Pornography(2) Essay, Research Paper

PornographyIn the late Seventies, America became shocked and outraged by the rape,mutilation, and murder of over a dozen young, beautiful girls. The man who committedthese murders, Ted Bundy, was later apprehended and executed. During his detention invarious penitentiaries, he was mentally probed and prodded by psychologist andpsychoanalysts hoping to discover the root of his violent actions and sexual frustrations.Many theories arose in attempts to explain the motivational factors behind his murderousescapades. However, the strongest and most feasible of these theories came not from thepsychologists, but from the man himself, as a teenager, my buddies and I would allsneak around and watch porn. As I grew older, I became more and more interested andinvolved in it, (pornography) became and obsession. I got so involved in it, I wanted toincorporate (porn) into my life, but I couldn t behave like that and maintain the success Ihad worked so hard for. I generated an alter-ego to fulfill by fantasies under-cover.Pornography was a means of unlocking the evil I had buried inside myself (Leidholdt47). Is it possible that pornography is acting as the key to unlocking the evil in moreunstable minds?According to Edward Donnerstein, a leading researcher in the pornography field, the relationship between sexually violent images in the media and subsequentaggression and . . . callous attitudes towards women is mush stronger statistically than therelationship between smoking and cancer (Itzin 22). After considering the increase inrape and molestation, sexual harassment, and other sex crimes over the last few decades,and also the corresponding increase of business in the pornography industry, the linkbetween violence and pornography needs considerable study and examination. Once theevidence you will encounter in this paper is evaluated and quantified, it will be hard notto come away with the realization that habitual use of pornographic material promotesunrealistic and unattainable desires in men that can lead to violent behavior towardwomen. In order to properly discuss pornography, and be able to link it to violence, wemust first come to a basic and agreeable understanding of what the word pornographymeans. The term pornography originates from two Greek words, porn, which meansharlot, and graphein, which means to write (Webster s 286). My belief is that thedescribe, in literature, the sexual escapades of women of pornography has grown toinclude any and all obscene literature and pictures. At the present date, the term isbasically a blanket which covers all types of material such as explicit literature,photography, films, and video tapes with varying degrees of sexual content. Now that pornography has been defined in a fashion mirroring its content, it isnow possible to touch upon the more complex ways a community, as a society, views ordefines it. Some have said it is impossible for a group of individuals to form a concreteopinion as to what pornography means. A U.S. Supreme Court judge is quoted as saying, I can t define pornography, but I know it when I see it (Itzin 20). This statement canbe heard at community meetings in every state, city, and county across the nation.Community standards are hazy due to the fact that when asked what pornography is tothem, most individuals cannot express or explain in words what pornography is, thereforecreating confusion among themselves. Communities are left somewhat helpless in this matter since the federal courtspassed legislation to keep pornography available to adults. The courts assess that to banor censor the material would be infringing on the public s First Amendment Right (Carol28). Maureen O Brien quotes critics of a congressionally terminated bill, the 3pornography Victim s Compensation Act, as saying That if it had passed, it would havehad severely chilling effects on the First Amendment, allowing victims of sexual crimesto file suit against producers and distributors of any work that was proven to have had caused the attack, such as graphic material in books, magazines, videos, films, andrecords (Carol 7). People in a community debating over pornography often havedifferent views as to whether or not it should even be made available period, and somecould even argue this point against the types of women used in pornography: A forgreater variety of female types are shown as desirable in pornography than mainstreamfilms and network television have ever recognized: fat women, flat women, hairywomen, aggressive women, older women, you name it (Carol 25). If we could alldecide on just exactly what pornography is and what is acceptable, there wouldn t be somuch debate over the issue of censoring it. The bounds of community standards have been stretched by mainstreamingmovies, opening the way even further for the legalization of more explicit fare (Jenish53). In most contemporary communities explicit sex that is without violent ofdehumanizing acts is acceptable in American society today. These community standards have not been around very long. When movies werefirst brought out, they were heavily restricted and not protected by the First Amendment,because films then were liked upon only as diversionary entertainment and business.Even though sexual images were highly monitored, the movie industry was hit so hardduring the Great Depression that film-makers found themselves smeaking in as muchsexual content as possible, even then they saw that sex sells (Clark 1029). Films werehighly restricted throughout the 30 s, 40 s, and 50 s by the industry, but onceindependent films of the 60 s such as: Bonnie and Clyde and Whose afraid ofVirginia Wolfe? (Clark 1029-1030), both with explicit language, sexual innuendo, and 4violence started out-performing the larger wholesome production companies, many ofthe barriers holding sex and violence back were torn down in the name of profit. Adultcontent was put into movies long ago, we have become more immune and can t expect itto get any better or to go way. Porn is here for good. Pornography is a multi-million dollar international industry, ultimately run yorganized crime all over the world, and is produced by the respectable mainstreampublishing business companies (Itzin 21). Although the publishing companies arethought to be respectable , people generally stereotype buyers and users of pornographicmaterial as dirty old men in trenchcoats , with disposable income (Jenish 52). Pornomovies provide adults of both genders with activities they normally wouldn t get ineveryday life, such as oral pleasures or different types of fetishes. Ultimately adultentertainment is just a quick-fix for grown-ups, as junk-food would be for small children. Pornography s main purpose is to serve as masturbatory stimuli for males and toprovide a sexual bent. Although in the beginning, society was it as perverted and sinful,it was still considered relatively harmless. Today there is one case study, standing outfrom the rest, that tends to shatter this illusion. The study done by Monica D. Weisz and Christopher M. Earls used eighty-sevenmales . . . that were randomly shown one of four films , by researchers William Tookeand Martin Lalumiere: Deliverance, Straw Dogs, Die Hard II, and Days of Thunder ,for a study on how they would react to questions about sexual violence and offenders

after watching. In the four films there is sexual aggression against a male, sexualaggression against a female, physical aggression, and neutrality-no explicit scenes ofphysical or sexual aggression. Out of this study the males were more acceptable ofinterpersonal violence and rape myths and also more attracted to sexual aggression.These same males were less sympathetic to rape victims and were noted less likely to 5find a defendant guilty of rape (Jenish 71). These four above mentioned movies aremainstreamed R-rated films. If a mainstream movie can cause this kind of distortion ofvalue and morality, then it should become evident that continuous viewing/use ofpornographic films depicting violent sex and aggression could lead vulnerable personsinto performing or participating in sexual violence against their partners or against astranger. Bill Marshall, psychology professor at Queen s University and director of a sexualbehavior clinic in Kingston, interviewed one-hundred and twenty men, between the years1980 and 1985, who had molested children or raped women. In his conclusion he foundthat pornography appeared to be a significant factor in the chain of events leading up to adeviant act in 25% of these cases (Nicols 60). Rape myth is a term pertaining to people s views on rape, rapists, and sexualassaults, wherein it is assumed that the victim of a sexual crime is either partially orcompletely to blame (Allen 6). To help understand the rape myth a Rape MythAcceptance Scale was established, which lists some of the most prominent beliefs that aperson accepting the rape myth has. They are as follows:1. A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their firstdate implies that she is willing to have sex. 2. One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequentlyhave a need to call attention to themselves. 3. Any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she reallywants to. 4. When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tighttops, they are just asking for trouble (Burt 217). 6Pauline Bart reports that studies held simultaneously at UCLA and St. XavierCollege on students, demonstrate that pornography does positively reinforce the rapemyth. Men and women were exposed to over for hours of exotic video (of varying types;i.e. soft, hard core, etc.) and then asked to answer a set of questions meant to gage theirattitudes of sex crimes. All the men were proven to be more accepting to rape myths, andsurprisingly, over half of the women were also (Burt 123). Once again, the women inthese films were portrayed as insatiable and in need of constant fulfillment. After somuch exposure to women in this light from films and books, it is generally taken forgranted that women should emulate this type of behavior in real life (Burt 125). In regards to pornography perpetuating violent acts toward women, pornographydefenders claim that the use of pornographic material can act a s a cathartic release,actual lessening the likelihood of males committing violent acts. The reasoning is thatthe pornography can substitute for sex and that the want to commit sexual crimes isacted out vicariously through the pornographic material (Whicclair 327). This argument,however, does not explain the crimes committed by serial killers like Ted Bundy andJohn Wayne Gacey, who regularly viewed pornography during the lengths of their timesbetween murders and rapes (Nicols 70). By saying the pornography would reduce harmto women through cathartic effects, pornography defenders display a large lack inreasoning because through their argument the rise in the production of pornographywould have led to a decrease in sexual crimes, but as has been shown previously, thatsimply is not true. Pornographers and pornography defenders proclaim that the link betweenpornography and violence is exaggerated and that the research linking pornography tosexual crimes is inconclusive. They state that the fundamentals of sex crimes are foundinherently in the individuals and that the sexual permissiveness of American society 7cannot be blamed on the increase of pornography s availability (Jacobson 79). DavidAdams, a co-founder and executive director of Emerge, a Boston counseling center formale batterers, states, that only a minority of his clients (perhaps 10 to 20 percent) usehard-core pornography. He estimates that half my have substance abuse problems, andadds that alcohol seems more directly involved in abuse the pornography (Kaminer115). The statement made by Adams and the view that pornography does not contributeto the act of sex crimes is heavily outweighed, however, by the various studiesconnecting violence and pornography. Bill Marshall s observations on his patients andthe examples of individual crimes originating from pornography, show this acclimationto be invalidated. Some also say that attacks on pornography merely reflect the majority offeminist s disdain for men, cynically stating that people who fear pornography think ofall men as potential abusers, whose violent impulses are bound to be sparked bypornography (Kaminer 114). Researcher Catherine MacKinnon, says that pornographyworks as a behavioral conditioner, reinforcer, and stimulus, not as idea or advocacy (Kaminer 114). However, this idea is proven to be false by the use of pornography in andby the Serbian military. This example shows that pornography does advocate sex crimesand that ideas of sexual violence are able to be stemmed from the viewing ofpornography. From its inception, in most cases, pornography is a media that links sexualgratification and violence together. This fact can only lead a rational mind to theconclusion that a chain of events will begin, combining sex and violence further in theminds of those who watch pornography and will ensure and unhealthy attitude towardswomen and their sexual identities. Only through discussion and individual action can the 8perpetuation of the negative impacts of pornography be swept from the closets and darkcorners of the American household. 9

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