

Pornography Is Neither Harmless Nor Fantasy Uncomfortable truths about the industry and how it intertwines with child abuse, sex trafficking, and exploitation

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Non-simulated violence and the glorification of rape, child abuse, and incest feature prominently in pornography.

Pornography has come a long way since Grecian urns and *Playboy* centrefolds; anonymous, easy access to an overabundance of content has resulted in an desensitised consumer, and a saturated market.

In response to such challenges, pornographers are making bank by filming people, primarily women, subjected to increasingly degrading and dangerous sex acts. Secondary distributors also profit while turning a blind eye to the fact that many a video uploaded to their platform was the end result of [blackmail, threat, coercion, rape, and child abuse](#).

Violence in popular pornography

Rough group sex (including “gangbangs”, “double”, and “triple anal”), women gagging on male genitalia (sometimes to the point of vomiting), slapping, strangulation, misogynistic verbal abuse, and ejaculating on a woman’s face — [particularly common in the “interracial” genre](#) — are now the mainstay of pornography. What once existed on the fringes has become par for the course; the extreme has become the mainstream.

The sheer quantity of non-simulated, and non-age or consent verified sexual violence, torture (piercing, waterboarding etc.), and degradation available on mainstream sites means that someone, remunerated or not, endured ill-treatment in the most intimate of ways to create your entertainment. Meanwhile, [pornographers “joke”](#) about new industry talent becoming acquainted with the urgent care department.

Even the majority of *popular* pornography — by definition the lowest common denominator and therefore least likely to be objectionable — features non-simulated violence at alarming rates. (If you require violence to be defined for you, it’s “any purposeful action causing physical or psychological harm to oneself or another person”.)

[An analysis of 304 scenes](#) of popular pornography revealed 88% featured aggression, principally but not exclusively, spanking, gagging, and slapping. If your immediate thought was “that’s not too bad” it rather illustrates how normalised and prevalent sexual aggression has become. Strangulation, also popular in the sort of domestic abuse which turns fatal down the line, was present in 28% of scenes analysed. Almost half of scenes involved verbal aggression, primarily name calling such as “bitch” and “slut”. Predictably and overwhelming, the perpetrators of violence were mostly male, and their targets mostly female (94%).

In contrast, [McKee \(2005\)](#) concluded “only” 2% of popular videos feature violence after conveniently *excluding* violence so long as the target acted out enjoyment. Their study failed to take into account that a porn actress moaning ecstatically at every single thing done to her is a job requirement, the factor determining whether she’ll be able to collect a paycheck after a day of grueling filming, and continue securing future work.

In [popular violent pornography](#), 95% of women plastered on smiles or displayed stony indifference to give an impression that women are onboard with, and feel at most neutrally about, sexual violence and physical abuse.

“[I] told them to stop but they wouldn’t stop until I started to cry and ruined the scene.” — [Link](#) (remarks by a former porn performer)

“This consensual depiction of aggression is concerning as we run the risk of rendering true aggression against women invisible” — [Link](#) (remarks by the study’s author)

One of the most disturbing things about modern day pornography is the way it trivialises and normalises violence as a genre *requiring* the apparent enjoyment of its participants. (Of course, there are also the likes of the “painful anal” or “facial abuse” genres, wherein women’s *visible* suffering is the draw card.)

This makes it hard to argue to the inexperienced adolescent or those with little understanding of female anatomy or human psychology, or prone to “othering” their fellow man or woman, that it’s untrue women enjoy dangerous and degrading sex acts such as “triple anal” or “ass to mouth” oral sex. After all, they’ve seen the “proof”.

The quote below, regarding how the brain stores episodic memories, was stated in relation to feigned “enjoyment” by children in child pornography, however it applies equally well to the abuse of adult performers. It illustrates the dangers of being bombarded with imagery of women “enjoying” abuse:

A picture is an event, because you can see it. And once you see a picture it doesn’t come in as an opinion, it comes in as something that happened. And it’s stored in your brain where you store other things that have happened. So you don’t challenge it. You don’t buffer it. You don’t say, ‘That’s not true.’ You saw it. — [Link](#)

Rest assured, the content of pornography is dictated by a desensitised consumer, [sadistic and misogynistic directors](#), and a competitive market where it’s hard to stand out, and *not* women who wish to be abused on set.

Not only does pornography encourage sexual violence, in many cases it *is* sexual violence. Porn is not harmless, nor is it fantasy in the ways that matter. The violence is real — the only fantastical aspects of pornography are that women, “barely legal” or underage teenagers, [and children love](#) nothing better than physical abuse, sexual violence, degradation, and constant sexual subservience.

Sexualisation of children in pornography

[Among the videos popular in 2005](#), were six videos promoting the sexualisation of children (titled the likes of “Teen Fuck Holes”) and depicting the (hopefully) adult actresses as underage with props like school girl uniforms, pigtails and braces. The dialogue often emphasised these teens were below the age of majority.

Pornhub did not exist in 2005, however since their “year in review” started “teen” has been among the top 10 words searched on the platform six years running, and a category onto itself. In 2019, “teen” was [conspicuously absent](#) from the top 10, perhaps because such content has become so pervasive one need not actively seek it out. (Of course, “teen” is hardly [the most disturbing search](#) that’s ever trended on porn sites.)

[In the U.S., restrictions](#) on depicting young-looking girls were overturned in 2002, facilitating pornography which sexualises children for adult enjoyment. As of 2018, secondary distributors i.e. hosting sites are exempt from an obligation to keep records of performers’ ages. Child protection was deemed too “onerous” a requirement, and of much less import than the industry’s profit margins.

The ability to source pornography from low-cost production companies based overseas, featuring very young looking girls with no proof of age *with impunity* is certainly a victory for those wishing to profit from the sexual abuse of children.

Rape and incest pornography

Pornography hosting sites are circumspect enough that ‘rape’ as a search term yields no results, however such content merely appears under ‘forced’, ‘intruder’, ‘unwanted’, ‘groped’, ‘helpless’ and ‘pain’.

Abusers often use pornography to groom their young victims, instruct them, and assure them the abuse they endure is “normal”. Incest pornography seems particularly well-suited for such a task.

Why are either of these forms of harm considered appropriate as entertainment considering the life long pain felt by its victims?

Consent is not so simple, static or unitary that it can be purchased, nor is porn always consensual

If you believe the saving grace of pornography is that some people consent to appear in it, I’d like to know: is the pornography you’re watching at all — even nominally — consensual, and would you be able to tell if it wasn’t?

On any porn site, you can find the likes of your typical “passed out teen”, “teen gets destroyed”, “teen crying and getting slapped around” — a staple of the popular “teen” category, subcategory “helpless teen”. If you condone such pornography because the participant is 18-years old and

financially remunerated, know that those were the exact titles used for the filmed [abuse of a 14-year old rape victim](#).

When mainstream pornography and child abuse material are indistinguishable could it be that there is also a problem with the former? When you type “schoolgirl sexually assaulted on a bus” into your web browser and half the links are to news items and the other half to pornography it’s obvious things have gone too far.

Rose Kalemba’s videos were only taken down after she emailed *Pornhub* from her “lawyer’s” account, in a matter of 48 hours, rather than the six months of pleading that fell on deaf ears. She was to receive no justice however, even the brutal, filmed rape of an unconscious child is “consensual” in some people’s eyes. It used to be that rape victims had to prove grievous bodily injury, now even *that* isn’t enough.

“Millions of men watched the six videos of my assault. [...] The porn industry made it so that my rape didn’t just end that horrible night, and my fears weren’t just that — they quickly became reality. Because of the porn industry, I was harassed, stalked, threatened, and so much more for years and years after my attack. I was followed multiple times when I was walking around, spit on, and groped, and touched against my will — by complete strangers and also some boys and grown men I knew.” — [Link](#)

These videos, [and many more like it](#), were hosted by *Pornhub* which requires neither age, consent, nor identity verification using actual photo identification. It also requires no age verification for viewers — get them while they’re young seems to be their motto.

Pornhub, owned and operated by *MindGeek* which also owns *RedTube* and *YouPorn*, was also happy to continue hosting content from *GirlsDoPorn* while they were [on trial for trafficking](#). Let nothing get in the way of profit is clearly their other motto. (By no means do I believe other porn sites don’t take the same unethical approach to increasing shareholder value; I am merely focusing on the company which has monopoly.)

When the [Sunday Times investigated](#), they found dozens of child rape videos on *Pornhub* in mere minutes. Pornography not only feeds the demand for human trafficking and child abuse material, it gluts itself on the resultant sexual exploitation; almost half of victims of the sex slave trade [report being filmed](#). Where do you think such videos are uploaded if not to platforms providing a payoff in exchange for increased ad revenue?

The elusive nature of consent in porn

Though some women do consent to appear in pornography, it is also true that many, particularly those who are *completely* retired, speak up against the industry. Former performers relate instances where they were raped on set, retracting consent due to a boundary-violating sex act or an unanticipated level of brutality, only to be ignored by those wishing to profit and obtain pleasure from their abuse.

Consider the “consenting” women below; some were coerced into the industry, some consented to only some of the sex acts they were subjected to, while others endured unprecedented brutality in order to continue working without loss of other bookings or the day’s wages:

“I have permanent scars up and down the backs of my thighs. It was all things that I had consented to, but I didn’t know quite the brutality of what was about to happen to me until I was in it.” — [Link](#)

“It was filthy and disgusting,” she says of her first experience. “I just said yes and got it over with . . . I felt like a complete and total prostitute.” She kept doing it, despite bladder infections, yeast infections, and losing bowel control. — [Link](#)

“I was being hit and choked. I was really upset and they didn’t stop. They kept filming.” — [Link](#)

“The [male performer] has a natural hatred towards women, in the sense that he has always been known to be more brutal than ever needed. I agreed to do the scene, thinking it was less beating except for a punch in the head. If you noticed, [he] had worn his solid gold ring the entire time and continued to punch me with it.” — [Link](#)

“A few weeks later I flew to NY for a “hardcore scene.” My agent didn’t elaborate on hardcore, just emphasized it was money. I was beaten, given a black eye, and sodomized with a baseball bat. I wasn’t allowed to end the scene unless I wanted a pay cut.” — [Link](#)

“He actually acknowledged the fact that I wanted his d — out of my mouth so I could breathe, because it was becoming unbearable at this point, because...essentially, I’m choking [on my own vomit].” — [Link](#) (after being forced into a position the performer informed the director she could not do, she was left with a vaginal tear and bruised cervix)

“The agency that I’m with only represents 25 girls at a time, so they require all their girls to do everything... we aren’t allowed to have no-lists. — [Link](#)

“He told me that I had to do it and if I can’t, he would charge me and I would lose any other bookings I had because I would make his agency look bad.” — [Link](#)

The perils of offering financial incentive to injure or traumatise oneself are obvious and unconscionable. Whether a violent or degrading video is the end result of [present day coercion or a normalisation of sexual violence due to grooming/abuse as a child](#), or entirely consensual — is it ethical?

If someone is willing to sell a kidney because they need the cash, should a glamourised get-rich-quick business be able to profit from society’s failure to safeguard the vulnerable, the victims of privation? Should a business be able to profit from the torture of women, as is currently the case, as long as they whack a BDSM label on it?

Is consenting to be abused for money cognitive dissonance at its finest? Consider the following:

“You don’t want people to think you’re weak when you’re in porn; you wanna act like you love it and you love rough stuff, and you love being violated, and called degrading names. It’s all just a pack of lies. People do porn because they need the money, and most of them don’t have other options or education.”

— [Shelley Lubben](#) (former porn performer)

There are many financially desperate people in this world. If consent is the be all, end all, for determining whether a course of action is ethical, can women be brutally murdered in exchange for money, as long as men would enjoy masturbating to it? As long as she consents and there’s a camera rolling? And before you say that’s ridiculous, consider there are people willing to step out into traffic so their families can receive the insurance payout. [Edited to say: This is no longer a hypothetical, recently a streamer abused his pregnant girlfriend to the point of death, [while men donated up to \\$1000](#) for the privilege of watching. His only mistake was in killing her and uploading to Youtube, instead of *almost* killing her and uploading the video to Pornhub — she was wearing lingerie when she died of hypothermia, after all.]

The fact that people agree to it [pornography] and are paid, is about as convincing as the fact that we should be in favour of sweatshops in China, where women are locked into a factory and work fifteen hours a day, and then the factory burns down and they all die. Yeah, they were paid and they consented, but it doesn’t make me in favour of it, so that argument we can’t even talk about.

— *Linguist, cognitive scientist, and philosopher* [Noam Chomsky](#)

Men who have increased their pornography use hold less egalitarian and more hostile attitudes to women

An increase in past pornography use [predicted less egalitarian attitudes](#), and more hostile sexism toward women, among men. The same study also found experimental exposure to *non-violent* pornography lead to hostile sexism among men and women low in agreeableness.

Even non-violent pornography influences perceived acceptability of rape and violence against women

[A laboratory study](#) exposing men to almost 5 hours of pornography over the course of 6 weeks (back then considered a “massive” amount) lead them to be desensitised to sexual violence. Men exposed to pornography espoused attitudes trivialising or justifying rape at significantly higher rates than the control group.

This experiment used non-violent pornography, still a possibility back in the 1980s, much like finding a control group of young men naïve to pornography. [Whether violent or non-violent](#), pornography objectifies and dehumanises women to the point where men cannot empathise with them as human beings, viewing them only as tools for their sexual gratification.

Similarly, [this meta-analysis](#) found a link between men’s pornography consumption — particularly of violent pornography, but also non-violent — and attitudes supportive of violence against women.

Rape has increased since the liberalisation of pornography laws

In the decade [after the liberalisation of pornography laws](#), rape reports increased by 139% in the U.S., 94% in England, 160% in Australia, and 107% in New Zealand. In the same period, countries where obscenity laws remained as strict, the increase in rape reports was far smaller or had decreased.

“Porn Up, Rape Down” is the crutch of the pro-porn advocate, a sentiment expressed by [D’Amato \(2006\)](#) on the basis of 1973–2003 data. However, after [correcting for under-counting](#) the opposite trend is observed: rape rates in America increased in this period.

The “decline” was an artifice of approximately 22% of police departments nation-wide under-counting, at the very *least*, forcible vaginal rapes due to a mixture of hostile attitudes to rape victims and a desire to look successful in the fight against crime. As such, reported rapes were dismissed as ‘unfounded’ without investigation, reclassified, or not recorded in writing.

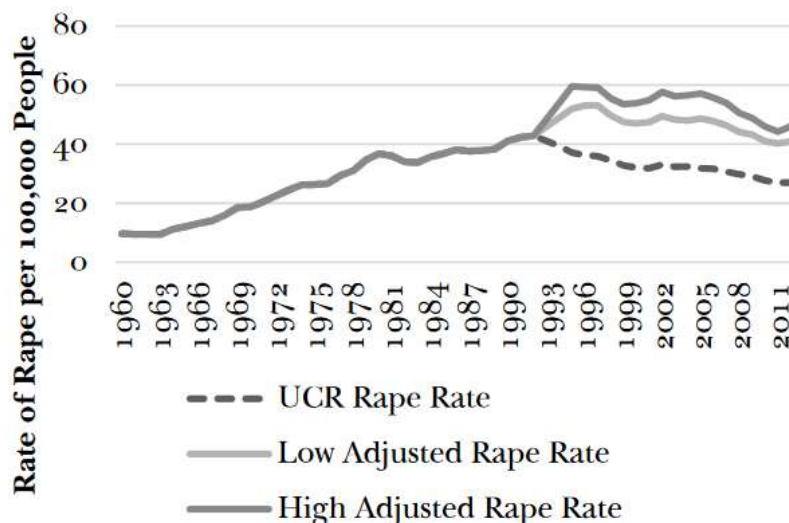
Unlike murder, assault, burglary, theft and automobile theft — did D’Amato think the whipping girls of porn were sparing us from those too? — rape did not decrease since the early 1990s, nor was there a steep increase since 2010 (chart on the left). Rather, there was a precipitous increase in reported rape following the liberalisation of pornography laws in 1964 (chart on the right, see the solid lines).

Forcible rape rate history:



UCR rape rates not adjusted for uncovered under-counting retrieved via [WolframAlpha](#)

Figure 17: UCR and Adjusted Rape Rates 1960–2012



Adjusted Rape Rates after imputing data based on the majority of jurisdictions following outlier detection ([Yung 2013](#))

Not only has rape increased, but as observed in Australia, pornography has [changed the character of offending](#), particularly as regards the increase in the sexual assault and rape of young girls aged 13 and 14.

This is of course the time to recall a sobering fact: the vast majority of rapes are not reported to police, as illustrated in the pyramid below. [Self-report of sexual assault](#) (including rape: 36%) more than doubled between 2017 and 2018 in the United States. At the same time, reporting to police decreased from 40% to 25%.

FIGURE 6.1

Magnitude of the problem of sexual violence



[Sexual violence](#) — World Health Organisation (take note of “sexual exploitation resulting from economic vulnerability”, apply to pornography)

Pornography is one of the strongest predictors of rape and coercive sex

[A recent longitudinal study](#) of American youth found that after controlling for other influential factors, exposure to parental spousal abuse and current exposure to violent pornography — both acting as scripts for inter-personal violence — were the two strongest predictors of sexual violence, including coercive sex and rape. To clarify, the study design means that violence occurred *after* pornography use.

A [meta-analysis of 22 studies from 7 different countries](#) found that pornography consumption is associated with sexual aggression, both verbal (e.g. pressuring for sex through argument or threat to end a relationship) and physical (use of force).

The weight of the evidence

There are over 100 studies showing that pornography use is both correlated with and is the cause (shown through experimental studies) of a wide range of violent behaviors. Over 50 studies show a strong connection between pornography and sexual violence. The results are the same in correlational, cross-sectional, experimental, and longitudinal studies: pornography use and acts of sexual aggression are directly connected. — [Link](#)

Does this mean every man who watches pornography is guaranteed to rape? No, but nor do we use the fact that not everyone who smokes will develop lung cancer as a refutation of the harmful effects of cigarette smoke.

How pornography increases risk of rape perpetration

One sociologist, after summarizing the available data, says this about the connection between pornography and rape: “pornography (a) predisposes some males to want to rape women and intensifies the predisposition in other males already so predisposed; (b) undermines some males’ internal inhibition against acting out their desire to rape; and c) undermines some males’ social inhibitions against acting out their desire to rape — [Link](#)

Pornography leads to desensitisation and seeking out extreme content

Pornography is an escalating behaviour; it’s [addictive](#) so there are [diminishing returns](#) with its increased consumption. This prompts the consumer to seek ever more extreme and objectifying content in order to [replicate that initial ‘high’](#), and the industry has certainly [kept pace](#).

“We found the same pattern for both girls and boys. The desensitization process over time could indicate a normalization process, in the sense that the more one becomes exposed to sexually explicit material on the internet, the less sensitive to such content one becomes.” — [Link to study](#)

Orgasm is powerfully reinforcing of behaviour through the release of [dopamine](#); any stimulus associated with sexual release *itself* becomes more desirable. The vast majority of people are not

innately attracted to violence, nor sexually to children, however pornography can reshape their sexuality so that they are.

You are not immune to classical conditioning, it is not a matter of will power or moral character. You can train dogs to salivate at the sound of bells, rats to prefer the stench of death, men to fetishize boots and high heels by association— why would masturbating to teen or violent content as makes up the majority of pornography be an exception to this?

All roads lead to Rome, or in this case to [extreme pornography](#). Not only does masturbating to such content increase the desire for it, it [gives the impression](#) that dangerous and degrading sex acts are commonplace and acceptable.

Pornography not only rewires the brain but rewrites the sexual script to the detriment of girls and women

“The linkage of passion to dominance/subordination is the prototype of the heterosexual image of male-female relationships, one which justifies pornography. Women are supposed to love being brutalized. This is also the prototypical justification of all relationships of oppression — that the subordinate one who is “different” enjoys the inferior position” — [Audrey Lorde](#)

[The more pornography a man uses](#), the more likely he is to use it during sex, fantasise about it during sex, request pornographic acts of his partner, and the less likely he is to actually enjoy sex with a partner.

In pornography, male aggression and pleasure are at the forefront; although mostly feigned, women’s orgasms appear only [18% to men’s 78% of the time](#). The desires of boys and men now revolve around the sexual script set out by porn (normalised male violence and deemphasised female pleasure), and [women and girls are suffering for it](#).

“Pornography gives the message to girls that you have to submit to a very high level of violence, and have a tolerance for violence and dehumanization. They look at it as sex as opposed to violence, as consent as opposed to coercion, threat, abuse, or worse.”

— Taina Bien-Aime (Executive Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking In Women)

Nearly a quarter of adult women report having felt [fear during sex](#), describing frightening situations such as being unexpectedly strangled. In the U.S., more than half of girls aged 15–19 years reported being [coerced into sex acts](#).

In England, 40% of girls aged 13–17 have been [coerced into sexual activity](#) (including forced intercourse) by a boyfriend, with 22% reporting physical abuse at the hands of their partner. Many of the boys surveyed regularly viewed pornography, with 1 in 5 harbouring very negative attitudes to women.

“Is it normal to be a heterosexual girl but not wanting to have sex with men and finding it disgusting, degrading and violent? I dont have any sexual trauma, i’m not religious and sex never was a taboo to [me]” — Anonymous reddit post

A GP, let’s call her Sue, said: “I’m afraid things are much worse than people suspect.” In recent years, Sue had treated growing numbers of teenage girls with internal injuries caused by frequent anal sex; not, as Sue found out, because they wanted to, or because they enjoyed it, but because a boy expected them to.” [on incontinence in young girls — [Link](#)]

Your rights end where mine begin

You have neither the inalienable right to masturbate to abuse, nor to profit from it. In free market economies and societies with free speech, toxic chemicals are routinely banned, child pornography is banned, snuff films are banned — why should the filmed exploitation of adults be any different?

Welcome to life in civilised society, your freedom is constantly infringed upon to spare people from the consequences of your every heart’s desire.

Speaking of freedom and rights:

“It is quite astounding that an industry as big as porn continues to evade the most basic principles that underpin human freedoms as outlined by the World Association of Sexual Health Declaration of Sexual Rights (#5): The right to be free from all forms of violence and coercion.” — Liz Walker (Founder, Youth Well-Being Project)

In addition to the above, [Article 3 of the Human Rights Act](#) guarantees freedom from torture (mental or physical) and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. If you respect human rights, you must understand that the right to be free of inhuman or degrading treatment includes workers in every industry. Everyone has the right to a safe working environment. It’s that simple.

Free speech

The pro-pornography lobby has branded itself the *Free Speech Coalition*. Last I checked, free speech is “the right to express any opinions without censorship or restraint”. The fantasy element — that women loved to be abused — can certainly be conceived of as hate speech inciting violence, but non-simulated violence and degradation go well beyond ‘speech’, even if it reflects a director’s ‘artistic’ vision.

Cowering behind the banner of free speech is disingenuous. This is about the ‘right’ and ‘freedom’ to profit from exploitation and socioeconomic inequality, or to enjoy it, nothing more.

A sad sign of the times

Many abusive men strangle their female victims, to the extent that 34–68% of women who have reported intimate partner violence report strangulation. [Non-fatal strangulation](#) is an important risk factor for homicide of a woman by an intimate partner.

Women are [seven times more likely](#) to be killed or severely harmed following strangulation as compared with physical assault or threat. In light of this, the popularity of what is one of the most dangerous forms of assault leveled at women as masturbation fodder is disturbing.

“...my concern is with the ethics of representing a key method of misogynist torture and terror as a sex game” — [Link](#)

It’s a type of abuse that often doesn’t leave a trace of physical proof, and yet its “[physical repercussions](#) can include cardiac arrest, stroke, miscarriage, incontinence, speech disorders, seizures, paralysis, and other long-term brain injury”. That is, if the victim survives.

Husbands, boyfriend and Tinder dates have [strangled women to death](#) then blamed it on “rough sex” gone wrong to have their murder charge downgraded. Many such men received meagre sentences, released after a handful of years on good behaviour (there are no women to offend against in prison, after all).

Any amount of domestic and sexual violence, even *fatal sexual violence*, can now be dismissed as “consensual” because men can point to the same acts in their favourite porno and its smiling or unperturbed recipients of violence.

A victim’s vaginal arterial bleeding, fractured eye socket, facial wounds, and blunt-force trauma can be chalked up to mere “sex” “games” by men who torture women to death. We used to say “she was asking for it” with rape, [now we’re doing it with murder](#). (The UK, at least, has taken measures against this “defense”).

A 16-year old girl will need [a colostomy bag](#) for the rest of her life due to rough group sex, and some news outlets can only write of *her* emulating pornography, of “injuring herself”. Passive voice. Women are raped, grievously injured, and killed —by whom? Who are the silent, protected portion of this equation? *Where is mention of the boys and/or men who injured her?*

We are getting to the stage where sex and rape, sex and cruelty to women are being collapsed into one concept. Pornography is now a means of reinforcing and encouraging misogyny by filming it, it’s nothing short of a celebration of women’s rape, abuse, and humiliation at the hands of men.

Sexual violence and hypocrisy

“The age of children has become increasingly younger, and it’s more and more likely that individuals not only have child pornography, but child pornography with violent themes.” — [Link](#)

A society committed to eradicating child abuse cannot sexualise children in any form of mass media, nor enable the dissemination of child pornography such as through a lack of vetting or verification.

We cannot commit to the equality, rights, or even basic fundamental respect, for women with anything more than lip service, if we remain tolerant of enabling and encouraging men to pleasure themselves to the real abuse, degradation, and objectification of women. There is no fighting sexual assault, rape, or domestic violence in such a landscape — it would be tantamount to draining the Atlantic with a teaspoon.

“...is ethical and honorable to ‘play with’ and promote dynamics of humiliation and violence that terrorize, maim, and kill women daily?” — [Link](#)

When a popular form of entertainment routinely [depicts the likes of incest](#), abduction, brutal gang rapes, as well as a barrage of sexual aggression and verbal abuse against women it sends the wrong message, to say the least. As do corrosive narratives of women resisting and then appearing to enjoy their rape.

You have a choice

Pornography is humiliation and degradation of women. It’s a disgraceful activity. I don’t want to be associated with it. Just take a look at the pictures. I mean, women are degraded as vulgar sex objects. That’s not what human beings are. I don’t even see anything to discuss. — [Noam Chomsky](#)

If you have read thus far, you have been disabused of the notion that pornography features only of age, willing performers. You might even be considering whether authorisation to be hurt and humiliated is enough to justify any level of physical or psychological harm incurred by pornography performers.

I may have even convinced you that the sexual violence of pornography is not confined to the performers, and that even objectifying but non-violent pornography endangers women. In light of this, you have a choice. You can:

Pretend that pornography content is dictated by women who love to be abused rather than men who love to watch women *being* abused. Defend your desire to consume objectifying content or non-simulated sexual violence and degradation under the guise of being a champion of women’s rights and freedom of speech.

Cling to the idea that consent for cash makes any amount of brutality and humiliation permissible if it allays your conscience. Brush aside the ethics of filming abuse as entertainment. Above all, fail to think critically or act morally.

Wrap yourself in the comforting delusion that choices are made in a vacuum, that personal histories of abuse, and the social, cultural, and economic forces which place women at a disadvantage have no bearing on why someone might “volunteer” to drink ejaculate from her

own rectum. (The betrayal of self inherent in “willingly” abasing oneself due to various complex constraints and pressures is why [humiliation](#) “has longer-lasting and more deadly effects on the soul and mind...than does physical torture”.)

Insist sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse (often as a means of getting through a scene), and the injuries rampant in the industry are inconsequential— who cares if the ‘star’ of a “double anal” film suffered lacerations or a prolapse; who cares if a [male performer’s](#) overuse of erectile dysfunction drugs could lead to priapism?

Convince yourself that the abuse you watch “isn’t that bad” because the lady in the exit interview told you how great it was in order to collect a paycheck, keep her job, and avoid abuse and ridicule from fans and co-stars protective of the industry. You never saw her repeatedly tap-out only to be ignored in the *edited* video, so everything that happened on set *must* have been perfectly kosher.

Turn a blind eye to the fact that you have no way of distinguishing paid for sexual battery of an adult dressed up as a child, from the rape of an abducted girl. Assure yourself you can spot the difference between a video of a person who can, physically if not financially, leave her job from that of a trafficked woman or girl who cannot. Dig your heels in, insist that amateur video posted by ‘Unknown’ was *definitely* uploaded with both parties’ permission, and was *definitely* consensual.

Overlook that “teen” and “incest” videos are used by abusers to [groom or instruct their victims](#). Willfully ignore that the industry is tied up in [human trafficking](#), feeds the demand for it, then hosts a video record of it for profit.

Pretend the acts you’re fine with watching porn actresses endure aren’t going to become equally “fashionable” in child pornography, whose entire user base, by the way, [also watches adult pornography](#).

Staunchly insist mass media has no effect on attitudes, and that attitudes and beliefs have no bearing on behaviours. Pretend that orgasm isn’t powerfully reinforcing of behaviour, able to rewire the brain and warp sexual tastes.

Ignore the weight of the evidence. Convince yourself that those who study, deal with, or are in fact sex offenders don’t know what they’re talking about when they speak of the connection between men masturbating to *real* sexual violence and wanting to *really* participate in it themselves.

And finally, you can choose to support an inhumane industry whose product is the onscreen abuse, exploitation, objectification and dehumanisation of other human beings.

Or, you can place a higher premium on the welfare and dignity of others than one particular way of getting off. That’s *all* you would have to give up, not shelter, not food, not social connection, not self-actualisation, not sex, not even masturbation. I cannot emphasise pornography’s non-essential nature enough — it’s not a crutch you need.

Change is possible: regulation and bans

Personal responsibility is all well and good, but it's too small scale. We have more power than that. We can, and have, regulated and even banned entire industries which follow this pattern: the user receives a rush of feelgood chemicals at the expense of their or others' health and wellbeing.

In Australia, tanning beds were first regulated to minimise harm, then banned outright when the risk to the population's wellbeing was thought to be unconscionable (and when government regulation gave [the false impression of safety and endorsement](#)).

What happened to the tanning bed operators? They found other work, while solarium owners found other ventures. Female porn performers typically have careers that span no longer than 6–18 months, with many quitting after their first scene. It's an industry which chews people up, spits them out, and continues to profit off their filmed exploitation in perpetuity.

Similarly, cigarettes were made prohibitively expensive and emblazoned with graphic health warnings. Tobacco companies were prohibited from advertising, even covertly, to children, while vendors selling to minors without checking photo ID were heavily penalised. Smoking was banned from restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Very few people today consider smoking glamorous or harmless, and as a consequence, very few smoke.

The difference in approach had less to do with level of harm, and more to do with the relative lobbying power of the two industries. Pornography is estimated to be a \$6–15 billion dollar industry, while sex trafficking is thought to be even more lucrative. Banning, or even attempting to adequately regulate an industry protective of its massive profits is no easy task, however, it is not an insurmountable one.

Granted, sometimes there are unintended consequences to bans, such as people resorting to drinking industrial alcohol and going blind. However, I don't think a comparison with Prohibition is appropriate; there *already* exists a vast criminal network predicated on men's (often porn-inspired) appetite for sexual violence and degradation. How else could supply keep up with demand?

(As an aside, why do we so often speak of Prohibition's failures, and not the multitudes of women spared their drunken husbands' beatings during this period of American history?)

Some solutions

If pornographers register their businesses and website domains in countries tolerant of harm to women, then pornography filters can be used — at the very least, age filters.

The U.S., which films a large share of pornography, can adopt bans [used by other countries](#) wherein sex acts that risk the health of the performer and are likely to incur injury are illegal, irrespective of performer authorisation. This does not eliminate the potential for exploitation entirely, but does reduce the extent of harm.

Similarly, condom use can be made mandatory. If that would result in injury to female performers then shoots can be shortened to compensate. Yes, even if such basic consideration for workers would cut into a production company's profits.

Production companies can be regulated or shut down entirely for human rights violations. Video hosting companies can also be shut down; major credit card companies can be pressured to pull their support (as *PayPal* did). *OnlyFans*, which [easily allows children](#) to upload child pornography to their platform, can be held accountable. *Pornhub* can be held accountable. In fact, [here is a petition you can sign](#).

“When a company is making millions off of the facilitation and distribution of child pornography, rape videos and filmed exploitation, the solution couldn't be more clear. It's time to shut down Pornhub and hold them accountable for the devastating harm they have caused”

— *Lauren Hersh (National Director, World Without Exploitation)*

One doesn't have to settle for pittance such as “porn literacy” in classrooms as though the adult consumer was of no concern. Misleading children that “porn isn't real” does nothing to address porn performers' reprehensible working conditions, rather it obscures it.

History repeats itself, which means there's hope

In the same way that tobacco companies manipulated levels of nicotine to sustain addiction to their product, pornographers are creating increasingly extreme content.

[Just like tobacco companies](#), the porn industry and its supporters will deny direct and indirect harm, calling the evidence “unclear”, “inconclusive”, or “contradictory”, while ignoring a mountain of evidence.

Fast-food giants sponsor children's athletics, *Pornhub* [might turn their charitable, virtue-signalling efforts](#) to a human trafficking charity to clean up its image — or would that be too on the nose?

Eventually, the first peace-offering will come, in the form of voluntary weak codes of conduct. Perhaps “exploitation-free” or “feminist” porn will be their version of the low-tar cigarette?

If you think [feminist-porn](#) won't be as profit-driven, male-orientated, and as exploitative as the rest of the adult entertainment industry that's incredibly naïve of you. When asked how pornography can be improved, [Noam Chomsky](#) likened the question to the absurdity of “improving” rather than eliminating child abuse.

If miraculously enacted in practice, pornography that is non-violent, age and consent verified would be an improvement, but how long until pornographers push the envelop, lobbyist dismantle restrictions, and we're right back to where we started? Recall, also, that objectifying but non-violent pornography likewise encourages entitlement to women's bodies, and consequently precipitates sexual violence.

One thing's for certain, we might as well be [in the pro-smoking landscape of the 1950s](#) with [Joe Camel](#) blowing smoke in our faces. (You know, before he's retired and speaking out against the industry.)

And yet, there's hope!

Pornhub have now removed unverified videos, their verification process is, of course, a joke. Responses to this article were overwhelmingly possible, though the man deeply concerned I was "kinkshaming" him and who claimed being deprived of abusive pornography was the real "abuse", and the man claiming pornography doesn't lead to disrespect for women while exhibiting same, were truly astounding.

Angela Volkov writes about the full gamut of human experience, and is the editor of [Sike! Psychology for World Domination](#).