

Against Pornography



*The Evidence
of Harm*

WARNING:
Some of the
visuals in this
book may cause
distress.

Diana E. H. Russell, Ph.D.

MORE PRAISE FOR

AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

“Diana Russell’s careful analysis of the causal connection between pornography and rape in *Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm* is the most lucid and persuasive I have read. After distinguishing between pornography and erotica, Diana has reprinted standard woman-hating, vicious and violent pornographic depictions—from cartoons through to hard-core porn. Now when we speak about pornography, we all will know precisely what we are talking about. Bravo and thank you Diana Russell for your brilliant analysis, your courage and commitment.”

—Jane Caputi, Ph. D., author of *The Age of Sex Crime*.

“Feminists have long tried to explain how pornography hurts women. In this book Diana Russell combines a logically compelling argument with research evidence which shows that pornography actually causes some men to rape women. But just as important: for the first time in a feminist book about pornography, she shows us the images which, she says, teach men to rape women, so the reader can see for herself what the pornography debate is all about. *Judge for yourself!*”

—Melissa Farley, Ph.D., feminist psychologist
and anti-pornography activist.

“Even in our wildest imaginations, most women are unable to fathom the vicious acts done to women by the pornography industry in the name of free speech, profit, pleasure, and yes, entertainment. Facing head-on the hatred and contempt for women exposed in visual pornography, as much as it hurts, fuels our anger and a lot of incendiary activism. After attending Diana’s feminist anti-pornography slide presentation at UC-Santa Cruz one afternoon, I was moved to tear up several hundred *Hustler* magazines in convenience stores and throughout Santa Cruz.”

—Nikki Craft, feminist activist against pornography and
all other forms of violence and hatred against women.

Against Pornography

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Against Pornography:

THE EVIDENCE OF HARM

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Berkeley, California**



Penthouse

Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm
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WARNING

Some of the visual pornography included in this book may be distressing to some people, particularly to survivors of sexual assault.

DEDICATION

To all the feminists in the world who, in recognition of the fact that pornography is a vicious manifestation of misogyny designed to keep women subordinate to men, are committed to the fight against it.



This photo records one of many protests organized by Nikki Craft and Melissa Farley in their rampage against *Penthouse* because of the magazine's grisly photo essay on Asian women published in December 1984. An effigy of *Penthouse* owner Bob Guccione hangs over a garbage can, about to be ignited. Note the picture of Vanessa Williams (top left), for whose dethronement as Miss United States *Penthouse* was responsible, about which the rampagers were also protesting. (Photo courtesy of Melissa Farley.)

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PREFACE

I have come to dislike talking about the effects of pornography with people who have not seen it for themselves, or whose exposure to it has been so minimal that they equate it with pictures of nude people in sexual encounters. Many women in particular believe that they shouldn't be bothered by such pictures even though they often are. Sometimes they try to discount their dislike of many men's attachment to it with a "boys will be boys" shrug. In such circumstances, discussions on this controversial topic frequently descend into verbal combat totally removed from the reality of the degrading portrayals of women featured in these misogynist materials.

Many people are more convinced of the harmful effects of pornography after seeing visual examples of this material than by reading about the now considerable scientific evidence of harm. Many women find the visual evidence particularly convincing—if they look at it. But few women *do*. Others find the combination of theory and visuals particularly effective. I therefore decided to include in this book a summary of some of the scientific research on the impact of pornography together with examples of visual pornography.

Several people in the United States and abroad have told me that they found an article which I wrote on the causal relationship between pornography and rape instrumental in persuading them that pornography is dangerous to women. I decided to include this article in this book because I wanted my theory of the rape-promoting effects of pornography to be more easily available to non-academic as well as to academic readers;¹ I particularly wanted it to reach those who are working to combat pornography. I am optimistic that this book will convince many of the people

¹ See *Political Psychology*, 9(1), 1988; Itzin, 1992; and Russell, 1993. Part of this article has been revised for my introduction to *Against Pornography*, the remainder has been revised for Part 2 of this book.

who read it with an open mind, that pornography promotes sexism, rape, and other forms of violence against women.

This book is being published just a few months after the publication of my anthology, *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography*. The reason for my publishing a second book on pornography is that Teachers College Press was unwilling to take the risk of publishing the pornography pictures without my having obtained permission from the pornographers who own the copyright to them. In this, they are no different from any other publishing house. Although my essay on "Pornography as a cause of rape" is included in *Making Violence Sexy*, I feel it particularly important that the visual evidence on the harmfulness of pornography should be followed by a summary of some of the scientific evidence of harm.

I did not attempt to obtain permission from the pornographers for several reasons. I didn't want to support the pornography industry by giving them money — particularly the amount of money they would be likely to require. *Playboy*, for example, charges "\$200 per cartoon for one-time North American use; \$300 for worldwide use in the English language."² A *Hustler* representative, on the other hand, maintains that the magazine does not grant permission to reprint their materials.³ The Photo Rights and Permissions representative at *Penthouse* refused to provide information in writing on her magazine's permissions policy, despite my efforts to obtain this, which began in October, 1992.⁴ It is relevant to point out that my letters to these three magazines did not reveal my anti-pornography stance.

Another factor that would have made it impossible to even *seek* permission to reprint in some cases was my inability to trace many of the more hard-core pornography magazines whose material I wished to in-

2 Marcia Terrones, Rights and Permissions Administrator, Playboy Enterprises, personal communication, November 12, 1992.

3 After many phone calls to try to find out *Hustler's* permission policy, and many cagey responses from those answering the phone, we were informed by *Hustler* representative Jeanne Diamond that, "We cannot grant permission because licensing obligations prohibit us from granting reprint rights" (November 3, 1992).

4 Letter to Maria Rothenberg, October 27, 1992; follow up letter sent February 1, 1993.

clude. Most were probably defunct by 1993, at least under the former names of their publications. It is likely that it would have been impossible to track down many of them even at the time of their publication. Probably some of them were completely underground. I was told that many such publishers deliberately avoid dating their publications. A strategy to protect themselves from prosecution for illegally using women under 18 years of age was one reason suggested for this policy.⁵ Failure to date a publication also prolongs its apparent currency.

In other cases, permission was unobtainable because I no longer had any record of the sources. I have included pornographic pictures whose sources or dates I was unable to locate because this information is not needed to appreciate the degradation and abuse of women conveyed in these materials. Despite this fact, some efforts were made to document accurately the sources of the pornography included in this book. Calls to *Penthouse* proved helpful in some cases. In contrast, a *Hustler* employee maintained that it would take weeks of labor to locate the publication dates of the visuals I had faxed to her.

I have not checked the accuracy of the sources and dates of the visuals sent to me by other activists. In many cases such checking is impossible because public libraries rarely house materials which are considered pornographic, and many of the more hard-core magazines do not survive for very long. Nevertheless, I would be grateful to readers who are willing to provide any missing information and/or to correct any errors in the documentation of the visuals included here.

Another factor that influenced my decision not to seek permission to reprint pictures was that I simply could not afford the prohibitive fees that would be required in those cases where permissions might be granted. Since the only way this book could be published was to publish it myself, I had to pay all the bills that publishers normally pay. Just meeting these costs put a severe strain on my financial resources.

In addition, just because permission *can* be granted, as in the case of *Playboy*, does not mean it *will* be granted. For example, the rights and permissions administrator at *Playboy* states, "We cannot consider permission to reprint *Playboy* material in any publication until we first see a copy of the publication making the request.... If you are asking to include

5 Jean Barkey, personal communication to Jan Woodcock, 26 August, 1992.

our material within a book, you must first have found a publisher as *Playboy* does not grant permission to individual authors of a work.”

Here is one of those proverbial Catch 22 situations. I cannot get a publisher without being able to assure them that I can obtain the appropriate permission-to-reprint documents, but, in the case of *Playboy* anyhow, I can't even *apply* for permission without already having a publisher. Were I somehow able to obtain a publisher without being able to assure them that I could get the appropriate permissions, what chance would there be of all the pornography copyright holders represented in this book giving or selling me permission rights when the book's purpose is to critique their material and point out the dangers of it to women? Pornographers invariably see feminists as their enemies. For example, this is what *Playboy* owner Hugh Hefner has been quoted as saying to his staff: “These chicks are our natural enemy.... It is time we do battle with them.... What I want is a devastating piece that takes the militant feminists apart.”⁶

In short, it is safe to conclude that it would have been impossible to find a publisher for this book, even if I had sought to obtain all the reprint permissions necessary, and even had I been able to afford the high fees required for any permissions that might be granted. Since I believe that an informed evaluation of pornography requires seeing examples of the actual pictures, and that a critique without the visual evidence is far less effective, I decided to go ahead and self-publish this material. I believe that my right to free speech includes the right to publish the material necessary to show that pornography is harmful to women.



Just as smoking is not the only cause of lung cancer, so pornography is not the only cause of rape. I believe there are many factors that play a causal role in this crime.⁷ I will not attempt to evaluate the relative importance of these different causal factors in this book, but merely to show the overwhelming evidence that pornography is a major one of them.

6 This quotation comes from a memo to staff members at *Playboy*, cited by Jacobs, 1984.

7 See Russell, 1984, for a multicausal theory of rape.

Because all viewers of pornography are not equally affected, many people conclude that pornography does not play a causative role in harm or violence toward women. This is similar to the tobacco industry's defense of cigarette smoking. They maintain that since many smokers do not die of lung cancer, smoking cannot be a cause of this disease. The mistake here is to focus on explaining individual rather than group differences; that is, the difference in the number of lung cancer cases found in smokers as a group, versus non-smokers as a group.

Similarly, instead of trying to explain why Mr. X is affected by viewing violent pornography while Mr. Y is not, we need to look at whether the average aggression scores (or whatever is being measured) of those exposed to violent pornography are significantly higher than the aggression scores of those exposed to erotica or to non-sexual, non-aggressive material.

Whereas the individual level of analysis is more relevant for clinicians, the group level of analysis is more relevant to social policy makers. Had legislators insisted on being able to understand why Mr. A kept having car accidents when he drove while drunk, but Mr. B did not, *before* they imposed stiffer penalties on drunken drivers, there would have been even more deaths on the road. Although it can be important for researchers to try to explain individual differences, we do not need this information before recognizing group effects.



This is my first experience in self-publishing, and I hope it will not be my last. Having to rely on publishers and other gatekeepers to the published word is frequently frustrating and disempowering, particularly for radical feminists. Sonia Johnson is one well-known feminist who has decided to self-publish all her books. It will be a great victory if we can find a way to bypass mainstream publishers, many of whom censor radical feminist work. Many publishers, for example, turned down my book, *Making Violence Sexy: Feminist Views on Pornography* (1993),⁸ because an anti-pornography stance became unfashionable in the publishing com-

8 The references in the text are referred to by the last name(s) of the author(s) and the year that the work was published or, in the case of unpublished papers, presented. Complete citations for these references are at the end of the book.

munity after the Final Report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography was published in 1986. Neither are feminist publishers a viable alternative for scholarly work since, to my knowledge, none in the United States publish academic books by social scientists.

Distribution is probably the biggest stumbling block for self-publishers at the moment. This situation will presumably improve as increasing numbers of feminists and writers in other marginalized groups decide to bypass mainstream publishers and rely on alternative methods to get their words into print.

This self-publishing project became far more ambitious after a printing company in Oakland, California, reneged on their agreement to print the book for fear of being sued. The pornographic pictures had been reproduced as mediocre quality halftones according to the printer's stipulations. In addition, the halftones were kept small so as to fit into the 5 x 8 inch page size I had chosen. At this alarming point in my publishing venture, John Fremont of Comp-Type, Inc. of Fort Bragg, California, came to the rescue. He persuaded me to obtain more professional assistance so that the formerly amateurish quality of the manuscript would not be used to diminish the profoundly important implications of *Against Pornography*. This required reformatting the entire manuscript, going through a lengthy editorial process, obtaining Comp-Type's assistance in distributing and marketing the book, all of which added greatly to the cost of this self-publishing effort, and delayed publication for close to a year.

Unfortunately I could not afford to get larger, higher quality halftones of the pornographic photographs made. But perhaps this fortuitous fact may serve to diminish the interest of pornography consumers in this book. Quite aside from the quality and size of the pictures included here, I anticipate that such interest would be minimal, since most pornography magazines are much cheaper than this volume and since few pornography users are likely to enjoy their masturbatory material being subjected to a critical analysis.



Roberta Harnes assisted greatly by tracking down obscure references. Several people helped with different phases of the editing process, including Mary Armour, Candida Ellis, John Fremont, Desirée Hansson, Angela Harraway, Anna Livia, Wendy Powell, Shauna Wescott, and

particularly Suzanne Popkin. Dennis Bell and Mary Anne Saunders helped with the word processing.

Jan Woodcock, Ann Simonton, Melissa Farley, and Robert Brannon generously loaned me their pornography collections from which to select photographs for this book. Jan made available to me a duplicate set of the slides and script put together by the now defunct feminist Organizing Against Pornography (OAP), as well as slides from Stopping Violence Against Women (SVAW) in Portland, Oregon, a press release on *Playboy* containing visual pornography prepared by New York-based Women Against Pornography (WAP), and a handout, also on *Playboy*, compiled by Students Organizing Against Pornography (SOAP). I am indebted to Jan for allowing me to edit and quote from her and OAP's scripts without having to go through the cumbersome practice of repeated acknowledgments. She also provided the list at the back of this book of feminist anti-pornography organizations currently active in the United States and Canada. Her contributions to this project have been invaluable.

I also had at my disposal many slides and an extensive display of visuals from pornographic magazines and newspapers which the now defunct San Francisco-based organization, Women Against Violence in Media and Pornography (WAVPM), had used, since its inception in 1976, to educate people about the harms of pornography. I am grateful to all these organizations for their contributions to this project. Many of my commentaries on visual pornography in this book have drawn on the scripts prepared by OAP, WAVPM, and other individuals and organizations. It would be far too unwieldy to acknowledge the specific sources in the section on visuals. Suffice it to say here that the commentaries about each pornographic picture represent a collaborative effort.

Several people assisted me with the metamorphosis of my original article on pornography and rape, some of which is presented in the introduction to this book, but most of which appears in Part 2. I would particularly like to thank Dorchen Leidholdt who encouraged me to publish it. She, as well as Catharine MacKinnon and Helen Longino, made some useful suggestions for revisions, and Catharine MacKinnon and Catherine Itzin were very encouraging about its value. Robert Brannon also contributed greatly to my definition of pornography and my explication of it.

I am extremely indebted to Dennis Bell, who was willing to help in whatever way I needed, applying his computer, drafting and photographic skills to the preparation of the manuscript. Without his invaluable assis-

tance, I would not have embarked on this project on the eve of my departure from the United States. I am also exceedingly grateful to John Fremont for his role in transforming this self-publishing enterprise into one which is likely to have considerably more impact than it otherwise might have had. In addition, I am very grateful to Cynthia Frank, Mark Gatter, and Comp-Type staff members Linda Gatter and Marla Greenway who contributed their expertise and enthusiastic support to this project.

I would like to thank Suzanne Popkin and Vanessa Tait for their assistance with trans-continental communication and other vital tasks while I was in South Africa. I also anticipate that they, Dennis Bell, and Anne Mayne will help expedite the distribution of this book.

I have consulted several lawyers about the legal issues involved in publishing pornographic pictures. Of those consulted, I particularly appreciate the legal advice of Sally Kilburg, Karl Olson, Stephen Fishman, Penny Seator, Pat Grey, and legal professors Ann Scales and Catharine MacKinnon.

The encouragement I have received from many people for undertaking this project has been important to me, especially from Robert Brannon, Jane Caputi, Nikki Craft, Melissa Farley, Marny Hall, Catherine Itzin, Jeffrey Masson, Anne Mayne, Maryel Norris, Ann Scales, Ann Simon-ton, and Shauna Wescott.

Against Pornography:

The Evidence Of Harm

INTRODUCTION

What Is Pornography?

Proponents of the anti-pornography-equals-censorship school deliberately obfuscate any distinction between erotica and pornography, using the term erotica for all sexually explicit materials.¹ In contrast, anti-pornography feminists consider it vitally important to distinguish between pornography and erotica, and support or even advocate erotica.

Although women's bodies are the staple of adult pornography, it is important to have a gender neutral definition that encompasses gay pornography, as well as child pornography. Animals are also targets of pornographic depictions. Hence, I define *pornography* as *material that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with abuse or degradation in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior.*

Most of this book will focus on adult male heterosexual pornography, because most pornography is produced for this market, and because males are the predominant abusers of women. I define *heterosexual pornography* as *material created for heterosexual males that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with the abuse or degradation of females in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior.*

Erotica refers to *sexually suggestive or arousing material that is free of sexism, racism, and homophobia, and respectful of all the human beings and animals portrayed.* This definition takes into account that humans are not the only subject matter of erotica. For example, I remember

¹ I have incorporated several of Robert Brannon's suggestions into my definition of pornography, as well as the definitions of the concepts within it. Personal communication, 11 March, 1992.

seeing a short award-winning erotic movie depicting the peeling of an orange. The shapes and coloring of flowers or hills can make them appear erotic. Many people find Georgia O'Keefe's paintings erotic. But erotica can also include overtly or explicitly sexual images.

The definition's requirement of non-sexism means that the following types of material qualify as pornography rather than erotica: sexually arousing images in which women are consistently shown naked while men are clothed or in which women's genitals are displayed but men's are not; or in which men are always portrayed in the initiating, dominant role. An example of sexualized racism which pervades pornography entails depictions of women that are confined to young, white bodies fitting many white men's narrow concept of beauty; i.e., very thin, large-breasted, and blonde.

Canadian psychologists Charlene Senn and Lorraine Radtke found the distinction between pornography and erotica to be significant and meaningful to female subjects in an experiment which they conducted. After slides had been categorized as violent pornography, non-violent pornography (sexist and dehumanizing), or erotica (non-sexist and non-violent), these researchers found that the violent and non-violent images had a negative effect on the mood states of their women subjects, whereas the erotic images had a positive effect (1986, pp. 15-16; also see Senn, 1993). Furthermore, the violent images had a greater negative impact than the non-violent pornographic images.² This shows that a conceptual distinction between pornography and erotica is both meaningful and operational.

The term *abusive* sexual behavior in my definition refers to sexual conduct that ranges from derogatory, demeaning, contemptuous, or damaging to brutal, cruel, exploitative, painful, or violent. *Degrading* sexual behavior refers to sexual conduct that is humiliating, insulting, and/or disrespectful, for example, urinating or defecating on a woman, ejaculating in her face, treating her as sexually dirty or inferior, depicting her as slavishly taking orders from men and eager to engage in whatever sex acts men want, or calling her insulting names while engaging in sex, such as bitch, cunt, nigger, whore.

Note the abuse and degradation in the portrayal of female sexuality in Helen Longino's description of typical pornographic books, magazines, and films:

² These differences were significant at $p < 0.05$ (Senn and Radtke, 1986, p. 16).

Women are represented as passive and as slavishly dependent upon men. The role of female characters is limited to the provision of sexual services to men. To the extent that women's sexual pleasure is represented at all, it is subordinated to that of men and is never an end in itself as is the sexual pleasure of men. What pleases women is the use of their bodies to satisfy male desires. While the sexual objectification of women is common to all pornography, women are the recipients of even worse treatment in violent pornography, in which women characters are killed, tortured, gang-raped, mutilated, bound, and otherwise abused, as a means of providing sexual stimulation or pleasure to the male characters (Longino, 1980, p. 42).

What is objectionable about pornography, then, is its abusive and degrading portrayal of females and female sexuality, not its sexual content or explicitness.

A particularly important feature of my definition of pornography is the requirement that *it appears to endorse, condone, or encourage abusive sexual desires or behaviors*. These attributes differentiate pornography from materials that include abusive or degrading sexual behavior for educational purposes. Movies such as *The Accused*, and *The Rape of Love*, for example, present realistic representations of rape with the apparent intention of helping viewers to understand the reprehensible nature of rape, and the agony experienced by rape victims. I have used the expression "*it appears to*" instead of "*it is intended to*" endorse, condone or encourage sexually abusive desires or behavior to avoid the difficult, if not impossible, task of establishing the intentions of pornography producers.

My definition differs from most definitions which focus instead on terms like "obscenity" and "sexually explicit materials." It also differs from the one I have used before, which limited pornography to sexually explicit materials that were abusive (Russell, 1988). I decided to avoid the concept "sexually explicit" because I could not define it to my satisfaction. In addition, I chose to embrace a long-standing feminist tradition of including in the notion of pornography all types of materials that combine sex and/or genital exposure with the abuse or degradation of women. Members of WAVPM (Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media), for example, used to refer to record covers, jokes, ads, and billboards as pornography when they were sexually degrading to women, even when nudity or displays of women's genitals were not portrayed (Lederer, 1980).

Some people may object that feminist definitions of pornography that go beyond sexually explicit materials differ so substantially from common usage that they make discussion between feminists and non-feminists confusing. First of all, however, there is no consensus on definitions among non-feminists or feminists. Some feminists, for example, do include the concept of sexual explicitness as a defining feature of pornography. Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon define pornography as "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words" (1988, p. 36). They go on to spell out nine ways in which their definition can be met, for example, "(i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things, or commodities." James Check (1985) uses the term sexually explicit materials instead of pornography, presumably in the hope of bypassing the many controversies associated with the term pornography. But these scholars have not, to my knowledge, defined what they mean by sexually explicit materials.

Sometimes there can be a good reason for feminists to employ the same definition as non-feminists. For example, in my study of the prevalence of rape, I used a very narrow, legal definition of rape because I wanted to be able to compare the rape rates obtained in my study with those obtained in government studies. Had I used a broader definition that included oral and anal penetration, for example, my study could not have been used to show how grossly flawed the methodology of the government's national surveys are in determining meaningful rape rates.

But if there is no compelling reason to use the same definition as that used by those with whom one disagrees, then it makes sense to define a phenomenon in a way that best fits feminist principles. As my objection to pornography is not that it shows nudity or different methods of sexual engagement, I see no reason to limit my definition to sexually explicit material. Unlike MacKinnon and Dworkin, who sought to formulate a definition that would be the basis for developing a new law on pornography, I have not been constrained by the requirements of law in constructing mine.

My definition of pornography does not include all of the features that commonly characterize such material, since I believe that concise definitions are preferable to complex or lengthy definitions. Pornography, for example, frequently depicts females, particularly female sexuality, inaccurately. "Pornography Tells Lies About Women" declared a bold red and black sticker designed by Women Against Violence in Pornography

and Media to deface pornography. It has been shown, for example, that pornography consumers are more likely to believe that unusual sexual practices are more common than they really are (Zillmann and Bryant, 1984). These distortions often have serious consequences. Some viewers act on the assumption that the depictions are accurate, and presume that something is wrong with females who do not behave like those portrayed in pornography. This can result in verbal or physical abuse, including rape, by males who consider that they are entitled to the sexual goodies that they want or that they believe other men enjoy.

Sexual objectification is another common characteristic of pornography. It refers to *the portrayal of human beings — usually women — as depersonalized sexual things, such as "tits, cunt, and ass," not as multifaceted human beings deserving equal rights with men.* As Susan Brownmiller so eloquently noted,

[In pornography] our bodies are being stripped, exposed and contorted for the purpose of ridicule to bolster that "masculine esteem" which gets its kick and sense of power from viewing females as anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys, dehumanized objects to be used, abused, broken and discarded (1975, p. 394).

However, the sexual objectification of females is not confined to pornography. It is also a staple of mainstream movies, ads, record covers, songs, magazines, television, art, cartoons, literature, pin-ups, and so on, and influences the way that many males learn to see women and even children. This is why I have not included it as a defining feature of pornography.

INCONSISTENCIES IN DEFINITIONS

Many people have talked or written about the difficulty of defining pornography and erotica, declaring that "one person's erotica is another person's pornography." This statement is often used to ridicule an anti-pornography stance. The implication is that if there is no consensus on a definition of pornography, its effects cannot be examined.

Yet there is no consensus on the definitions of many phenomena. Rape is one example. Legal definitions of rape vary considerably in different states. The police often have their own definitions, which may differ from legal definitions. If a woman is raped by someone she knows, for exam-

ple, the police often “unfound”³ the case because they are sceptical about most acquaintance and date rapes. Hence, such crimes are rarely investigated. This practice certainly has no basis in the law.

If rape is defined as forced intercourse or attempts at forced intercourse, the problem of figuring out what exactly constitutes force remains. How does one measure it? What is the definition of intercourse? Does it include oral and anal intercourse, intercourse with a foreign object, or digital penetration, or is it confined only to vaginal penetration by the penis? How much penetration is necessary to qualify as intercourse? How does one determine if an attempt at rape or some lesser sexual assault has occurred? How does one deal with the fact that the rapist and even the rape survivor quite often do not believe that a rape has occurred, even when the incident matches the legal definition of rape? Many rapists, for example, do not consider that forcing intercourse on an unwilling woman qualifies as rape because they believe that a woman’s “no” actually means “yes.” Many women think they have not been raped when the perpetrator is their husband or lover, even though the law in most states defines such acts as rape. Fortunately, few people argue that, because rape is so difficult to define and there is no consensus on the best definition, it should therefore not be considered a heinous and illegal act.

Similarly, millions of court cases have revolved around arguments as to whether a killing constitutes murder or manslaughter.⁴ No one argues that killing should not be subject to legal sanctions just because it takes a court case to decide this question.

In contrast, the often-quoted statement of one United States judge — that although he could not necessarily define pornography, he could recognize it when he saw it — is frequently cited to support the view that pornography is self-evident or entirely in the eye of the beholder. Many people have argued that because there is no consensus on how to define pornography and/or because it can be difficult to determine whether or not the pornographic label is appropriate in particular cases, pornography should therefore not be subject to legal restraint, or even opprobrium.

3 This is an FBI euphemism for the frequent practice by the police of discounting rape cases reported to them.

4 That a sizable proportion of the killing is womanslaughter is essentially obliterated by this term.

It is interesting to note that lack of consensus did not prove to be an obstacle in making pictorial child pornography illegal. This makes it clear that the difficulty of defining pornography is a strategy employed by its apologists in their efforts to derail their opponents by making their work appear futile.

THE CONTENT OF PORNOGRAPHY

“I’ve seen some soft-porn movies, which seem to have the common theme that a great many women would really like to be raped, and after being thus ‘awakened to sex’ will become lascivious nymphomaniacs. That...provides a sort of rationale for rape: ‘they want it, and anyway, it’s really doing them a favor’” — Male respondent, Hite, 1981, p. 787.

Don Smith did a content analysis of 428 “adults only” paperbacks published between 1968 and 1974. His sample was limited to books that were readily accessible to the general public in the United States, excluding paperbacks that are usually available only in so-called adult bookstores (1976). He reported the following findings:

- One-fifth of all the sex episodes involved completed rapes.
- The number of rapes increased with each year’s output of newly published books.
- Of the sex episodes, 6% involved incestuous rape. The focus in the rape scenes was almost always on the victim’s fear and terror, which became transformed by the rape into sexual passion. Over 97% of the rapes portrayed in these books resulted in orgasm for the victims. In three-quarters of these rapes, multiple orgasm occurred.

A few years later, Neil Malamuth and Barry Spinner undertook a content analysis to determine the amount of sexual violence in cartoons and pictorials in *Penthouse* and *Playboy* magazines from June 1973 to December 1977 (1980). They found that:

- By 1977, about 5% of the pictorials and 10% of the cartoons were sexually violent.
- Sexual violence in pictorials (but not in cartoons) increased signifi-

cantly over the five-year period, "both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total number of pictorials."

- *Penthouse* contained over twice the percentage of sexually violent cartoons as *Playboy* (13% vs. 6%).

In another study of 1,760 covers of heterosexual magazines published between 1971 and 1980, Park Dietz and Barbara Evans reported that bondage and confinement themes were evident in 17% of them (1982).

Finally, in a more recent content analysis of videos in Vancouver, Canada, T. S. Palys found that 19% of all the scenes in a sample of 150 sexually-oriented home videos involved aggression, and 13% involved sexual aggression (1986, pp. 26-27).⁵

Of all the sexually aggressive scenes in the "adult" videos, 46% involved bondage or confinement; 23%, slapping, hitting, spanking, or pulling hair; 22%, rape; 18%, sexual harassment; 4%, sadomasochism; and 3%, sexual mutilation. In comparison, 38% of all the sexually aggressive scenes in the triple-X videos involved bondage or confinement; 33%, slapping, hitting, spanking, or pulling hair; 31%, rape; 17%, sexual harassment; 14%, sadomasochism; and 3%, sexual mutilation (1986, p. 31).

While Palys's analysis focuses largely on the unexpected finding that "adult" videos "have a significantly greater absolute number of depictions of sexual aggression per movie than triple-X videos," the more relevant point here is that violence against women in both types of pornographic videos is common, and that rape is one of the more prevalent forms of sexual violence depicted. Moreover, I would expect a comparable content analysis of videos in the United States to reveal more rape and other sexual violence than was found in this Canadian study, as the Canadian government has played a more active role than the U.S. government in trying to restrict the most abusive categories of pornography.

Palys did not find an increase in the amount of sexual violence portrayed in these videos over time. However, as he points out, it was not clear whether this was because some proprietors had become sensitized to issues of sexual violence as a result of protests by Canadian women, or

⁵ A "scene" was defined as "a thematically uninterrupted sequence of activity in a given physical context" (1986, p. 25). Only scenes involving sex, aggression, or sexual aggression were coded.

whether they hoped to avoid protests by selecting less violent fare in recent years (1986, p. 34).

In a comparison of the contents of sexual and non-sexual media violence, Malamuth (1986) points out the following important differences between them:

- While the victim is usually female in pornography, he is generally male in non-sexual portrayals of violence on television (p. 5).
- "Victims of nonsexual aggression are usually shown as outraged by their experience and intent on avoiding victimization. They, and at times the perpetrators of the aggression, suffer from the violence" (p. 6). In contrast, "when sexual violence is portrayed, there is frequently the suggestion that, despite initial resistance, the victim secretly desired the abusive treatment and eventually derived pleasure from it" (p. 6).
- Unlike non-sexual violence, pornography is designed to arouse males sexually. Such arousal "might result in subliminal conditioning and cognitive changes in the consumer by associating physical pleasure with violence. Therefore, even sexual aggression depicted negatively may have harmful effects because of the sexual arousal induced by the explicitness of the depiction" (pp. 6-7).

In summary: pornography has become increasingly violent over the years — at least in the non-video media — and it presents an extremely distorted view of rape and sexuality.

THE CIRCULATION OF MAJOR PORNOGRAPHY MAGAZINES

The numbers of paid subscribers for selected pornography magazines are (The National Research Bureau, 1992):

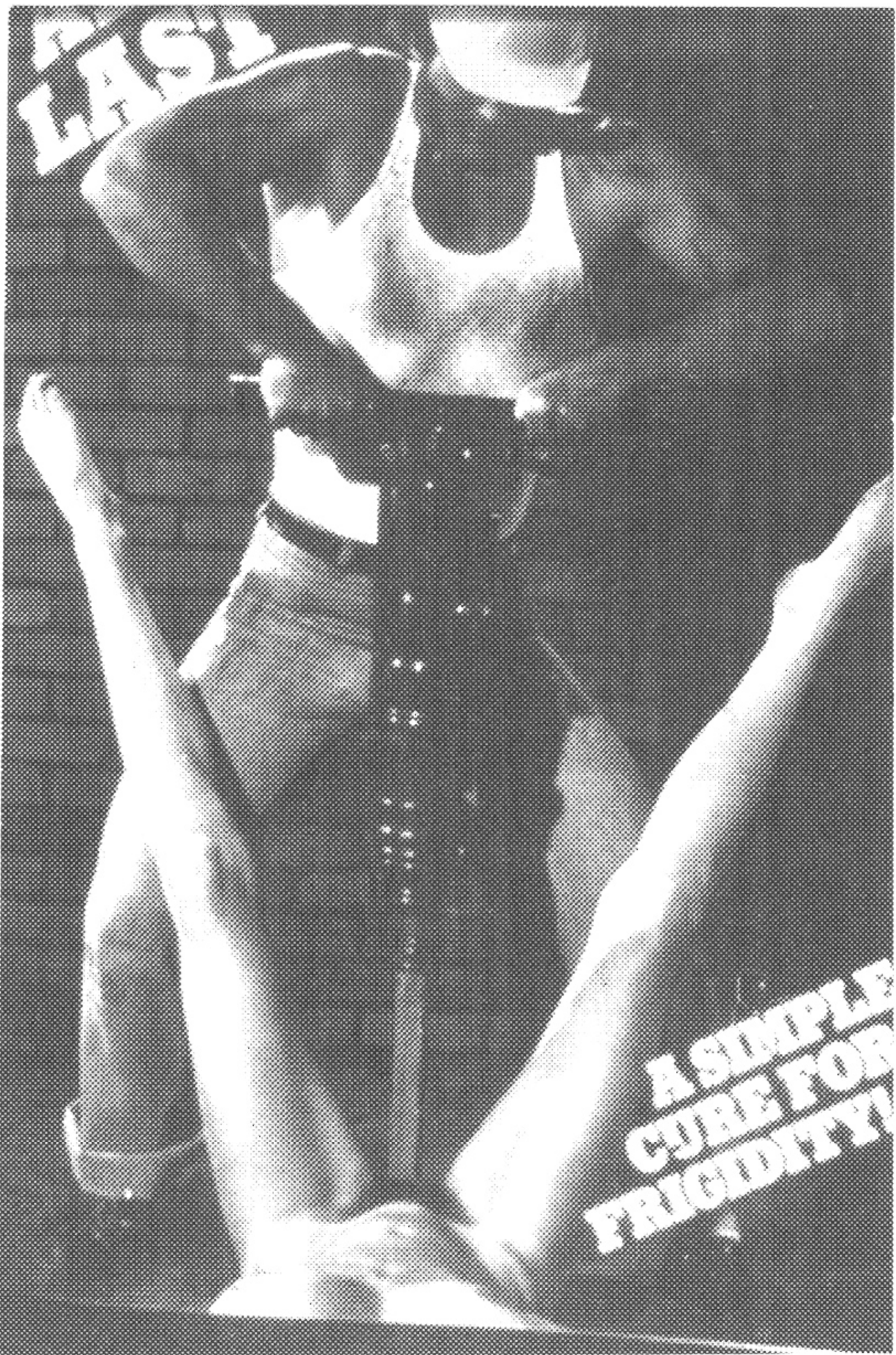
<i>Penthouse</i> —4,600,000	<i>Gallery</i> —500,000
<i>Playboy</i> —3,600,000	<i>Oui</i> —395,000
<i>Hustler</i> —1,200,000	<i>Chic</i> —90,000

Studies conducted by many magazines indicate a pass-along readership

of between two and five copies. This number is probably more like five copies for pornographic magazines because many people are embarrassed to buy their own copies, while minors may not be permitted to purchase copies by their families or by the sellers. Assuming five readers per pornographic magazine, the estimated readership of the six publications mentioned above adds up to approximately 52,000,000.

PART 1

VISUAL PORNOGRAPHY



“At last a simple cure for frigidity.”
Hustler.

INTRODUCTION:

Seeing Woman-Hatred

“A picture is worth a thousand words.”

Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM), the first feminist anti-pornography organization in the United States, was born in San Francisco in 1976 at the end of a workshop which included an extensive display of pornography. Showing women pornography remained WAVPM's major method of educating women about the relationship between pornography, sexism and violence against women. We (I was one of the founding members) gave slide presentations, exhibited pornographic pictures on large pieces of cardboard when no slide projector was available, and arranged tours of pornography stores in San Francisco. Providing opportunities for women to see pornography has become one of the basic tools of feminist anti-pornography groups throughout the United States. For example, Women Against Pornography (WAP) which was started in 1979 in New York, provided educational tours of pornography businesses in Times Square.

When I visited Denmark, the pornography capital of the world, in 1974, I bought a sample of visual pornography to take back to the United States. I wanted to show women what this so-called benign material actually looked like. (At the time, Denmark had the mistaken reputation of having reduced sexual crimes by permitting a flood of hard-core pornography to be prominently displayed all over their city.¹) On returning

¹ For critiques of the research that purported to show that the availability of pornography in Denmark had lowered the number of sex crimes, see, for example, Bart and Jozsa (1980) and Diamond (1980).

to co-teach a class on human sexuality at Mills College (an all-women's school) with three other faculty members, I showed my colleagues the material that I wanted to present to the students. I wanted the students to be able to see and judge for themselves what pornography is like, rather than having to rely on my description of it.

It is ironic that my colleagues, none of whom shared my view that such materials cause males to behave in ways that are harmful to women, refused to allow me to show it to the students. Their position was that pornography is harmless, but that it would be too distressing for students to see it! They even objected to my reading from the text that accompanied the photographs depicting the rape and torture of a woman. That was my first experience of how difficult it can be to provide women with the opportunity to look at pornography without having to go to a so-called adult sex store.

Since my colleagues first forbade me to show pornography in the class we co-taught, I have frequently organized displays of this material for my own classes there, as well as when speaking on pornography to other audiences of women. I have found that showing pornography is an effective and rapid consciousness-raiser about misogyny and male views of women. It helps to enhance women's understanding of many males' dangerous notions of what it is to be a man. It often also succeeds in arousing women viewers' anger (and some men's) at the contempt and hatred of women they see in the pictures and captions.

Women's ignorance about the true nature of pornography is not surprising. Pornography is, after all, part of male culture, like locker rooms, fraternities, football, and powerful government bodies. When women had the opportunity to see how the Senate Judiciary Committee conducted its investigation of Anita Hill's allegations of sexual harassment by Clarence Thomas, they were outraged. The assumption that men in politics make reasonable decisions and conduct themselves in a reasonable way was shattered. Instead, women saw how unable the male senators were to transcend their self-serving biases and deal fairly with one of their own whose credibility was challenged by a "mere woman."

For these reasons, I want to provide as many women as I can reach with the opportunity to see some of the portrayals of women and sex that turn males on in this and other male-dominated societies. While a self-published book can hardly satisfy my aspirations to reach millions of women, it is the best I can do at this time.

Some might think it inconsistent for anyone who believes as I do — that viewing pornography is frequently harmful to the viewer and/or their intimates — to show pornography. But the effects of seeing pornography are different when such material is presented within an anti-pornography framework. The reader may recall that I have defined heterosexual pornography as "material created for heterosexual males that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with the abuse or degradation of females in a manner that appears to *endorse*, *condone*, or *encourage* such behavior." Clearly, I am not endorsing, condoning, or encouraging pornography in this book. I am exposing and criticizing it.

Psychologists James Check and Neil Malamuth have provided experimental evidence that pornography that is supplemented with sound educational information does not induce the negative effects that would otherwise occur (1984). On the contrary, their findings reveal that pornography shown in an educational context provides the viewer with a better understanding of the material. Before this experiment was conducted, anti-pornography feminists had arrived at the same conclusion by relying initially on our intuition, and later on our experience.

Although my causal theory focuses specifically on rape, I have also selected pornography that portrays other forms of violence against women. I think it is a mistake to discount the commonality in these different manifestations of male violence. Beatings frequently accompany rape. Some rape victims are murdered. Sexual harassment sometimes involves rape. And the torture of women frequently has a sexual dimension. I have included non-violent depictions as well in order to demonstrate the misogyny in non-violent pornography.

The section on visual pornography begins with cartoons from pornographic publications. Many readers may find cartoons less disturbing than the photographs of real women that follow. Some may question my inclusion of cartoons as examples of pornography, but those I have included do meet my definition. Cartoons in pornographic magazines are also effective indicators of the owners' or producers' attitudes to women and sexual assault. Consider the *Penthouse* cartoon that is the frontispiece of this book, for example. It is inconceivable that the magazine's owner, Bob Guccione, would permit the inclusion of such a cartoon in his magazine if he considered rape to be an abhorrent act.

Many people fool themselves that the women they see in the pages of pornography are happy to be doing this kind of work; that the rapes,

beatings and other forms of torture portrayed are only simulated; that the women in bondage are never hurt or humiliated while posing for the camera and never sexually assaulted before they are released from their bonds; and/or that the women have chosen to do this work so issues of harm are irrelevant, just as they are for some other dangerous occupations. But even were these views accurate, this would be no reason to discount the harm caused by the misogynist messages conveyed by these materials. Because cartoons do not involve live women, the issues of choice and harm to the women used in pornography cannot distract viewers from seeing the woman-hating messages in the cartoons.

On the other hand, those who are not targeted in the cartoons often say, "But they are only jokes! Where's your sense of humor?" as if humor wipes out the harmful effects of sexist jokes. Of course, this argument cannot be applied to pornography that uses real live women, although *Hustler* magazine frequently uses humor in these circumstances as well. I am suggesting, then, that some readers will be more disturbed by the cartoons and others by the degrading portrayals of real women. Those who discount both may have a tougher time discrediting the data and theoretical arguments presented in Part 2.

Most people probably do not consider pictures on record covers to be pornographic, but again, the two examples I include in the following pages meet my definition. Just because an image or a story is considered mainstream does not mean that it's not pornography. Many people today mistakenly believe that *Playboy* and *Penthouse* are not pornographic magazines because looking at them has become so widely accepted. The fact that millions of males use the pictures as ejaculatory material tends to be forgotten — at least, by women.²

Written materials are a significant part of the pornography market. Many racks of inexpensive paperback novels on a wide range of pornographic themes are a staple product in many pornography stores. The covers of some of these books, as well as a few excerpts, are included in the visual material which follows.

2 Of course, there is nothing wrong with sexual excitement or sexual gratification *per se*. But there *is* a serious problem when these sensations are stimulated by abusive images, including the objectification of women. This point will be addressed in greater depth in Part 2.

I have included many examples of pornography that portray contempt and/or hostility toward women without actually depicting violence. My theory about the causal relationship between pornography and rape developed in Part 2 shows how such sentiments contribute to the undermining of some males' inhibitions against acting out their desire to rape women.

For the most part, I have deliberately omitted child pornography. (I say, "for the most part," because there is no way of knowing whether some of the women photographed are minors; that is, under 18 years of age.)³ Often when child pornography and adult pornography are addressed together, people overlook the abuse of adult women.⁴

Readers may notice that many of the examples of visual pornography were published in the 1970s. Given that the primary goal of this book is to show the causal relationship between pornography and harm, the publication date of the material isn't important. Similarly, some readers may question my inclusion of five pictures from Denmark and two from Japan. Once again, *where* pornography is published is irrelevant to whether or not it is causally related to rape and other forms of violence against women.

There are probably some otherwise sceptical readers who are willing to concede that the few examples of foreign pornography included in this book are harmful to women since they are more degrading than pornography made in the United States. Yet, aside from the fact that there is an international trade in pornography, as a result of which foreign materials are readily available in the United States, to grant that *some* pornography has a harmful effect is significantly different from arguing that all pornography is harmless. The question would then shift to *which* materials are harmful and which are not. This would be a very different public debate than the one going on over the past few years, which still questions whether any pornography is harmful.

Because of racist notions that equate female beauty with whiteness or lightness, the features of women of color who appear in pornography

3 Also, I have included three examples from a *Penthouse* sequence portraying females who appear to be adolescent girls (see numbers 102-104).

4 I plan to self-publish a book in the future on child pornography that will also combine theory and visual examples.

often resemble Caucasians. A careful review of the visuals will reveal a larger representation of women and men of color than a cursory examination might suggest.⁵ However, I was unable to find suitable examples of pornography portraying Latina women. Whether or not this is because there is less acceptance of pornography in Catholic than in Protestant cultures is a matter for future research to determine.

Some readers may be disturbed to find themselves becoming sexually aroused by some pornographic pictures in this book despite their awareness, perhaps even abhorrence, of the misogyny they reveal. This may engender feelings of self-criticism, or even self-hatred, or it may cause these readers to feel that something is wrong with them. There are many ways in which men and women have learned to sexualize male domination and female subordination in Western societies, including being turned on by both subtle and blatant forms of female degradation. After all, we live in a male-dominated society so we should not be surprised that most males, and even some females, feel aroused by pornographic materials that celebrate sexism and woman abuse.⁶

While I think getting turned on to pornography *does* signify that our culture has made some destructive inroads into a person's psyche, as is similarly signified by discovering racist attitudes in oneself, this is no reason to embrace either pornography or racism. Rather, it indicates the importance of fighting against these phenomena for both personal and political reasons.

However, there *is* reason for great concern when those who feel aroused by pornography (or racism) become advocates or defenders of it. Many unhealthy practices are promoted in all societies, such as the consumption of unnutritional foods, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, spending beyond one's means. That such practices are — like pornography — encouraged in Western cultures is no reason to accept them as harmless, or to take a *laissez faire* attitude to them. Rather, the more destructive they are found to be, the more strenuously they should be resisted, on both personal and public levels. This book provides evidence

5 For a more detailed analysis of pornography and racism, see Mayall and Russell, 1993.

6 We cannot even begin to know what sexuality would be like in a truly egalitarian society. This also applies to lesbian relationships.

to show that pornography qualifies as deserving the most strenuous opposition we can muster.

Questions I have found useful to keep in mind when evaluating the harm that results from pornographic pictures are these:

1. Does it appear that any harm was done to the people and/or animals photographed? If not, can one be certain that no harm occurred to them in connection with their being photographed? How does the treatment appear to have differed for the males and females photographed?
2. Regardless of the fate of the participants in the pornographic pictures, what are the messages conveyed to viewers? How dangerous, traumatic, humiliating, painful or unpleasant is the treatment of the people depicted? Are males and females portrayed differently? If so, why?

It is difficult, of course, to be confident about the accuracy of one's evaluations in light of the often feigned pleasure on participants' faces. Let us never forget the numerous rapes and torture behind the smiles of Linda Lovelace (Lovelace, 1981 and 1986) in the blockbuster pornographic movie, "Deep Throat."