

THE PROBLEMS WITH PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography Is Readily Available To Minors

In practice, pornography is not “adults only”. In one study where the median age was 14 years old, 90% of boys and 60% of girls had seen at least one pornographic movie. About one in three fourteen-year-old males is a regular consumer of pornography and almost the same proportion say that pornography is a significant source of sex information.

- In one study, 100% of all high school age males surveyed reported having read or looked at *Playboy* or similar “men’s entertainment” magazines ²
- the average age when viewing first issue is 11 years old ²
- 16.1 issues is the average number seen by male high-schoolers ²
- 92% of males in junior high report exposure to *Playboy* or similar magazines ²
- a larger proportion of high school students had viewed X-rated films than any other age group ²

Child Magnets In Pornography Cater To Juveniles

An estimated 27% of *Playboy*, 33% of *Penthouse*, and 47% of *Hustler* cartoons and illustrations were identified as “child magnets”. ³ Child magnets are features that are generally unique to the children’s world of entertainment and known to attract child readers/viewers.

Teenagers Don’t Just Look, They Learn From Pornography

Many boys are introduced to the opposite sex between the pages of a magazine. A 1986 York University study showed teens 12 to 17 are, in fact, the largest consumers of pornographic materials. While girls are reading *Teen* and *Young Miss* magazine articles about relationships and feelings, boys are studying the *Penthouse* Forum and the *Playboy* Centerfold. Magazines function as the main text in a boy’s sex education; they are the two-dimensional equivalent of a young man’s first prostitute who leads him confidently and sensitively down the road to adult sensuality. However, as sexual education, pornography is tantamount to a big lie. You get a false expectation of realities. Much pornography makes it seem everyone else is having sex, in all different ways – that women are craving sex and men can go all night. Boys learn that women put out easily and are willing to do anything.

Boys often make their first precious glimpses of female nakedness in magazine pictures a bonding or activity, by passing the pictures around as part of a group consumption. They try to impress each other with their reaction. Various verbal expressions are learned--“Look at those hooters!” “What a pair of melons on that babe!”--and so forth” (p. 116) ⁵

What Are Young Boys Learning From Pornography?

That the use of force during sex is exciting to your partner, and that the use of force is justified if the female partner is at all active (i.e. if she took the initiative).¹

“Porn taught me everything I knew...The woman I was chatting with had no idea at first she had to measure up to the dozens of pets, playmates, bunnies, pieces of tail I had pored over and fantasized about this past week. They are called ‘fantasies’ but they sure become real and sink deep when you orgasm to them day in and day out for years. Nobody acknowledges the jerking off” (p. 108).⁴

The Objectification of Women

“Voyeurism and objectification are closely related. Just as the Centerfold Syndrome calls for men to become observers, it also calls for women to be the observed. Women become objects as men become objectifiers. As the culture has granted men the right and privilege of looking at women, women have been expected to accept the role of stimulators of men’s visual interest, with their bodies becoming objects that can be lined up, compared, and rated. The process is distinctly one-way, with women’s bodies highlighted and male observers remaining in the shadows or anonymous in a crowd” (p.3-4).⁵

“What’s more, one fantasy woman is never enough, since images that initially can be enormously novel and exciting can quickly lose their zip, Objectifying observers soo find one naked woman boring and routine, and look for new and different images to provoke their fascination-- ‘variety is the spice of life.’”⁵

References:

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- ³ Reisman, J.A. (1990). *Images of children, crime, and violence in Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler*. Lafayette, LA: Huntington House.
- ⁴ Dufresne, M. (1993). Getting off on sexploitation. In D. E. H. Russell (Ed.). *Making violence sexy: Feminist views on pornography* (pp.107-110). New York: Teacher’s College Press.
- ⁵ Brooks, G. R. (1995). *The centerfold syndrome: How men can overcome objectification and achieve intimacy with women*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT PLAYBOY?

The Commodification of Women

"In *Playboy*, as in all other pornographic magazines, women exist for male use. The 'brilliance' of *Playboy* was that it combined the commodification of sex with the sexualization of commodities."¹

Playboy glamorizes a compulsive quest for illusions of power and control by the relentless conquest of smaller, younger, and subjugated sexual objects.

The Dangerous Game of Sexualizing Youth

"While society is looking at ways to draw the line and say clearly that adolescent girls are not 'fair game' we see on *Playboy's* March 1996 cover, a knock-kneed adolescent in a parochial school uniform depicted as the 'stripper next door' ever ready to symbolically service all male viewers. *Playboy* continues its practice of sexualizing extreme youth, innocence, vulnerability, and submission. *Playboy* is glamorizing the adolescent student as a sexual target and perpetuating the propaganda of pedophiles that children solicit sex from adults. 'Barely Legal' schoolgirls as a genre of child pornography and pseudochild adult bookstore porn is standard fare. Recycling these images in a more legitimized commercial sex format only multiplies the harm."²



Devaluing Marriage, Women, and Violence Against Women

"Although the magazines (*Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Hustler*) editorially suggested they fulfilled a need for sex education, marriage was modeled as repugnant while wives (fat-ugly) were commonly cartooned as copulating with the family dog or other beast—in all three publications. Moreover, sexual harassment in the workplace, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, and the rape of women and children were uniformly cartooned as humorous" (p.315).³

Representations of Male Dominance

"Although soft-core pornography is not graphic or violent, it is often degrading, depicting scenes in which a person (almost always a woman) is consenting but in a clearly submissive role, apparently sexually insatiable and usually subjected to some form of humiliating behavior. All pornography portrays sex in an impersonal or dehumanizing manner, depicting women purely as objects in a nonaffectionate context" (p. 158).⁴

When Pro-Feminists Critique Playboy

Playboy has long touted a philosophy of tolerance—claiming to embrace diversity, support differing opinions and welcome varied viewpoints. And yet at the first hint of diverse opinion that doesn't toe their questionable content line they resort to narrow-minded and archaic double-standards of intolerance, screaming 'first amendment rights.' The slightest criticism draws slanderous and vitriolic attacks. Viewpoints that vary from theirs incite retaliation in the form of eighth grade trash talk, with columnists and editors regressing to the super-juiced hormonal chest-bumping of 14-year olds. Really quite surprising behavior from a group of businessmen whose platform is built upon so-called liberating tolerance.

References:

- ¹ Dines, G. & Humez, J. M. (1995). *Gender, race, and class in media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- ² Smith, L. (1996, Winter). Playboy: R & R for pedophiles. *Action agenda: Challenging sexist and violent media through education and action*, 2:11.
- ³ Reisman, J. A. (1994). Child pornography in erotic magazines, social awareness, and self-censorship. In D. Zillman, J. Bryant, & A. C. Huston, (Eds.). *Media, children, and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and clinical perspectives* (pp. 313-326). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
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IS PORNOGRAPHY JERKING YOU AROUND?

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:
Habitual use of this product may be hazardous
to your self-esteem and well-being.**

It's time we men who use pornography got more honest and self-aware about the role we've given pornography in our lives. Pornography affects our moods, our well-being, our self-esteem, and our ability to live fully. Once we've surfaced the effects pornography is having on us, we can begin to decide whether or not we'll allow those effects to continue to control us.

Check Yourself Out

Here are some effects that pornography use can have on men. Not every man experiences all of them, but chances are there is at least one effect on this list that has happened to you:

- You become dissatisfied with your sexual partner's physical appearance or how they express themselves sexually
- You become dependent on pornography in order to masturbate.
- You look at people's body parts a lot, especially the parts you look at most in pornography.
- You become attracted to people just because they remind you of people you have only seen in pornography.
- When you are having sex with someone, images or scenes you've seen in pornography "get in the way" – they come into your mind and won't go away, even if you want them to.
- You treat people the way you see people in pornography treated.
- You become more hostile or more aggressive toward your sexual partner.
- You seek out more and more violent/degrading pornography in order to get the same sexual turn-on.
- You can't feel "turned on" without pornography.

Porn Defines Sexuality For Men & Women

One way pornography works is by manipulating men's sexuality. Many men have learned a lot from pornography about what sex is supposed to be, what women are supposed to be, and what we're supposed to be as men. Pornography gives men false ideas and expectations about women's sexual nature – that women want men to possess and dominate them. Pornography also encourages us to "get off" on the objectification of women, so it gives us a false notion of our own natures as well.

Pornography As A Stimuli for Classical Conditioning

"Is it possible to stare at women's breasts or other body parts and not be treating them as objects? It is no secret that a great many men 'have sex' with these two-dimensional 'impersonations' of women – that is, they use visual pornography as masturbatory stimuli. Despite the arguments of apologists and profiteers, these glossy pictures are not 'sex aides'. Men do not use pornography to help themselves 'get into' the relationship with their partner, but use them instead of their partner. Some use pornography to masturbate instead of having sex with their partner; others have sex with the 'pornographic impersonation' during sex with their partner. American boys, adolescents, and men are being taught [classically conditioned] to become sexually obsessed with constant, intense, sexually arousing fantasies, and to make their sexual arousal more dependent upon use of nonliving objects than on real women with whom they are partnered" (p.113-114).³

Cartoons That Perpetuate Rape Myths

"There's a cartoon; it's from *Penthouse*: A man and a woman are in bed. He's on top, fucking her. The caption reads: 'I can't come unless you pretend to be unconscious.' The joke could as well have taken any number of variations: 'I can't get hard unless...I can't fuck unless...I can't get turned on unless...I can't feel anything sexual unless...' Then fill in the blanks: 'Unless I am possessing you. Unless I am superior to you. Unless I am in control of you. Unless I am humiliating you. Unless I am hurting you. Unless I have broken your will' ...autonomic nervous system surges at the thought and/or the action of forced sex, bullying sex, violent sex, injurious sex, humiliating sex, hostile sex, murderous sex. The kind of sex that puts the other person in their place. The kind of sex that keeps the other person other" (p.63).²

References:

- ¹ Men Against Pornography. (1990). Is pornography jerking you around? In M. Kimmel (Ed.). *Men confront pornography* (pp. 293-296). New York: Crown Publishers.
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PORNOGRAPHY: THE EVIDENCE OF HARM

Pornography Activates Sexual Callousness

"The fact that exposure to pornography can activate sexually calloused perceptions of women and promote manipulative and, in some instances, aggressive behaviors is highlighted clearly by the research evidence" (pp. 223-224) ¹

"...Buchman (1988) found that repeated exposure to pornography [adult, nonviolent] promoted callous perceptions of the extent of suffering experienced by child victims of sexual abuse and trivialized the sexual abuse of females, whether adults or children, as a criminal transgression" (p.219). ¹

Pornography Renders Women 'One-Down'

"It is because of pornography and the entrenchment of men in a value system that requires her to be low so he can be high; makes her subordinate so he can be a real man; sexualizes her inequality so he can get off. Pornography has become the sexuality of oppression, which lies at the heart of male sexual identity, and which has become central to the maintenance of male supremacy. I implore all men regarding this to stop using pornography and to encourage other men to do the same" (p. 7). ³

"Pornography can (a) be an important factor in shaping a male-dominant view of sexuality, (b) contribute to a user's difficulty in separating sexual fantasy and reality, (c) be used to initiate victims and break down their resistance to sexual activity, and (d) provide a training manual for abusers" (p. 33). ⁴

"The silencing pornography does is inextricably tied to what social science has documented are pornography's 'nonspeech' harms: its contribution to sexist attitudes, its encouragement of rape myths, its sexualization of dominance, and its reduction of men's inhibitions to rape" (p. 123). ⁶

How Pornography Affects Women

"Data on how pornography affects women's relationships with men demonstrate that women feel [about the presence of pornography in their homes, in their partner's hands, and in the media marketplace]:

as if they are being negatively compared to other women, 42%	as if sex were a performance, 24%
bad about their bodies, 33%	sexually inadequate, 19%
pressured to perform, 22%	emotionally distant, 15%
pressured to try sex acts, 15%	
sexually distant, 14%	

Twelve percent answered that they had "been upset by someone trying to get [them] to do what they had seen in pornographic pictures, movies, or books" (p. 87). ⁷

Facilitating and Reinforcing Sexual Addictions

"The use of sexual media is clearly associated with sexually aggressive behavior...Some believe that it can cause addiction or compulsive sexual behavior, and almost all believe that it facilitates, maintains or reinforces it...This is particularly true (a) if the pornography is arousing; (b) if it is coupled with masturbation and subsequent orgasm; (c) when alternate non-deviant fantasies are unavailable; (d) if the pornographic stimuli occurs during puberty and the 10 to 24 months afterwards (the crucial period for the development of enduring sexual propensities...); (e) if the child (at the onset of adolescence) has little or no previous sexual experience to draw on..." (pp. 263-264). ²

Pornography Blurs Boundaries for Sex Offenders

Like other men in the sex offender group, David was reluctant to place blame for his actions on anything or anyone, but he described pornography as the primary stepping stone that he took to sexually acting out. He used the concept of boundary violations in his life:

Pornography was a way to begin violating people's boundaries. And it kind of went from there. Where, like when you look at somebody engaging in sex, I think it's a violation of boundaries. That is something that should be private. So it's like I gave myself permission to voyeur on them. And the more I did that, the more liberties I took to actually act that stuff out...it's like pornography and I [slapping his hands together], we got bound up somehow. And I ended up taking permission over a long period of time to violate boundaries, and I think pornography was the beginning of that violation (p. 50). ⁴

Pornography Blurs Boundaries for College Men

"Mary Koss conducted a large national survey of over 6,000 college students selected by a probability sample of institutions of higher education. She found that college men who reported behavior that meets common legal definitions of rape were significantly more likely than college men who denied such behavior to be frequent readers of at least one of the following magazines: *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Chic*, *Club*, *Forum*, *Gallery*, *Genesis*, *Oui*, or *Hustler*" (pp.147-148). ⁵

References:

- ¹ Weaver, III, J. B. (1994). Pornography and sexual callousness: The perceptual and behavioral consequences of exposure to pornography. In D. Zillman, J. Bryant, & A. C. Huston, (Eds.). *Media, children, and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and clinical perspectives* (pp. 215-228). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
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- ⁶ Anderson, M. J. (1995). Silencing women's speech. In L. J. Lederer & R. Delgado (Eds.). *The price we pay: The case against racist speech, hate propaganda, and pornography* (pp. 122-130). New York: Hill and Wang.
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