

## Eaves information sheet – pornography

December 2008

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### Part 1 – introduction and background

- In 1874, 130,000 photos of pornography were discovered in a police raid in London<sup>1</sup>. One century later, Victorian censorship was relaxed and restrictions on pornography were lifted. Hardcore pornography was not yet legal in the UK, but softcore magazines were sold under the counter in concealed packaging.
- The cultural and sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, rather than liberating all women from male subjugation, facilitated an explosion in commercial sexual exploitation on an unprecedented scale.
- It has been known for decades that the pornography industry is responsible for driving the development of viewing technology. The introduction of home videos in the 1970s precipitated the demise of the “dirty mac brigade”<sup>2</sup> and advanced the proliferation of pornography, from VHS to DVD, then onto the internet and live streaming on mobile devices.
- Pornography enjoys the biggest profit margin of any medium, raking in at least \$57bn worldwide annually<sup>3</sup> ([the UK slice](#) accounts for more than £1bn), attracting more than 68m daily search engine requests and exposing an estimated 80% of 15-17-year-olds to hardcore images<sup>4</sup>.
- The effect of the prevalence of pornography is not ‘harmless’ as its millionaire producers might try to suggest, but rather “reinforces and

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<sup>1</sup> Dines, G. (1997). *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*. UK: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> A term used to describe men who frequented Soho's adult cinemas, so called for their habit of wearing long mackintosh coats in order to masturbate discreetly in movie theatres.

<sup>3</sup> Of which \$3 billion is generated through child pornography alone.

<sup>4</sup> Internet Pornography Statistics, Jerry Ropelato, Top Ten Reviews 2007. <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html> Published 24 October 2006.

normalizes sexual disorders”<sup>5</sup> and thus plays a key role in fostering demand for sexually exploitative encounters in the real world.

- Pathological “pornography distortion” can occur rapidly, especially among teenagers. [A study in the US](#) exposed college undergraduates in three groups to varying levels of pornography over six weeks. At the end of the study their attitudes towards women and sexual violence were measured. The group exposed to the most pornography in that period – just five hours of videos over six weeks – believed that “rapists deserved milder punishments, that women’s liberation was not a good idea [and] they became more callous toward women”<sup>6</sup>, significantly more than the groups which had watched less pornography.
- Highly sexualised images of young women and girls exist across all media, including mainstream television and public advertising. They are routinely presented as expressions of sexual liberation, rather than exploitation. The commodification of women and girls, which is central to the majority of pornographic material, fuels demand for commercial sex acts, which in turn increases sex trafficking<sup>7</sup>.
- Recent years have seen a rise in the popularity of ‘[torture porn](#)’ films<sup>8</sup> – mainstream blockbusters offering extreme pornographic violence, almost exclusively inflicted upon young women and girls.

## Part 2 – facts and figures

- The [UK porn industry](#) is estimated to be worth about £1bn, compared with £20 billion worldwide.
- Almost 40% of the male population used pornographic websites in 2005<sup>9</sup>. British internet users search for “porn” online more than anyone else in the English-speaking world.
- Half of UK children (7mn) have encountered pornography on the internet “while looking for something else”<sup>10</sup>. [A survey of 1,000 teenage girls](#) in 2005 found that 63% of schoolgirls want to be glamour models.
- In January 2008, [a BBC survey](#) found that three-quarters of therapists said excessive use of internet pornography was the most common cause of sex addiction.

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Robert Weiss, Sexual Recovery Institute, Washington Times, 26 January 2000

<sup>6</sup> Mary Anne Layden, PhD. ‘Testimony for US Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation’ (1999).

<sup>7</sup> For discussion of the intersection between prostitution and pornography, refer to ‘Prostitution Online’ by Donna M. Hughes, published in ‘[Prostitution, Trafficking and Traumatic Stress](#)’ (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Also known as ‘gorno.’ Examples include *Hostel 1 & 2* (2005 & 2007, dir. Eli Roth); *Grindhouse 1 & 2* (2007 & 2008, dir. Quentin Tarantino).

<sup>9</sup> Nielsen NetRatings for Independent on Sunday, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Buckingham, D. & Gragg, S. (2003). *Young People, Media and Personal Relationships*. London: Institute of Education.

- In 2004, 'lads mags' *Nuts* and *Zoo* launched, competing in a ratings war which included weekly nipple counts and increasingly pornographic images of women in order to boost sales.

### Part 3 – UK law & policy

- Hardcore pornography was legalised in the UK in 2000, decades after many other European states.
- Legislation includes the [Obscene Publications Acts 1959/1964](#); [Indecent Displays Control Act 1981](#), [Video Recordings Act 1984](#) and the [Criminal Justice & Immigration Act 2008](#).
- In 2006, the [Sexually Explicit Material \(Regulation of Sale and Display\) Bill](#) failed to gain a second reading; legally, lads' mags are available on any shelf, without protective packaging, despite guidelines.
- In December 2008, '[Top Shelf Report](#)' published findings that 100% of sixth form girls surveyed were angry, upset or offended by images of women in *Nuts*, *Zoo* and the *Daily Sport*, compared to only 11% of sixth form boys, although one-fifth of male respondents thought such pictures encouraged them to view women as objects.

In 2008, the Criminal Justice & Immigration Act introduced the term 'extreme pornography' ([Part 5, section 63-68](#)) to cover sexual images which (a) threaten human life (b) cause serious injury to sexual body parts (c) involve human corpses or (d) involve animals – or appear to do so.

Policy dispute is centred on ensuring protection for those who suffer harm and exploitation through pornography without infringing the civil liberties of those who enjoy or profit from it.

### Part 4 – Eaves' view

- Pornography is routinely used as a control mechanism for women exploited in the sex industry.
- In this digital age, children may receive their earliest sex 'education' from hardcore pornography, viewed online either accidentally or intentionally. The effects of such early exposure are as yet unknown, but seem unlikely to lead to happy, healthy sex lives for all.

### Part 5 – FAQs

- Isn't watching porn just harmless fun?  
Various studies on prolonged consumption of pornography have found a range of sociopathic effects including violence, desensitisation,

sexual dysfunction, social exclusion, exploitative behaviour and paedophilia<sup>11</sup>. Convictions for child pornography offences quadrupled between 2002 and 2004 (Home Office, 2005).

- Does 'DIY porn' count as grassroots activism?<sup>12</sup>  
Some argue that DIY porn is positive because it shows real people having real sex, thereby undermining the glossy machine of professional porn. However, there is no way to verify the ages or consent of people involved, not to mention violations of privacy or copyright issues.
- Doesn't porn prevent sex attacks?  
There is a growing case file of assaults where the perpetrator watched large amounts of violent pornography before committing attacks<sup>13</sup>. The rise of the internet has served to link up paedophiles across the globe through online communities, offering validation through normalisation.

## Part 6 – what you can do

- Volunteer and/or donate to organisations which campaign against exploitation through pornography, such as the Lilith Project ([www.eaves4women.co.uk](http://www.eaves4women.co.uk)) and OBJECT ([www.object.org.uk/TakeAction](http://www.object.org.uk/TakeAction)).
- [Write to your local MP](#) calling for independent and socially responsible monitoring of the UK pornography industry, including adult online exploitation.
- [Campaign and complain](#) in your local shops about the display of lads mags and insist that such titles are relocated to the top shelf, if not removed altogether<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. Zillmann, D. (1989). *Effects of Prolonged Consumption of Pornography in Pornography: Research Advances and Policy Considerations*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Also, Layden, M.A. (1999).

<sup>12</sup> Homemade pornography has leapt in popularity since the advent of low-price video cameras and 3G mobile devices. *YouPorn*, a video-sharing website, launched in August 2006 was the most popular and largest pornographic website online by October 2007.

<sup>13</sup> For one example, the case of Graham Coutts, who killed Jane Longhurst in 2003, following years of consuming necrophilic pornography, preceded by thoughts of murdering women since the age of 15.

<sup>14</sup> For information and advice on porn-free shops: <http://www.hamdyspornfree.com/Menu.html>