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Pornography as a Public Health Issue: Promoting Violence and Exploitation of Children, Youth, and Adults

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Pornography as a Public Health Issue: Promoting Violence and Exploitation of Children, Youth, and Adults

Abstract

The pornography industry is expanding exponentially as a result of ongoing technological advances. The ability to stream videos over the internet and the ubiquity of the smart phone have meant that pornography producers are able to use algorithms to target potential consumers, to cultivate new sexual tastes and to deliver content to a more diverse audience over mobile devices. The advent of virtual reality pornography with interactive sex toys and sex robots imbued with artificial intelligence promises to unleash a further step-change in the extent to which pornography influences 'real-world' sexual culture. The critical analysis of pornography undertaken over decades largely by feminist academics and activists has produced a compelling account of how pornography serves to manipulate ordinary sexual interests and direct consumers towards more extreme content. The objectification of pornography performers and the promotion of the idea that they are consenting are both essential strategies to allow normal men (and, though less often, women) to feel comfortable with their pornography viewing. Drawing on interational academic literature from a range of disciplines, together with evidence from popular culture, contemporary news, and criminal law cases, this paper examines the growing body of evidence that pornography plays a pivotal and causal role in shaping real-world sexual behaviours and expectations. As the increasingly brutal fantasies represented in pornography continue to inform expectations for sexual experiences, the evidence for the detrimental consequences of this also proliferates. The nature and extent of these detrimental consequences are explored particularly with reference to three population groups: women, adolescents, and children. Having described the nature of modern pornographic content and isolated pornography as an important agent of change in sexual culture, this paper then explores the connection between the behaviours celebrated in gonzo porn and real-world sexual violence towards women. The promotion of sexually risky practices to adolescents through pornography has a material impact on sexual health as well as social wellbeing. The long-term effects of this can only be guessed at, since no generation has previously been saturated with such extreme sexual content available through such a variety of media. Measurable health outcomes as well as self-reported effects on teenagers highlight the dangers of the current trajectory. Finally, the dangers to children are emphasised in a discussion of how the fantasies encouraged by 'pseudo child porn' genres engender a sexual interest in genuine child exploitation material (CEM), which in turn increases the risk of contact abuse for children. CEM is also used by paedophiles to groom future victims and forms 'currency' within online communities of men with paedophilic interests. The rise of child-on-child sexual assault can, in many cases, be causally linked to children's access to pornography or to previous experience of sexual abuse, which is very often filmed.

Keywords

pornography, public health, violence, sexual abuse, harm, objectification, women, men, children

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PORNOGRAPHY AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE: PROMOTING VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The pornography industry is expanding exponentially as a result of ongoing technological advances. The ability to stream videos over the internet and the ubiquity of the smart phone have meant that pornography producers are able to use algorithms to target potential consumers, to cultivate new sexual tastes and to deliver content to a more diverse audience over mobile devices. The advent of virtual reality pornography with interactive sex toys and sex robots imbued with artificial intelligence promises to unleash a further step-change in the extent to which pornography influences 'real-world' sexual culture. The critical analysis of pornography undertaken over decades largely by feminist academics and activists has produced a compelling account of how pornography serves to manipulate ordinary sexual interests and direct consumers towards more extreme content. The objectification of pornography performers and the promotion of the idea that they are consenting are both essential strategies to allow normal men (and, though less often, women) to feel comfortable with their pornography viewing. Drawing on interational academic literature from a range of disciplines, together with evidence from popular culture, contemporary news, and criminal law cases, this paper examines the growing body of evidence that pornography plays a pivotal and causal role in shaping real-world sexual behaviours and expectations. As the increasingly brutal fantasies represented in pornography continue to inform expectations for sexual experiences, the evidence for the detrimental consequences of this also proliferates. The nature and extent of these detrimental consequences are explored particularly with reference to three population groups: women, adolescents, and children. Having described the nature of modern pornographic content and isolated pornography as an important agent of change in sexual culture, this paper then explores the connection between the the behaviours celebrated in gonzo porn and real-world sexual violence towards women. The promotion of sexually risky practices to adolescents through pornography has a material impact on sexual health as well as social wellbeing. The long-term effects of this can only be guessed at, since no generation has previously been saturated with such extreme sexual content available through such a variety of media. Measurable health outcomes as well as self-reported effects on teenagers highlight the dangers of the current trajectory. Finally, the dangers to children are emphasised in a discussion of how the fantasies encouraged by 'pseudo child porn' genres engender a sexual interest in genuine child exploitation material (CEM), which in turn increases the risk of contact abuse for children. CEM is also used by paedophiles to groom future victims and forms 'currency' within online communities of men with paedophilic interests. The rise of child-on-child sexual assault can, in many cases, be causally linked to children's access to pornography or to previous experience of sexual abuse, which is very often filmed.

KEYWORDS

pornography, public health, violence, sexual abuse, harm, objectification, women, men, children

Researching the pornography industry in 2001, the British writer Martin Amis observed the soul-destroying effects of pornography both on the consumer and on the consumed. He concluded that, for this very reason, pornography could never become mainstream:

Porno is littered — porno is heaped — with the deaths of feelings ... For porno to become mainstream, human beings would have to change.¹

His words are peculiarly prescient. Amis was writing when the primary distribution platform for filmed pornography was still the VCR. Now, with the proliferation of the internet and the ubiquity of the smartphone, pornography is increasingly mainstream, and it is apparent that Amis was right; pornography is changing human beings in ways we cannot afford to ignore.

Pornography now accounts for 35% of all internet downloads.² Porn Hub boasted a total of 2.8 billion visitors to its site in 2017, which equates to an average of 81 million visitors every day.³ Australia is the eighth largest consumer of pornography in the world.⁴ With an estimated annual income of a \$100 billion per year worldwide, successful pornography directors and performers are no longer social pariahs. Money brings glamour, influence and an air of artistic legitimacy. These strong international revenues also speak of a large support base of consumers who would similarly argue for the unfettered proliferation of a product they enjoy.

Concerns about the effects of pornography relate to its influence on culture, the way it shapes intimate relationships and impacts on individual physical and mental health. These concerns are particularly acute for young people, whose social, relational, neurological, and sexual development is most vulnerable to the unhealthy messages of pornography. As the market grows and competitive forces demand the production of more extreme content, this content is also being delivered to an ever-younger audience. In only three years, between 2008 and 2011, as the smartphone was taken up, the percentage of children under the age of 13 exposed to pornography jumped from 14% to 49%.⁵

¹ Martin Amis, "Rough Trade," *The Guardian*, 17 March 2001. (Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/mar/17/society.martinamis1>)

² "Internet pornography by the numbers; a significant threat to society," *Webroot*. (Available at: <https://www.webroot.com/au/en/home/resources/tips/digital-family-life/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers>.) See also, Culture Reframed. (Available at: <http://www.culturereframed.org/>) Some sources place this estimate at 50%.

³ Pornhub, "2017 Year in Review," op.cit.

⁴ Pornhub, "2017 Year in Review," op.cit.

⁵ C. Sun, A. Bridges, J.A. Johnson and M.B. Ezzell, "Pornography and the Male Sexual Script: an analysis of consumption and sexual relations," *Archive of Sexual Behaviour*, vol. 45(4), May 2016, pp. 983–94. (Available at:

Partly as a result of its enormous success, internet pornography has created its own commercial problem. Having attracted viewers to their websites, pornography producers must then keep them interested enough to return and to continue spending money. Viewers who are bored, or whose sexual appetites are sated, disengage and move away from the website. The proliferation of pornography therefore only increases competition in the market. “As more and more pornographic images become readily available, it takes much more to scratch one’s sexual itch ... that leads to the necessity for extremism. Even when it comes at the expense of the performers.”⁶ This pressure to supply consumer demand fuels so-called innovation and explains the trend towards mainstream acceptance of pornography genres that were formerly marginalised as too extreme.

In this way, the health risks endemic to the pornography industry – which include physical injury, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and psychological trauma – are magnified through popular emulation of the sexual activity normalised through hardcore pornography. The sexual behaviours of those who consume pornography are inevitably shaped by the stories and situations that pornography producers deploy to fuel the sexual fantasies of their audience. By re-enacting pornography scripts in bedrooms across the country, pornography users communicate the influence of porn-inspired expectations to their real-life partners.

A weighty body of evidence now stands in support of the contention that pornography is indeed at the heart of “the health crisis of the digital age.”⁷ The extent of the damage wrought by exposure of young people to pornography may not be fully understood until this first generation of children growing up in “Pornland”⁸ reach maturity. Already we can observe the corrosive effect of amplifying and broadcasting the toxic content of pornography into mainstream culture. This paper proposes to summarise some of the implications of the normalisation of hardcore pornography for public health, looking particularly at:

- safety risks to women that result from the eroticisation of violence;
- evidence of the detrimental influence of pornography on the physical, mental and sexual health of adolescents;

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25466233>), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-014-0391-2>.) Seventy percent of porn viewing in Australia is over portable devices. “Going Down Under: Australia,” Porn Hub, 5 November 2015. (Available at: <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/pornhub-australia>).

⁶ Mark Shrayber, “Here’s the Dangerous and Grotesque Anal Sex Trend You’ve Always Wanted,” *Jezebel*, 19 June 2014. (Available at: <http://jezebel.com/heres-the-dangerous-and-grotesque-anal-sex-trend-you-ve-1593038946>). The effects of pornography viewing on the brain indicate that there is a biochemical reason for this, as the brain craves sexual novelty to stimulate new releases of dopamine. (See S. Negash, N. Van Ness Sheppard, N.M. Lambert, and F.D. Fincham, “Trading Later Rewards for Current Pleasure: Pornography Consumption and Delay Discounting,” *The Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 53(6), 2016, pp. 698–700. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1025123> ; P. Banca et al., “Novelty, conditioning, and attentional bias to sexual rewards,” *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, vol. 72, 2016, pp. 91–101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2015.10.017>

⁷ *Culture Reframed* Web site. See <http://www.culturereframed.org/>.

⁸ Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked our Sexuality*, North Melbourne, 2010.

- and the danger pornography poses to children through the normalisation of sexual attraction for minors as well as evidence that pornography is implicated in rising levels of child-on-child sexual assault.

Hardcore pornography is now mainstream

Before the effects of pornography can be properly understood, it is important to describe the nature of the material commonly consumed in today's market. It is particularly important to expunge any fond ideas that the majority of modern pornography consists of 'soft porn'; films aimed at the couples market, intended to engage, interest, and titillate⁹. Many may associate soft porn with girls in frilly knickers having unlikely sex throughout a laughably weak plot-line. Even 20 years ago, these films were becoming unexciting, and consumer revenues began to be diverted instead to 'gonzo' or 'wall-to-wall' pornography, characterised by non-stop sexual acts, with no attention to plot, but featuring up-close camera involvement in the sexual activity and/or point of view (POV) camera angles, showing heterosexual sex from the man's point of view. This was usefully summarised by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation in their submission to the 2016 Australian Senate Inquiry into the *harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet*:

Typical X-rated pornographic scenarios comprise 'kissing, sexual touching, masturbation, fellatio, vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, and cunnilingus. Typical practices depicted also include 'double penetration' (where two men simultaneously have vaginal and anal intercourse with one woman, one woman kneeling between two or more men and practising fellatio on each in turn, and one woman engaged simultaneously in vaginal or anal intercourse with one man or two men and fellatio with a second or third man. 'Two additional sexual practices have become staples in pornography. It is standard practice in heterosexual pornography for the male partner to withdraw from intercourse or fellatio before orgasm to ejaculate on the body or face of his female partner. Male-female anal intercourse is a second, almost mandatory, inclusion in pornographic depictions of heterosexual sex. These scenarios, which would have been judged obscene 50 years ago now are part of 'mainstream' pornographic experience.¹⁰

⁹ Some commentators have argued that pornography might have a positive influence on established relationships. (See, for example, Bettina Ardnt, *The Sex Diaries*, Melbourne, 2009). These arguments are generally made in defense of soft porn, not hardcore porn. Renowned clinical psychologists, Drs John & Julie Gottman, who specialise in intimate relationships and sexuality describe their own shift from initial acceptance of pornography as potentially beneficial to couples, to recognising it as "a serious threat to couple intimacy and relationship harmony." (Drs John and Julie Gottman, "An Open Letter on Porn," *The Gottman Institute: A research-based approach to strengthening relationships*, 5 April 2016. Available at: <https://www.gottman.com/blog/an-open-letter-on-porn>).

¹⁰ The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, Submission 89, Australian Senate Inquiry into the *Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet*, 2016, p. 4. (Available at: https://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Online_access_to_porn/Submissions); Michael Flood and Clive Hamilton, "Youth and Pornography in Australia –

Dr Robi Sonderegger's 2007 analysis of 50 best-selling gonzo films revealed:

- physical aggression in over 88% of the scenes (including shoving, biting, pinching, hair pulling, open-hand slapping or spanking, gagging, choking, whipping, threatening with a weapon, kicking, closed-fist punching, bondage/confining, using weapons, torturing, mutilating and attempting murder);
- an average of 11.5 of these acts featured per scene;
- verbal aggression towards women in 48% of the scenes (name calling/insults, threatening physical harm and/or using coercive language);
- negative responses from the women (such as a request to stop) in fewer than 5% of the scenes; and
- positive behaviours towards women (such as compliments, kissing or laughter) in fewer than 10% of the scenes.¹¹

Depictions of non-consenting sexual acts, including 'upskirting', rape, bestiality, and sexual torture are also common tropes in gonzo pornography:

There is no way to tell if the sites show images of actual rapes or staged depictions. The victims are usually tied with rope or other restraints, a weapon is shown being used, and typically the victim's face is depicted as screaming or expressing pain... Accompanying text accentuates the violent nature of the images depicted or available for a fee, using such language as 'rape', 'torture', 'abuse', 'brutal' and 'pain.'¹²

Videos featuring these would be 'Refused Classification' and banned from sale or hire by the Office of Film and Literature Classification but, in Australia, they are accessible over the internet, often without paying for the images and without the need for age verification.¹³

The gonzo genre was pioneered by Paul Little, aka "Max Hardcore," who now has over 800 titles to his name, including *Anally Ripped Whores*, *Anal Agony*, *Hardcore Schoolgirls* and *Max! Don't F*** Up My Mommy*. The promotional copy

evidence on the extent of exposure and likely effects," *The Australia Institute*, 2003, p. ix. (Available at: <http://www.tai.org.au/node/915>).

¹¹ Robi Sonderegger, "Neurotica: Modern Day Sexual Repression," Melinda Tankard Reist, and Abigail Bray, (eds.), *Big Porn Inc: exposing the harms of the global pornography industry*, Melbourne, 2015, p. 70; Ana Bridges, Robert Wosnitzner, Erica Scharrer, Chyng Sun and Rachel Liberman, "Aggression and sexual behaviour in best-selling pornography videos: a content analysis update," *Violence Against Women*, 2010, vol. 16(10), pp. 1065–1085. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801210382866>

¹² Submission 89, The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, op. cit., p. 4. (Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Online_access_to_porn/Submissions).

¹³ Unlike Australia, the UK implemented filters for pornography in 2013 and now has age-verification for access to pornography sites. ("Stricter Age-Verification For Porn Sites Now Required In The UK," *Fight the New Drug*, 6 November 2017. (Available at: <https://fightthenewdrug.org/age-verification-for-porn-sites-now-required-in-the-uk/>)

for *Anally Ripped Whores* indicates the sexual tastes that Hardcore aims to cater for:

F**k softcore couples movies! We, at Pure Filth, know exactly what you want, and we're giving it to you. Chicks being ass f**ked till their sphincters are pink, puffy and totally blown out. Adult diapers just might be in store for these whores when their work is done!¹⁴

Max Hardcore's style is now commonly emulated by other pornography producers. In one of these imitations, for example:

... a young woman is gangbanged, instructed to crawl across the floor on all-fours while stating repeatedly, "I'm a f***ing whore," and then directed to drink the contents of a dog bowl, the side of which reads "SH**-HOLE," into which her costars (sic) have ejaculated.¹⁵

Analysing the content of gonzo pornography, Dr Gail Dines has noted that each sex act is designed to eroticise the power imbalance depicted between men and women:

Whether the man is choking her with a penis or pounding away at her anus until it is red raw, the goal of porn sex is to illustrate how much power he has over her. It is what he wants when, where, and how he wants it because he controls the pace, the timing and the nature of the acts ... The power that men have over women in porn sex is encoded into the sex acts and the physical and verbal abuse that accompanies them.¹⁶

One of the main hallmarks of gonzo pornography is extremely rough anal sex, the goal of which is to hurt and/or physically and psychologically damage the woman. Gagging or choking are important expressions of male dominance; quantities of mascara are applied so the viewer can clearly appreciate the evidence of tears streaming down the woman's face as she is being choked. The message of gonzo pornography is repeated over and over: "You can't debase these women enough, because they love it – however much you hurt her, she loves it and wants more."¹⁷

Sexual pathology normalised

Although gonzo is mainstream and always hardcore, it is not the only form of degradation eroticised in pornography. A variety of pornography sub-genres cater

¹⁴ <https://www.hotmovies.com/video/28517/Anally-Ripped-Whores/>

¹⁵ Susannah Breslin, "The Reverse Cowgirl," 6 October, 2008. (Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20081010120322/http://reversecowgirlblog.blogspot.com/2008/10/to-max.html>)

¹⁶ Gail Dines, *Pornland*, p. xxiv–xxv. This explains why gonzo contains very few scenes in which one man has sex with multiple women, despite the fact that, for many men, this represents "a time-worn fantasy." Such a ratio could potentially invert the presumption of absolute male dominance which is essential to the erotic fantasy of gonzo porn. (Gail Dines, *Pornland*, p. xxv).

¹⁷ Dines, *Powerful Pornland Conference*, Melbourne, 2011.

for every fetish. In 2017, Pornhub's most popular genres included: lesbian; hentai, MILF (Mothers I would Love to F***), step mom, step sister, mom, teen, Japanese, massage, anal, ebony, cartoon, overwatch; Asian; threesome; virtual reality; creampie (which involves condomless ejaculation into either a vagina or anus with subsequent visible dripping of semen); big ass, cheerleader and gangbang.¹⁸ Sonderegger's 2010 study of popular pornographic sub-genres observed that many of these fetishes represented in pornography subgenres "almost perfectly match the clinical forms of sexual paraphilia acknowledged in forensic psychiatry."¹⁹

The empirical literature refers to sexually neurotic thoughts and behaviours as paraphilia. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-4) 'paraphilia is characterised by recurrent, intense sexual urges, fantasies, or behaviours that involve unusual objects, activities, or situations.' More specifically, paraphilia generally involves '1) nonhuman objects, 2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner, or 3) children or nonconsenting persons.'²⁰

Most mainstream pornography celebrates and normalises sexual behaviours which are thus recognised as pathological. Amis's reflections also frankly observed the potential of pornography to uncover hidden pathologies, even in well-adjusted individuals:

Gore Vidal once said that the only danger in watching pornography is that it might make you want to watch more pornography; it might make you want to do nothing else but watch pornography. There is, I contend, another danger. As I sampled some extreme productions on the VCR in my hotel room, I kept worrying about something. I kept worrying that I'd like it. Porno services the 'polymorphous perverse': the near-infinite chaos of human desire. If you harbour a perversity, then sooner or later porno will identify it. You'd better hope that this doesn't happen while you're watching a film about a coprophagic pig farmer – or an undertaker.²¹

Pornography consumers are now venturing where Amis knew better than to tread. The common indulgence of personal 'perversities' by consumers of internet pornography means that these perversities are no longer fringe; they are no longer hidden, recognised as shameful or even acknowledged as peculiar.

A logic of non-judgement has emerged, supported by sexual rights activists and academics,²² which challenges the traditional "charmed inner circle of acceptable sexualities."²³ Just because something isn't your cup of tea, why deny anyone else

¹⁸ Pornhub, "2017 Year in Review," op. cit. Further pornographic subgenres are listed in Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pornographic_subgenres

¹⁹ Sonderegger, op.cit., p. 72.

²⁰ Sonderegger, op. cit., p. 71, quoting the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-4)*, American Psychiatric Association, 2000, pp. 535, 566.

²¹ Amis, "Rough Trade."

²² For example, Alan McKee, Katherine Albury, and Catharine Lumby, *The Porn Report*, Melbourne University Publishing, 2008.

²³ Gayle Rubin (noted feminist anthropologist and founder of the first lesbian S&M night-club in Chicago) used this term in her 1984 essay "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical

their harmless pleasure? This normalisation of formerly fringe sexual practices feeds a cultural narrative which celebrates and demands free sexual expression for the individual. Pursuit of a sexual thrill justifies behaviour such as violence and brutality which, in other contexts, would be regarded as criminal. This has created a situation in which even those (particularly children but also women) who may have nothing to do with pornography themselves – and who may be entirely ignorant of its socially corroding influences – are affected by the behaviours of those who have as they re-enact the sexual scripts of pornography.²⁴

Isolating pornography as the agent of change in sexual behaviours

Dines has explained that the objectification of women in pornography is essential to the commercial success of the product. Since most men who use pornography are not sexual sadists and would not normally find the torture of a woman in real life arousing, it is essential for pornography producers to present the pornography performer as essentially different from real-life women; rather, these performers are ‘whores,’ ‘sluts,’ or ‘cum dumpsters’ – strange creatures who enjoy their humiliation and degradation:

That woman who is grimacing and is in pain and is crying, she’s not like your mother, your girlfriend, your sister, she’s different, she’s a whore, she’s a slut, she’s a cum dumpster ... If men who were using porn looked in her eye and they saw her as a human being, that would kill the erection stone dead.²⁵

Professor Michael Flood has pointed out that several factors mediate the impact of pornography on different viewers and in different circumstances. The age, gender, maturation, and sexual experience of the viewer all constitute important variables that may moderate the influence of pornography viewing. Other variables include the individuals’ cultural background, their family circumstances, their personality, and their current emotional state. Some viewers are more active and involved than others. Young men watching pornography in company with other boys may be erotically less engaged with the material than an individual using pornography as a masturbatory aid on his own. On the other hand, the collective experience may have the effect of normalising acceptance of the sexual practices and attitudes depicted. Many factors therefore influence the degree to which viewing pornography impacts different individuals.²⁶

Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” to describe the divide between sexualities that adhere to the traditional, married heterosexual model and those that fall outside this model. (Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121224204605/http://www.feminish.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Rubin1984.pdf>)

²⁴ According to Porn Hub figures, porn consumers are still predominantly men, although female viewers now constitute a significant minority. In 2017, 26% pornography viewers were women. (“2017 Year in Review,” op.cit).

²⁵ Dines, *Powerful Pornland Conference*, op. cit.

²⁶ Michael Flood, Submission 250, Australian Senate Inquiry into *the Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet*, 2016, p. 9. (Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Online_access_to_porn/Submissions).

Culture is complex, and some may argue that it is overly simplistic to draw a direct cause-effect connection between the consumption of pornography and subsequent real-life emulation of porn-inspired sexual behaviours. This may be true on an individual level; not every man who views pornography will be equally tempted to mistreat their next sexual partner. On the other hand, at a cultural level, the connection is undeniable. The influence of commercial pornography can be isolated as a causal factor with more surgical precision where the introduction of pornography can be seen to result in changes to sexual behaviour within a narrow timespan and in the absence of other obvious influences. Sheila Jeffreys comments that:

[w]here pornography is introduced quite suddenly to an indigenous culture it may be possible to identify more easily the ways in which women's status is damaged. In western societies, pornography has been normalized over 40 years. As this has taken place the rhetoric of sexual freedom, free speech and sexual liberation has been used to justify it. It may be hard now for citizens to turn around and observe the harm that pornography has wrought because its values have become so much a part of many areas of culture.²⁷

In traditional societies then, where the observed changes in sexual behaviour can be attributed to no other obvious cause and where the pornography consumers themselves attribute their new sexual appetites to pornography consumption, the arguments for a direct causal connection between consumption and re-enactment of porn-inspired behaviour become much harder to dismiss. Jeffreys has pinpointed pornography as the significant factor in the transformation of sexual behaviours in traditional communities in the Northern Territory of Australia and Papua New Guinea.²⁸ In both places, traditional restrictions on sexual activity for adolescents were swept aside shortly following the introduction of commercial pornography, with the result that sexual abuse of children, gang rape and sexual violence are now alarmingly frequent.²⁹

Jeffreys quotes the earlier work of Dr Carol Jenkins who recorded the results of interviews conducted with focus groups in Papua New Guinea. When asked about his recent movie viewing, one boy replied that he couldn't remember the title of the movie but that it was acted by white people:

I saw them naked, they played around with their sexual organs, sucking each other's sexual organs – they f*** like wild dogs ... [I] could not control my feelings. I lost control, my penis expanded and expanded. Some of the boys, when they saw it, they held on to their expanded penis and tried to control it, but they couldn't ... when I came outside when I saw girls I really was tempted to rape them. I wanted to put into practice what I saw that made me sexy.³⁰

²⁷ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Industrial Vagina: The political economy of the global sex trade*, Abingdon, 2009, pp. 81–82

²⁸ Jeffreys, op. cit., pp. 82–84

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Quoted in Jeffreys, op. cit., p. 84.

A similar swift change in sexual behaviour following the introduction of pornography has been noted more recently among the Maasai of Tanzania, where the introduction of the smartphone (and thus pornography) led to changes in sexual practices which had been regulated by a long tradition in order to protect women's procreative capacities. An Australian development worker living in Tanzania between 2010 and 2015 has recalled the concerns of the Maasai women at the implications of these changes for their status as child-bearers:

In the first half of 2015, some of the women approached my team members and myself (all women) to discuss Western sexual practices. It became apparent as the conversation unfolded that they had begun experiencing changes in male expectations during sex since the introduction of smartphones into their community over the preceding twelve months. When asked for details regarding common sexual practice in Maasai relationships the women stated that there were clear rules and taboos when it came to intercourse and that, up until recently, women, as child-bearers, were able to enforce these restrictions through various rites and social pressures. However, as the men became more exposed to pornographic material they also became more demanding of sexual deviations from normal practice.

Some of the notable changes in behaviour included:

- Fondling of the breasts – traditionally breasts were considered the purview of babies and not part of the sex act;
- Rapid and aggressive penetration – there are many cultural taboos surrounding penetration during intercourse. These are considered of central importance to protecting a woman's fertility;³¹
- Sex during pregnancy – as with restricted penetration, taboos surrounding sex during pregnancy are considered vital for ensuring the safety of an unborn child. Now, however, women are for more likely to be pressured into having sex during pregnancy; and
- Anal sex, oral sex and other abnormal sexual positions – Maasai have a standard sexual position from which there has historically been very little deviation. However, as a result of pornography, the women are being required to adopt a variety of positions and roles during the sex act that they find painful, strange and degrading.³²

The use of pornography as an aid to masturbation presupposes a certain level of imaginative engagement with sexual fantasy presented as reality. It should hardly be surprising that the sexual behaviour of those who consume pornography is shaped by it and this is now confirmed by an abundance of scientific literature, even for western societies where the cultural influences may be more diffuse. One expert has written:

³¹ According to the same source: "Men who are identified as having a member of longer than acceptable proportions are required to pay a higher bride price (to compensate for the risk of damage) and limit their penetration during sex. With the introduction of pornography, the women reported more violent penetration and an increasing disregard for the value inherent to their status as child-bearers."

³² This text was kindly contributed by an Australian development worker known personally to the author.

An overwhelming number of empirical studies have now established a significant relationship between the consumption of sexually explicit media and sexual delinquency. Irrespective of additional mediating/moderating variables, pornography contributes directly to pro-sexual-offending attitudes, intimate relationship difficulties, sexual callousness, disinterest in the suffering of others, and desensitisation to violence against women, acceptance of male dominance and female servitude, leniency toward rapists in legal proceedings, accepting various rape myths (that rape can be justified), self-assessed proclivity to force sex on women, and the direct instigation of sexual assault.³³

Almost invariably, women in gonzo pornography respond to aggression and violence either with “expressions of pleasure (such as encouragement, sexual moans) or neutrally.”³⁴ The message that women love being degraded, hurt, injured and insulted is the crucial message that pornography is communicating to its predominantly male audience.³⁵ Inevitably, this message is reshaping male sexuality. Dines warns that “never before have we brought up a generation of boys with hardcore pornography accessible 24/7.”³⁶ This is a social experiment. We can have no clue as to where it will end. The indications so far are that, particularly for women, teenagers and children, the dangers incubated by pornography are far from hypothetical.

Pornscripts re-enacted: sexual violence for real-world women

Pornography perpetuates various myths about rape and sexual coercion – that women actually enjoy it, or, even if they don’t enjoy it, that they deserve it; that they are ‘dirty sluts’ who ‘asked for it.’ Women in pornography never say ‘no,’ and even when they do, the projected narrative is that ‘they don’t really mean it.’ The acts depicted in pornography films are legitimised by the presupposition that the performers consented to participate in making the film. In reality, this consent may be mythical or highly compromised.³⁷ For example, Regan Starr, who performed in *Rough Sex 2*, described her subjective experience of her treatment on set:

³³ Sonderegger, op. cit., pp. 74–75. Quoting Davide Dettore and Alberto Giannelli, “Explorative survey on the level of online sexual activities and sexual paraphilias,” *Abstracts from the 9th Conference of the European Federation of Sexology*, vol. 17(1), 2008, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1158-1360\(08\)72539-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1158-1360(08)72539-8) ; William Marshall, “Revisiting the use of pornography by sexual offenders: Implications for theory and practice,” *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, vol. 6(1/2), 2000, pp. 67–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600008413310> ; and Max Waltman, “Rethinking Democracy: Pornography and Sex Inequality,” *Paper presented at the Western Political Science Association (WPSA)*, San Diego, 2008, pp. 1–41.

³⁴ Robert Jensen “Stories of a rape culture: pornography as propaganda,” Melinda Tankard Reist, and Abigail Bray, (eds.), *Big Porn Inc: exposing the harms of the global pornography industry*, Melbourne, 2015, p. 31.

³⁵ According to Porn Hug figures 26% of those who view pornography are women. (“2017 Year in Review,” op. cit.)

³⁶ Dines, *Powerful Pornland Conference*, Melbourne, 2011.

³⁷ Melissa Farley, “Pornography is Infinite Prostitution,” Melinda Tankard Reist, and Abigail Bray, (eds.), *Big Porn Inc: exposing the harms of the global pornography industry*, Melbourne, 2015, pp. 150–159; M. Tyler, “Harms of production: Theorising pornography as a form of prostitution,” *Women’s Studies International Forum*, vol. 48, 2015, p. 114.

I got the s**t kicked out of me ... I was told before the video – and they said this very proudly, mind you – that in this line most of the girls start crying because they're hurting so bad... I couldn't breathe. I was being hit and choked. I was really upset, and they didn't stop. They kept filming. You can hear me say, 'Turn the f***ing camera off,' and they kept going.³⁸

The scenes depicted in pornography are not the result of special effects, as in other movie genres. The physical punishments of gonzo are enacted upon real women, whose bodies have real limits.³⁹ In the pursuit of 'more extreme stuff,' gonzo pornography tests those limits, challenging the boundaries of legality in its quest. The sexual excitement generated for the viewer is predicated upon the woman's powerlessness and the man's (or men's) unrestricted prerogative to do whatever he wants to her.

"Wild sex" can be deadly

The events leading to the death of Lynette Daley in 2011 on a beach in northern New South Wales exemplify the dangers that the normalisation of violent sexual practices poses for women. The Coroner's report found that Daley died of massive blood loss from internal injuries which "were more severe than those which occur in even precipitous childbirth."⁴⁰ Evidence presented in court spoke of two lacerations, located on the inner and outer parts of Daley's genitals, caused when Adrian Attwater inserted his fist or part of his hand into her body, "thrusting vigorously." When questioned by police, Attwater admitted: "It was my f***** hand." In other words, 'fisting' (which is celebrated in pornography sex) appears to have caused the violent death of Lynette Daley.⁴¹

At the time of her death, Daley had a blood alcohol content of 3.52 as well as traces of methamphetamine. The Director of Public Prosecutions correctly noted that, in these circumstances, her lack of resisting cannot be interpreted as consent. Despite this, Attwater and Paul Maris (who was implicated in the sex proceeding Dailey's death) pleaded not guilty to rape, manslaughter and aggravated sexual assault in company. Attwater maintained that the "wild sex session" that killed Daley was consensual, that Daley never indicated she was in pain and that he and Daley had engaged in such activity previously, without the need for subsequent hospitalisation. His comment on camera that "girls will be girls and boys will be

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.11.014> ; Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Pornography as trafficking," *Michigan Journal of International Law*, vol. 26(4), 2005, pp. 993–1012.

³⁸ Martin Amis, op. cit., (Khan Tusion, the director of the Rough Sex series, denying the evidence of his own film, simply contradicted her saying "Regan Starr categorically misstates what occurred").

³⁹ Dines, *Powerful Pornland Conference*, Melbourne, 2011.

⁴⁰ "Two men who had violent sex with a woman too drunk to consent left her for dead and burned the blood-soaked mattress," *Yahoo News*, 3 February 2016. (Available at: <https://au.news.yahoo.com/nsw/a/30724520/two-men-who-had-violent-sex-with-a-woman-too-drunk-to-consent-left-her-for-dead-and-burned-the-blood-soaked-mattress/#page1>).

⁴¹ Clair Morton, "Lynette Daley rape trial hears shocking evidence," *The Dailey Examiner*, 1st August 2017. (Available at: <https://www.dailyexaminer.com.au/news/trial-over-lynette-daleys-death-begins/3207155/>).

boys"⁴² appears to indicate that he does not regard fisting as an unusual sexual activity. Indeed, the defence case argued that Attwater could not have “reasonably assumed that the sexual activity they engaged in could have caused her serious injury.”

It seems unlikely that Attwater would consider fisting to be a normal part of ‘wild sex’ without some prior exposure to pornography or its narratives.⁴³ No information on his personal viewing history is publicly available. Nor is it necessary to establish that pornography was the principle inspiration behind Attwater and Maris’s behaviour to nevertheless make the point that the very behaviour which is glamorised in pornography and presented as erotic ‘wild sex,’ is potentially lethal to real-life women.

Gang rape or consensual group sex?

A 2017 case heard by the Downing Centre District Court in Sydney provides further illustration of how pornography celebrates behaviours that are criminally culpable in the real world. In this case, three men (aged from 25 to 27) pleaded not guilty to multiple charges including aggravated sexual assault in company and inflicting actual bodily harm. Their 16-year-old victim was a Facebook friend of one of the men who invited her to a party where she was the only female present and where, according to her testimony, she had a spiked beer poured down her throat. The Crown argued that she was too intoxicated to consent to sex.

The girl professed to have no recollection of events at the party other than waking up naked, sore and bleeding. The case only came before the court because a GoPro video of events at the party later came to the attention of police who, recognising the behaviour shown as probably criminal, then searched for the girl in question. According to one newspaper report of this case, the 17-minute video shows a group of men having sex with the girl, “sometimes ... simultaneously, sometimes taking turns.” The teen (who is understood to be intellectually challenged with the verbal capacity of an eight-year-old) can repeatedly be heard saying she’s tired and wants a blanket before one man says “I’ll get this f**king party started, c***.” Other notable comments include, “just bend her over the bed,” “one by one we’ll all get a f***.”⁴⁴

The behaviour described mirrors a pornography script: there are several men having sex with one girl; “sometimes simultaneously” strongly suggests double penetration; her wishes to be left alone are ignored; she is objectified, stripped of personality, feelings, and humanity and reduced, insultingly, only to ‘c***.’

⁴² Clair Morton, op.cit.

⁴³ The Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships (*ASHR2*) in 2014, found that fisting was practiced by less than 1% of the population and then, most commonly, in the gay community. (J. Richters, R.O. de Visser, P.B. Badcock, A.M.A. Smith, C. Rissel, J.M. Simpson and A.E. Grulich, “Masturbation, paying for sex, and other sexual activities: the second Australian Study of Health and Relationships,” *Sexual Health*, vol. 11, 2014, p. 461–471, <https://doi.org/10.1071/sh14116>).

⁴⁴ Andrew Koubaridis, “Gang rapists, who filmed victim with a GoPro camera, jailed,” *News.com*, 19 January 2018. (Available at: <http://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/courts-law/gang-rapists-who-filmed-victim-with-a-gopro-camera-jailed/news-story/8ab01a8c9571502e5192ed74913f95c5>)

Intriguingly, the three principal defendants and their respective lawyers argued that this sexual contact was consensual and that “the complainant can be seen co-operating.”⁴⁵ According to Stevenson, one of the defendants:

[She was] actively participating ... She never tried to stop anything, never said no ... to stop ... I had no doubt it was consensual.⁴⁶

The beliefs informing these arguments deserve closer examination. Since the video evidence (a rarity for a rape trial) prevents the defence casting doubt on what the men did and said, their case rested entirely on questioning the girl’s response to these behaviours – whether she consented; whether she ‘participated’ or ‘co-operated’ (we can infer that they meant willingly).

In the absence of positive evidence to affirm that this particular 16-year-old girl had a pre-established predilection for multi-partner sex, double penetration, and verbal abuse, it is difficult to imagine how *consent* could possibly be construed from the scene described, unless the defence believed – or, more importantly, expected the court to believe – that positive responses to the behaviours described might be normal for a very young woman in this situation. The idea that this girl was exercising sexual agency in consenting to her treatment ignores the obvious fact that (just as in pornography films), the sexual excitement for the men is derived from her complete powerlessness.⁴⁷

Understanding that the defence must clutch at whatever straws might present themselves, it is nevertheless astonishing, given the video evidence that a not guilty plea was even advanced by the defendants. What took place is either an horrific gang rape of a vulnerable young girl barely over the legal age for sex, criminally punishable by significant prison sentences, or this is a picture of a young girl who enjoys a harmless bit of kink. The fact that it takes a court to decide which of these polar opposites is represented by the footage demonstrates that the savage narratives of pornography are leaking into assumptions about human sexuality among the general population – that sexual pathology is normal. This ‘leakage’ poses inherent dangers for real-world women everywhere. If a court-room of trained legal minds, who (unlike the defendants themselves) are not affected by the excitement of a drunken party, can still argue that the sexual activity depicted was consensual (and the case for the defence depended on establishing sufficient doubt on this score), what hope has the average porn-affected man on the street (or at a party) to distinguish between rape and consensual sex?

Normalising, even celebrating, sexual aggression towards women

Headlines are, of course, only the tip of the iceberg. The blurring of the lines of what is normal and what is brutal is affecting women every day in ways that are unlikely to reach the courts or attract media attention. Anyone cocooned in a stable

⁴⁵ “GoPro rape accusation: Video allegedly shows men having sex with 16-year-old,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 July 2017. (Available at: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/gopro-rape-accusation-video-allegedly-shows-men-having-sex-with-16yearold/news-story/3040c558e6beca2b5c3d33974c60e44f>).

⁴⁶ Andrew Koubaridis, op.cit.

⁴⁷ In the end, the court did not believe this was consensual. Seven men were charged over the assault, three received jail sentences of between six and 13 years.

relationship or over the age of 35 might be shocked at how singles dating culture is changing. Sex is now expected, even on the first date,⁴⁸ and anecdotal reports from women being choked during this sex abound. Sometimes, women in this situation communicate their distaste by voting with their feet but others, disturbingly, are resigning themselves to the idea that this treatment is an inevitable part of a sexually active lifestyle.

Evidence for this is anecdotal but commonplace. When it first came to my attention, I was shocked and skeptical. I mentioned it to the very next single woman in her 30s that I met – a confident, intelligent, tertiary-educated feminist. I wondered if she had heard similar rumours. After a small hesitation, she said “Oh, well ... I’ve been choked.” She then provided me with a brief account of the circumstances: casual sex with a partner she didn’t know well, and in the middle of it, unexpectedly finding she was being throttled. She told me that she just froze at which point her partner also stopped. Feeling the sudden need for a shower, she extricated herself from his grip. On returning, her partner reproached her for her sudden frigidity, saying, “Well! That was a big turn-off.”⁴⁹

This young woman found this experience traumatic, but, being analytical, was still confused months later about his reaction, wondering why this man had thought choking was so normal as to require no previous conversation. “Surely,” she reasoned, “If you had a thing for dressing up in furry suits, you would mention that beforehand? Equally, if you have a thing for choking your partner, wouldn’t that be worthy of prior discussion?” She guessed that something must be going on in male culture to account for his expectation that she would respond positively to strangulation. As in the case examined earlier, the connection between the behaviours celebrated in gonzo pornography and real-world violence to women seems inescapable. This woman’s one-time partner – apparently respectable and intelligent – was rehearsing the behaviours he had observed in pornography or heard communicated through a male culture influenced by pornography. Without apparent malice, he was acting upon popular myths promulgated by pornography that sexual violence is normal and that women will appreciate it.⁵⁰

Choking in popular culture

Further research reveals that choking is widely promoted in both male and female popular literature as bringing an extra *frisson* to the bedroom. A Google search on “choking as sex play” brings up 62,100,000 results. In an article entitled “Choking as a Sex Move—Is It for You?” *Women’s Health Magazine* explains to its readers:

⁴⁸ Emma Gray, “On Aziz Ansari And Sex That Feels Violating Even When It’s Not Criminal,” *Huffington Post*, 19 January 2018. (Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/aziz-ansari-sex-violating-but-not-criminal-us_5a5e445de4b0106b7f65b346).

⁴⁹ Some while later, in the course of treatment, this woman’s physiotherapist touched her on the neck and she recoiled violently. Recovering herself quickly, she apologised and explained her reaction, to which the physiotherapist replied understandingly that she had a lot of women clients who reported something similar.

⁵⁰ See Kate Manne, *Down girl: The logic of misogyny*, New York, 2018 for discussion of prevalence of woman killing through strangulation. Choking and gagging that features in pornography and heterosexual sexual situations also features in the murder of women.

Experimenting with breath control, or scarfing (using a scarf to constrict breathing), can be an exhilarating experience for some people ... Having a man's hands around your neck plays into the fantasy of being taken, also known as ravishment ... The biggest turn on here is that he wants you so much that he is prepared to do anything to have you.⁵¹

Women's Health does acknowledge some dangers:

The reality is that it's crazy dangerous for beginners. 'If you're choking your partner while in the throes of sexual excitement, it is so easy to actually kill the person ... If you press on someone's larynx too hard, you can choke them to death in under a minute.' Gulp.

Recognising this behaviour is potentially lethal, *Women's Health*, with dubious regard to its responsibility to the public, recommends that those who wish to try this out seek proper instruction from their local S&M club first.⁵²

In a popular internet blog, "How to Choke a Woman During Sex," the US social-media personality Mike Cernovich advises his readers:

Once you start choking women, you'll be addicted. Women love it, too. Choking is also a useful indicator of your strength as a man. If you are an alpha male, a woman will crave your domination and show of strength. If women do not regularly let you choke them, your game is weak. You are giving off a weak, beta male vibe and are lucky to be getting any sex at all.⁵³

The comments immediately following this article reveal a variety of opinion from both men and women. Some find a penchant for choking is indicative of a depraved mindset. 'Tom Sawyer', for example, writes:

And even if 99% of people like something that still doesn't make it decent ... I bet you right before Rome fell choking sex was all the rave.

Others (of both sexes) say choking is highly enjoyable, even unexpectedly so. 'Happy Girl' comments:

I do not agree that if I pass out that it is enjoyable, but I do like being choked ... I enjoy rough sex. I am extremely excited by it.

It is not necessary to pick sides in this debate to point out that the line between what is intended to be enjoyable sex play and what constitutes criminal violence is razor-thin, turning only on the levels of enjoyment of those participating; enjoyment levels that may change dramatically from pleasure to panic in a single

⁵¹ Molly Triffin, "Choking as a Sex Move—Is It for You?" *Women's Health Magazine*, 23 March 2016. (Available at: <http://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-love/choking-during-sex>).

⁵² Molly Triffin, op.cit.

⁵³ Mike Cernovich, "How to Choke a Woman During Sex," Word Press, 26 December 2011. (Available at: https://www.dangerandplay.com/2011/12/26/how-to-choke-a-woman/#disqus_thread).

moment. Particularly where the erotic thrill is linked with the fantasy of female powerlessness and male dominance, the potential for misunderstanding about female consent is huge. Although enjoyment of choking as sex play may be professed by men and women equally, it is noteworthy that there does not exist in popular culture the 'sexual practice' of women choking men as erotically thrilling, and it is the women who suffer when choking goes wrong.⁵⁴

How, indeed, can anyone distinguish now between violence and fun? In response to Cernovich's article mentioned earlier, 'H' says:

I enjoy choking my wife against the wall. Like randomly when she's putting away groceries. Look into her eyes, psychopath style, then kiss her. What he's describing is a blood-choke or strangle, and girls do indeed love it.

Do they? What about when they don't? In a separate string of exclusively male comments on this article, 'RSP: Male feminist' seems to have been wrongly directed by the choking advice:

I think I'm doing it wrong. I brought a girl home Friday night who claimed to be a virgin. I roughoused her in bed, to the point she walked out half way through, dragged her friend off my mate in the other room and went home. Any pointers?

'Pusscrook,' who describes himself as an 'Alpha Male' posted this:

I like to hem them up in the rape position, with one hand, snatch a good bundle of hair, and with the other hand, hook it in right under their chin and squeeze. I am surprised I haven't been charged with something.⁵⁵

Sexual negotiation is inherently incompatible with the aura of confident, masculine dominance that is necessary for 'ravishment' narratives. Pausing to ask "Excuse me dear, but do you mind if I choke you now? Is that alright? Too hard?" presumably defeats the object of the exercise. Since the erotic success of this strategy depends at least on the illusion of lack of female consent, men embarking on this course of action must avoid disclosure of their intentions to choke their partners beforehand and run the risk (despite the fulsome reassurances from their online mates), that this may not be well received. It may, indeed, be rewarded with criminal charges. On the whole, it is easy to see that furry suits might be more conducive to prior discussion than choking.

⁵⁴ The 2014 case of 16-year-old Jessica Burlew who strangled her 43-year-old boyfriend, Jason Ash, with an electrical cord during 'consensual rough sex' is a highly unusual example of a male victim of these practices. Burlew claimed that the strangulation was accidental, because Ash didn't say the 'safe word'. Even in this case, his Facebook posts suggest that Ash sometimes enjoyed strangling his much-younger female partner as well. (Sarah Goldstein, "Goth Arizona teen strangled 43-year-old boyfriend to death during sex: cops", New York Daily Times, 5 February 2014. (Available at: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/arizona-teen-strangled-43-year-old-boyfriend-death-sex-cops-article-1.1603989>).

⁵⁵ Roosh v Forum "How to choke a woman." (Available at: <https://www.rooshforum.com/thread-9169.html>)

For those who deny the effect of pornography on women in the real world, Melinda Tankard Reist offers the evidence of this letter sent to her in 2015 by Di Macleod, the Director of the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence:

In the past few years, we have had a huge increase in intimate partner rape of women from 14 to 80+. The biggest common denominator is consumption of porn by the offender. With offenders not able to differentiate between fantasy and reality, believing women are ‘up for it’ 24/7, ascribing to the myth that ‘no means yes and yes means anal,’ oblivious to injuries caused and never ever considering consent. We have seen a huge increase in deprivation of liberty, physical injuries, torture, drugging, filming and sharing footage without consent. I founded the centre 25 years ago and what is now considered to be the norm in 2015 is frightening.⁵⁶

In 2016, a Bill presented to the Queensland Parliament to make non-fatal strangulation or suffocation a stand-alone offense in the Criminal Code received bi-partisan support.⁵⁷ The initiative followed recommendations of the Special Taskforce on Domestic, and Family Violence presented in their report, *Not Now, Not Ever*, which advised that perpetrators should be held to account for their conduct “to reinforce the message that such actions are not acceptable in our society.”⁵⁸ Strangulation is recognised as a life-threatening offense. “The risk of death to victims of domestic violence is multiplied by 800 times where strangulation has previously occurred.”⁵⁹ In 2016–2017, the city of Townsville alone reported 63 cases of choking, indicating that the government is not over-stating the need for such legislation.⁶⁰ In this proposed framework, the above-mentioned ‘RSP Male feminist’ would potentially face up to seven years in jail for choking his wife ‘while she puts away the groceries.’ The violence eroticised in pornography and promulgated through popular culture is at the centre of a new absurdity; horrific crime and harmless recreation have become indistinguishable. Behaviour that is celebrated in pornography, promoted to both women and men as enjoyable, and broadcast through popular culture is also subject to significant jail sentences.

⁵⁶ Melinda Tankard Reist, “Growing Up in Pornland: Girls Have Had It with Porn Conditioned Boys,” *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 7 March 2016. (Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2016/03/07/4420147.htm>)

⁵⁷ Media Release: “Strangulation to be a stand-alone offence under Queensland’s Criminal Code,” *Queensland Cabinet and Ministerial Directory*, 19 April 2016. (Available at: <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2016/4/19/strangulation-to-be-a-standalone-offence-under-queenslands-criminal-code>).

⁵⁸ *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*, February 2015, p. 15. (Available at: <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/end-domestic-family-violence/about/not-now-not-ever-report>).

⁵⁹ Chief Superintendent Kev Guteridge quoted in Chris McMahon, “Alarming number of choking cases in Townsville,” *Townsville Bulletin*, 14 July 2017. (Available at: <http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/alarming-number-of-choking-cases-in-townsville/news-story/c3a8d98fbaa427eacd39d0b3498d6631>).

⁶⁰ McMahon, op. cit., (Available at: <http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/alarming-number-of-choking-cases-in-townsville/news-story/c3a8d98fbaa427eacd39d0b3498d6631>)

Pornographic 'fantasy' informing reality

When men become immersed in a world of pornographic 'fantasy,' it is perhaps inevitable that at least some of them will wish to take that further step to make fantasy a reality by re-enacting the behaviours eroticised by pornography. This can be seen in the way that consumption of pornography fuels demand for prostitution. In their 2011 comparison of men who bought sex with men who did not, Melissa Farley and her colleagues found:

[S]ex buyers masturbated to pornography more often than non-sex buyers, imitated it with partners more often, and had more often received their sex education from pornography than the non-sex buyers. Over time, as a result of their prostitution and pornography use, sex buyers reported that their sexual preferences changed such that they sought more sadomasochistic and anal sex. Significantly more of the sex buyers learned about sex from pornography compared to the non-sex buyers.⁶¹

Some men with regular sexual partners visit prostitutes to act out sexual behaviours that their wives or girlfriends would find degrading or unacceptable (behaviours that are unthinkable for the woman who is the mother of his children, for example). The freedom to enact fantasy conferred by the anonymity of a brothel is still more obvious when the prostitute visited is a sex doll, rather than a human being. In this context, the recent comments of Sergi Prieto, co-founder of Lumidolls, one of the world's first sex doll brothels, are particularly interesting, confirming the strong connection between the habitual indulgence of pornographic fantasy and the wish to act on those fantasies in reality. The company promotes the fact that, "with Lumidolls, customers can perform any of their sexual fantasies they do not dare to do with a woman."⁶² Experiences are tailored to the preferences of each customer: "Tell us how you want to encounter your doll, what kind of clothes you want her to wear and in what position she should be."⁶³

Nevertheless, despite the promises that Lumidolls will "cater for all preferences," and its invitation for men to "live out their wildest fantasies," even Prieto feels obliged to turn down some clients, specifically those with rape fantasies and those who request child-like sex dolls. Prieto has ethical objections to encouraging rape and paedophilic behaviours that he regards as 'too extreme.' It is impossible to avoid observing that porn-inspired fantasy informs these men's desires for real-world re-enactment of extreme sexual behaviours.

In the same way, 'rape myth' promulgated by pornography aligns with actual rape in real-world experiences; consistent evidence demonstrates the correlation

⁶¹ Melissa Farley, Emily Schuckman, Jacqueline M. Golding, Kristen Houser, Laura Jarrett, Peter Qualliotine, Michele Decker, "Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Don't Buy Sex," *Psychologists for Social Responsibility Annual Conference*, Boston, Massachusetts, 15 July 2011, p. 4. (Available at: <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdfs/Farley-et-al2011ComparingSexBuyers.pdf>)

⁶² Felix Allen, "The one disgusting request sex doll brothel owner always turns down" *News.com*, 10 October 2017. (Available at: <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/relationships/sex/the-one-disgusting-request-sex-doll-brothel-owner-always-turns-down/news-story/753540f4caa90e15d7dada09da899fe2>)

⁶³ Felix Allen, op. cit.

between pornography consumption and rape-supportive attitudes and cultures.⁶⁴ Men who view violent pornography are more likely to believe that women who are raped enjoyed the experience or were ‘asking for it.’ Pornography is recognised as a significant risk-factor for violence towards women, correlating with increases in sexual harassment, physical or verbal coercion to have sex, using drugs or alcohol to sexually coerce women, date rape, marital rape or incest, as well as the sexual abuse of children and greater willingness to have sex with 13/14-year-olds.⁶⁵ In Australia, it is clear that sexual assault rates continue to trend upward, as other types of offence trend downwards. It is also clear that this cannot be attributed entirely to the reduced stigma around reporting. The link with real-life sexual assaults of women cannot be ignored. “After 40 years of peer-reviewed research, scholars can say with confidence that pornography is an industrial product that shapes how we think about gender, sexuality, relationships, intimacy, sexual violence and gender equality – for the worse.”⁶⁶

The expected take-up of virtual reality pornography can only be expected to accentuate this problem. As noted earlier, Pornhub’s most popular 2017 genres includes hentai (based on anime characters), cartoon, overwatch (inspired by Blizzard Entertainment’s 2016 video game of the same name) and virtual reality,⁶⁷ indicating that online gaming technology is already shaping popular sexual fantasies. Virtual reality pornography introduces interactive toys – and therefore real physical sensation – to the already ‘immersive’ experience of watching pornography, making the fantasy seem even more ‘real.’ The market in virtual reality pornography is still nascent, but developers are tremendously excited about its revenue-earning potential. One producer likens the difference between regular pornography viewing and virtual reality pornography to the difference between looking at a Polaroid photo and watching an Imax film.⁶⁸ By heightening the degree of concordance between the viewer’s sensory responses and the world of manufactured sexual fantasy presented on a screen, virtual reality pornography makes it even harder for a consistent user to distinguish between the world of pornographic fantasy and the real world.

Molding adolescent sexuality

The effect of pornography consumption on teenagers even in western societies, where the influence of pornography is more diffused through culture, is worthy of particular attention. Adolescents often lack the skills necessary to navigate the

⁶⁴ Farley, *et al.*, *op cit.*, p.4.

⁶⁵ Recognition of this is not new. See Marlene Goldsmith, “Sexual Offenders and Pornography: a causal connection?” Patricia Weiser Easteal (ed.), *Without Consent: confronting adult sexual violence*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Proceedings of a conference held 27–29 October 1992, pp. 253–261. (Available at: <https://aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/proceedings/downloads/20-goldsmith.pdf>)

⁶⁶ Gail Dines, “Is porn immoral? That doesn’t matter: It’s a public health crisis,” *Washington Post*, 8 April 2016.

⁶⁷ Pornhub, “2017 Year in Review,” *op. cit.* Further pornographic subgenres are listed in Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pornographic_subgenres

⁶⁸ Amelia Butterfly, “Is virtual reality the future of online pornography?” *newsbeat*, 19 August 2016. (Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/37057814/is-virtual-reality-the-future-of-online-pornography>).

highly sexualised environment of the Internet with safety and yet teenagers are extensive users of internet devices. Even if first exposure to pornography is accidental, it apparently creates an appetite.⁶⁹ A study commissioned by the UK government found that, in May 2015, one in 10 visitors to adult sites in the UK were children⁷⁰ and one in five children under 18 visited a pornographic website.⁷¹ Similarly, a study by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Childline found that nearly 10% of children aged 12–13 years old expressed worry that they were addicted to pornography, and 18% said that they had seen images which shocked or upset them. Twelve percent admitted to making or being a part of a sexually explicit video.⁷²

Research also suggests that children and adolescents may be disproportionately vulnerable to the negative consequences of exposure to sexually explicit material.⁷³ Puberty is a period of significant and critical physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. Studies indicate that lifelong sexual tastes are formed in puberty.⁷⁴ Concerns that the sexual acts depicted in pornography become normative — that vanilla pornography viewing habits will evolve to include more extreme content — apply to all age groups but particularly attach to the young, whose sexual tastes are not yet fixed.

The continual novelty offered by internet pornography differs qualitatively to regular sexual encounters in that it fuels the production of abnormally high levels of dopamine. Dopamine acts to stimulate the reward-centres of the brain. Produced in high quantities, dopamine over-rides the brain's mechanisms for registering satiation, fuelling further search for novelty. In this way, prolonged exposure to pornography creates 'arousal addiction', whereby regular pleasure responses to

⁶⁹ Jennifer Johnson describes how this is achieved through deliberate commercial strategies used by online commercial pornography producers. (J. Johnson, "Mapping the feminist political economy of the online commercial pornography industry: A network approach," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, vol. 7(2), 2011, pp. 189–208, https://doi.org/10.1386/macp.7.2.189_1).

⁷⁰ "Curbing access to pornographic websites for under 18s," *Media Release from the UK Prime Minister's Office*, 30 July 2015. (Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/curbing-access-to-pornographic-websites-for-under-18s>).

⁷¹ Patrick Wintour, "Cameron tells pornography websites to restrict access by children or face closure," *The Guardian*, 20 July 2015. (Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jul/30/cameron-promises-action-to-restrict-under18s-accessing-pornography>).

⁷² Patrick Wintour, op. cit.

⁷³ E.W. Owens, R.J. Behun, J.C. Manning, R.C. Reid, "The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: a review of the research," *Sex Addict Compulsivity*, vol. 19, 2012, pp. 99–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720162.2012.660431> ; Frances E. Jensen and Amy Ellis Nutt, *The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guild to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults*, New York, 2015); Tamara L. Doremus-Fitzwater, Elena I. Varlinskaya, and Linda P. Spear, "Motivational Systems in Adolescence: Possible Implications for Age Differences in Substance Abuse and Other Risk-Taking Behaviors," *Brain and Cognition*, vol. 71(1), 2010, pp. 114–123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandc.2009.08.008>

⁷⁴ "Porn, A User's Manual: Hardcore, abundant and free: what is online pornography doing to sexual tastes—and youngsters' minds?" *The Economist*, 26 September 2015. (Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21666113-hardcore-abundant-and-free-what-online-pornography-doing-sexual-tastesand>)

sex become ‘numbed’ in favour of novelty provided by internet pornography.⁷⁵ A 2014 study conducted by Valerie Voon and her colleagues found neural differences in the processing of sexual-cue reactivity for sexual addicts, in regions of the brain previously implicated in drug-cue reactivity studies.⁷⁶

Scientists now recognize that as well as producing drug-like chemical rewards for the brain, pornography used as a masturbatory aid produces a “deeply satisfying state of focused attention” that is ideal for forming strong and enduring neuronal pathways, particularly in adolescents.⁷⁷ (This state is sometimes referred to as ‘the flow’). These pathways are naturally created and strengthened when any new skill is learned and practiced, making this a satisfying process. With repeated use, the association between pornography and erotic response may become so well-established as to over-ride even the reward system that would normally make real-life sexual contact stimulating. This then explains the increasing incidence of sexual dysfunction in men under the age of 40, which is strongly associated with pornography viewing.⁷⁸ The neural system designed for a sexual relationship is diverted instead towards an object. Since the brain is continually reforming neural pathways, both addiction and sexual dysfunction appear to be treatable over time, but only if pornography consumption stops.⁷⁹ As many pornography addicts are finding, this may be no simple matter.⁸⁰ In the meanwhile, those habitually using pornography, particularly young people, are learning and reinforcing associations between what they see in pornography and feelings of gratification that will ultimately prove detrimental to their ability to form sexually satisfying relationships with real people.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Gary Wilson, “The Great Porn Experiment”, *Ted X Talks*, 1 February 2013. (Available at: <https://yourbrainonporn.com/garys-tedx-talk-great-porn-experiment>).

⁷⁶ Valerie Voon, Thomas B. Mole, Paula Banca, Laura Porter, Laurel Morris, Simon Mitchell, Tatyana R. Lapa, Judy Karr, Neil A. Harrison, Marc N. Potenza, Michael Irvine, “Neural correlates of sexual cue reactivity in individuals with and without compulsive sexual behaviours,” *PLoS ONE*, 11 July 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102419>

⁷⁷ “How Porn Changes the Brain,” *Fight the New Drug*, 23 August 2017. (Available at: <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-changes-the-brain/>); William M. Stuthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*, Downer Grove, IL, 2010.

⁷⁸ B.Y. Park, G. Wilson, J. Berger, M. Christman, B. Reina, F. Bishop, W.P. Klam, A.P. Doan, “Is Internet Pornography Causing Sexual Dysfunctions? A Review with Clinical Reports” *Behavioural Science*, vol. 6, 2016, p. 17, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs6030017>

⁷⁹ R. Porto, “Habitudes Masturbatoires et Dysfonctions Sexuelles Masculines,” *Sexologies*, vol. 25(4), 2016), pp. 160–65, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sexol.2016.03.004>

⁸⁰ Kevin Skinner, “5 Steps for Fighting a Porn Addiction,” 23 September 2016. (Available at: <http://drkevinskinner.com/5-steps-for-fighting-a-porn-addiction/#more-295>).

⁸¹ Paul J. Wright, Robert S. Tokunaga, Ashley Kraus, and Elyssa Klannm, “Pornography Consumption and Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis,” *Human Communication Research*, vol. 43(3), March 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12108>

Instead, pornography compounds the feelings of social isolation (which is one predisposing factor towards pornography use)⁸² and exacerbates anti-social behaviours. Examining the extensive international research from multiple studies on the effects of exposure to pornography in adolescence, Eric Owens and his colleagues list several behaviours associated with more frequent consumption of pornography for adolescents. These include:

- attitudes towards sex that regard it as primarily physical and casual, rather than affectionate and relational;
- greater sexual uncertainty due to dissonance between the sexual attitudes and beliefs communicated through pornography and those instilled by families or schools;
- beliefs that pornography can contribute to a more stimulating sex life;
- stronger preoccupation with sex to the exclusion of other thoughts; high levels of distraction;
- fewer progressive gender role attitudes for both males and females; acceptance of the narrative of male dominance and female submission;
- increased likelihood that adolescents, regardless of gender, would regard women as sex objects, sexual playthings, eager to fulfil male sexual desires;
- positive attitudes toward casual or recreational sex, uncommitted sexual exploration and extramarital sexual relations;
- increased likelihood of having casual intercourse with a friend, group sex, oral sex, anal sex and using drugs or alcohol during sex;
- earlier reported ages for sexual intercourse;
- among boys, increased sexual harassment of female peers;
- increased insecurity for boys about their ability to perform sexually;
- increased insecurity for girls about body image; and
- Increased levels of social maladjustment.⁸³

Regarding social development, those adolescents with lower degrees of social integration and less functional support networks of friends and family seem most susceptible to being drawn to pornography, to consume pornography more frequently and to be more adversely affected by this exposure. Adolescents who consume pornography are more likely to demonstrate social maladjustment, violence at school, clinical symptoms of depression, theft, truancy, manipulation of others, arson, to force sexual intercourse and be convicted of criminal sexual behaviour. For boys with 'predisposing risk levels' towards aggressive sexual behaviour, frequent exposure to pornography was found to exacerbate this predisposition, making them four times as likely to exhibit sexual aggression compared with those only infrequently exposed. This aggression includes coerced vaginal penetration, forced

⁸² Mark H. Butler et al., "Pornography Use and Loneliness: A Bi-Directional Recursive Model and Pilot Investigation," *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 7 March 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2017.1321601>

⁸³ E.W. Owens et al., op. cit.

sexual acts such as oral or digital penetration, sexually aggressive remarks (obscenities), and increased propensity to engage in sex with animals.⁸⁴ Exposure to unpleasant or bizarre material between the ages of 12 and 18 correlates with significantly higher rates of sexual paraphilia in later life.⁸⁵

The significant causal link between increased sexual offending and viewing of pornography is well-established. According to Flood:

Youth may expect that these behaviours should feel erotic and arousing and, if they hurt, may choose to ignore that or avoid saying something to a partner, for fear of being seen as prudish or inexperienced.⁸⁶

Dr Jill Manning, an experienced Australian family therapist, corroborates this:

I am ... witnessing more female adolescents tolerating emotional, physical and sexual abuse in dating relationships, feeling pressure to make out with females as a way to turn boys on, looking at or producing pornography so that their boyfriends will think they are 'open-minded' and 'cool', and normalising sexual abuse done to them because they see the same acts eroticized in pornography – after all, how bad can it be if the larger culture around you find abusing and demeaning acts a turn on?⁸⁷

Indeed, therapists around the world are corroborating that young girls are buying the lie that porn sex is normal. If the women in pornography love it and they don't, girls assume the problem is with them.

Promoting risky sexual behaviour

The correlation between consumption of pornography and engagement in risky sexual behaviours such as unprotected anal or oral sex, sex with multiple partners,

⁸⁴ E.W. Owens, et al., op. cit.

⁸⁵ M.S Kaplan and R.B. Krueger, "Chapter 45: Adolescent Sexual Offenders," in R. Rosner (ed), *Principles and Practice of Forensic Psychiatry*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, p. 456. (Available at: <http://www.paraphilias.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/11874-Kaplan-Adolesce.pdf> f). Boys who have experienced sexual abuse after the age of 12 are more likely than those abused as younger children to be subsequently convicted of a sexual offense. (James Ogloff, Margaret Cutajar, Emily Mann and Paul Mullen, "Child sexual abuse and subsequent offending and victimisation: A 45 year follow-up study," *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice*, No. 440, Australian Institute of Criminology, p. 5. (Available at: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/421-440/tandi440.html>).

⁸⁶ Michael Flood, "Young men using pornography," Karen Boyle (ed), *Everyday Pornography*, New York, 2010.

⁸⁷ Quoted by Tankard Reist, *Pornography and Violence: What is the connection?*

and using drugs or alcohol in sex, is also well established in academic literature.^{88,89} This is an international phenomenon, affecting liberal western countries in particular.⁹⁰ The Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships (*ASHR2*) attributes this increase to the ‘sexualisation’ of popular media, advertising and with pornography in particular:

The increased availability of pornography via the Internet, which frequently depicts oral and anal sex, may also have contributed to increased experimentation.⁹¹

Heteroanal sex

This suggestion is supported by growing evidence that the connection is causal.⁹² A 2014 UK study of anal heterosex among 16–18-year-olds noted that the 130 teenagers interviewed frequently cited pornography as the motivation for anal sex.⁹³ Mutuality and consent did not feature in men’s narratives of anal sex; rather, it was considered normal for men to badger women for anal sex. Women said they continued to be asked, sometimes forcefully, even after repeated refusals.⁹⁴ Both

⁸⁸ Miranda A.H. Horvath, Llian Alys, Kristina Massey, Afroditi Pina, Mia Scally, and Joanna R. Adler, “Basically ... porn is everywhere”: A rapid evidence assessment on the effects that access and exposure to pornography has on children and young people, *Office of the Children’s Commissioner*, London, 2011, p. 7. (Available at: http://www.mdx.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/48545/BasicallyporniseverywhereReport.pdf)

⁸⁹ L.W. Smith, B. Liu, L. Degenhardt, J. Richters, G. Patton, H. Wand, D. Cross, J. S. Hocking, S.R. Skinner, S. Cooper, C. Lumby, J.M. Kaldor and R. Guy, “Is sexual content in new media linked to sexual risk behaviour in young people? A systematic review and meta-analysis,” *Sexual Health*, 2016, vol. 13(6), pp. 501–515, <https://doi.org/10.1071/SH16037> .

⁹⁰ J. Richters, et al., op. cit., p. 469. In the UK between 1995 and 2004, heterosexual anal sex doubled. (See [William Saletan](#), “The Ass Man Cometh: Experimentation, orgasms, and the rise of anal sex,” *Slate*. (Available here: http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2010/10/the_ass_man_cometh.html). Chris Rissel et al., indicate results for Australia between the reporting periods 2002/3 and 2012/13 that reflect similar developments around the world. (See Chris Rissel, Paul B. Badcock, Anthony M. A. Smith, Juliet Richters, Richard O. de Visser, Andrew E. Grulich and Judy M. Simpson, “Heterosexual experience and recent heterosexual encounters among Australian adults: the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships,” *Sexual Health*, vol. 11, 2014, p. 416–426, <https://doi.org/10.1071/sh14105>

⁹¹ Rissel et al., op. cit., p. 424.

⁹² See, for example, the work of Melinda Tankard Reist, “Growing Up in Pornland”; Baughman A. “‘Without porn...I wouldn’t know half the things I know now’: A qualitative study of pornography use among a sample of urban, low-income, black and Hispanic youth,” *Journal of Sex Research*, 2015, vol. 52 (7), pp.736–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2014.960908>.

⁹³ C. Marston, R. Lewis, “Anal heterosex among young people and implications for health promotion: a qualitative study in the UK,” *BMJ Open*, 2014, vol. 4(8), pp. 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-004996>

⁹⁴ “Porn, A User’s Manual.” (Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21666113-hardcore-abundant-and-free-what-online-pornography-doing-sexual-tastesand?zid=319&ah=17af09b0281b01505c226b1e574f5cc1>).

men and women expected anal sex to be painful for women. This pain was seen as inevitable and techniques to reduce the pain were not discussed:

Interviewees often spoke casually about penetration where women were likely to be hurt or coerced (“you can rip ‘em if you try and force anal sex”; “you just keep going till they get fed up and let you do it anyway”).⁹⁵

“Accidental” anal penetration was reported by some interviewees, and in at least one interview it was clear that these accidents may happen on purpose. Although this behaviour could be classed as rape (non-consensual penetration), it is ambiguous enough to make prosecution problematic.

The study concluded that anal sex appears to be a marker of (hetero)sexual achievement or experience, particularly for men. Women who did not enjoy it were considered either flawed, naïve, uptight or else were suspected of being reluctant to confess to secret enjoyment of the experience. These beliefs about anal sex were found to “support the erroneous idea that a man pushing for anal sex is simply ‘persuading’ his partner to do something that ‘most girls would like.’” On the other hand, women who participate in heteroanal sex risk reputational loss:

The common portrayal of anal heterosex in terms of men breaking women’s resistance can be compared with narratives about first vaginal intercourse and perhaps have superseded them to some degree in the British context where premarital vaginal intercourse is considered normal and so perhaps less of a ‘conquest.’⁹⁶

The connection between these teenagers’ interest in anal sex and pornography consumption was strengthened by evidence that pornography is shaping the interviewees’ understanding of sex more generally:

The researchers asked them to name all the sexual practices they knew of. They listed many porn tropes, such as threesomes and gang bangs, and some scatological and extremely violent acts made notorious by particular clips and films.⁹⁷

This is consistent with messages of young people highlighted in Tankard Reist’s work in Australian high schools:

The proliferation and globalisation of hypersexualised imagery and pornographic themes makes healthy sexual exploration almost impossible. Sexual conquest and domination are untempered by the bounds of respect, intimacy, and authentic human connection. Young people are not learning about intimacy, friendship and love, but about cruelty and humiliation.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ C. Marston, R. Lewis, op. cit., p. 5.

⁹⁶ C. Marston, R. Lewis, op. cit., p. 5.

⁹⁷ “Porn, A User’s Manual.”

⁹⁸ Melinda Tankard Reist, *Growing up in Pornland*.

Apart from the background of coercion and harassment associated with heteroanal sex in teenagers, this practice poses risks to sexual health through both physical damage and by increasing the risk of STIs:

- **Physical damage:** The vagina is supported by a network of muscles and composed of a multi-layer squamous epithelium that allows it to endure friction without damage and to resist the immunological actions caused by semen and sperm. By contrast, the anus is a delicate mechanism of small muscles. With repeated trauma, friction and stretching, the sphincter loses tone and its ability to maintain a tight seal. For this reason, anal receptive intercourse is associated with reduced resting pressure in the anal canal and an increased risk of faecal incontinence.⁹⁹ Prolapse can be treated with surgery but this in itself carries a high risk of infection and is unlikely to restore the anus to its pre-trauma condition. Young girls who require such anal surgery are unlikely to be able to deliver a baby vaginally without significantly increased risk of further rectal prolapse.¹⁰⁰
- **Infection:** The intestine is highly vascular, with a single layer of tissue separating the inside of the intestine and blood. This layer of tissue is not suited to withstand the friction associated with penile penetration. Micro-tears are common, and microfold cells found in the rectum (but absent from the vagina) capture viruses and deliver them directly to the lymphatic system.¹⁰¹ Organisms introduced into the rectum, therefore, establish a foothold for infection more easily than they would in the vagina. Trauma to the rectum exposes both sexual partners to blood, micro-organisms in faeces, and a mixing of bodily fluids. The list of diseases found with increased frequency among male homosexual practitioners as a result of anal intercourse includes anal cancer, chlamydia, herpes simplex virus, human papilloma virus (HPV), gonorrhoea, viral hepatitis types B & C and syphilis. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is, of course, the most well-advertised risk of anal sex. In Australia, two thirds (68%) of new HIV transmissions occur among men who have sex with men, with a further

⁹⁹ A.J. Miles, T.G Allen-Mersh and C. Wastell, “Effect of anoreceptive intercourse on ano-rectal function,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, March 1993, vol. 86(3), pp. 144–47. (Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1293903/>).

¹⁰⁰ Pornography now celebrates even the rectal prolapse. Recognised as occupational risk for porn actresses, prolapse would once have signalled the end of a career. However, in more recent developments, the prolapse has been repackaged and is now celebrated as “rosebudding.” Mark Shrayber, whose familiarity with pornography derives from his previous work running an adult bookstore describes rosebudding as “worse than anything I’ve seen in legal pornography before.” To be able to rosebud effectively, actresses need to have prolonged sessions with multiple massive objects so that their rectal walls become loose and easy to push right out. Training might also include sleeping with toys in the anus the night before a shoot ... In general, an individual is immediately rushed to the emergency room when such an event happens. In [pornography], the cameras keep turning as the prolapse is looked at, touched, licked, and prodded until the director believes that the viewer will have enough to satiate them. Sometimes honey is poured all over it. (Mark Shrayber, op. cit.).

¹⁰¹ Sinead C. Corr, Cormac C.G.M Gahan and Colin Hill, “M-Cells: origin, morphology and role in mucosal immunity and microbial pathogenesis,” *FEMS Immunology and Medical Microbiology*, vol. 52(1), January 2008, pp. 2–12, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1574-695X.2007.00359.x>.

20% through heterosexual sex.¹⁰² Increases in heteroanal sex and group sex can reasonably be expected to expose a broader portion of the population to these infections, thus amplifying the risk.

Any mention of the health risks associated with heteroanal sex is peculiarly absent from popular blogs and magazine articles on the subject, which confine themselves with encouraging sexual exploration while advising the generous use of lubricant.

In Australia, data from *ASHR2* indicates that nearly 12% of sexually active 16–19 year-old-girls have had anal sex and are unlikely to have used a condom.¹⁰³ Possibly because pregnancy is not a risk with anal sex, condoms are worn in heteroanal sex in only a small number of cases.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, a Swedish study of 718 students reported 16% had anal intercourse, again with infrequent condom use. This study explicitly noted the association of group sex, anal sex and early sexual debut with consumption of pornography.¹⁰⁵

Oral sex

Oral sex is sometimes represented in sex education programs as safe and normal, so it is perhaps impossible to attribute the rise in this activity to pornography alone, although pornography is still an important factor. *ASHR2* (2012–2013) reported increased rates of oral sex and at younger ages compared with the *ASHR1* survey (2001–2002):

¹⁰² *HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexually Transmissible Infections in Australia: Annual Surveillance Report 2016*, The Kirby Institute, Sydney, 2016, p. 11. (Available at: https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/kirby/report/SERP_Annual-Surveillance-Report-2016_UPD170627.pdf).

¹⁰³ See Chris Rissel, et al., op. cit., p. 424. A 2009 US study of women aged 16–21 years old found that 16% had experience of heteroanal sex and noted that these women were “more likely to be living with a sexual partner, to have had 2 or more partners, and to have experienced coerced intercourse ... among females, the variables associated with anal intercourse relate to the context and power balance of sexual relationships.” (Carol F. Roye, Beatrice J. Krauss, Paula L. Silverman, “Prevalence and Correlates of Heterosexual Anal Intercourse Among Black and Latina Female Adolescents,” *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, July–August 2010, vol. 21(4), pp. 291–301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jana.2009.12.002>; Anal sex was surveyed in the 5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health but this was not surveyed in the 4th National Survey, so exact data on changes are not yet possible. (Anne Mitchell, Kent Patrick, Wendy Heywood, Pamela Blackman and Marian Pitts, *5th National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health*, ARCSHS 2013, p. 25).

¹⁰⁴ Richard O. de Visser, Paul B. Badcock, Chris Risse, Juliet Richters, Anthony M. A. Smith, Andrew E. Grulich and Judy M. Simpson, “Safer sex and condom use: findings from the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships,” *Sexual Health*, vol. 11, 2014, p. 500. Condom use among the men who have sex with men is also declining: “Results from the 2015 Gay Community Periodic Survey indicate that 41% of gay men reported condomless anal intercourse with casual partners in the six months prior to the survey, an increase on the 33% reporting condomless anal intercourse in 2006.” (*HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexually Transmissible Infections in Australia: Annual Surveillance Report 2016*, The Kirby Institute, Sydney, 2016, p. 25).

¹⁰⁵ E. Häggström-Nordin, U. Hanson, T. Tydén, “Associations between pornography consumption and sexual practices among adolescents in Sweden,” *International Journal of STD & AIDS*, vol. 16(2), pp. 102–107. <https://doi.org/10.1258/0956462053057512>.

A decade ago, among people aged 16–59, 79% of men and 67% of women had ever had oral sex, but now 88% of men and 86% of women have done so. People also experience oral sex earlier. Among people under 20, 21% of men and 17% of women had had oral sex before they had intercourse, but this was true of only 3% of men and women in their 60s.¹⁰⁶

Once a sexual taboo, oral sex is now common practice, particularly among the young:

... more adolescents [are] now having their first experience of oral sex and intercourse around the same time and [there is] a decrease in the numbers of adolescents who have never tried oral. Only 12 per cent of sexually active 16– 19-year males have never indulged in this sexual practice.¹⁰⁷

It has been suggested that oral sex is on the rise because young people consider it safer than genital intercourse in terms of risk of pregnancy and transmission of STIs. For these reasons, condom use with oral sex is not common and, in any event, would not offer sufficient protection from many of the STIs transferred through genital-oral contact. The most common STIs of the mouth are herpes, chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis. It is also possible to contract Hepatitis A, B and C, as well as other gastrointestinal infections in this way. Gonorrhoea of the throat may only manifest as a sore throat, and so 80% of those infected with gonorrhoea are unaware of the fact.¹⁰⁸ Young adults and teenagers are the most likely to be infected and the least likely to be tested. Gonorrhoea can be transmitted genitals to throat through oral sex, and new research from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre suggests that kissing is now the main driver of gonorrhoea transmission for inner-city dwellers.¹⁰⁹

In addition to the usual list of STIs, 10 years ago researchers first noticed increasing incidence of oral cancer (normally associated with older adults with a history of heavy drinking and smoking) in younger adults. Studies concluded that tumours affecting the base of the tongue and the throat were the result of the transference of HPV virus from the genitals to the mouth through oral sex and that incidence was “markedly elevated among patients with a high lifetime number of such partners.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ “Sex in Australia Summary,” *Australian Study of Health and Relationships*. (Available at: http://www.ashr.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/sex_in_australia_2_summary_data.pdf).

¹⁰⁷ Bettina Ardnt, “Teen survey offers a reality check against alarm over sexual activity,” *The Australian*, 8 November 2014. (Available at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/opinion/teen-survey-offers-a-reality-check-against-alarm-over-sexual-activity/news-story/d430a80a40a3f7b3ec020413f3449a08>).

¹⁰⁸ James Purtill, “Can you get gonorrhoea from kissing?” *Triple J Hack*, ABC, 8 November 2017. (Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/can-you-get-gonorrhoea-from-kissing/9131440>).

¹⁰⁹ Purtill, op. cit.

¹¹⁰ Gypsyamber D'Souza, Aimee R. Kreimer, Raphael Viscidi, Michael Pawlita, Carole Fakhry, Wayne M. Koch, William H. Westra, and Maura L. Gillison, “Case–Control Study of Human Papillomavirus and Oropharyngeal Cancer,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 356, 2007, pp. 1944–56, <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmoa065497>

Multiple partner sex

Multiple partner sex (MPS), as observed earlier, is frequently depicted in pornography (particularly with multiple men having sex with one woman) and obviously multiplies the health risks associated with non-monogamous sexual activity. *ASHR2* showed steady levels of MPS over the last decade, with 2.1% of men and 0.6% of women reporting group sex in the last 12 months.¹¹¹ Data specifically relating to MPS among Australian adolescents is not available, but there is strong international evidence to suggest that socially vulnerable individuals are disproportionately represented in the population involved with group sex. For example, a 2006 US survey of 328 women, aged 14–20 years old, found that 7.3% reported ever having had a MPS experience. The majority of participants reported that MPS occurred in the context of pressure, coercion, threats, or force. Condom non-use was again a significant feature of this sexual activity.¹¹² This study found MPS was associated with cigarette smoking, sexual initiation prior to age 15, ever being diagnosed with an STI, dating violence victimization, suicidal ideation and behaviour, childhood sexual abuse victimization, and past-month pornography exposure.¹¹³ The study found that:

the strong association between exposure to pornography, having been forced to do things that their sex partner saw in pornography, and MPS suggests that pornography may have influenced directly the sexual experiences of the girls in this sample, as has been found elsewhere.¹¹⁴

Increasing risk of STIs

Recent STI figures for Australia show steady rates of new HIV transmission. Though survival rates have improved, the lifetime risk of HIV sufferers subsequently developing anal cancer has increased dramatically. This results from repeated exposure to HPV and is 100 times more likely for HIV-positive gay and bisexual men than it is for HIV-negative exclusively heterosexual men.¹¹⁵ Significant increases in chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis, can be found in people of all

¹¹¹ Ritchers et al., op. cit., p. 468.

¹¹² Emily F. Rothman, Michele R. Decker, Elizabeth Miller, Elizabeth Reed, Anita Raj and Jay G. Silverman, “Multi-person sex among a sample of adolescent female urban health clinic patients,” *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of New York Academy of Medicine*, vol. 89(1), February 2012, pp. 129–137. (Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3284585/>).

¹¹³ J.C. Abma, G.M. Martinez, W.D. Mosher, B.S. Dawson, “Teenagers in the United States: sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing,” *Vital and Health Statistics Series No. 23*, vol. 24, 2004, Table 8, p.23, <https://doi.org/10.1037/e609162007-001> (Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_024.pdf.) This study also found that early sexual activity is also associated with an increased likelihood that this sex is unwanted).

¹¹⁴ Emily F. Rothman, et al., op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Ashish A. Deshmukh, Elizabeth Chiao, Jagpreet Chhatwal, Scott B. Cantor, “How the anal cancer epidemic in gay and bi HIV-positive men can be prevented,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 September 2017. (Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/sns-how-the-anal-cancer-epidemic-in-gay-and-bi-hiv-positive-men-can-be-prevented-80358-20170926-story.html>).

sexual orientations but are particularly prevalent among teenagers and young adults. According to the 2016 surveillance report produced by the Kirby Institute:

- Chlamydia was the second most frequently reported notifiable condition with a total of 66,033 notifications in 2015. 77% of these notifications were among 15–29 year-olds;
- Gonorrhoea has nearly doubled for both men and women between 2006 and 2015. 18,588 new cases were reported in 2015, with the highest rates occurring among men aged 20–29 years; and
- Infectious syphilis has also increased in the past ten years, with the highest rates again reported among males aged 25–29 years.¹¹⁶

The data emphasise sexually active adolescents and young adults as priority populations because of their susceptibility to disease transmitted through (among other things) risky sexual activity and multiple sexual partners. Data from the American Centre for Disease Control confirm similar findings for the US population. Although 15–24-year-olds make up only 27% of the sexually active population, they account for 50% of new STIs each year.¹¹⁷

Since the bodies of adolescent girls are more vulnerable to disease than older women's bodies, early sexual activity is particularly inadvisable for this group.¹¹⁸ Multiple partners compound the risk of infection. Young bisexual women are at higher risk, being more likely than heterosexual women both to engage in sexual contact with gay or bisexual men and to do so without protection.¹¹⁹ The effects of infection for women in this age group are also more deleterious for potentially causing loss of fertility. In the US, 24,000 young women per year become infertile because of STIs.¹²⁰

Pornography, in promoting risky sexual activity such as heteroanal sex, group sex, oral sex, casual sex, as well as early sexual initiation, needs to be understood as heightening the risk of STIs that already effect young people disproportionately. The first Australian study to examine the associations between frequency and age

¹¹⁶ HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexually Transmissible Infections in Australia, pp. 12–16.

¹¹⁷ "Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Young Americans," *Centre for Disease Control*. (Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/products/youth-sti-infographic.pdf>).

¹¹⁸ Miriam Grossman, *You're Teaching My Child What?* New York, 2009, pp. 77–82.

¹¹⁹ L. Robin, N.D. Brener, S.F. Donahue, T. Hack, K. Hale and C. Goodenow, "Associations between health risk behaviours and opposite-, same-, and both-sex sexual partners in representative samples of Vermont and Massachusetts high school students," *Archive of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, vol. 156(4), 2002, pp. 349–55, <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.156.4.349>. Women are unlikely to infect other women and lesbians who have never had sexual contact with a male sexual partner have lower rates of STIs than heterosexual women. However, this group constitutes a small minority. In a 2000 US study of 1400 women who have had sex with women, only 7% reported never having had sexual contact with a man. (Katherine Fethers, Caron Marks, Adrian Mindel, and Claudia S. Estcourt, "Sexually Transmitted Infections and risk behaviours in women who have sex with women," *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, vol. 76, 2000, pp. 345–49, <https://doi.org/10.1136/sti.76.5.345>).

¹²⁰ Fethers et al., "Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Young Americans," op. cit.

of first pornography use and sexual behaviour, mental health and other characteristics of young people, concluded that:

pornography viewing is common and frequent among young Australians from a young age. Pornography use was associated with potentially harmful outcomes, such as mental health problems, sex at a younger age and anal intercourse.¹²¹

Pornography endangers children

Of the total \$100 billion annual revenue for the pornography industry worldwide, \$13 million is thought to derive from child exploitation material (CEM) alone.¹²² Significant as this figure may be, it does not accurately reflect the extent of abuse occurring in the production of CEM. International Network of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) estimates that 79% of CEM produced is non-commercial.¹²³ Whereas paedophiles were previously isolated, the Internet has allowed online communities to organise. These communities share content, fantasies, and techniques of child abuse. Importantly, ‘fresh’ material forms the currency required for members to join and maintain their membership of such communities.¹²⁴ In this way, an increase in the number of viewers results directly in increased numbers of children being exploited.

A 2017 report released by Anti-Slavery Australia into online child exploitation in Australia (the first of its kind to attempt to describe the reach of the global industry in sex trafficking of children into Australia) describes child exploitation as “a pandemic ... with some statistics suggesting the volume of child sexual abuse imagery increasing as much as 400% between 2013 and 2015.” The police report, “Back in the early 2000s we were dealing with kilobytes and megabytes. Now we are dealing with petabytes, mainly terabytes when we do our seizures.”¹²⁵

Research into this area is urgent and ongoing, but initial studies suggest that these online communities are not simply attracting members who always identified as paedophiles. Rather, it seems that the availability of CEM is “contributing to the crystallization of those interests in people with no explicit prior sexual

¹²¹ Megan S.C. Lim, Paul A. Agius, Elise R. Carrotte, Alyce M. Vella, Margaret E. Hellard, “Australians' use of pornography and associations with sexual risk behaviours,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, June 2017, vol. 14(4), pp. 438–443, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12678>.

¹²² Melinda Tankard Reist, *Pornography and Violence*.

¹²³ Jennifer Burns et al., *Behind the Screen: Online Child Exploitation in Australia*, Anti-Slavery Australia, 2017, p. 6. (Available at: <http://www.antislavery.org.au/images/behind%20the%20screen%20-%20report.pdf>)

¹²⁴ Sally Treeby, speaking at the *Summit Against Sexual Exploitation*, Brisbane, 6 May 2017. Fresh material is evidence of a member’s continued commitment to the shared interests of the community. It also ensures that all members are criminally culpable, which is an effective strategy for insuring against information being passed to authorities from anyone within the group.

¹²⁵ Senior Officer of the Queensland Police Project Argos. Quoted in *Behind the Screen*, p. 1.

interest in children.”¹²⁶ As well as those with an established, exclusive sexual interest in children, these communities are also attracting members who are not consistently paedophilic, and who have had adult-to-adult sexual relationships. As a result, men in prison for possession of CEM may be offended to be referred to as paedophiles.¹²⁷ Their interest in CEM results from the organic progression of the search for “more extreme stuff,” as described earlier.¹²⁸

CEM offenders are a heterogeneous group. They do not fit stereotypes of the aberrant village pervert, instantly recognisable by his dirty macintosh and involuntary facial tick. Studies show that factors such as substance abuse, antisocial orientation, deviant sexual interest and situational factors may distinguish those who commit contact sexual crimes against children from those who engage online only.¹²⁹ There might be various ways to understand this, but possibilities include the idea that “pre-disposing factors to paedophilia might be amplified through Internet pornography” or that exposure to adult-child sex through the internet may cause the adult–adult sexual adaptation to unravel.¹³⁰

Dines has constructed a compelling case for the argument that legal “pseudo child pornography” (PCP) plays a crucial part in grooming online users of internet pornography toward an interest in “the real thing.”¹³¹ PCP must still use performers over the age of 18 (for the purposes of legality) but pornography producers select those with young-looking bodies and use visual cues that suggest pre-pubesence. The fashion for removing all pubic hair (known popularly as ‘the Brazilian’) began with PCP.¹³² Performers are shown, for example, wearing school uniforms, knee-high socks, cuddling stuffed toys in a children’s bedroom, wearing pig tails and/or sucking lollipops. The language used to describe the girls on the PCP sites is strikingly different to the terms of abuse typically used for adult women on other hardcore pornography sites. In PCP material, girls’ bodies (including their vaginas) are described as “tiny,” “teeny,” “petite” or “tight.” Pornographers emphasise that their websites offer genuine depictions of a girl’s first sexual experience (“our girls are fresh and inexperienced and very sexy in an innocent kind of way”) and, in order to support the fantasy of innocence defiled, typically advertise “fresh girls every week.”

“Solo” PCP genres serve as an entry level for an audience that may still find the association of childhood and sexual activity shocking. These sites depict young

¹²⁶ Heather Wood, “Internet pornography and paedophilia,” *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, vol. 27(4), 2013, pp. 319–388, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02668734.2013.847851>

¹²⁷ Dines, *Powerful Pornland*.

¹²⁸ Dines, *Pornland*, p. 161.

¹²⁹ Jennifer A. McCarthy, “Internet Sexual Activity: a comparison between contact and non-contact child pornography offenders,” *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, vol. 16(2), 2010, pp. 181–195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552601003760006>

¹³⁰ Heather Wood, *op. cit.*

¹³¹ The following discussion summarises Dines’ analysis of PCP genres (Dines, *Pornland*, pp. 141–162). See also, Gail Dines, “The New Lolita: Pornography and the sexualization of childhood,” Melinda Tankard Reist and Abigail Bray (eds.), *Big Porn Inc: exposing the harms of the global pornography industry*, Melbourne, 2015, pp. 3–9.

¹³² Vibeke Venema, “The women who invented the Brazilian wax,” BBC World Service, 31 December 2016. (Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37896963>)

girls on their own. They begin as nervous, giggling, smiling and blushing innocents but, with a little coaxing from off-stage men happily strip and masturbate for the camera. The narrative constructed indicates that the girl's innocence was really only ever a pretence, disguising the underlying truth that she really was a slut all along. The transference of the culpability onto the girl divests the viewer of any feelings of guilt he may otherwise have in masturbating to such a scene. The fantasy of sexual agency on the part of the girl is essential to the success of the solo pornography genre.¹³³

In PCP depictions of penetrative sex, the movie may involve more kissing and touching than adult pornography genres, and the girls are rarely referred to by derogatory names. According to Dines:

What is also striking to anyone who is familiar with the codes and conventions of Internet porn is that the male actually keeps asking the female, in a tender way, if the sex feels okay or if he is hurting her. These differences should not be seen as positive steps toward a less violent type of porn; what they actually represent are techniques aimed at authenticating the supposed consensual loss of virginity. On these sites, there is no mention of coercion or even subtle manipulation; the performer is depicted as eager to lose her virginity.¹³⁴

PCP genres extend to sadistic, gonzo pornography (where, although virgins, the girls are actually revealed to be “dirty little whores,” eager for rough sex) and incest pornography (where the girls are depicted as coaxing a reluctant father or, at least, amazed at how satisfying the sex initiated by her father turns out to be). The power imbalance, typical of other pornography genres, is accentuated in PCP. The girl is often economically vulnerable, a babysitter or a cleaner—therefore younger than the man, present in his home and happy to be paid for sex instead of other services. The age disparity between the teenage girl and her male partner – who may be in his 60s or 70s – is also emphasised in these films. Dines described the process:

Once he clicks on these sites, the user is bombarded, through images and words, with an internally consistent ideology that legitimizes, condones, and celebrates a sexual desire for children.¹³⁵

Dines' analysis explains how these sites act as socializing agents for their users by constructing a particular set of ideologies that normalize children as legitimate sexual partners for adult men. The user enters a virtual community that offers him inclusion:

For these men, PCP sites can be seen as a kind of low-stakes primer nudging, encouraging, and in a way seducing them into joining the club with promises of community, friendship, and understanding – the very things that a nascent paedophile may lack the most. In a perverse way, the sites are seasoning the would-be user in much the same way a professional

¹³³ Dines, “The New Lolita,” p. 7.

¹³⁴ Dines, *Pornland*, p. 149.

¹³⁵ Dines, *Pornland*, p. 158.

predator seasons his prey since they first find out what that mark lacks and then tease and manipulate him into compliance with the promise of fulfilling these deeply felt needs.¹³⁶

PCP attracts pornography viewers who are bored with the usual fare. Men interviewed in prison for possession of CEM have expressed surprise at how quickly they overcome the initial exciting shock of watching sex with children and were led thereby to continue on their quest for still “more extreme stuff.”¹³⁷

The supportive nature of the online community is bolstered by a shared understanding that, although the outside world considers such behaviour deviant, those within the community know better – that sex with children has nothing to do with violence, aggression or sexual abuse. The same narratives of consent discussed earlier regarding adult pornography – where the viewer is invited to believe the pornography performer enjoys the experience – applies to CEM also. The child is shown looking like a willing, eager accomplice, sometimes even as ‘the seducer.’ Dines points out:

Of course, this is a lie but one that ... many perpetrators – and indeed sometimes lawyers, social workers, and police – believe, since they view the image as the truth rather than as a carefully constructed representation of reality that is produced with specific goals in mind.¹³⁸

Fueling further abuse of children

Discussions about the rates and prevalence of consumption of CEM must always acknowledge the limitations of such data. Such highly illegal activity is obscured using sophisticated technologies to protect vast online networks and communities of users under the relative protection and anonymity of the darknet.¹³⁹ Although CEM was a problem even when printed media was the only form of distribution, the internet again is responsible for an explosion in this material and in the numbers of users who can access it anonymously from anywhere in the world. According to Anti-Slavery Australia, the information they have gathered:

... demonstrates what can only be described as a crime epidemic that has grown alongside the proliferation of online technologies and the ease with which online child exploitation offenders are able to access, store, produce and disseminate huge volumes of material. As this report reveals, these images increasingly depict crimes committed against young children and highly depraved acts of sexual violence and torture.¹⁴⁰

The number of consumers of CEM has been growing steadily in recent years. In 2014, the number of users in the UK alone was estimated at 50,000. Of these, it

¹³⁶ Dines, *Pornland*, p. 159.

¹³⁷ Dines, *Pornland*, p. 161.

¹³⁸ Dines, *Pornland*, p. 151.

¹³⁹ Burns, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁴⁰ Burns, op. cit., p. 5.

was thought that half would go on to physically abuse a child.¹⁴¹ Now arresting 400 offenders every month, the UK justice system has officially announced its inability to cope with the volume of new referrals. In February 2017, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, who heads the police ‘Operation Hydrant,’ which investigates child abuse cases, announced a new policy whereby those offenders thought to represent low risk of contact abuse for children could be dealt with in the community, rather than through the over-loaded courts, which were already spending 40%–50% of their time hearing sex abuse cases. With potentially 150,000,000 CEM images available on the internet, the criminal justice system simply cannot prosecute all the online pornography users who view CEM:

We are having to deal with more referrals than we ever have done. So, three years ago we would receive 400 referrals a month into the National Crime Agency from the United States of America, that is now approaching, on occasions, 5000 a month.¹⁴²

The Australian Federal Police received 11,000 online child exploitation reports in 2015. A report from the International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) image database indicated that, as of 1 June 2016, there were 194 identified Australia-based child victims and 102 identified Australian offenders.¹⁴³ Australia-based offenders are not only viewers of online CEM, but also procurers, groomers and administrators of vast online child exploitation networks. Australia-based offenders are also major contributors to these networks and have been known to drive the exploitation of children both locally, and in countries overseas such as the Philippines and areas of Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁴

This global problem will only grow as online communities interested in CEM continue to expand. Figures released recently that attempt to measure the scale of the problem warn that what we know cannot be taken as a holistic representation of the contents of vast online networks that work under the protection of the Darknet. These figures, nevertheless, may shock:

Data from the International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database reveals that in 2015 the database held 6,672 unique identified victims in different age ranges, with approximately 40,000 victims who were not yet to be identified and who were very young children. Recent figures from the same database indicate that approximately seven new child victims are identified daily. The number of new images uploaded daily is enormous with a total figure of 8510 in April 2016.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Keith Baker and Chris Greenwood, “Don’t lock up web perverts ... treat them on the NHS: Anger as police chief insists many will never abuse a child,” *Daily Mail*, 5 December 2014. (Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2861958/Officer-says-view-child-porn-dont-abuse-helped.html>).

¹⁴² Interview with Simon Bailey on *BBC Radio 4’s Today Program*, 28 February 2017. (Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-39112911>).

¹⁴³ Burns, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Burns, op. cit., p. 9.

The Internet Watch Foundation found from 2015 data that:

- 69% of the victims were assessed as aged 10 or under;
- 3% (of 1,788) of the victims were assessed as aged 2 or under; and
- 34% of the images were assessed as 'Category A' images, depicting rape or sexual torture of children.

According to a member of the New Zealand Government's International Affairs team:

As well as children of very young ages, even babies, being filmed, the nature of the material is also becoming 'extremely sadistic, brutal ... INTERPOL put out a statement a number of years ago that the majority of material these days was between the ages of zero and five, and they believed that was because the victim could not voice or speak for themselves [making them] difficult to identify ... We are seeing, and know, that some of the children that have been videoed have since been killed.'¹⁴⁶

It would be hard to argue that the onward progression of some internet pornography users through PCP genres to CEM, in the quest for 'more extreme stuff' was not fuelling this exponential rise in demand for CEM and the unmeasurable (and unimaginable) increase in child abuse that accompanies this demand. Obviously, not all pornography users will venture this far, but they are not encouraged to desist from their exploration by the advertising and promotion strategies of pornographers. The commercial success of the pornography business depends on locating and exploiting whatever secret perversions may be kindled in even those men (and, much less often, women) who would not otherwise be sexually interested in children. The creation of secret communities of like-minded men only serves to normalise deviant behaviour and give life to the fantasy of children's sexual agency, further feeding paedophilic narratives that sex with children is not abusive.¹⁴⁷

Children as sex offenders

As well as affecting the children filmed to create individual images or videos, CEM is used by paedophiles to groom other children for exploitation, desensitising them to sexual contact with adults and instructing them in various sex acts. According to the late Emerita Professor Frieda Briggs, exposure to pornography, either for grooming purposes or just casual exposure in the home, is an aggravating factor in child-on-child sexual assault, not just between adolescents but even for

¹⁴⁶ Member of the New Zealand Government's Internal Affairs team, quoted in Burns, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ A study of those serving prison sentences for possession of child pornography also indicates a worsening of the crimes for which offenders are incarcerated. See, for example, Michael C. Seto, Lesley Reeves and Sandy Jung, "Explanations given by child pornography offenders for their crimes," *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, vol. 16(2), 2010, pp. 169–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600903572396>. "There was evidence to suggest that the recently arrested offenders were more sexually deviant, as they were more likely to have images of boys, larger collections, images depicting sexual violence or other paraphilic content and more involvement in online trading and communication."

children in the early years of primary school. Commenting on the rising rates of such sexual assaults, Briggs noted three possible explanations:

- (a) They have been traumatized/influenced by exposure to pornography and repeat what they have seen. In the writer's interviews with more than 700 children for the ARC, some boys aged 6–8 years revealed that “fun” activities with their fathers included watching pornography on the internet because “that’s what guys do;”
- (b) They have been traumatized by sexual abuse and are repeating what they have experienced; and
- (c) They have inappropriately witnessed sexual activity in the home environment.¹⁴⁸

International longitudinal studies demonstrate that intentional exposure to violent X-rated material over time predicted an almost six-fold increase in the odds of self-reported sexually aggressive behaviour for boys aged 10–15 years old.¹⁴⁹ Flood concurs:

Pornography's role in children's sexual offending is likely to be similar to its role in adults' sexual offending. Yes, pornography exposure is a significant risk factor for sexual violence perpetration by children and young people. There is no doubt: pornography exposure increases the risk of children's and young people's perpetration of sexual assault ... In addition, children's pornography exposure itself may be a part or symptom of a range of forms of abuse and trauma experienced by children who themselves are engaged in problem sexual behaviour.¹⁵⁰

Although not all abused children will grow up to reproduce this abuse, a history of being abused is well-established as a predisposing factor. “Studies suggest anywhere between 33% and 75% of child sex offenders report being sexually abused as children.”¹⁵¹ The connection demonstrated earlier between regular viewing of online pornography and perpetration of sexual violence also applies to children

¹⁴⁸ Frieda Briggs, Submission 2, Australian Senate Inquiry into the *Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet*, 2016, p. 5. Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Online_access_to_porn/Submissions).

¹⁴⁹ M. L. Ybarra, K.J. Mitchell, M. Hamburger, M. Diener-West, and P.J. Leaf, “X-rated material and perpetration of sexually aggressive behavior among children and adolescents: is there a link?” *Aggressive Behavior*, vol. 37(1), 2011, pp. 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20367> .

¹⁵⁰ Michael Flood, Submission 250, p. 19. (Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Online_access_to_porn/Submissions).

¹⁵¹ Xanthe Mallett, “Psychology of a paedophile: why are some people attracted to children?” *The Conversation*, 26 May 2016. (Available at: <http://theconversation.com/psychology-of-a-paedophile-why-are-some-people-attracted-to-children-59991>). See also A. Gray, W.D. Pithers, A. Busconi, P. Houchens, “Developmental and etiological characteristics of children with sexual behaviour problems, treatment implications,” *Child Abuse and Neglect*, vol. 23(6), 1999, pp. 601–21, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134\(99\)00027-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(99)00027-7).

where it is even less surprising that children who regularly view pornography are inspired to believe the fantasy depicted in pornography and emulate what they have seen onscreen by doing ‘what the grown-ups do.’¹⁵²

It is estimated that adolescent boys are responsible for approximately a fifth of rapes of adult women and between a third and half of all reported sexual assaults of children.¹⁵³

Research has confirmed that the age of the abuser has no effect on the degree of harm caused to the victims: “Abuse by a school peer or sibling can be just as frightening and harmful as abuse by an adult.”¹⁵⁴

As with sexual offending in adults, exposure to pornography is often one of a number of aggravating factors for child perpetrators of assault. Others may include dysfunctional family background, exposure to domestic violence, an environment of drug and alcohol abuse, and previously having been the victim of sexual assault, either directly by an adult or by another child who in turn has been abused by an adult. Although it is therefore impossible to draw simplistic conclusions that attribute all child-on-child sexual assault to the direct inspiration of pornography, it is necessary to note that pornography feeds into such situations and exacerbates the vulnerability of children in a number of ways that may be cyclical or self-perpetuating:

- Pornography is used to groom children for sex;
- Sexual abuse of children is filmed for the instruction of other children in particular sex acts, or to blackmail the child into silence and for sale to other adult abusers (thus increasing the demand for CEM as described above);
- Children who have been abused are more likely to abuse other children; and
- Merely watching pornography is a risk factor for subsequent coercion of other children into unwanted sex acts.

Joe Tucci, head of Childhood Foundation in Australia, runs programs for young people who have engaged in problematic sexual behaviours. In 2016, he commented that “pornography is a factor in 100 percent of the cases we see, whereas it used to just account for a small portion of cases 10 years ago.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Briggs, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁵³ M.L. Bourke and B. Donohue, “Assessment and treatment of juvenile sex offenders: An empirical review,” *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, vol. 5, 1996, pp. 47–65, https://doi.org/10.1300/J070v05n01_03. See also D. Finkelhor, R. Ormrod, and M. Chaffin, *Juveniles who commit sexual offenses against minors*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention, 2009.

¹⁵⁴ Cameron Boyd and Leah Bromfield, “Young people who sexually abuse: key issues,” *Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA)*, Wrap No3, December 2006, Commonwealth of Australia. (Available at: <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/young-people-who-sexually-abuse>).

¹⁵⁵ Antoinette Lattouf, “Sexual assault among young people is on the rise. But why?” *ABC News*, 3 September 2016. (Available here: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-03/sexual-assault-among-young-people-is-on-the-rise.-but-why/7810866>).

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures relating to sexual offenses committed by school-aged children quadrupled from 430 in 2007 to 1709 in 2011.¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

The contribution of pornography to cultural change since the rise of the Internet and the ubiquity of the smartphone is complex. Undoubtedly, pornography affects some members of the community more than others. An individual's predisposition to view pornography, his susceptibility to encouragement to explore new genres, the degree to which belief systems promulgated by pornography are accepted and internalised, and the degree to which these are played out in subsequent behaviour are inter-related in complex ways. Other variables include social isolation, environments of abuse, previous sexual experience, age, gender, sexual orientation and maturity levels and the context in which pornography is viewed. The influence of pornography is also diffused through culture, feeding increasing popular acceptance of sexualised music, advertising, and TV programming. It is therefore impossible to reduce the influence of pornography down to a simple equation.

If exact quantification is difficult, the harmful consequences of pornography's proliferation can nevertheless be clearly discerned in cultural and attitudinal change. Pornography (particularly the increasingly popular hardcore pornography genres), depicts a 'fantasy' world in which the harassment, rape, intimidation, and coercion of women is received positively. Even well-intentioned and seemingly well-adjusted individuals may be unable to sufficiently critique the beliefs they imbibe through pornography narratives that sexual dominance of women is necessary to the expression of healthy male sexuality. The promulgation of such ideas within male online discussion groups demonstrates that the beliefs of pornography are being accepted and internalised by their predominantly male audiences. The consequences for women include sexual violence, being choked and being coerced into sexual acts they find painful and/or degrading. The evidence connecting pornography with rape-supportive attitudes and actual perpetration of sexual violence is now compelling.

So too is the evidence that pornography is changing the sexual behaviours and expectations of teenagers, for whom the negative influence of pornography is increased by lack of sexual experience that might cause more experienced adults to question the idea that pornography sex is normal. Changes to teenage sexual behaviour, including risky sexual behaviours, are clear. So too are the negative consequences in terms of incidence of STIs.

Perhaps most concerning is the evidence that pornography is serving to expand mainstream sexual tastes into the few areas still considered taboo, such as sex with children. The role of PCP in presenting children as legitimate sexual partners for men has encouraged the proliferation of extensive international networks sharing massive quantities of content and driving demand for the creation of fresh content. The children abused in the process are filmed to groom others. The alarming

¹⁵⁶ Lisa Cornish, "Teenage sex offences increase, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 28 October 2012. (Available at: <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/teenage-sex-offences-increase-australian-bureau-of-statistics-figures-show/news-story/787e74808cc07b998ad98b99cac3cf63>).

incidence of child-on-child sexual assault is causally linked to exposure to pornography and/or experiences of sexual abuse.

The debate has moved well beyond whether pornography is morally supportable or ethically produced. It has come to the point of forcing an acknowledgement that pornography is feeding “the health crisis of the digital age.” The various negative effects of pornography are too profound to allow this industry to continue in its current trajectory of exponential growth. Unfettered, pornography producers have proven to be far too clever at making the fantasy real and thereby discovering and exploiting latent sexual paraphilia, which had much better remain latent.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

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