterosexual partners and total homosexual partners to be positively related to (pornographic) exposure."

This suggests that pornography may act as a facilitator or accelerator of youthful promiscuity, which could raise health concerns relative to the acquisition and spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as sexual addictions.

Correlation alone, of course, never demonstrates a causal relationship. However, it does sometimes permit a reasonable hypothesis. Because the researchers had partialled out the contribution of other key variables in this study, the possibility of causation (of harm via pornography exposure) was highly suggested.

In another study of 476 reformatory inmates, published in Volume IX of the Commission's Technical Reports, Dr. Martin Propper notes again and again a relationship between high exposure to pornography and sexually promiscuous and deviant behavior, as well as affiliation with groups high in criminal activity and sex deviancy.

In yet another study, published in Volume VII of the Technical Reports, C. Eugene Walker found that 39% of the sex offenders interviewed indicated that "pornography had something to do with their committing the sex offense that they were convicted of."

While one must be cautious in interpreting these results, they again raise the possibility of serious negative outcomes from exposure to pornography.

## Sex Offenders' Use Of Pornography

In research conducted by Dr. W. Marshall, almost half of the rapists that he studied used pornography depicting consenting sex to arouse themselves, preparatory to seeking out a victim to rape.

Another investigator, Dr. M.J. Goldstein, found that far more of the sex offenders than the non-offenders he studied wished to, and often did, emulate the acts they saw depicted in pornography.

In still another study, most of Dr. G.G. Abel's sex offenders said that pornography increased their appetites for deviant activities (and these were the men who reported the least control over their deviant urges).<sup>23</sup>

Other investigators have reported that rapists and child molesters use pornography incitefully, both immediately prior to their crimes and during the actual assaults.<sup>24</sup>

Still another type of evidence comes from a study conducted by Darrell Pope, a former Michigan State Police officer, who found that of 38,000 cases of sexual assault on file in Michigan, 41% involved pornography-exposure just prior to the act or during the act.<sup>25</sup>

## Gary Bishop, Serial Killer

Another example of the effects of pornography comes from Gary Bishop, convicted homosexual pedophile who murdered five young boys in Salt Lake City, Utah in order to conceal his sexual abuse of them. He wrote in a letter after his conviction: "Pornography was a determining factor in my downfall. Somehow I became sexually attracted to young boys and I would fantasize about them naked. Certain bookstores offered sex education, photographic or art books which occasionally contained pictures of nude boys. I purchased such books and used them to enhance my masturbatory fantasies.

"But it wasn't enough. I desired more sexually arousing pictures so I enticed boys into letting me take pictures of them naked. From adult magazines, I also located addresses of foreign companies specializing in 'kiddie porn' and spent hundreds of dollars on these magazines and films.

"Such material would temporarily satisfy my cravings, but soon I would need pictures that were more explicit and revealing. Some of the material I received was shocking and disgusting at first, but it shortly became commonplace and acceptable. As I continued to digress further into my perverted behavior, more stimulation was necessary to maintain the same level of excitement.

"Finding and procuring sexually arousing materials became an obsession. For me, seeing pornography was like lighting a fuse on a stick of dynamite; I became stimulated and had to gratify my urges or explode. All boys became mere sexual objects. My conscience was desensitized and my sexual appetite entirely controlled my actions."

Gary Bishop then continued to tell how he sexually abused and killed his boy victims.

## Ted Bundy, Serial Killer

In the case of Ted Bundy, serial killer of possibly 31 young women, he stated in the videotaped interview hours before his execution, "You are going to kill me, and that will protect society from me. But out there are many, many more people who are addicted to pornography, and you are doing nothing about that."

And, while some commentators discounted his linking aggressive pornography to his sex-murders (when he said it fueled his violent thoughts toward women), there seems little doubt that Bundy consumed a great deal of pornography, much of it violent, from an early age. This was suggested, not only in the interview with Dr. James Dobson, but also documented by psychiatrist Dorothy Otnow Lewis in her prior extensive study of Bundy and his history.<sup>26</sup>

A recent study by FBI researchers of 36 serial killers revealed that 29 were attracted to pornography and incorporated it into their sexual activity, which included serial rape-murder.<sup>27</sup>

## Denmark Update

**Didn't sex crimes decrease in Denmark with pornography legalized? Apparently not. Some of the more serious types of sex crimes such as rape actually increased in number and rate following the legalization of pornography in Denmark.<sup>41</sup>**

The notion that sex crimes dropped is illusory and was due to the fact that a number of sex crimes, including homosexual prostitution, extra-marital incest between close relatives, voyeurism (peeping), and "indecent toward women" or frottage, were decriminalized at the time pornography was legalized, giving the appearance of a decrease in the overall rate of sex crimes. Because they were no longer counting any of those sex offenses (which, of course, were still continuing to occur) in their new summaries of sex crime statistics, it appeared that the incidence of sex crimes was dropping.

Also, one investigator, B. Kutchinsky, found that there were unofficial changes in the handling by police of those sex crimes that remained, which also reduced their "reported" incidence, further distorting the problem or illusion of decreased sex offenses.<sup>42</sup>

# Effects On Children

## Spillover Effect on Children

I find in my clinical practice a spill-over effect where pornography used by adults very frequently gets into the hands of children living in the home or neighborhood. This can cause extremely negative outcomes.



**Example:** A mother brought her pregnant 13-year-old daughter to my office. The girl and her 14-year-old boyfriend had discovered her father's secret cache of pornography and had imitated the sexual acts portrayed in those materials over many months. The ensuing consequences, including pregnancy, abortion and depression, were very traumatic for the whole family as well as for both youngsters. The mother divorced her husband because of the complications surrounding what happened.

**Example:** Parents of a 14-year-old boy brought their son to me when they discovered that he was sexually molesting his sister. We found on investigation that cable TV was in the home, and late at night on one of the channels, there were some very graphic, rough, very violent depictions of sexuality. He got up at two in the morning, went downstairs, and watched these films night after night. They became the training manual or "sex education" that triggered him to assault his sister sexually.

**Example:** From my private practice--two brothers, ages 9 and 10, stumbled across their parents' X-rated video tapes and secretly played them for many months while their dad and mom were at work. They later forced two younger siblings and a neighborhood boy to view the video tapes, stripped all three

children naked, forced dirt, sticks, and small rocks into their rectums, forced them to engage in oral sex and anal sex, and threatened to shoot them with a BB gun if they told.

This abuse continued for nearly a year before finally being discovered when one of the younger abused children could no longer tolerate it and gained the courage to report it.

## Effects of Dial-A-Porn on Children

With the sponsorship of the U.S. Dept of Justice, I was commissioned to conduct a pilot field study on the effects of Dial-A-Porn on children in 1985. I interviewed a number of children (mostly pre-teens or early teens), who had become involved with this type of pornography, and their parents.

When one makes a Dial-A-Porn call, it is usually answered by a very sexy, seductive sounding female (this may be a recording or a live female) who talks directly to the caller about how badly she wants to have sex with him. With panting voice, she then tells him in specific detail all of the things she now wants to do to him sexually.

There may be a second young woman on the line and they may talk about all three having sex together. They may mention having a sex marathon (dozens of partners) with all of the explicit details.

In some cases, bondage is part of the scenario (having sex while gagged, handcuffed and leashed at the neck), suggesting that sex is better if it "hurts so good--don't stop."

Sex with animals is also included as well as group sex; rape; inviting a married male to have sex with the "baby-sitter;" a school-teacher having sex with her students; inviting the caller to urinate in the woman's face; degrading the woman as a slut and trash while having sex with her, as well as inviting beatings, torture, and general physical abuse as part of the sexual activity.

At the time of the study, any youngster of any age could call these porno lines and get these messages from nearly any place in the country. All they needed was a phone number to call, and the numbers were very easy to come by. If parents put a "block" on their phone to prevent these calls, the children merely found another phone to use.

**Hooked on Phone Sex:** With every one of the children we studied, we found an "addiction-effect." In every case, without exception, the children (girls as well as boys) became hooked on this sex by phone and kept going back for more and still more. None of them ceased until found out. In some cases, more than 300 long distance calls were made by particular children.

Disclosure usually occurred when the parents later received an enormous phone bill. This alerted them that something was amiss. Only after investigation (often having to call the number which was printed on the phone bill) did the parents become aware of what their children were calling and listening to. There was always a major confrontation, and the children were usually made to pay the long distance phone costs as well as given a variety of chastisements, lectures, and/or punishments.

When both parents worked or when there was a single parent working, left behind were "latch key children" who were not monitored or supervised for a number of hours during the day. This created a very difficult problem in controlling phone use. I found that nearly all of the children had clear memories of a great deal of the content of the calls they heard, even when there was a time lag of one or two years. I also found that, almost without exception, the children felt guilty, embarrassed, and ashamed about their involvement with Dial-A-Porn. In nearly all cases, there were some problems and tensions generated in the parent-child and family relationships because of the Dial-A-Porn calls.

**Acting Out Phone Sex:** I have also interviewed some children, where as a result of hearing Dial-A-Porn messages, they engaged in sexual assaults on other children. One 12-year-old boy in Hayward, California listened to Dial-A-Porn for nearly two hours on the phone in the empty pastor's study between church meetings one Sunday afternoon. A few days later he sexually assaulted a four-year-old girl in his mother's day care center.

He had never been exposed to pornography before. He had never acted out sexually before and was not a behavior problem in the home. He had never heard or knew of oral sex before listening to Dial-A-Porn. And this was how he assaulted the girl, forcing oral sex on her in direct imitation of what he had heard on the phone.

I later interviewed a number of children in Michigan where similar sexual assaults occurred: males in their early teens, forcing sex on younger females as a result of listening to Dial-A-Porn. All of these children might be considered victims--the abusers as well as the abused.

The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect reported in 1988 that the incidence of child sexual abuse-reports tripled in the previous six years in the United States. In my clinical judgment, at least part of this was due to the influence of Dial-A-Porn and other porn materials as a "how to manual," especially where older children were sexually abusing younger ones.



Since I conducted this study, Congress enacted legislation prohibiting obscene Dial-A-Porn messages and restricting access to indecent messages. Many Dial-A-Porn services, however, continue to operate in violation of this law, and neither the Justice Department nor the FCC is doing much about it.

### Acquiring the Values Which Permeate Hardcore Porn

In a study reported to the 1986 Attorney General's Commission on Pornography by Dr. Jennings Bryant, 600 American males and females of junior high school age and above were interviewed about their "out in real life involvement with pornography."<sup>28</sup> He found that 91% of the males and 82% of the females admitted having been exposed to X-rated, hardcore pornography. Two-thirds of the males and 40% of the females reported wanting to try out some of the sexual behaviors they had witnessed.

And, among high school students, 31% of the males and 18% of the females admitted actually *doing* some of the things sexually they had seen in the pornography *within a few days after exposure*. This clearly suggests the modeling-effect or imitative-learning effect, as well as "triggering effect," that even non-violent

and sound patterns can be attention-getting, pleasing and even unappealing. When lyrics are added, however, that is another story. It is the lyrics of songs that impact the brain most dramatically.

Consider the Alphabet Song that nearly every pre-schooler learns, or the radio and TV jin-

***As Dr. Jennings Bryant comments, "If the values which permeate the content of most hardcore pornography are examined, what is found is an almost total suspension of the sorts of moral judgment that have been espoused in the value systems of most civilized cultures. "***

pornography has on human sexual behavior in some individuals.

Additionally, it was found that massive (e.g., six weeks) exposure to non-aggressive pornography was able to change the attitudes and feelings of adult subjects in a laboratory setting in the direction of making sexual improprieties and transgressions seem less bad. The victims of such transgressions were also perceived to suffer less and be less severely wronged. In other words, they had become to some degree desensitized to the breaking of sexual taboos as a result of the pornography exposure.

As Dr. Jennings Bryant comments, "If the values which permeate the content of most hardcore pornography are examined, what is found is an almost total suspension of the sorts of moral judgment that have been espoused in the value systems of most civilized cultures. Forget trust. Forget family. Forget commitment. Forget love. Forget marriage. Here, in this world of ultimate physical hedonism, anything goes.

"If we take seriously the social science research literature in areas such as social learning or cultivation effects, we should expect that the heavy consumer of hardcore pornography should acquire some of these values which are so markedly different from those of our mainstream society, especially if the consumer does not have a well developed value system of his or her own."

And, of course, this is just what Dr. Bryant found in his research reported above.

### Influences of Rock Music Porn

Most people would probably agree that music itself--that is, minus the lyrics--is basically neutral. Music

gles or ditties which nearly every child--and adult--find hard to erase from consciousness. The catchy music helps anchor this information in the conscious mind and memory.

When one rock group "2 Live Crew" exults in their lyrics about the degradation of women, the joys of forcing sex on them, busting vaginal walls, and repeatedly referring to females as bitches, plus many unprintable and dehumanizing indignities, the question is, can these persuasive communications be without consequences?

Social commentator John Leo calls these "venomous messages...disguised as harmless fun...packaged and beamed to kids as entertainment."<sup>29</sup>

Stanley Crouch, a prominent critic and essayist, refers to this music as "sadistic, misogynist, hateful..."<sup>30</sup>

Columnist George Will raises the question of, "Which words are lyrics, and which are testimony?"<sup>31</sup> As he compares the explicit obscene and brutal rock music lyrics performed by a popular rock group with the court testimony of the teenagers who violently assaulted and raped the Central Park (New York) jogger several years ago, he notes that the messages, the words, the communications are essentially identical.

George Will suggests that, as a certainty, the coarsening of a community, the desensitizing of a society by these words or persuasive communications, so artfully presented, will have behavior consequences. He further notes that America today is capable of terrific intolerance about smoking, or toxic waste that threatens trout. He suggests that only a deeply confused society is more concerned about protecting lungs than minds, or trout than women.

When one of the Central Park rapists was arrested, he said, "It was something to do. It was fun." George Will asks, "Where can you get the idea that sexual violence against women is fun?" His unsettling response: "From a music store, through Walkman earphones, from boom boxes blaring forth rap lyrics."

John Leo asks the question, "Why should our daughters have to grow up in a culture in which musical advice on the domination and abuse of women is accepted as entertainment?"

## **Pornography as a Training Manual**

**W**e also have a great deal of information gained from studies treating sex offenders, suggesting that pornography is often used by them as a facilitator or "training manual" in not only acquiring their own deviation but also as a device to break down the resistance and inhibitions of their victims or targets of molestation--especially when these are children or juveniles.<sup>32</sup>

Bob Peters and Bob Navarro of the Los Angeles Police Department's Administrative

Vice Division cite an in-house study of every child molestation case referred to them during a 10-year-period which found, in 60% of the instances, adult or child pornography was used to lower the inhibitions of the children molested or to excite or sexually arouse the perpetrator of the abuse.

In another study of 43 pedophiles, they found adult or child pornography (magazines, photos or videos) involved in 100% of the cases investigated. In every interview they conducted, the officers reported the abusers repeatedly saying the same thing: "I used this stuff to stimulate the child, to break down his inhibitions."<sup>33</sup>

## **Child Pornography**

**T**he majority of producers of pornography avoid getting mixed up with child pornography. They draw a line here, and for a very simple reason. The making of child pornography (using still pictures, video or movies) requires child sexual abuse. In fact, it is a crime in progress, permanently recorded.

The most they will do is use females over the age of 17 who look much younger and

dress them as "teeny boppers" to suggest that the viewer is seeing a 12-to 15-year-old engaging in sex. Viewing and masturbating to this kind of simulated child pornography can still have major negative consequences for the voyeur in terms of creating a sexual appetite for minors.

It is mainly pedophiles who create true child pornography using children. And they do this for their own use as well as to exchange or sell the materials they produce. When this occurs, the children are doubly abused: at the time the films or videos or pictures are made, and then when others observe their victimization in the years to come and get turned on sexually by observing the children being sexually used.

Child pornography invariably produces great shame and guilt in the children involved, especially as they get older and more fully comprehend the enormity of their abuse and know that there is a permanent record of their degradation out there, circulating around for people to see--maybe future friends or their own children when grown up. Only pedophile organizations and the American Civil Liberties Union defend the distribution of child pornography, which is, of course, illegal everywhere at both national and local levels.

# **Other Considerations of Pornography's Effects**

## **People Are Affected by What They See**

**T**here is a belief strongly held by some Americans that pornography (or obscenity), while it may be vulgar and tasteless, is still essentially harmless and has no real effect on the viewer.

However, for someone to suggest that pornography cannot have an effect on you (including a harmful one) is to deny the whole notion of education, generally, or to suggest that people are not affected by what they read and see. If you believe that a pornographic book or film cannot affect you, then you must also say that Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, the Bible, the Koran or advertising have no effect on their readers or viewers. But, of course, books and other media do have an effect on their consumers.

Consider a single book by Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at any Speed*. It set in motion a whole series of events leading to legislation which

is now undoubtedly saving thousands of lives yearly on the highway and which put General Motor's Corvair out of business.

Additionally, astute businessmen would not spend billions of dollars a year on television advertising if their visual/verbal messages and imagery did not motivate people to buy deodorant, Chevies, or Pampers. Therefore, the key question is, not whether, but what kind of an effect does pornography have?

## **Use of Sexually Explicit Films To Change Sexual Behavior & Attitudes**

**M**any hundreds of sex counseling clinics in the United States daily make use of explicit sexual pictures, films, books, and videos to change couples' sexual behavior, beliefs, and attitudes. Other centers use graphic sex films in an attempt to recondition the sexual behavior of sex offenders.

However, these are as carefully selected and prescribed as a physician would in writing a prescription for a particular drug to treat a specific illness or infection. No responsible doctor would ever send a patient to a pharmacy and say, "Take anything available on the shelf." And no responsible sex therapist would ever say to a patient who had a specifically focused sexual problem, "Go down to the adult bookstore and help yourself to anything you find there."

You cannot logically argue that the kind of change which takes place in a sex counseling clinic can function only one way (just to make people healthy). The possibility certainly exists that some pornography can harm people through accidental conditioning processes or modeling and imitative learning of destructive, unhealthy, or illegal kinds of sexual activity, which some viewers may later act out. This could be especially true for more impressionable, immature, and vulnerable children and adolescents.

## Pornography As A Form of Sex Education

Consider also the spread of sex education courses through schools in the United States. The assumption is that you can change attitudes and behavior about sex through some form of teaching and instruction. If you assume that this is so (still a controversial issue among researchers), then you have to admit to the possibility that films, magazines, and books which model rape and the dehumanization of females in sexual scenes are also powerful forms of sex education. This latter type of material educates, but not necessarily in healthy ways.

Anyone who has seen much pornography knows that most of it is made by men for male consumption; is extremely sexist; gives a great deal of misinformation about human sexuality; is devoid of love, relationship, responsibility; mentions nothing about the risks of sexually transmitted diseases, and for the most part, dehumanizes both male and female participants. Pornography falsely represents sex, and some of it is very hostile to females who are often denigrated and humiliated.

If you were to regard pornography as a form of sex education, you would have to label most of it as miseducation because it presents and models scientifically inaccurate, false and misleading information about human sexuality, especially female sexual nature and response.

In addition, pornography portrays "unhealthy" or even antisocial kinds of sexual activity such as sadomasochism, abuse and humiliation of the female, involvement of minors, incest, group sex, voyeurism, exhibitionism, bestiality, etc. Thus, if we examine just its educative impact, it presents us with some grounds for concern.

### Why Some Claim 'No Effects'

Some of the educated commentators or even "experts" that I know who publicly suggest that pornography has no effects are just simply unaware of the new research/studies suggesting harm. There are others who really do not believe what they are asserting. And, there are still others who will only reluctantly admit to the possibility of harm from just "violent pornography."

In some cases, they are pretending "not to know" because of their concern over what they falsely believe is censorship or loss of First

Amendment rights. Some fear the tyranny of a moralist minority who might take away their rights to view and use pornography, then later maybe free speech and expression. And, some are themselves sex addicts with a hidden agenda behind their public posturing. Thus, for some of them, the issue is political. It also has to do with their personal values and much less with what any contrary evidence might suggest.

This is somewhat akin to the repeated and pious denial of "effects" of exposure to extreme media violence by movie and TV executives despite massive evidence to the contrary--especially concerning exposure to children. These denials, as well as the contradicting harm-evidence, have been extensively documented by Michael Medved, author of *Hollywood vs. America*.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the tobacco institute scientists are still claiming there is no proof of harm from smoking despite 30 years of carefully researched evidence to the contrary and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of victims.

One striking example of experts "speaking out of both sides of their mouths" to different audiences can be found documented in "Misrepresentation of Pornography Research, Psychology's Role," by Stewart Page.<sup>35</sup> Dr. Zillmann and Dr. Bryant also touched on this subject in a 1989 book, *Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*.<sup>36</sup>

In summary, some of the experts who deny harm are simply unaware of the new studies and research suggesting health hazards. With others, it is a matter of their personal politics and values.

## The Feminist Position On Pornography

In reviewing the evidence on the effects of pornography, brief mention should be made of the feminist position. Their general view is that a great deal of scientific studies proving or disproving harm are irrelevant and unnecessary. Pornography, on its face, is abusive and denigrating, especially of women, and you do not have to do research to prove that.

Sociologist Diana Russell states in her privately published paper, "Pornography, A Feminist Perspective" (Berkeley 1977), "Pornography is vicious, anti-woman propaganda. It tells lies about us. It degrades women. Pornography is not made to educate but to sell, and for the most part, what sells is a

## How U.S. Citizens Feel About Pornography

Morality in Media commissioned the Wirthlin Worldwide survey research company to conduct a national public opinion survey of attitudes about obscenity law enforcement. The poll, conducted in September 1997, found that 80 percent of Americans - four out of five - think the Federal laws against hardcore pornography should be vigorously enforced, and 68 percent of Americans are of the opinion that the Federal government is not vigorously enforcing these laws.

Support for vigorous law enforcement against obscenity was strong among all demographic groups: women (87% support); men (72%); high school graduates (85%); college graduates (82%); whites (81%); blacks (78%); singles (72%); married persons (83%); married with children (83%); Catholics (82%); Baptists (80%); "born again" Christians (85%); Republicans (79%); Democrats (77%); and independents (85%).

And "while public opinion clearly indicates that the vigorous enforcement of pornography legislation is preferred by a majority of Americans ... the majority of men (66%) and women (69%), regardless of age, feel that the government is not vigorously enforcing the current legislation," Wirthlin Worldwide reported.

The Wirthlin Worldwide findings are consistent with earlier public opinion surveys:

- A CBS News/New York Times national poll (November 18, 1992) found that 63 percent thought that laws against pornography are not strict enough and that 54 percent thought that reading or watching pornographic materials makes people more likely to commit violent sexual crimes.
- A Gallup poll (October 6, 1991) found that 81 percent favored "no public display or a total ban on X-rated movies, and 76 percent favored banning dial-a-porn for adults.
- A poll reported in Time in (July 21, 1986) found that "nearly two-thirds of the respondents were 'very' or 'fairly concerned' about the pervasiveness of pornography in the U.S." Seventy-two percent wanted the government to crack down harder on pornography; 77 percent indicated that X-rated movies should be illegal; 84 percent said magazines portraying heterosexual intercourse should be illegal.
- A poll reported in Newsweek (March 18, 1985) found that 73 percent of respondents believed that explicit sexual materials lead some people to commit rape or other sexual violence; 93 percent called for stricter control of magazines displaying sexual violence.

bunch of lies about sex and women. Women are portrayed as enjoying being raped, spanked or beaten, tied up, mutilated, enslaved, or they accept it as their lot as women to be victims of such experiences. In the less sadistic films, women are portrayed as turned on and sexually satisfied by doing anything and everything men order them to do. What this involves is, for the most part, totally contrary to what we know about female sexuality: i.e. it is almost totally penis-oriented, often devoid of foreplay, tenderness, or caring, to say nothing of love and romance."

Legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon argues that pornography is central to the subordination of women because it eroticizes dominance. As she puts it, "Part of the reason that women--to the extent that women do--get pleasure out of subordination has to do with their experiences of abuse very early on. Look at the rape rate. Look at the rate of child sexual abuse. Women learn to sexualize powerlessness through experiencing their sexuality under conditions of powerlessness."

"About 38% of all young girls are sexually molested before they reach the age of maturity. That means their experience of their body's being accessed, aroused, as well as the experience of being loved and approved is an

experience of violation."

MacKinnon believes that women are getting obliterated by pornography and feels that since harm occurs, one should be able to get an injunction against it.<sup>37</sup>

Susan Brownmiller sees much "woman hatred" in pornography, suggesting in her book, *Against Our Will*,<sup>38</sup> "Pornography, like rape, is a male invention, designed to dehumanize women, to reduce the female to an object of sexual access. The gut distaste that a majority of women feel when we look at pornography comes from the gut knowledge that we and our bodies are being stripped, exposed and contorted for the purpose of ridicule, to bolster that 'masculine esteem' which gets its kicks and sense of power from viewing females as anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys, dehumanized objects to be used, abused, broken and discarded."

The feminists may be right when they insist that proof of harm may be really an irrelevant issue. We do not set up Presidential commissions to decide whether prostitution or "crack houses" are harmful to the public interest or whether cigarettes can be advertised on TV.

These are all issues which, in one way or another, involve public morality, and prohibitions against them have evolved out of English common law as well as common

sense legislation using democratic procedures and processes.

It should also be noted here that in a leading obscenity case, *Paris Adult Theatre v. Slaton* (1973), the United States Supreme Court expressly rejected the argument that no regulation of obscenity is permitted without "scientific data" conclusively demonstrating that exposure to obscene materials adversely affects individuals or society.

The Court stated, in part: "If we accept the unprovable assumption that a complete education requires the reading of certain books...and the well nigh universal belief that good books, plays and art lift the spirit, improve the mind, enrich the human personality and develop character, can we then say that a state legislature may not act on the corollary assumption that commerce in obscene books, or public exhibitions focused on obscene conduct, have a tendency to exert a corrupting and debasing impact leading to antisocial behavior? Many of these effects may be intangible and indistinct, but they are nonetheless real..."

The decision concluded: "Nothing in the Constitution prohibits a State from reaching such a conclusion and acting on it legislatively simply because there is no conclusive evidence or empirical data."

## Research Methodology

**T**o the average reader uninitiated in the complexities of behavioral science and research methodology, mention should be made of an important issue which has to do with whether two things you are studying are related (correlated with each other) or whether one causes or makes the other to happen (a cause-effect relationship). You can have the first without the second and many people, even scientists, come to grief over this issue.

Correlation alone never demonstrates or proves a causal relationship, though it can be suggestive or raise that possibility.

Therefore, the sun rising each morning and a person being consistently hungry at that time are correlated events. But one does not *cause* the other to happen. However, the sun rising in the morning and the outdoor temperature increasing are correlated in a causal way.

Thus, a number of studies suggest a relationship (correlation) between early exposure to pornography and later sexual promiscuity and deviancy. Pornography could be one cause of

promiscuity.

Or, affiliation with delinquent companions could be a factor contributing to an interest in pornography as well as to participation in later promiscuous sexual activities.

Or, promiscuity and pornography could be reciprocally and causally related. We are really not sure what all the causal connections, if any, are in this instance. However, we can make some good guesses (hypotheses) which might be tested through further research.<sup>39</sup>

Sometimes the methodology of behavior science cannot disentangle all of these influences and precisely measure their individual unique contributions. But, the fact that we cannot adequately measure them does not mean that they do not occur or that they have no effects.

For example, all of the evidence linking drunk driving with high vehicular accident and fatality rates is correlational and anecdotal. However, despite this, nearly all of us would agree that there is probably a cause-

effect relationship here. And many laws have been passed as well as public policy decisions made, based on this assumption.

In addition, I have not heard of any behavioral scientists who are critical of this interpretation of the data and evidence, even though it is only "correlational."

Frequently, good judgment, correct inference, and sound logic have to be used--along with proper scientific data analysis to arrive at reasonable judgments about risk of harm. In the meantime, all people (including parents) are faced with making daily decisions, without final knowledge (as they have for eons of time) as to whether or not to continue smoking or eating foods that may be carcinogenic (even though the data suggesting their lethality is only correlational or suggestive--not conclusive) and, similarly, whether or not to expose themselves or their offspring to pornographic materials.

Nobody will ever do the definitive cause/effect study on pornography's effects

by taking young children or even pre-college adolescents, for example, in experimental and matched control groups, exposing them to various amounts of pornography or pornography, and then following them through for 25 years to see what harm might occur.

Ethical considerations would simply rule out such experiments, and few or no parents would permit it. University Human Subjects Review Committees would not approve it. The risks to the participants would be perceived as too great.

So we will continue, as in the past, to make social policy decisions and law on the basis of the best evidence available, good common sense, and the data available to us,

including that out of the laboratory of our everyday experience, in handling pornography, carcinogens in our environment, job and sex discrimination, and a number of other matters.

We need not claim that we are paralyzed or immobilized or unable to make these decisions just because there is not final conclusive proof. There never is.

While cigarette manufactures are still claiming that there is no conclusive evidence of a causal connection between smoking and lung cancer (and many other illnesses), millions of Americans have still chosen to stop smoking in recent years on the basis of what evidence that does exist.

## In Conclusion

**I**t should be emphasized in this brief essay that it is not possible to review any more than a few representative studies and summarize some of the trends of current as well as past research on pornography's effects, focusing especially on the harm issue. But the studies and other evidence set forth here should still be sufficient to give the reader a sense of the field and, thus, answer for himself or herself the question of pornography's potential to change or influence sexual attitudes and behavior in adults as well as children.

There are many people who still argue that immersing oneself in a milieu of pornography is devoid of any negative consequences. But, that perhaps reflects their unfamiliarity with the new literature and research on this issue or maybe a very protected life experience. For there do indeed exist a number of experimental, field and clinical studies, and related data that give contrary evidence.

In my clinical practice, I have daily treated both children and adults who have been unequivocally and repeatedly injured by exposure to pornography, where the cumulated evidence over many years demonstrates a cause/effect relationship between such exposure and a variety of harms.

If anyone who reviews this report still has doubts about pornography's effects, I would suggest that he or she get invited to some meetings of "Sexaholics Anonymous" or "Sex Addicts Anonymous" and personally witness the pain, trauma, and evidence first

hand. Most members of these groups, when they share their pathology and histories, will implicate pornography as a contributing facilitator of their compulsive, out-of-control sexual behavior.

These groups are located in almost every major city in America and usually meet up to seven nights a week. Their times of meeting and location can usually be found by calling AA (Alcoholics Anonymous--a related organization) which is listed in most city phone directories.

However, in fairness, it should be emphasized that, as with using alcohol or even some of the highly addictive drugs, not everyone exposed will become an alcoholic or addicted--at least in the early stages of use.

But there are risks and there seems little doubt that there are at least some people--even those who are initially healthy--who can be eventually harmed through repeated exposure to pornography. In my clinical work, I find pre-teen or adolescent males, who are mostly innocent and uninformed, being particularly vulnerable to these negative and addictive effects.

In treating patients with out-of-control sexual and pornography addictions, I have found that a combination of personal therapy, which always includes the partner's spouse (when available), and using an addiction model therapeutically, plus involvement with a 12-step Sexaholics Anonymous type group, yields the most successful healing results.

## Obscenity and the First Amendment

Obscenity is not protected speech under the First Amendment. For example, in *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15 (1973), the Court stated: "This much has been categorically settled by the United States Supreme Court, that obscene material is unprotected by the First Amendment." And, in *Roth v. United States*, 354 U.S. 476 (1957), the Supreme Court said: "We hold that obscenity is not within the area of constitutionally protected speech or press."

The First Amendment is not absolute and never has been. In fact, in addition to obscenity, there are many other kinds of speech and expression also not protected by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment--such as slander, libel, perjury, false advertising, conspiracy, yelling "fire" in the crowded theater, contempt of court, copyright violations and child pornography. The relevant statutes, designed to protect the public interest, were enacted using democratic processes and can always be revoked or modified if the elected legislatures choose to do so.

There are a few people who would like to make the First Amendment absolute, and they have every right to have that opinion and lobby Congress and their state legislatures toward that end. However, the Supreme Court, as well as Congress and every state legislature, has rejected this absolutist point of view.

Some individuals confuse anti-obscenity laws with censorship. Technically, censorship is "prior restraint" on speech by the government, and as the United States Supreme Court stated in its 1993 *Alexander v. United States* decision, the term "prior restraint" is used to describe government orders forbidding speech "when issued in advance of the time that such communications are to occur." Obscenity laws, however, operate subsequent to publication as punishments for past criminal conduct.

In a society where some types of pornographic material are protected by the Constitution and obscenity laws often go unenforced, some individuals may choose to immerse themselves in a pornographic milieu, just as some people may

choose to drink or smoke excessively or use illegal drugs. These individuals should be made cognizant of the health hazards involved. This kind of knowledge is also especially important for parents to have since most sexual

and pornographic addictions begin in middle childhood or early adolescence and most of the time without the parents' awareness or the children themselves having a sufficient understanding of the risks involved.

## Internet Porn

In the past five years porn on the Internet has virtually exploded in volume and is now the leading source of pornographic materials worldwide. Some of my porn addict patients inform me that the Internet has three major advantages in feeding their addictive sexual illnesses. They call them the three "A's": It's easily Accessible, Affordable, and Anonymous.

I have had boys in their early teens getting into this wasteland with really disastrous consequences. They told me they actively search for porn on the Internet, keying in on such words as sex, nudity, pornography, obscenity, etc. Then, once they have found how to access it they go back again and again, just like drug addicts.

Dr. Albert Cooper, a West Coast university researcher, writing in the *Journal of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, refers to this as a "cybersex addiction." He indicates that cybersex compulsives are just like drug addicts using the Internet as an important part of their sexual acting out. This is their "drug of choice," often with serious harm in their home lives and livelihood.

Dr. Mark Schwartz of the Masters & Johnson Institute in St. Louis says, "Sex on the Net is like heroin, it grabs them and takes over their lives. And it's very difficult to treat because the people affected don't want to give it up." Cybersex compulsives can become so involved with their online activities that they ignore their partners and children and risk their jobs. Another researcher (Putnam) has noted that some cybersex addicts develop a conditioned response to the computer and become sexually aroused even before turning it on. "Simply sitting down to work at the computer can start a sexual response that may facilitate online sexual activities. As with other addictions, tolerance to cybersex stimulation can develop, prompting the addict to take more and more risks to recapture the initial high." (see *New York Times*, 16 May 2000, F7)

Dr. Jennifer Schneider, a Tucson, Arizona, physician, conducted a survey of 94 family members affected by cybersex addictions and found that problems could arise even among those in loving marriages with ample sexual opportunities. "Sex on the Net is just so seductive and it's so easy to stumble upon it, people who are vulnerable can get hooked before they know it." She further commented that the damage can be as devastating as that caused by compulsive gambling or addiction to alcohol or drugs. In her survey of these 94 people in committed relationships she found they experienced serious adverse consequences, including broken relationships from those partners with cybersex addictions. Partners commonly reported feeling betrayed, devalued, deceived, ignored, and abandoned and unable to compete with a fantasy. Among those studied was a 34 year-old woman married 14 years to a minister who she discovered was compulsively seeking sexual satisfaction by visiting pornographic sites on the Internet. She commented: "How can I compete with hundreds of anonymous others who are now in our bed, in his head. Our bed is crowded with countless faceless strangers, where once we were intimate." (*New York Times*, 16 May 2000, F7).

State obscenity laws can't solve the problem since it is largely a national and international problem. However, enforcement of federal obscenity laws (18 USC 1462, 1465) would certainly reduce the amount of Internet porn, since the U.S. is the major producer at the present time. However, these laws are not being enforced; and as a result, distribution on the Internet of hardcore "adult" pornography (i.e., no children depicted) is largely unpo-

liced in the United States. At the international level, there are no treaties prohibiting hardcore "adult" porn.

Filters can be very helpful in discouraging or slowing down young family members from accessing Internet porn, but it should be clearly stated and understood that no filter is absolutely foolproof. A computer-wise user, if persistent, can nearly always breach filter defenses. So caring parents should use filters as partial protection but also have the family Internet computer in a central location where the parents can monitor and supervise its use.

It should also be noted that few parents are capable of monitoring their children (especially older children) 24 hours a day. Laws restricting minors' access to Internet porn are needed to help parents protect their children from being exposed to this addictive and often toxic material.

Most U.S. libraries allow use of their computers for Internet access but refuse to use filters to protect underage children from harmful exposure to pornography. This means that a seven year-old could potentially access explicit sexual matter representing extremes in anti-social pathology whose source could be from any place in the world. Already we are seeing children sexually abusing other children using the Internet or other media as their instruction manuals. Some might consider permitting exposure of young children to these kinds of materials a form of child abuse or, at the very least, contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

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