TABLE 4
FEMALE RAPE: VICTIMIZATION RATES (/1000) IN USA
(Bureau of Justice Statistics)

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>65+</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.2</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>.1</td>
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Table 5
RATES OF CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION AND PERCENT CHANGE, 1993-1996, IN USA
(Bureau of Justice Statistics)

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape/Sexual Assault</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape/Attempted Rape</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>-43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>-60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted Rape</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>-28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>-37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Violence</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>-17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt or Threat Violence</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>-15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The debates over who comprises a sex offender varies widely and rather than attempt to provide a variety of definitions, one provides the comprehensiveness necessary for this review of the literature. The Kinsey Institute for the Study of Sex, Gender and Reproduction in an earlier book, Sex Offenders by Gebhard, Gagnon, Pomeroy, and Christenson (1964) defines sex offenders as "individuals who are ultimately convicted for committing overt acts for their immediate sexual gratification that are contrary to the prevailing sexual mores of their society and thus are legally punishable." It should be noted that this definition of sex offender differs from those individuals who are deviant, but are never arrested and from those classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (1994) as paraphilias. The differing views of the legal and psychiatric professionals have generally been in conflict and there is no reason to expect convergence or agreement on what comprises either the offender or the offense. We therefore wish to focus our review on data based studies which provide evidence to test the research question Does exposure to pornographic materials lead to antisocial behavior in the form of sex offenses?

Before beginning the review of the literature, note must be taken of the questions raised by Bausenman (1996) with respect to research on pornography and offenses. According to Bausenman, two questions arise in the study of pornography and its relation to sexual offending, "whether or not exposure to pornography plays a role in the development of offending behavior and whether use of pornography plays a role in the commission of actual offenses" [emphasis added]. This paper will focus on the second of these questions, as the literature provides much clearer data with respect to the commission of the offense as opposed to the development of a pattern.
1 of behavior which is subject to the interpretation of the researcher from extensive background materials.

Theories of Sex Offenders

There are numerous theories of sex offenders, which need to be presented before one can focus on the variable of pornography. These explanatory perspectives of sex offenders usually fall into categories which are crafted by different researchers. The theories can be classified as (1) Individual, (2) Psychological, (3) Social, or (4) Cultural explanations of the offending behavior with the level of explanation usually being reflected by the discipline and training of the researcher. Others, such as Siegel and Senna (1994) take a different approach dividing the explanations for deviant or criminal behavior into groups: (a) Individual, which is composed of choice and trait theories; (b) Social Structure Theories, which are made up of social disorganization, social strain, and cultural deviance; (c) Social Progress Theories, made up of labeling and conflict types. Another addition to this group is that of Feminist Theory. Looking at the work of Barbara Schwartz (1995b) in her paper on “Theories of Sex Offenses” we see a list of no less than twenty different theories used to explain the behavior of sex offenders including Ego, Neurosis, Jungian, Psychoanalytic, Cognitive-Behavioral, and an Integrated Theory of Rape. In looking at the characteristics and typologies of sex offenders, Schwartz (1995a) indicates a number of characteristics associated with the sex offenders, however, pornography was not one of them. Typologies which can classify groupings of sex offenders into categories providing insight into their patterns, behavior and possible motivations make a significant contribution to the field. These have been developed mainly for two types of sex offenders—pedophiles and rapists. It is worthwhile noting, however, that “research into the characteristics of sex offenders can become a meaningless list of traits. Typologies may be reduced to labels that do more harm than good” (Schwartz, 1995b).

Upon reviewing the literature, the position serious researchers have taken with respect to pornography is one in which the antisocial or deviant behavior is preexisting and that the role of pornography is that of providing justification and rationalizations for their behavior in addition to being a source of sexual arousal.

One of the variables that is often cited in association with pornography is that of aggression. It is this link that provides much of the fodder for emotional appeals based on experiential evidence. The research most often cited is that of Malamuth and Donnerstein reported in the book Pornography and Aggression (1984). Their research has often been misinterpreted and misstated for political purposes. In their research, Donnerstein and Linz (1986) conclude that “There is no evidence for harm-related effects from sexually explicit materials. But research may support potential harmful effects from aggressive materials. Aggressive images are the issue, not sexual images.”

The Debate Over the Effects of Pornography

The debate over the effects of pornography can be seen in three positions: (1) those supporting the relationship between pornography and sex offenses, (2) those whose results are mixed or conflicting, and (3) those studies which show no relationship between pornography and sex offenses. A brief discussion of the two polar positions may provide a clearer picture of the debate as there is a movement to present opinion as data and mix the politics of pornography with what pretends to be scientific research. However, it is very important to look at the source of the data and conclusions drawn by the different positions.

The position that sees pornography as directly related to sex offenses is most strongly held in a wing of the feminist perspective, namely following the work of Andrea Dworkin (1981) and Catharine MacKinnon (1993). The basis in Feminist Theory is explained on the grounds of a patriarchal, oppressive society. Dworkin and MacKinnon believe that pornography is at the root of every form of exploitation and discrimination of women. Dworkin, MacKinnon, and numerous other feminists also believe that violence against women is not merely reflected in some pornography, it is caused by all pornography. (Turley, 1986)

To support this position, the work of Donnerstein and Malamuth (1984) is frequently cited along with the support of the pro-feminist men’s group NOMAS (National Organization of Men Against Sexism) strongly supported by M.S. Kimmel (1992).

Leading the fight against the Dworkin-MacKinnon position have been the female sex workers who are the focus of the “exploitation.” These women form the foundation for a strong pro-porn or pro-erotic position with respect to women and sexuality. The position of the academic women who support them, such as Linda Williams, Camille Paglia and others do not find pornography oppressive of women. In fact, their position supports the thesis that pornographic material releases women to express their sexuality. This is further reinforced by sex workers like Annie Sprinkle and filmmakers such as Candida Royalle.

When strong personalities make strong political arguments, the data may very well become lost in the rhetoric. This paper will try, as much as possible to eliminate the politics of pornography and focus instead on data derived from research. The research should stand on its own and the interpretation should be based on the conclusions derived from data and not from the political positions of conflicting groups. It is with that intention that this review of the data was undertaken.
STUDIES REFUTING THE PORNOGRAPHY-SEX OFFENSE LINK

Pornography, Rape, and Sexual Arousal

Asked about why sex offenses may occur, individuals in the general population believe that reading and viewing pornographic materials lead people to commit rape (Abelson et al., 1970). This is also contended by many law enforcement officials. Dworkin (1981, 1985) and MacKinnon (1989) maintain that pornography constitutes hate literature against women, that it facilitates aggression, and that it encourages men to see women as sex objects. Misleading statements such as “Pornography is the theory and rape is the practice” (Morgan, 1980; Bowen, 1987) further carry on this belief. However, as suggested by analyses of crime data on sexual offending in the United States and abroad do not support this causal connection between the availability/circulation of pornography and the commission of sex crimes among juveniles or adult sex offenders. In fact, it has been shown that although the availability of pornographic materials has sharply increased over time, arrests for sex offenses have remained relatively stable or decreased compared to other violent crimes.

Examining Uniform Crime Reports compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1960 to 1969 Kuperstein and Wilson (1970) found an overall decrease in sex offenses, with the exception of forcible rape, prostitution, and commercialized vice. However, these accounted for less than 2 percent of arrests from 1960 to 1969. Compared to the forcible rape, arrests for criminal homicide, robbery, grand larceny, and auto thefts increased to a greater extent. Juvenile sex offenses decrease by 4 percent during the same period.

Comparative studies conducted in the United States and European countries have found no causal relation with the availability of pornography and the commission of sex offenses. A Danish study revealed that the number of arrests for sex offenses dramatically decreased from 1958 to 1969, despite an extensive increase in the circulation of pornographic material (Ben-Veniste, 1970). A more recent study conducted by Kutchinsky (1991) found similar results.

Studying the role of pornography on rape rates in Denmark, Sweden, West Germany, and the United States from 1964 to 1984, Kutchinsky reports that the availability of both hard-core pornography (combining sex with aggression and or explicit dominance) and non-aggressive pornography experienced rapid growth during this period in all four countries. Rape rates, however, differed among them. That is, rape rates in West Germany remained relatively steady; Denmark and Sweden experienced moderate increases; and the United States experienced a higher increase. Kutchinsky suggests that “it is likely that at least some of the increase is due to increased reporting and registration of rape, as a result of growing awareness of the rape problem among women as well as the police” (Kutchinsky, 1991).

Despite the increase of reported rapes, these did not differ from non-sexual violent crimes such as aggravated assault from 1964 to 1984. The rates for rape and aggravated assault in the United States experienced similar growth; assault increased at a faster pace than rape rates in Denmark, Sweden, and West Germany. Kutchinsky suggests that “the two developments [rape and aggravated assault] are related and should be explained in the same terms.” This is consistent with the view that rape is an act of aggression, not a sexual act (Russell, 1980) and “refute[s] the belief that explicit sexual material is somehow related to rape” (Scott & Cuvelier, 1993).

Yet another study conducted in the United States examining arrest rates in Maine, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington during the periods of time when these states’ pornography statutes were inoperative, found an upsurge in explicit pornographic media, a decrease in murder and robbery arrest, and an increase in rape and aggravated assault. Despite these increases, however, arrest rates for sex crimes were well below the national average (per 100,000 arrests in those states: ME=6.77; NC=11.32; PA=13.36; WA=12.56; ALL=14.46) over the fourteen-year period studied. Compared to the pre-suspension periods, no significant changes occurred in observed rates of arrest for rape, prostitution, and sex offenses. Winick & Evans (1996) offer various interpretations for their findings. They postulate the possibility that there may not exist a relationship between the use of pornography and the commission of sex offenses, or that the availability of pornography may alternately increase rates of sexual offenses for one group, decrease it for others, or have no impact on the majority of individuals.

Challenging the belief that increased availability and circulation of pornography in effect leads to an increase in rates for rapes, Kimmel and Linders (1996) found just the opposite, mainly, that rape rates along with aggravated assault increased while pornography consumption decreased. Thus, it is evident that “a steady decline in consumption of printed pornography and a steady rise in rape rate” (Kimmel & Linders, 1996) was in effect. It was also found that among the cities studied (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Dallas, Jacksonville, and Louisville) “the proportion of rapes reported for the core cities had decreased from 1979 to 1989 in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Louisville, remained fairly stable in Cleveland and Jacksonville, and [slightly] increased in Dallas.” Additionally, a negative correlation (r = .79) between circulation rates and rape rates between 1979 and 1989 was found nationwide. Even after removing Penthouse and Playboy, which account for the majority of the circulating material as included in the study, this negative correlation remained substantially high (r = -.54). Similar correlations were found at the state level, Kentucky (r = -.75), Ohio (r = -.82), and Texas (r = -.61). Positive correlations were found in Florida (r = .50) and Indiana (r = .04). The authors conclude that “just as legalizing pornography has not, and... will not lead to an increase in rape rates,” contrary to beliefs held by Dworkin (1981, 1985), MacKinnon (1980, 1993), and Brownmiller (1975).
Allegations have also been made in reference to increased violence depicted in sexually explicit materials, including sadomasochistic and bondage representations (Smith, 1976; Winick, 1977; Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography, 1986; Zillman & Bryant, 1986; Marshall & Barbaree, 1984). However, as reported by Kutchinsky (1983) sadomasochistic representations accounted for less than 2 percent in the available material in Denmark. Winick (1985) also reports that among 430 magazines found in a representative adult bookstore, sadomasochistic material accounted for only 1.2 percent of the total available pornographic material, while that of bondage was slightly higher (4.9 percent). Yet another bookstore study analyzing three hundred magazines found that only 7 percent of the women and 9 percent of the men portrayed in these magazines were seen in sadomasochistic or bondage submissive positions (Soble, 1986).

Furthermore, a content analysis of all cartoons and pictorials included in Hustler magazine from 1974 to 1987 was conducted by Scott & Cuvelier (1993). The study focused on any depictions of violent and nonviolent portrayals in such pictorials. Sexually violent depictions included references to rape, sadomasochism, and exploitative/coercive sexual relations. Contrary to popular belief, researchers found no evidence to the assumption that violent pornography was increasing. In fact, the average number of sexually violent depictions per year was .577, or .48 per issue. According to the authors “there has not been a monotonic increase in either violent or sexually violent cartoons or pictorials in Hustler magazine from 1974 to 1987.” Authors also note these findings were unexpected given that the number of cartoons and pictorials substantially increased from one issue to another. In fact, without controlling for the number of pages or the number of pictorials and cartoons included in each issue of the magazine, a decrease in violent depictions is observed.

In addition to refuting the so-called increase in sexually violent portrayals, Scott & Cuvelier (1993) state that “these data also question the alleged link between increased sexual violence in adult magazines and rape rates” by citing relevant literature. They argue that given the increase in X-rated video rentals in the U.S., one would expect that rape rates would have increased if the assumption that pornography causes individuals to rape held true, but this has not occurred.

Additional research has been conducted to assess the effects of pornography. Donnerstein & Linz (1986) state that a non-rapist population will show increased sexual arousal after having been exposed to “media-presented images of rape,” especially when the female victim demonstrates signs of pleasure and arousal. This exposure may also lead to a lessened sensitivity towards rape, acceptance of rape myths, increased self-reported likelihood of raping and self-generated rape fantasies. According to Donnerstein & Linz, exposure to nonaggressive pornography may have one of two effects: either (1) individuals predisposed to aggress who are later exposed to nonaggressive pornography increase their experiencing aggressive behavior; or (2) exposure to nonaggressive pornography may have the opposite effect, it may reduce subsequent aggressive behavior. They go on to state that no evidence exists “for any ‘harm’-related effects from sexually explicit materials. But research may support potential harm effects from aggressive materials. Aggressive images are the issue, not sexual images” (Donnerstein & Linz, 1986).

Jaffee & Straus (1987) report that sex magazine circulation rates, poverty, urbanization, and divorce rates of males are statistically associated with the incidence of reported rape as measured by the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports. Having reviewed their findings the authors conjectured a theoretical model explaining how rape might occur. They state, “it is the joint dependence of sex magazine readership and rape on hypermasculinity, rather than the influence of exposure to sexually explicit materials per se, that produces the correlation between sex magazine readership and rape.”

Studies assessing the impact of pornography on men’s fantasies, attitudes, and aggressiveness toward women have also been conducted. Such was the purpose of Fisher & Grenier’s study (1994), where a group of men was assigned to one of three experimental conditions or one control condition where they were told they would view a video (edited to fit three scenarios) depicting a man and a woman who had met at a dance and either (1) the man forced the woman into the bedroom and raped her but the woman ultimately enjoyed the experience (positive outcome); (2) the man forced the woman into the bedroom and raped her, and after the incident she fell into a deep depression (negative outcome); (3) the couple were quite attracted to one another and wanted to express their feelings; and (4) the neutral (control) group was explained the rules of a television game show. Pre-exposure arousal of subjects (as measured by the Sexual Arousal Self-Report Grid) revealed equivalent arousal levels across all conditions. Post-exposure measures indicated that in all, but the neutral condition, arousal levels had increased significantly. It was found that exposure to the neutral, erotic, and pornographic stimuli had no effect on subjects’ fantasies or attitudes toward women. No man produced sexually aggressive fantasies; men had positive attitudes toward women, rejected interpersonal violence toward them and contrary to other studies, rejected rape myths. Fisher & Grenier concluded that “these observations are consistent with the conclusion that exposure to violent pornography, as often studied in this research area, is not a reliable cause of antifeminist fantasies or antifeminist attitudes.”

Conducting a second experiment on the “effects of exposure of pornography on men’s aggressive behavior toward women,” Fisher & Grenier (1994) found that twelve of fourteen men assigned to the exposure to violent pornography, positive outcome condition did not experience antifeminist aggression following a negative evaluation by a female confederate by means of electric shock and exposure to violent, positive outcome pornography—confirming the researcher’s hypothesis. The two other men had from the onset of the experiment expressed an interest in using the shock machine to provide feedback to the female confederate on a poorly performed memorization task. Because no significant effects were found in...
this experimental condition, the remaining conditions were not carried out. These results go on to suggest that:

The current research findings do tell us—together with the empirical, methodological, and conceptual problems identified in the literature—that the reliability of effects of violent pornography on men's fantasies, attitudes, and behavior toward women remains to be demonstrated within the experimental procedures that have often been used to study such effects (Fisher & Grenier, 1994)

Sexual and Physical Abuse and Family Violence among Sex Offenders

Although allegations continue to be made that sex offenders consume comparatively substantially more pornography than the general population, research does not support this premise, rather it seems other variables may instead affect sexual offending more adversely. Howitt (1995) conducted extensive interviews with eleven pedophiles undergoing treatment. The interviews probed a variety of areas as they related to sex offenses. Howitt characterized these offenders as fixed, that is, their offenses did not extend to adult women, for example. During the interview, sex offenders were asked about their experience with pornography, fantasy, and sexual history pertaining to childhood sexual abuse. Exposure to heterosexually oriented soft-core pornography was typical of the men, however, “commercial pornography was rarely a significant aspect of their use of erotica.” Although exposure to child pornography was not significant among offenders, some generated their own erotic materials from such items as catalogs and newspaper advertisements. No reports were made by the offenders regarding exposure to sexually explicit materials prior to their first sexual abuse offense, or prior to their own victimization. Howitt concludes “there is no evidence that early exposure to pornography was a cause of later offending.”

To the extent that pornography did not play a significant role in their offending, a strong association with childhood sexual abuse was readily evident. Ten of the eleven pedophiles had been sexually victimized as children. The eleventh man witnessed a pedophilic assault of another child. Hewitt argues that early sexualization of these men as children might help explain why masturbatory experience occurred at a relatively young age.

Becker & Stein (1991) conducted a study investigating (1) the number of adolescent sex offenders using sexual erotica, (2) the type of sexually explicit material used, and (3) the relationship between erotic, alcohol/drug, history of victimization, and number of victims. One hundred and sixty adolescent males charged with or convicted of a sex crime participated. Results indicated that 35 percent of the offenders used magazines and 26 percent viewed pornographic videotapes most often than other media. Eleven percent reported not viewing sexually explicit materials at all.

Asker about the effect of pornography on their sexual arousal, the majority (67 percent) reported an increase in sexual arousal. No differences were found in terms of number of victims for type of material used. However, a significant relationship was found on the use of alcohol and number of victims. In general, those subjects who believed alcohol increased their sexual arousal had a mean of 3.1 victims, compared to 2.1 for those believing it decreased their arousal. 2.0 for those believing alcohol had no effect on their arousal, and 1.7 for those not using alcohol.

Subjects who were sexually abused had a greater number of victims (M=2.8) than those with no sexual abuse history (M=1.7). Those with no prior history of sexual abuse, were more likely to have had female victims (79 percent), while those reporting no sexual abuse had approximately the same number of male and female victims. Physical abuse history was also significant. Specifically, physically abused offenders had a greater number of victims (M=2.4) than those with no physical abuse history (M=1.7). Arriving at similar conclusions as did Howitt (1995), Becker & Stein (1991) suggest that:

Sexual victimization can provide a powerful basis for the development of sexual deviancy. A young victim of sexual abuse may fantasize about his own victimization or about committing similar abuse while masturbating. This pairing of masturbation and the experience of abuse only serve to strengthen deviant sexual interest. Therefore appropriate sexual interest may not have the opportunity to develop.

Thus, pornography may not significantly contribute to sexual offending. Of twenty offenders selected for further inquiry, Becker & Stein found fourteen sex offenders believed pornography had no effect on their offending. Only one reported having seen a video which perhaps “may have unconsciously given me the idea.”

Studying characteristics that might be predictive of sexual offending among juvenile sex offenders (rapists and child molesters), violent nonsex offenders, and status offenders, Ford & Linney (1995) found that child molesters differed from status offenders in observing and being victims of parent violence; reported more intrafamilial violence than status offenders did; and were sexually victimized more frequently than other offenders. The study revealed juveniles in all groups were exposed to soft-core and hard-core (bondage, violent sexual acts, paraphilia) pornography. While 42 percent of the sex offenders were exposed to hard-core pornography only 29 percent of violent and status offenders were exposed to the same types. Results also indicated sex offenders were exposed to sexually explicit materials at a younger age (five–eight). Of the two sex offender groups, child molesters were more frequently exposed. No difference was found in exposure to X-rated movies or sexually explicit television programs among offenders. However, violent offenders reported earlier exposure to explicit movies and television programs that showed violence associated with sexual intercourse. “The salience of these early memories sug-
suggests that exposure to violence during early childhood, either within the home or elsewhere, may be a significant antecedent risk factor for violent and sexual offending” (Ford & Linney, 1995).

Finally, a review of the literature on pornography and its relation to sexual aggression concludes that “pornography in its purely erotic form” has failed to demonstrate “any significant detrimental effect on human behavior,” especially its effects on psychological development (Fukui & Westmore, 1994). It is further noted that no causative link has been demonstrated between sex offenders’ deviant behavior and pornographic material. Fukui & Westmore go on to state that:

The psychological problems are traced back to childhood [38] and involve issues of intimacy and loneliness [39] inability to control feelings of anger and hatred, and disturbances of identification [40]. The functional disturbances demonstrated by sexual offenders are often extensive, particularly in those who commit rape or sadistic sexual assault. However, pornographic stimulation acting either as a “trigger” for the offending behavior or indeed as a “kindling” phenomenon has not been identified [their brackets].

**Degree of Exposure to Sexually Explicit Materials Among Sex Offenders**

One of the most extensive studies conducted to-date (Gebhard, Gagnon, Pomeroy, & Christenson, 1965) analyzed sexual offenses among 1,356 white male sex offenders, 888 male nonsex offenders, and a control group of 477 volunteer males from the general population. The study found that exposure to sexual materials was common among all three groups, and sex offenders did not differ statistically from the nonoffender group and the control group in the degree of exposure to sexual material. Additionally, sex offenders reported less arousal from using pornography.

A study conducted by Condon & Nutter (1968) on sixty-two men (sixteen reporting a paraphilia (exhibitionism, cross-dressing, infanticide, voyeurism, fetishism, bestiality, klimaphilia, sadism, masochism, bondage, or discipline), a control group of eighteen men from a service club, a control group of fifteen men being treated for a sexual dysfunction, and a nonincarcerated sex offender group of sixteen men (offenses included rape, incest, child molestation, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and telephonophilia). Although age differences in pornography exposure did not differ statistically, results indicated sex offenders were generally exposed to pornography at a later age than were non-offenders (sex offenders: M=14.90; paraphiles: M=13.40; sexual dysfunction group: 13.33; service group: 12.80). This dispelling the common belief that sex offenders are exposed to pornography at earlier ages and somehow causing them to offend. In all four groups studied, first masturbation experience occurred prior to exposure to pornography. Specifically, 63 percent of the sex offenders; 91 percent of paraphiles; 47 percent of sexual dysfunction patients; and 41 percent of men in a men’s service group had masturbated prior to exposure to pornographic materials. As Lipton (1976) suggests, “In general, sex offenders report sexually repressive backgrounds and immature and inadequate sexual histories” (Condron & Nutter, 1968).

Becker and Stein (1991) also reported that nearly 90 percent of 160 adolescent sex offenders had been exposed to sexually explicit materials, two-thirds of which reported having been aroused by it. However, no relation was found between the number of victims and the type of materials used. Of twenty individuals questioned in more detail, only two felt that sexual materials may have contributed to the commission of their sexual offense.

Several studies reported by the U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970) suggest that sex offenders are not exposed to pornography or to more unusual types of it during childhood or adolescence to a greater extent than non-offenders. For example, Cook and Fosem (1970) compared imprisoned sex offenders and non-sex offenders in the degree of exposure to soft-core and hard-core pornography. Compared to non-sex offenders, sex offenders were exposed to significantly lower levels of soft-core and hard-core pornography during pre-adolescence and early adolescence periods. Although both groups experienced increased sexual activity after exposure, sex offenders resorted to masturbation, whereas, non-sex offenders resorted to interpersonal sexual activity.

Also writing for the Commission, Johnson, Kupperstein, and Peters (1970) conducted a study on erotica and sex offenders. Compared to a national sample of 652 adult males, forty-seven probationary sex offenders, including rapists, pedophiles, homosexuals (deemed deviant at the time of the study), and exhibitionists answered a questionnaire identical to that of a national sample. It was observed that sex offenders came into contact with sexual materials including hard-core pornography (whips, belts, spankings) at later ages than the national sample. Their reported arousal level to such materials was similar, however (7 percent and 6 percent, respectively). Questioned about whether pornography had led them to commit their sexual offense, only one pedophile claimed that pornography had led him to commit rape. Walker (1970) too, assessed the effects of erotic stimuli among sixty imprisoned aggressive sex offenders, sixty matched incarcerated non-sex offenders, and ninety non-matched non-offenders controls from colleges and men’s service clubs. Results indicated controls were exposed more frequently and at an earlier age to erotic materials than were the sex offenders. However, an unspecified “small but significant minority” of sex offenders believed pornography contributed to their sexual offense.

Goldstein and Kant (1970) found no differences in exposure to pornography among rapists, pedophiles and controls (Black and white non-offenders) during adolescence and rapists were exposed to hard-core pornography at similar rates of exposure as were the low-income blacks, whereas, whites were exposed to such materials less frequently. Exposure to pornographic materials during the past year was not significantly different among sex offenders and controls.
Together, these findings suggest there is no readily identifiable causal connection between sex offenses and exposure to pornographic materials. The rare instances in which individual offenders reported their belief that pornography caused them to commit their sex crimes, must not be taken at face value given the possibility that offenders may in fact be rationalizing their deviant behaviors.

STUDIES SUPPORTING THEPornography-sex OFFENSE LINK

Few data-based studies have been conducted to date on the effects of exposure to pornographic materials and its relation to sexual offending. It is here that much of the politicization of pornography occurs. Allegations are made by numerous individuals who often interpret findings in an effort to advance their own agendas. Nonetheless, there exist a few studies supporting the pornography-sex offense link. Typical studies in this area involve the utilization of undergraduate psychology students in experimental research where they are exposed to varying degrees or forms of pornography. They are then given a series of questionnaires or tasks designed to reveal the extent to which pornography may have a deleterious effect on those participating, and their interactions with female confederates. One such study was conducted by Zillman & Bryant (1986) which explored the relation of pornography on beliefs about sexuality and on dispositional toward women. The study involved the use of experimental and control groups in which subjects were exposed to different levels of pornography. The control group was not exposed to any form of pornography, while the experimental group was exposed to varying levels of pornography. The results of this study suggested that exposure to pornography may have a deleterious effect on attitudes and interactions with female confederates.

Effects of Pornography on Sexual Offending

Women, especially reflected in lower prison terms. Subjects also asked to report their support for the women's liberation movement. Subsequently, they were exposed to a sexually explicit novel and were asked to rate their affective reactions, and their objections regarding the distribution of pornographic material. Finally, only all male participants filled out a questionnaire assessing sexual callousness toward women.

For the purpose of this paper only those aspects regarding pornography and rape and men's sexual callousness toward women will be discussed. According to the authors, the disposition to rape—as measured by prison sentences—was readily evident in the assigned prison terms of the offender. Specifically, those exposed to the massive pornography condition (men and women alike) assigned significantly shorter prison terms. Additionally, the men exposed to the same condition were more likely to express an increased sexual callousness toward women. The authors conclude that “massive exposure to standard pornographic materials devoid of coercion and aggression seemed to promote such callousness (in particular, the trivialization of rape), the findings are suggestive of further anti-social consequences” (Zillman & Bryant, 1982).

Moving beyond the study of length of exposure to pornographic material, Emerick & Dutton (1993) assessed observed differences in reported sex offenses of adolescent offenders. Seventy-six adolescent males reported for charged with, adjudicated of a sexual crime including voyeurism, exhibitionism, bestiality, sexual abuse, rape, child molestation, fetishism, and obscene phone calling were included in the study. No specific numbers for each type of sexual offense were noted. Data regarding assault history disclosure was gathered by means of collateral documents (legal and clinical documents), clinical interview, and polygraph examination. Pornography was classified as depicting (1) “commercial objectification of women,” (2) “commercial exploitation of women,” and (3) consisting of hard-core pornography. Seventy percent of subjects reported having been exposed to pornographic materials: 272 percent to #1, 17.1 to #2, and 55.7 percent to #3. Nearly 79 percent reported viewing pornography while masturbating. Additionally, those using hard-core pornography while masturbating had a higher number of female child victims (M=2.75) than those not using it or viewing commercial pornography (M=1.69). Additionally, they too had a greater number of female adult and child victims combined (M=3.29 vs 3.04). Finally, when put together, those using hard-core pornography had a higher number of victims of both genders (M=4.33 vs 3.04). Emerick & Dutton also found a strong association with the sexual victimization of the offenders themselves, specifically, 63.5 percent had been sexually abused.

Employing yet another research technique to study the effects of pornography, Marshall (1988) conducted a retrospective study in which fifteen incest offenders, eighteen homosexual child molesters, thirty-three heterosexual child molesters, and twenty-three men accused of rape or attempted rape participated. An additional twenty-four men with no prior history of sex offending were matched to child molesters on socioeconomic class, intelligence, and age. Each of the offenders was interviewed twice to
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assess their sexual preferences, and a third time to inquire about their exposure to and use of sexually explicit materials. Subjects were asked to focus on only hard-core materials defined as “those available only in specialized stores (or from illegal sources) and depicting explicit sexual acts with nothing left to the imagination.” Results indicated that child molesters did not have significantly more access to “kiddie porn” than the other groups. Additionally, rapists did not differ from child molesters and non-offenders in their use of material concerning forced sex.

Although the type of sexually explicit material used by sex offenders did not differ from non-offenders, significant differences were found in the use of pornography during pubescence and current use. Specifically, 33 percent of heterosexual child molesters, 39 percent of homosexual child molesters, 33 percent of rapists, and 21 percent of non-offenders reported using pornography during pubescence. Although rates for current use of pornography did not differ significantly among sex offenders, these rates were much higher than those reported during pubescence (67 percent for both heterosexual and homosexual child molesters, 100 percent for incest offenders, 83 percent for rapists). Non-offenders reported less current exposure than any of the other groups (29 percent). Additionally, 53 percent of the child molesters and 33 percent of the rapists reported pornography served as an instigator to their offenses. That is, they intentionally viewed these materials in preparation to commit their offense.

Marshall also found that compared to non-offenders and incest offenders, child molesters and rapists masturbated more frequently (one–two per week vs greater than one time per day). They were also more likely to report deviant fantasies during masturbation and non-masturbatory daydreams. Heterosexual and homosexual child molesters with three or more victims were more likely to have used sexual stimuli in preparation to commit their offense. Frequent masturbators (greater than one time per day or three–six times per week) who were current users of pornography were more likely to use it in preparation to commit their offense. Marshall states that “The demonstration of relationships between the use of sexual stimuli as instigators to offend, the strength of deviant sexual interest (as measured by deviant quotients), and the rates of masturbatory activities, strengthens the conviction that child molesters (in particular) are preoccupied with deviant thoughts that unfortunately appear to mediate a high rate of sexual offending.” Marshall goes on to say

It is possible that the use of these stimuli by sex offenders reflects the generally deviant sexual appetites of these men. According to this view, rather than exposure to sexual materials contributing to their deviance, the fact that these offenders seek it out is simply another manifestation of their basic deviant interests. (Marshall, 1988)

Indirect findings on the effects of pornography have been reported in the literature. Silbert & Pines (1984) carried out a field study analyzing sexual abuse experienced by street prostitutes prior to and following entrance into prostitution. Although the intent was not to directly look at pornography, it became clear during the course of the study that many prostitutes reported incidents in which their clients behaved in a manner which is portrayed in many pornographic movies. That is, many of the clients engaged in violent sexual acts as viewed in the movies. Authors caution against any firm conclusions about these findings given that victims, not perpetrators, contributed the information on violent pornography. Nonetheless, they go on to state that their “results lend considerable support to the ‘imitation model’ of pornography. Many of the references to pornography noted by the subjects indicated that their abusers were imitating the abusing males in pornographic materials, and believed that, as the victims in pornography, their victims [too] must enjoy the abuse” (Silbert & Pines, 1984).

DISCUSSION

Studying the purported link that pornography may have on antisocial behavior, particularly in the form of sexual offending has proved a difficult task. Numerous methodological and logistical problems have been reported in the literature, including the lack of inclusion of control groups when gathering data from sex offenders. In conducting retrospective studies it is not uncommon to find that offenders attempt to provide an explanation on why they offend and cite the use of pornography as the instigator of their offending. However, this may instead prove to be no more than a rationalization for their deviant behavior. Laboratory experiments too suffer from a number of limitations, namely, whether findings from a laboratory setting can be generalized to the general population.

As with many other areas of sexuality, pornography is frequently cited by the feminist wing as being harmful and degrading to women, and how men consuming it become callous and violent toward them. Many findings–often with low correlation values between pornography and sex offenses–are exaggerated and exploited through the media in an effort to advance an agenda supportive of one’s point of view. There is also a trend to portray opinion as data, thus politicizing the study of pornography. The Effects Panel of the United States Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970) acknowledged that in conducting their studies, “social forces” impeded and limited carrying out given studies. The Attorney General’s Commission (1986) was even more political than scientific. Most of its reported findings were based from opinion and not data.

To briefly summarize the findings of this literature review, consistent with many of the findings of the U.S. presidential commission on pornography, no causal links can be established between the use of pornography and sexual offending. Study after study suggests that pornography is not the cause in sexual violence, rather violence itself may in fact cause sexual offending. Juvenile and adult offenders report similar use of pornographic...
material as nonoffenders. Age of exposure to such materials varies widely; however, sex offenders become exposed to it at later ages than nonoffenders. The review of several studies reported in this paper suggest that sexual abuse, physical abuse, and drug/alcohol use may better serve as predictors in sexual offending. Researchers have hypothesized that individuals who are sexually abused may fantasize about their own abuse while masturbating, which in turn may lead them to believe that offending may not be an inappropriate behavior. Sexually repressive backgrounds are also reported extensively in the study of sex offenders where pornographic materials are not readily available. Notwithstanding these findings, the view that pornography may serve as an instigator for sex offending cannot be ignored in its entirety. It is possible as Marshall (1988) found that pornography may be used by some offenders in preparation to commit their offenses. However, the opposite can be true.

REFERENCES


Materials that are referred to under the poorly defined rubric "pornography" are most often discussed in terms of controversies involving "free speech," decency, artistic value, depiction of gender relations, and in a number of other emotionally laden contexts. Beyond these concerns, however, pornography has, and will continue to do so, served as a valuable tool in the investigation of fundamental issues in human sexuality. There have been two predominant approaches to studying these issues, each of which involves its own advantages and disadvantages. Survey methods have the advantage of involving a large number of respondents but of relying on retrospective reports that may be distorted over time or faulty memory. Experimental laboratory methods have the advantage of directly exposing respondents to the materials but the disadvantage of relatively small numbers of respondents and the possible lack of generalizability of findings to the larger population. Methodological differences produce different findings. The presentation is to, rather superficially, highlight major issues investigated by both methods. Other presentations have focused in detail on some of these issues, but I want to address the overall value of the use of "pornography" address the overall value of the use of "pornography" as a research tool in investigating important questions regarding human sexuality.