

Is obscenity harmless?

Pornography linked with sex crimes

On August 25 of last year, NBC aired a documentary showing strong evidence that child pornography encourages child molestation. Studies from various universities point to the connection between hard-core pornography and sex crimes perpetrated mainly against women and children.

In the March '84 issue of *Conservative Digest* it was reported that one of ten women will be raped in her lifetime. Obviously, it's time to stop labeling

urge to commit that behavior and, therefore, pornography isn't all that bad.

It is important to note that Nixon's commission set out with the goal of proving that obscenity was harmless. No such study can be considered scientific in the least. Most data which showed evidence contrary to their goal was not included in the report. Also, the study concentrated mostly on soft-core materials consisting of simple nudity.

Today, hard-core pornography featuring depictions of rape, incest, and torture can be found in most U.S. cities. The consumer of pornography has, over the years, developed a "taste" for more violent and bizarre literature.

Some people might have heard that Denmark has experienced less rape since their government decriminalized most pornography. One must take into account, however, that Denmark experienced no such decline and, in reality, saw an increase in sex crimes. The alleged drop in sex crimes came about as a result of alterations in the laws as to what was categorized as a sex crime.

Recent studies by law enforcement officials and psychologists in America and Europe have shown a definite correlation exists between pornography and sex crimes. According to Dr. Richard Lindsay of the Michigan State Police Department, classified over 35,000 sex crimes and found that "in 43 of the crimes, pornography was rated as a major antecedent cause."

In the February 6, 1984 issue of "Sexuality Today" Dr. Edward Donnerstein of the University of Wisconsin has found that men exposed to pornography consistently become desensitized to sexual violence and view victims of rape with less compassion than the control groups who viewed non-pornographic films.

A great deal of today's pornography depicts women being raped — and enjoying it. Even violent scenes of sado — masochism are accompanied with descriptions of pleasure (allegedly from the participants) being derived from whipping, chaining, cutting, hitting, and other acts of perverted violence. If average individuals can become desensitized to rape through viewing relatively mild examples of pornography and violence then what kind of effect can we expect the extreme films and literature to have on those who enjoy indulging in this sort of recreation?

British scientists R.J. McGuire, J.M. Carlisle, and D.G. Young found pornography prompts and reinforces a variety of sexual deviation. Even non-violent pornography was linked to negative actions according to the research of Dr. Dolf Zillman of the University of Indiana.

In the April, 1984 issue of "Ensign," psychologist Victor B. Cline described viewers of pornography as going through several stages. First, "They become addicted. Second, their desire for it escalates. . . Third, they become desensitized to the abnormality of the behavior portrayed. In time, they accept and embrace what at first shocked and offended them. Fourth, eventually there is a tendency and temptation to act out what they have witnessed."

Pornography a victimless crime? Evidence is mounting that sex crimes and pornography are strongly related and this poses some major questions we, as a society, must face — especially in light of the growing availability of pornography not only in bookstores, but on cable channels as well.

Michael Cross
Representative of Students Against Rape,
Pornography and the Exploitation of
Children.

Commentary

pornography as a victimless crime in light of the correlations between rape and pornography.

Often the cry of "freedom of speech" is heard when measures are taken to curb pornography; for instance, Reagan's signing into law harsher crackdown on "kiddie porn". But the founders of this nation did not believe everything meant to communicate was to be protected by the first amendment.

Many defenders of pornography are quick to cite the Nixon administration's commission on pornography which reported that little or no harm came from pornographic materials. They even supported the notion of the "Cathartic theory" — the psychological theory that one can derive benefit from viewing a behavior and therefore not have the desire to act out a fantasy one might have. This theory has major flaws however.

Under the logic of catharsis one could suppose that to alleviate hunger pains one should show starving people films of people gorging themselves with food. That's about as logical as claiming if someone can view deviant behaviors this will satisfy their

letters

Neanderthal

I thought the Neanderthal period ended centuries ago, but evidently some people take longer to evolve. Rob Young's letter (ODE 12/3) equating wearing pornographic t-shirts to enter a party with his having to wear a suit for a job interview is proof enough.

It's sad, Rob, that you fail to understand the significance of the event, or that you simply don't care how such an incident is detrimental to women. Whatever the case may be, your ignorance is boldly underlined.

You see, Rob, the t-shirt episode is but a small piece of a much larger pie — no matter how unimportant you consider

it. Place it in context with sexist language, sexist remarks and innuendos, the pornography industry and machismo etc., and the subjugation and degradation of women becomes startlingly clear. While you trivialize the matter, there are a great many of us who say it is a BIG DEAL.

As to your assertion that embarrassment from sexual games — t-shirt gags, panty raids and what have you — is supposed to abate as we mature, I propose that many men never reach sexual maturation mentally. They continue — a large part through pornography — to objectify women.

Empathy for women and men in their struggle against sexism is a tremendous first step in

understanding the repercussions of a sexist society. Please try a heavy dose, Rob.

While I don't discount your free will to decide what's considered sexist and a form of sexual abuse, I do question your intelligence.

Glenn Kilb
Eugene

Disgusted

I was disgusted to see that the Political Science Department here at the University was forced to purchase an advertisement in order to correct an error made by the Emerald. At the going Emerald advertising rate, the Political Science Department would have to have paid \$153

for the advertisement correcting the Emerald error. Even if the department was only charged the campus rate (for recognized student organizations), they still would have paid out \$115.20.

After recently paying \$480.50 to register for my winter classes, I'm appalled to think that my tuition is going in this manner to pay for Emerald errors, because the newspaper and its staff are unable or unwilling to use appropriate sources for their stories. Furthermore, my forced

payment of Emerald subscription fees (through incidental fees paid with tuition) should be more than enough payment for the Emerald to print a retraction when it is brought to their attention that a mistake has been made. Since the Emerald hasn't done so, somebody should see that the Political Science Department is refunded their money for the ad placed in the Jan. 9 issue of the newspaper.

Eric Stillwell
Political Science

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