



OFFICE OF FILM  
& LITERATURE  
CLASSIFICATION

*Te Tari Whakarōpū Tukuata, Tuhituhinga*

# **A Review of Research on Sexual Violence in Audio-Visual Media**

Commissioned by the Office of Film and Literature Classification

Carol Harrington  
Tainui Neilson

August 2009

**Office of Film and Literature Classification**

Te Tari Whakarōpū Tukuata, Tuhituhinga

4<sup>th</sup> Floor BP House

20 Customhouse Quay

PO Box 1999

Wellington 6140

Freephone 0508 CENSOR

Phone 04 471 6770

Fax 04 471 6781

Email [information@copyright.govt.nz](mailto:information@copyright.govt.nz)

Website [www.copyright.govt.nz](http://www.copyright.govt.nz)

**A REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA**

Authors: Carol Harrington and Tainui Neilson

Publishers: Office of Film and Literature Classification

August 2009

ISBN – 978-0-477-10302-2 (Paperback)

ISBN – 978-0-477-10303-9 (PDF website)

**Acknowledgment**

The Classification Office wishes to thank Associate Professor Nicola Gavey of Auckland University for the valuable advice provided in the preparation of this review.

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Definitions.....	2
Structure and Main Findings: Summary.....	2
Part I: Sexually Violent Media – Content, Prevalence and Potential Harm.....	7
Content Analysis.....	7
Sexual Violence in Men’s Magazines.....	7
Sexual Violence and Television.....	9
Sexual Violence in Sexually Explicit Videos.....	10
Sexual Violence in Slasher Films.....	11
Sexual Violence in Sexually Explicit Internet Sites.....	13
Discourse Analysis.....	16
Prurient Interest.....	16
Perpetuating Rape Myths and Justifying Male Violence.....	17
Responsible Representations of Sexual Violence.....	18
Japanese Sexually Violent Material.....	19
Part II: Sexually Violent Media – Audience Opinion and Effects.....	21
Viewer and Expert Opinions about Sexually Violent Material.....	21
Rape Revenge Narrative Sexual Violence.....	22
Exploitation Film Sexual Violence.....	24
Art Film Sexual Violence.....	28
Availability and Effects.....	31
Expert Opinions.....	33
Perpetrators’ and Victims’ Experiences of Sexually Violent Media.....	35
Perpetrators’ Experiences of Sexually Violent Media.....	35
Victims’ Experiences of Sexually Violent Media.....	36
Attitudes and Characteristics of Viewers of Sexually Violent Material.....	37
Female Viewers and Rape Myth Acceptance.....	38
Male Viewers and Sexual Aggression.....	39
Preferences for Sexually Violent Material.....	41

Experimental Research .....	43
Experiments on Aggressive Behaviour as a Function of Sexually Violent Media Consumption .....	43
Experimental Research on Attitude Change as a Function of Sexually Violent Media Consumption .....	45
Attitude Change in Men.....	46
Attitude Change in Women.....	48
Attitudinal “Spill Over” and the Rape Trial Test.....	49
Social Influence on Changes in Attitudes and Behaviour after viewing Sexually Violent Material.....	50
Correlation Research.....	53
The Availability of Sexually Explicit Material and the Official Rape Rate .....	53
Directions for Further Research .....	56
Sexual Violence Online .....	56
Other Areas for Further Research.....	58
Reference List.....	59
Search Strategy.....	66

## Introduction

An anti-sexual violence movement emerged in New Zealand, as in many other countries, during the 1970s, introducing new ways of representing sexual violence to the mainstream media while accusing much of the media of sexualising violence against women.<sup>1</sup> Anti-sexual violence voices joined with existing conservative anxiety about sexually explicit media to put the question of a link between sexually violent media and real life sexual violence on the public agenda. Due to these concerns, academic researchers have sought evidence that sexually violent material affects men's behaviour toward women and children. An influential international campaign led by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin defined pornography as the "graphic sexually explicit subordination of women, men and children" and called for legal reforms to criminalise the production and distribution of harmful pornography as a civil rights violation (MacKinnon and Dworkin 1997: 362). Consequently, the majority of scholarly literature about sexually violent material since the 1980s has focused on the proposition that such material causes or otherwise contributes to actual sexual violence.

Many who share the concerns raised by MacKinnon and Dworkin have nevertheless opposed calls for greater state control over media out of concern for freedom of expression. The feminist anti-sexual violence movement advocated "speaking out" about sexual violence as crucial to opposing it. From this point of view, opposition to sexual violence *required* the freedom to represent it. Feminist artists generally oppose restrictions on representation and may produce their own images of sex and violence designed to shock and provoke. Thus, anti-sexual violence activism has contributed to an increase in representations of sexual violence in mainstream and alternative media. Feminist media analysts have serious reservations about how even ostensibly anti-sexual violence media deals with the topic and they seek innovative ways to communicate alternative messages.

This political context framed subsequent decades of research into the effects of sexual violence in the media. Consequently, much of this research concerns representations of sexual violence perpetrated by men against women and focuses upon sexually explicit media. This literature review focuses on research conducted in the 1990s or later, although we do cover important older studies that shaped subsequent research. We exclude literature concerned with sexual violence against children, narrowing our

---

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd (1976) describes the development of a New Zealand feminist anti-sexual violence movement during the first half of the 1970s. Her book shows how New Zealand activists were influenced by the US anti-sexual violence campaign sparked by the New York Radical Feminists' "speak out" against sexual violence in 1971 (New York Radical Feminists 1974). See Bevacqua (2000) for a good general history of the anti-sexual violence movement.

review specifically to media that represents sexual violence or sexualizes violence involving adults. Of course, even the boundaries here are blurred – for example, we include research about audience reactions to *A Ma Soeur* (2001), a film by a French feminist which shows the rapes of sisters aged twelve and fifteen who are represented as on the boundary between girlhood and womanhood. We particularly sought to include literature about the effects of sexual violence from various genres, not just sexually explicit media but also popular films, art films and Japanese manga. Our focus is upon audio-visual material that may appear at the cinema, on DVD, video, video games, the internet, or other digital platforms such as mobile phones.

## **Definitions**

The anti-sexual violence movement contested mainstream understandings of sexual violence; thus, unsurprisingly, literature on sexually violent media has no settled definition. We surveyed literature that identified itself as about sexually violent media and note in the course of our report various definitions researchers use. We paid most attention to literature that defined sexual violence as including the use of “direct force” against a woman, for example, restraint, hitting or kicking and “bestiality, rape, torture, murder and so on”, as one study put it (Monk-Turner and Purcell 1999: 58; 62). Or, similarly, studies such as that by Cramer et al. who defined scenes as sexually violent if they included a woman being hurt or restrained during sex (Cramer et al. 1998). We also included studies which included concepts such as “emotional abuse” and “exploitative/coercive sexual relations” (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 689; Malamuth and Spinner 1980: 229; Scott and Cuvelier 1987: 535; Scott and Cuvelier 1993: 364). For the most part, we exclude research concerned to link sexually explicit media in general with sexual violence, except where such studies make specific claims about the effects of sexually violent representations as a sub-set of sexually explicit representations.

## **Structure and Main Findings: Summary**

Alongside the political agendas outlined above, various academic models of media effects inform methodological approaches in the scholarly literature. This report groups studies that use similar methods together, and comments on methodological strengths and weaknesses as well as reporting on findings. Our goal is not to synthesise the literature or to provide specific policy advice. Rather, we seek to describe the findings of existing research in the context of the methods that produced those findings, to draw out common themes and to highlight trends and gaps in the literature. The first section reviews content and discourse analyses of sexual violence in the media. This section also

clarifies how media analysts interested in sexual violence have defined the concept and reports on their views about the effects of media sexual violence. The second section deals with audience research and covers studies that use various definitions of sexual violence and models of media effects. We begin with studies of how audiences interpret sexually violent content and their opinions about it. We then discuss research on perpetrators' and victims' experiences with sexually explicit and violent media. Following this, we review studies that administered personality and attitude tests to regular viewers of sexually violent content, and literature on audience reaction experiments. Finally, we report on studies that attempt to correlate the availability of sexually violent media with rates of sexually violent crime. Our main findings are summarised below, and at the beginning of each section.

### **Sexually Violent Media: Content, Prevalence and Potential Harm**

#### *Content analysis, main findings:*

- *Sexual violence themes have become more prevalent in mainstream media.*
- *Rape myths regularly appear in mainstream media dealing with sexual violence themes.*
- *A significant proportion of sexually explicit material includes sexual violence.*
- *Video and internet material includes much more sexual violence than print media.*
- *The internet hosts a lot of extremely sexually explicit violent material; however, little research has been done on this.*
- *Sexually violent material is more likely to involve black and brown-skinned models and actors than white models and actors. Conversely, sexually explicit material involving white models and actors is more likely to show mutually consensual and pleasurable sex.*

#### *Discourse analysis, main findings:*

- *Ostensibly anti-rape stories in mainstream media may be presented so as to provoke prurient interest.*
- *Many representations of rape in film and television support rape myths.*
- *Film and TV storylines often show rape as a catalyst and justification for heroic (usually male) violence.*
- *Anti-rape activists praise storylines that show female solidarity and community organisation rather than violence as a solution to the problem of rape.*
- *Anti-rape activists praise storylines that confront rape myths and highlight problems with the justice system from the survivor's point of view.*

- *Some anti-rape activists think that even questionable representations of sexual violence provide good opportunities for public discussion.*
- *Analysts of extremely sexually explicit and violent Japanese manga worry about the violence toward homosexual men in this material.*

## **Sexually Violent Media: Audience Opinion and Effects**

### *Audience opinion, main findings:*

- *People think sexually violent material will not harm them, but they worry about how it will affect others.*
- *Most people did not think that the availability of sexually violent material would affect rates of sexual violence.*
- *Images of sexual violence are more controversial than images of just sex or just violence.*
- *There may be considerable differences in definitions of what counts as sexual violence among the public.*
- *Audiences often disagreed with official censorship interpretations of the messages particular films sent about sexual violence.*
- *Dangerous sexual activity such as asphyxiation should not be shown because people might imitate it and hurt themselves or someone else.*
- *Sexually violent material which presents the violent sexual activity as consensual and pleasurable could harm people in real life if the type of violence appears intense enough to cause serious physical injury or death.*

### *Perpetrators and victims, main findings:*

- *A significant proportion of sexual violence victims report being forced to view, imitate or participate in producing sexually explicit or sexually violent material, or that their abuser used such material.*
- *Rapists consume no more sexually explicit or sexually violent material than the general population.*
- *Child sex abusers report early exposure to sexually explicit and sexually violent material, usually as part of a sexualised childhood.*

### *Audience studies, main findings:*

- *Women who watch a lot of TV or have been exposed to pornography early in life are more likely to accept rape myths.*



- *Men who enjoy sexually violent material are more likely to report having engaged in sexually aggressive behaviour in the past and report more possibility of doing so in the future.*

*Experimental studies, main findings:*

- *Experiments suffer from attrition problems: people who are really offended or upset by sexually violent material will not participate.*
- *Behavioural experiments have serious problems with internal validity because the experiment requires participants to act aggressively.*
- *Under experimental conditions participants exposed to images of sexual violence against women consistently display more aggression toward women.*
- *Two separate experiments produced some support for the desensitisation hypothesis: male and female viewers repeatedly exposed to sexually violent material reacted to it with less criticism, anxiety or depression over time.*
- *Two separate experiments supported the hypothesis that viewing sexually violent material would make viewers less sympathetic to complainants of rape in the courtroom.*
- *Social cues matter in how people interpret somewhat ambiguous sexually violent and sexually explicit material.*

*Correlational research, main findings:*

- *These studies do not distinguish between sexually explicit and sexually violent material and so have limited use for our purposes.*
- *These studies take sexual violence rates reported to police as their measure of sexual violence, further limiting their relevance.*
- *These studies have mixed findings.*

*Directions for further research, main findings:*

- *More research is needed about people who participate in online sexually violent fantasy activity.*
- *The internet blurs the distinction between representation and performance, raising new questions about media effects and requiring innovative research methods.*
- *Future research should investigate aspects of sexually violent representations available on new media such as mobile phones and digital games.*
- *Another area where research is lacking is on representations of sexual violence against homosexual men.*

- *Finally, future research should investigate whether sexual violence is prevalent in texts introduced into New Zealand by diasporic groups, and whether there is a large New Zealand audience for non-Western sexually violent material, such as some Japanese manga.*

## **Part I: Sexually Violent Media – Content, Prevalence and Potential Harm**

### **Content Analysis**

Any consideration of the effects of sexually violent representations depends upon some knowledge of their content and prevalence. A number of content analyses have counted the occurrence of sexually violent representations in a range of genres and media. Thus, we begin our review with a discussion of research which attempts to estimate whether such content has increased and what kinds of sexually violent content are out there.

*Content analysis, main findings:*

- *Sexual violence themes have become more prevalent in mainstream media.*
- *Rape myths regularly appear in mainstream media dealing with sexual violence themes.*
- *A significant proportion of sexually explicit material includes sexual violence.*
- *Video and internet material includes much more sexual violence than print media.*
- *The internet hosts a lot of extremely sexually explicit violent material; however, little research has been done on this.*
- *Sexually violent material is more likely to involve black and brown-skinned models and actors than white models and actors. Conversely, sexually explicit material involving white models and actors is more likely to show mutually consensual and pleasurable sex.*

### **Sexual Violence in Men's Magazines**

While the focus of this review remains audio-visual representations of sexual violence, longitudinal studies of sexual violence in the print medium provide insights into more general trends. Importantly, they provide an indication of whether depictions of sexual violence against women have increased, decreased, or remained the same in sexually explicit material. Three major studies are often cited to support the contention that sexually explicit violence is either increasing (Malamuth and Spinner 1980) or decreasing (Scott and Cuvelier 1987; 1993). The more recent comparative content analysis by Kimmel and Barron (2000) focuses on the amount of sexual violence in magazines compared to video and the internet.

Malamuth and Spinner (1980) reported an increase in the percentage of pages displaying sexual violence in *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines over the five-year period

from January 1973 to December 1977. Sexual violence was to be defined as “stimuli that depicted rape, sadomasochism or exploitative/coercive sexual relations” (Malamuth and Spinner 1980: 229). They suggest that although only 10% of the cartoons and 5% of the pictorials in the two magazines contained sexual violence by the end of their study in 1977, “there exists the possibility that such materials contribute to a ‘cultural climate’ which sanctions acts of violence against women” (Malamuth and Spinner 1980: 235).

By contrast, Scott and Cuvelier (1987; 1993) who used similar methods and the same definition of sexual violence as Malamuth and Spinner, studying a longer period of time, failed to find increasing sexual violence in *Playboy* and *Hustler* magazines. They found that the number of sexually violent cartoons and pictorials increased steadily from 1954, peaking in 1977-1978 and then decreasing until 1982. Thus, they showed that the period 1973-1977 studied by Malamuth and Spinner was a time of increased sexual violence depictions in *Playboy* but that this was not part of a general increase. In a second study, Scott and Cuvelier (1993) also found “no monotonic increase in either violent or sexually violent cartoons or pictorials in *Hustler* magazine from 1974 through 1987” (1993: 367). In fact, they found no discernable trend at all and commented on the small ratio of sexually violent content compared to other content in the magazines (Scott and Cuvelier 1987: 536).

Kimmel and Barron (2000) used slightly different methods which reveal more about the types of sexual violence present in magazines and which they compared to sexual violence in video and on the internet, as discussed below. Using a randomly selected sample of 50 stories from adult magazines, Kimmel and Barron (2000) found that sexual violence constituted 24.8% of the content in the magazines that they sampled. They classified the sexually violent content on a scale from low to extreme; low-level violence (14.3%) constituted the majority of the sexually violent content and extreme violence the minority (1.9%). Only 38.5% of the cases showed male perpetrators, while in 61.5% of the cases, the victims were women (Kimmel and Barron 2000: 164). While higher percentages of female victims were found across the magazine, video and internet mediums, the higher ratio of female perpetrators to male perpetrators was unique to magazines.

## Sexual Violence and Television

According to Kunkel et al's (2007) analysis of almost 3000 television episodes over three years, the number of sexual images available on US television increased in the period studied. They note an increase in the number of programs including sexual content: 56% in 1997-1998 up to 64% in 2001-2002 (Kunkel et al. 2007: 608). They also count an increase in the number of scenes involving sex up from 3.2 scenes per hour in 1997-1998 to 4.4 scenes per hour in 2001-2002 (Kunkel et al. 2007: 608). Greenberg and Busselle (1996) found a similar increase in the number of scenes containing sex in their more limited content analysis of sex in five major soap operas (*General Hospital*, *All My Children*, *One Life to Live*, *The Young and the Restless*, and *Days of Our Lives*) which aired in the US in August/September 1994, compared with data on the three older soaps from 1985.

With this documented increase in televised sex, there has also been an increase in the portrayal of sexual violence. Greenberg and Busselle (1996) state that the difference between the numbers of sex acts depicted in soap operas between 1985 and 1994 is explained by an increase in intercourse between unmarried participants and the inclusion of rape incidents. Rape representations went from being almost nonexistent in 1984 (0.1 per episode) to being the second most prevalent type of sex act in 1995 (1.4 per episode). However, the increase in the portrayal of rape was almost solely verbal (68 incidents) with only three incidents depicted visually. The increase was due to storylines in two of the five soaps; the two rape storylines dealt with “date rape amongst teenagers and with the pain of the victims and punishment of the assailants in nonglamorous ways” (Greenberg and Busselle 1996: 160). Greenberg and Busselle also note a decline in the number of sexual incidences involving alcohol or physical aggression between 1985 (13%) and 1994 (2%) (1996: 158).

Brinson's (1992) content analysis of prime-time television shows was concerned with the number of, and treatment of, “rape myths” available to television audiences.<sup>2</sup> The study utilised a sample of prime-time dramas aired between 1980 and 1989 and found that four rape myths including

“asking for it” [the woman deserving rape], “wanting it” [the woman secretly desiring rape],  
“lying” [the woman consenting to intercourse then lying about it afterward], and “not being

---

<sup>2</sup> Rape Myth Acceptance: Indicates the level of an individual's belief in common myths about rape and rape victims. These include beliefs about certain women deserving rape (“asking for it”), secretly wanting to be raped, or lying about being raped. Rape myths also include the idea that rape is usually committed by “psychotic” strangers, and that a sex act can only be called rape when the victim provides sufficient physical resistance and is sufficiently injured in the assault.

hurt” [that a lack of physical harm means a rape wasn’t committed or downplaying the emotional harm caused by rape]

were used “extensively across the 26 rape storylines” (Brinson 1992: 373).

Rape myths were espoused an average of 5.08 times in each narrative and were opposed considerably less often (3.27 times per storyline). The three myths: that the victim had “asked for it, that the victim secretly wanted to be raped, and that the victim was lying about being raped occurred in 46%, 42% and 40% of the storylines respectively” (Brinson 1992: 373). All four rape myths were significantly more common in narratives regarding acquaintance rape than stranger rape. However, rape myths were also more likely to be opposed when the rape was perpetrated by an acquaintance. Brinson concludes that the evidence drawn from prime-time television drama reflects a social tendency to blame victims for their own rape but sees hope in the trend for shows to oppose rape myths. A further discussion of sexual violence and rape myths in television shows will follow in the discourse analysis section of this review.

### **Sexual Violence in Sexually Explicit Videos**

The emergence of video technology in the late 1970s decreased the production costs for sexually explicit media and allowed for a greater range of material aimed at different markets. Commentators have suggested that video technology led to an increase in the production of sexually explicit material as well as an increase in sexually violent material (Kimmel and Barron 2000: 164). Kimmel and Barron (2000) and Monk-Turner and Purcell (1999) conducted content analyses of sexually explicit commercially available videos. While both studies aimed to determine the amount and severity of sexually violent content in this medium, Monk-Turner and Purcell also examined the direction of sexual violence against specific categories of victim.

Though Kimmel and Barron, and Monk-Turner and Purcell, found different levels of adult video sexual violence, both studies found more sexual violence in their video samples than in the similar analyses of sexually explicit magazines, discussed above. Almost 27% of the 50 video vignettes in Kimmel and Barron’s (2000) study included sexually violent content, whereas Monk-Turner and Purcell’s (1999) found that fewer than one in five (17%) of the 40 videos in their sample contained sexual violence against women (defined as the use of “direct force”), and only one vignette involved a case of “extreme sexual deviance” in the form of an off-screen murder (Kimmel and Barron 2000: 164; Monk-Turner and Purcell 1999: 64). Kimmel and Barron reported a trend in

which videos showed more low-level violence (16.5%) than any other type of violence, with extreme violence (1.9%) making up the smallest percentage of the sexually violent content. Moreover, the videos contained 4.9% coercive or non-consensual sex; men were depicted as perpetrators in 60.2% of the videos; and women were victims in 79.6% of the videos (Kimmel and Barron 2000: 164).

While Monk-Turner and Purcell's (1999) study did not support the argument that extreme sexual violence was prevalent in widely available pornography on video, they found that sexism and racism were evident in the pornographic material in their sample "of 40 out of 3,375 commercially available x- to xxx- rated videos from a national chain" (1999: 61, 66). Monk-Turner and Purcell defined violence in pornography as the use of "direct force," for example the restraint, hitting or kicking of a woman. In this category the authors also include "extreme sexual deviance", which refers to representations of urophilia, bestiality, rape, torture, murder and so on. A second category of content was termed "degrading/dehumanizing" themes. This category included marked inequality of characteristics such as age or occupation; vocal cues of male domination or derogatory name calling; male domination in sexual acts (for example, ejaculation on the woman's face or body); sex exchanged for money, consumer goods, services or forgiveness; and casual/indiscriminate availability of female sexuality. A final category of content included neutral themes/intimacy. Monk-Turner and Purcell set out to find whether the "extreme violence, which some researchers believe is common in widely available pornographic material, actually characterizes content of such pornography" and whether this violence is directed at women (Monk-Turner and Purcell 1999: 60).

Monk-Turner and Purcell found that sexual violence was the least prevalent of their three content categories. However, the most violence occurred in scenes that paired a white man, or multiple white men, with a black or Hispanic woman (33% and 100% respectively), which they suggest could normalise sexual violence against specific types of women (Monk-Turner and Purcell 1999: 64-65). Surprisingly, intimacy was the most commonly recorded theme, occurring in 29% of the vignettes; however, intimacy was lowest for vignettes which included a black male or female, or a multiple mixed race cast, 12% and 8% respectively (Monk-Turner and Purcell 1999: 64-65).

### **Sexual Violence in Slasher Films**

Media analysis places the slasher film subgenre within the broader horror film genre, but at times also categorises slasher films with exploitation films. Slasher films became popular in the 1980s. They generally include a murderous villain or villains that stalk and

kill (usually teenaged) victims who are often engaged in morally dubious behaviour. Notable slasher films include *Halloween* (1978), *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). Some cite Hitchcock's (1960) film *Psycho* as the original slasher film. More recent examples include *Scream* (1996) and films such as *Saw* (2004) and *Hostel* (2005), the latter two also dubbed "torture porn". Linz and Donnerstein (1994) argue that slasher films contain scenes of explicit violence primarily directed toward women, often during or juxtaposed with mildly erotic scenes, though this assertion has been disputed (Linz and Donnerstein 1994: 759; Linz and Donnerstein 1998; Molitor and Sapolsky 1993: 233; Weaver, 1991).

According to Linz and Donnerstein (1994) "slasher films are uniquely violent against women." Their article "Sex and Violence in Slasher Films: A Reinterpretation" responds to content analysis research undertaken in two separate studies by Molitor and Sapolsky (1993) and Weaver (1991). Using the statistical information from the earlier studies, Linz and Donnerstein draw opposite conclusions. Molitor and Sapolsky's research using a sample of 30 slasher films released in 1980, 1985 and 1989 "found that 44% of innocent victims killed in slasher films were female" (1993). Weaver found a similar ratio of male to female deaths in his sample of ten top box-office grossing slasher films between 1970 and 1987. Both studies concluded that there was no bias toward the murder of women in slasher films due to the near 50/50 split in deaths across the gender line. Molitor and Sapolsky also concluded "that sex and violence are not linked in slasher films," though they found 33% of the sex scenes contained violence, 14% of sex incidents were linked to a female's death, and the murders of 22% of innocent female characters occurred during or following a sexual incident (Molitor and Sapolsky cited in Linz and Donnerstein 1994).

Linz and Donnerstein reinterpret the data collected in the previous studies within what they term "a more ecologically valid frame of reference" (Linz and Donnerstein 1994). They state that in other media contexts the ratio of deaths for women compared to men are around 20% to 80% respectively. Putting the 50/50 ratio of deaths by gender in slasher films in a wider context reveals that "slasher films show much more aggression against females than other media genres" (Linz and Donnerstein 1994). Moreover, it takes women in slasher films almost twice as long as men to die, and women are depicted in states of fear and terror more than five times as long as men in the average slasher film. This reinterpretation of the data seems to support the contention that women are treated differently to men in slasher films.



According to Linz and Donnerstein, “one third of all sex scenes contain violence, and 22% of innocent female protagonists die in a sexual situation in slasher films” (Linz and Donnerstein 1994). While sexual assault may not be a mainstay of these films, the authors argue that mildly erotic scenes serve as a backdrop, juxtaposition or even a justification for scenes of violence. Thus, Linz and Donnerstein conclude that “slasher films are uniquely violent against women”, and the use of sex and violence in close proximity in slasher films may “diminish aversive reactions to violence”, be more “attention grabbing”, and encourage “depthful processing” amongst other audience effects (Linz and Donnerstein 1994).

### **Sexual Violence in Sexually Explicit Internet Sites**

Surprisingly little research has systematically investigated the types and prevalence of sexually violent content on the internet, given levels of public concern about this, further discussed in the second section of this paper (31). Three projects have attempted this: Harmon and Boeringer's (1997), Kimmel and Barron's (2000) and Gossett and Byrne's (2002). Harmon and Boeringer, and Kimmel and Barron, investigated sexually violent content on the Usenet newsgroup alt.sex.stories, providing insights into textual user-produced material, while Gossett and Byrne (2002) analysed the content of sexually violent internet sites that advertise rape-oriented sexual content. The three studies provide valuable insights into the available content and the internet environment in which such content is produced and consumed.

Harmon and Boeringer (1997) and Kimmel and Barron (2000) both found high levels of sexual violence in postings on the Usenet newsgroup alt.sex.stories. Harmon and Boeringer used a sample of 196 separate postings, generally consisting of amateur stories, and found a disturbing level of “extreme violence and brutality” (1997). Similarly, Kimmel and Barron found that low and high-level violence occurred predominantly on the newsgroup (23.6% and 26.4% respectively) while medium-level and extreme violence occurred slightly less often (17.1% each) in their sample of 50 stories from alt.sex.stories (Kimmel and Barron 2000: 164).

These two separate studies classified the sexual content thematically and used slightly different definitions of non-consent, but both found a considerable number of representations of non-consensual material. Harmon and Boeringer classified the fetish content of the sample posts as including non-consent, homosexual acts, bondage, discipline, pain, paedophilia, torture, group sex, furry (sexual interaction between animal-like creatures with human characteristics), mind control, incest and bestiality

(however, some postings dealt with more than one of the aforementioned themes). The most frequently occurring thematic element was non-consent, occurring in 40.8% of the alt.sex.story sample. Non-consent included “rape, child molestation, forced slavery, mind control and other similar themes” (Harmon and Boeringer, 1997). Kimmel and Barron’s study found that 26% of their sample of alt.sex.stories contained coercive or non-consensual sex (rape, sexual assault, child sex). Despite counting slightly different content both studies found a concerning level of representations of non-consent in their respective samples.

Harmon and Boeringer report that pain occurred in 31.9% of their sample of stories – the third most common theme. They defined this category as images of mild pain infliction where no permanent damage was done. Themes of sadistic sexual torture occurred in 11.7% of the postings. They point to the lack of internet audience research and suggest that existing audience research cannot be applied to the internet environment. Firstly, much more extreme sexually violent material can be found on the internet compared with adult videos or magazines. Secondly, the interactive nature of the medium, for example, the way it encourages viewers to post their own stories, pictures and videos and to chat to one another, may mean that internet material affects viewers more than other media (Harmon and Boeringer 1997).

Gossett and Byrne also argue that the internet poses new concerns regarding media effects. They suggest that the interactive nature of the internet lends power to the consumer who can “manipulate images with the click of a button” and easily link to more violent and explicit material (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 705). Gossett and Byrne’s 2002 study “‘Click Here’: A Content Analysis of Internet Rape Sites” focused on internet sites that explicitly advertised the inclusion of rape content. The sample for the study included 31 internet sites which were accessed and printed on the 6 April 1999 and included terms like “rape or forced sex in their title, text, or internet address”. They limited their study to sites that included female victims and male perpetrators and could be accessed without paying. None of the sites required proof of age (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 689). The sites mostly advertised other pay sites, and indicated that the images for sale would be more explicit and violent. Analysis of the text on the sites found that descriptive words and phrases with violent connotations were often listed on the page or present as captions for pictures. The authors found that, other than the term rape, 21 sites included terms such as “abuse”, “torture”, “brutal” and “pain” (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 696). Some sites described the mutilation of female body parts and genitals and dwelled upon extreme fear and pain suffered by victims. Sites invited viewers to “take part in the rape or physical violence” (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 696).

They analysed images for information about the location of the rape, the force and weapons used, and the status of the perpetrator/s and victim/s. However, locations of the rapes often could not be discerned from the images or the text on the site. Occasionally, props, uniforms and furniture indicated the setting to be residential, a bedroom or a school. One website advertised the choice of woods, a car, a barn or other locations for the rape. Yet another website provided an array of geographical locations including Europe, Asia, South America and America as settings for rape images. All but seven sites implied the use of weapons and force. Many sites show the perpetrators' hands holding "the victim down, holding her arms back, pulling her legs apart, and choking the victim" (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 697). Sites showed a number of weapons and torture instruments: rope, leather straps, "cloth gags, handcuffs, chains, guns, knives, bats, whips, clothespins, and cages." Some sites referred to drugging victims, others to the use of electric shocks and hot wax (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 697).

The majority of images made it difficult to discern the characteristics, status or number of perpetrators. Rather, the sites offered viewers the ability to view the rape "through the eyes of the rapist" as a "sexual predator" (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 704). Sites described perpetrators as "janitor, bad student, associates, boss, masked abuser, exhibitioner, slave master ... gang member [and] serial rapist." Nine sites displayed a single perpetrator, and four sites contained more than one perpetrator of which two depicted gang rapes with four to five perpetrators. The researchers could not discern the race or ethnicity of those perpetrators included in the images (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 699).

The sites advertised victims' race, age and social status. The majority of sites portrayed one victim in a given image. In contrast to the findings for perpetrators, Gossett and Byrne found it easier to identify victims' races or ethnicities in just under half the sample. The text often mentioned the victim's race while 34 out of the 56 clear images showed Asian women, 24 images showed white women and one site referred to a Hispanic woman. They found no images or mention of black rape victims. Along with race, the victim's status also constituted a marketable characteristic with the victim's ages indicated through props and attire or terms such as "teen", "young", "Lolita" or "schoolgirl" (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 699). Some victims wore uniforms such as military, police, or school or nursing attire. Most sites advertised innocent victims but some used terms such as "bitch", "whore" and "slut" to describe victims (Gossett and Byrne 2002: 699).

## Discourse Analysis

While content analysis shows an increase in sexually violent representations in the mainstream media and with the development of the internet, discourse analysis can inform discussions of whether such representations could be harmful, and if so what kind of harm they might do. The discourse analyst would not attribute causal force to any particular film or television program. Rather, analysts look for common themes across texts (e.g. film and TV), and social practices (e.g. therapy, public testimony), that coalesce into authoritative ways of organising experience, in this case the experience of sexual violence. They assume that people interpret experiences in terms of culturally available frameworks and that media serve as a significant disseminator of such frameworks. Thus, when a rape victim says “it’s all my fault”, while a perpetrator tells himself “she asked for it”, both are drawing on culturally available scripts to tell a convincing story about what happened. From this point of view, the anti-rape movement treats mass media as an important site of political struggle because they want to get alternative stories about rape into the public domain.

*Discourse analysis, main findings:*

- *Ostensibly anti-rape stories in mainstream media may be presented so as to provoke prurient interest.*
- *Many representations of rape in film and television support rape myths.*
- *Film and TV storylines often show rape as a catalyst and justification for heroic (usually male) violence.*
- *Anti-rape activists praise storylines that show female solidarity and community organisation rather than violence as a solution to the problem of rape.*
- *Anti-rape activists praise storylines that confront rape myths and highlight problems with the justice system from the survivor’s point of view.*
- *Some anti-rape activists think that even questionable representations of sexual violence provide good opportunities for public discussion.*
- *Analysts of extremely sexually explicit and violent Japanese manga worry about the violence toward homosexual men in this material.*

## Prurient Interest

Alcoff and Gray argue that “the media often use the presence of [sexual violence] survivors for shock value and to pander to a sadistic voyeurism among viewers” (Alcoff and Gray 1993: 262). They analysed the talk shows *Donahue*, *Geraldo* and *Sally Jessy Raphael*

which they say “display the emotions of [sexual violence] survivors for public consumption” (Alcoff and Gray 1993: 277). Similarly, Yeates notes that the representation of rape in film can involve the issue of “overstatement versus understatement” because details that ostensibly dwell upon the horror of the crime may evoke sexual excitement (Yeates 1998: 554). For example, the film *The Accused* visually depicts the prolonged rape of a young woman by a group of men. Yeates suggests that in this case “the actual showing of rape itself in graphic detail is not necessary to give the victim credibility” and risks “slippage” in which the viewer may assume a voyeuristic viewpoint and the act of rape may cause excitement or titillation (1998: 555). Cheney (1993) also acknowledges the possibility that viewers of *The Accused* may adopt the position of voyeur. However, for Cheney, the prolonged nature of the rape and the camera’s gaze which encompasses the victim, the perpetrators and the onlookers, communicates the “enormity of the violation” and implicates the audience as one of the viewers of rape within the scene (1993: 194). Thus, the film positions the audience as participants in the crowd watching the rape. This may cause a degree of titillation along with discomfort, but nevertheless, according to Cheney, the film still represents rape as a horrible crime.

### **Perpetuating Rape Myths and Justifying Male Violence**

Ostensibly anti-sexual violence stories often contain themes that affirm male violence, with rape as the catalyst and justification for violence. Cuklanz (1998) analysed 25 prime-time television scripts dealing with rape that aired between 1976 and 1978, a period when rape was becoming a public issue and had begun to appear more often in mainstream media. She concluded that the “primary function of rape on prime-time serial television during this period was to provide material for the demonstration of ideal masculinity” (Cuklanz 1998: 432). In 17 of the 20 episodes the rape was committed by a stranger. Rapists were overwhelmingly portrayed as “marginal beings” and their deeds portrayed as the “results of sick, perverted and even psychopathic individuals”, drawing attention away from the social causes of sexual violence feminists wanted to highlight (Cuklanz 1998: 435). With the exception of *Charlie’s Angels*, rape in these prime-time television scripts provided an opportunity for the male hero to display his physical and mental prowess by bringing the pervert to justice. Victims only had a walk-on role, to display their physical injuries and emotional trauma, providing evidence that the rape did happen and was perpetrated by a brutal psychopath. None of the episodes dealt with rapes perpetrated by acquaintances or family members (Cuklanz 1998: 437, 444). Cuklanz suggests that in a context where the feminist movement was trying to challenge

traditional masculinity through politicising rape, such shows were an attempt to accommodate and thus defuse feminist critiques (Cuklanz 1998: 445).

Cheney (1993) and Yeates (1998) discuss similar concerns about the rape revenge films *I Spit on Your Grave* and *Thelma and Louise*. While these films portray independent and strong female characters able to avenge their own victimisation, the only solutions to male violence provided by the films are what Yeates (1998) refers to as phallic power in the form of the gun, the knife and the speedboat (Yeates 1998: 556). Yeates also calls attention to the sexualisation of Jennifer as the rape victim in *I Spit on Your Grave*. One promotional poster depicts a rear-view of Jennifer cut and bruised, scantily dressed in torn clothing, naked from the waist up. At the end of the film, Jennifer wears revealing clothes in order to lure the rapists to their deaths. On the other hand, Cheney (1993) thinks that rape revenge fantasies in which victims themselves take revenge provide “powerful communication of rape trauma and brutality; an infrastructure of moral/natural justice in the fate of the rapists; [and] a framework which constitutes a study of the motives of the act” (Cheney 1993: 191-192).

### **Responsible Representations of Sexual Violence**

Both Yeates (1998) and Hubler (2002) consider rape revenge narratives such as *Girls Town* (1996) and *Shame* (1998) responsible portrayals of rape and its aftermath. They argue that these films offer positive solutions to sexual violence such as female solidarity and community organisation. Such films typically avoid classification controversy because they are less likely to show in detail the actual rape, at least in a titillating manner.

Cuklanz and a co-author followed up their research on rape-themed detective shows with an analysis of a contemporary detective show *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU)* (Cuklanz and Moorti 2006). *SVU* was released in 1999 and has subsequently run for ten seasons. The majority of the show’s storylines focus on sexually violent crimes including sexual assault and rape (Cuklanz and Moorti 2006: 302). From a feminist point of view the show includes many commendable features. Devoid of possibly titillating scenes of the assault, *SVU* usually opts for a post-rape narrative and presents rape victims as strong survivors. Storylines dwell upon the “juridical hurdles” in rape cases in episodes where trials are shown, a long-term concern of the anti-sexual violence movement (Cuklanz and Moorti 2006: 307-308). Storylines have explicitly challenged popular ideas that feminists call “rape myths”, for example, that women are raped because they are alone in places they should not be; that most rape reports are false; that women’s sexual behaviour can justify rape; as well as myths about black male

sexuality and the sexual victimisation of women of colour. Cuklanz and Moorti also identify feminist theories of rape as caused by gender power imbalances and the cultural objectification of women in the show.

Nevertheless, alongside this they found that *SVU* also contained misogynist themes. The “proto-feminist” detective Elliot Stabler is often hindered by his feminine traits and inability to compartmentalise his job in the public sphere and his life in the private sphere. Female criminals are portrayed as malicious, manipulative and selfish; their crimes, based on a misplaced or distorted maternal impulse, are generally depicted as far more reprehensible than those of their male counterparts.

Male criminality is portrayed primarily as an ambiguous, lurking threat from unknown strangers who attack from outside the family. Female criminality is primarily depicted as an insidious interpersonal dysfunction that destroys the family and society from within.

(Cuklanz and Moorti, 2006: 318-319)

Cuklanz and Moorti suggest that these contradictory themes of misogyny and feminism, that they call “new prime-time feminism”, are spreading to other genres such as soap operas and situation comedies.

Discourse analysts typically stress the ambiguity of any given text and the role of the interpretive context of the audience. Cheney (1993) points out that ambiguity in sexually violent representations reflects ambiguities in actual experiences, definitions, and the legal issues surrounding real rape. Furthermore, she notes that meaning is produced both at the point of the text’s production and at the point of public reception. She supports the availability of even highly questionable representations of sexual violence because they provide opportunities for public and private discussion of issues such as: “Is it titillating? Was she raped or wasn’t she?” (Cheney 1993: 192).

Before we proceed to research on audience reaction we close this section with a report on discourse analyses of hentai, a form of Japanese manga, and researcher concerns about sexual violence toward homosexual men in this genre.

### **Japanese Sexually Violent Material**

McLelland (2006) provides an historical account of discourses of sexual violence in the Japanese hentai genre. The term hentai has been adopted as the name of a “genre of Japanese manga and animation that features extreme or perverse sexual content”, which

has become popular with fans in the West (McLelland 2006). In his study, “A Short History of Hentai”, McLelland (2006) explains that hentai is a term which designates “a person, action or state that is considered queer or perverse, particularly in a sexual sense”. Hentai often contain representations of multiple “partners as in gang rape, or bizarre partners as in aliens or monsters or illicit partners as in children” (McLelland 2006). While “hentai” is usually reserved as a label for the most extreme or perverted sexual representations, in the English lexicon it has come to include a range of sexually explicit Japanese manga and anime. McLelland reports that a search on the Yahoo search engine for “hentai” produces more than seven million hits (websites), “more than twice that of better-known loanwords such as samurai, geisha or sushi” (McLelland 2006).

Lunsing’s (2006) study “Yaoi Ronso: Discussing Depictions of Male Homosexuality in Japanese Girls’ Comics, Gay Comics and Gay Pornography” investigated specific subgenres of hentai. The Japanese girls’ comics of interest to Lunsing are called “yaoi,” an abbreviation of “yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi” meaning “no climax [as in the climax of a story], no plot, no meaning” (2006). Women generally write yaoi for a female audience. The genre focuses on sex with no plot structure and often involves violence/sexual violence (Lunsing 2006). Yaoi usually includes explicit pictures accompanied by descriptive text and written dialogue. The stories include images of bondage, rape, sexual torture, humiliation, non-consensual sex, slavery and prostitution. Gay manga often contain similar themes; for example, Lunsing writes that Tagame Gengorō almost always draws sexual abuse stories (Lunsing 2006). Similarly, Japanese gay pornography subgenres such as Ejiki (prey), Shirogane and Gareon videos often include themes of prolonged sexual violence, humiliation and torture with a focus on the painful or embarrassed facial expressions of the victims.

Lunsing (2006) worries about the consistent theme of sexual violence toward men across the texts he analyses. Men involved in homosexual sex are often depicted as heterosexuals raped by other men, and even when characters choose to engage in homosexual relationships they are still raped or forced into being sex toys, and in some cases killed. Furthermore, the texts affirm the myth that people enjoy rape. Particularly in the work of manga author Hirosegawa Susumu “sex is usually characterised by sadomasochism and often rape, in which the victim comes to enjoy being raped” (Lunsing 2006). More generally, “Japanese depictions of sex also often focus on someone losing control and giving in to corporeal [sic] lust when being manhandled by someone in one way or other” (Lunsing, 2006). Boy Loves Boy (BLB) manga have found popularity amongst Chinese and Korean audiences, which has led to moves by lawmakers to censor the whole genre or aspects of it. However, Lunsing cautions that



criticisms of the genre's representation of homosexuality and of sexual violence should be considered within the context of the genre as a performative space for marginalised sexual identities, much in the same way that sadomasochism may function in Western culture.

## **Part II: Sexually Violent Media – Audience Opinion and Effects**

This section begins with a discussion of how viewers of sexually violent media interpret that material and their opinions about its public availability. Following this, we turn to research which asks whether viewing such material contributes to sexually violent behaviour or subscription to rape myths. Researchers have approached this question through diverse methods. Some studies have asked both perpetrators and victims about their experiences of sexually violent and sexually explicit material. Others have investigated the attitudes and characteristics of people who watch sexually violent material. A number of laboratory experiments have exposed participants to sexually violent material and measured changes in their aggression toward women and attitudes to sexual violence. Finally, some studies have looked for correlations between the prevalence of sexual violence and the availability of sexually explicit violent material in a given population.

Overall, this research suggests that men who enjoy sexually violent material are more likely to behave in a sexually violent way. Furthermore, it seems clear that perpetrators sometimes film or photograph sexual assaults, and some sexual assaults include forced exposure to sexually explicit and sexually violent material. However, this finding applies to both violent and non-violent sexually explicit images since the violence may not be apparent in the image; conversely, images that appear violent are equally likely to have been produced under consensual conditions, since images can be deceptive. Some studies suggest that viewing sexually violent material could shape individual subscription to rape myths; however, findings were less conclusive in this regard.

### **Viewer and Expert Opinions about Sexually Violent Material**

*Audience opinions, main findings:*

- *People think sexually violent material will not harm them, but they worry about how it will affect others.*
- *Most people did not think that the availability of sexually violent material would affect rates of sexual violence.*

- *Images of sexual violence are more controversial than images of just sex or just violence.*
- *There may be considerable differences in definitions of what counts as sexual violence among the public.*
- *Audiences often disagreed with official censorship interpretations of the messages particular films sent about sexual violence.*
- *Dangerous sexual activity such as asphyxiation should not be shown because people might imitate it and hurt themselves or someone else.*
- *Sexually violent material which presents the violent sexual activity as consensual and pleasurable could harm people in real life if the type of violence appears intense enough to cause serious physical injury or death.*

Two different analyses deal with audience reactions and interpretations of sexually violent content in commercially released films, and another looks more closely at the decisions made by classification boards in western democracies. The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) commissioned two comprehensive research projects (Cumberbatch 2002; Barker Egan Hunter Mathijs Selfe and Sexton 2007). Cumberbatch (2002) investigated viewer opinions about whether people should be able to see sexual violence in film more generally, and opinions about six films more specifically: *Baise Moi*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Death Wish II*, *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Last House on the Left*, and *Straw Dogs*. Barker et al. (2007) focused on five films: *A Ma Soeur*, *Baise Moi*, *The House on the Edge of the Park*, *Ichi the Killer*, and *Irreversible*. They sampled naturally occurring audiences for each of these films using three methods: an internet survey, an analysis of web reviews and message boards, and a panel of audience members for each film (Barker et al, 2007). A third study dealing with similar questions, Townsend (2006), studied arguments for and against the censorship of sexually violent material in the films *Baise Moi*, *Irreversible*, and *A Ma Soeur*, in the cases of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, France, Sweden and Alberta, Canada. Since these three studies deal with overlapping questions we will discuss them together according to genre. Following this, we discuss Cumberbatch's general findings about audience opinion on censorship, supplemented by Lee and Tamborini's (2005) study that focused on people's views about the availability of sexually explicit material on the internet. Finally, we review a BBFC (2006) study of experts' opinions about the potential harm that scenes of extreme sexual violence might cause.

### **Rape Revenge Narrative Sexual Violence**

*Straw Dogs* (1971), *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), and *Death Wish II* (1982) can all be included in the "rape revenge" film genre which is often discussed in relation to Ridley Scott's (1991) iconic film *Thelma and Louise*. *Baise Moi* and *Irreversible* are also sometimes

placed within the rape revenge genre, but they transgress the genre in important ways. Additionally, *Last House on the Left* features a rape revenge plot but, due to the extreme content and low production quality, critics generally categorise it within the exploitation genre along with *I Spit on Your Grave*. The finer points of genre classification aside, *Straw Dogs*, *I Spit on Your Grave*, and *Death Wish II* are united by a focus on a single or multiple rapes, and the subsequent revenge by the victim or a (male) family member of the victim. All caused classification controversies because of their representations of sexual violence.

This rape revenge genre is built on the narrative of rape as a catalyst and justification for male violence, criticised by Cuklanz (1998) in her analysis of TV detective shows, (see above, 16). In both *Straw Dogs* and *Death Wish II* the rape of a female character justifies violent retribution by a male character. Women in the two films are both victimised and avenged by males. Furthermore, the male heroes in *Straw Dogs* and the *Death Wish* films are initially a “pacifist” and a “mild-mannered liberal,” respectively, and are forced to rekindle their “wavering masculinity” to avenge their loved ones (Cumberbatch 2002). In short, the films show violent masculinity as a solution to sexual violence rather than as an underlying social problem.

In the 1971 film *Straw Dogs* a husband and wife, David (Dustin Hoffman) and Amy Sumner (Susan George), leave “social unrest” in the US to live in a village in Cornwall where Amy has grown up. Amy is raped by an ex-lover and his friends and her usually pacifist husband takes violent retribution. The film was initially refused classification because the BBFC had three major concerns about the film's messages. The majority of the participants in Cumberbatch et al's sample did not support the BBFC's contentions that “the film gives the message that women might enjoy being raped” (52% to 44%), or that “the film gives the message that women like being knocked around a bit during sex” (52% to 40%). However, a majority of participants agreed that “the film gives the message that when a woman says no she might really mean yes” (60% to 32%) (Cumberbatch 2002: 27). At the very least, one could conclude that the rape scenes in *Straw Dogs* were controversial due to the split in opinion.

Similarly to *Straw Dogs*, *Death Wish II* (1982) includes a rape which serves to justify the violent retribution taken by a male family member. In *Death Wish* (1974) Paul Kersey (Charles Bronson) “is transformed from a mild-mannered liberal into a vigilante killer following the brutal gang rape of his wife and daughter” (Cumberbatch 2002: 31). In the second film of the series, *Death Wish II*, Kersey is again provoked to the role of vigilante after his maid and daughter are raped by home intruders and his daughter,

previously raped in *Death Wish*, takes her own life. The film was given an 18 and over rating by the BBFC after edits were made because two aspects of its rape scenes caused concern. The BBFC suggested that “the rape scenes are unacceptably prolonged” and this was overwhelmingly supported by film panel participants in the Cumberbatch et al. study (72% to 26%). Conversely, the BBFC contention that “the second rape scene gives the message that women sometimes enjoy rape” was opposed almost outright (82%) (Cumberbatch 2002: 33). While panel members in the Cumberbatch study may have felt the length of the rape scene was unbearable, it may be the distress caused by this which establishes the rape act as horrific in the eyes of the audience. The length of a sexually violent scene may not be its most important feature – of more concern as in *Death Wish II* may be the focus “upon the fully naked body” of the victim and upon the “male enjoyment” during the rape scenes (Cumberbatch 2002: 31).

The 1978 film *I Spit on Your Grave* differs from the two aforementioned rape revenge narratives in that the female victim avenges her own victimisation. Nevertheless, feminist discourse analysts have criticised it for showing violent retribution as a solution to the problem of rape. The film is about a young female author, Jennifer Hills (Camille Keaton) that “spends the summer in an isolated lakeside house... in the tranquility of the countryside” (Cumberbatch 2002: 37). Jennifer is raped and left for dead by a group of local men before taking revenge. She entices the men sexually, even having sex with her attackers, before brutally murdering them. *I Spit on Your Grave* received an 18 rating from the BBFC after considerable cuts. The BBFC was concerned by “the humiliation of the woman in the first half of the film [going] too far”, and the participants in Cumberbatch et al.’s panel generally agreed with this statement (76% to 19%). The BBFC contention that “the film gives the message that women can recover quickly from rape” was more controversial as the opinions of participants were roughly split (50% agreed while 46% disagreed) (Cumberbatch 2002: 39).

### **Exploitation Film Sexual Violence**

Fans and critics place the three films *Last House on the Left* (1972), *The House on the Edge of the Park* (1980) and *Ichi the Killer* (2001) within the exploitation genre, though *Ichi the Killer* can also be classified as a Japanese manga adaptation or within the yakuza film genres. Exploitation films rely on explicit sex, violence or similar material to draw controversy, confront audiences and gain notoriety, despite often having low budgets and production quality.

While *Last House on the Left* (1972) and *The House on the Edge of the Park* (1980) were produced almost a decade apart, Cumberbatch's discussion of *Last House on the Left* coupled with Barker et al's discussion of *The House on the Edge of the Park* will highlight public concerns and classification concerns about exploitation films, and the way that fans of the genre respond to such films. Wes Craven's *Last House on the Left* is the story of two teenage girls "kidnapped by a gang of escaped convicts and ... subjected to a series of humiliating sexual, torturous and violent acts" before the girls' families take violent revenge on the perpetrators (Cumberbatch 2002: 40). The film caused the BBFC concern due to its sadistic treatment of women, which 96% of the panel participants in Cumberbatch (2002) agreed to be the case. Also agreed upon by a (smaller) majority of participants was the BBFC concern that "the film invites the viewer to enjoy the spectacle of young women being stripped and killed" (67%) (Cumberbatch 2002: 42). Due to these concerns, *Last House on the Left* failed to achieve a rating for video or television, and distributors rejected cuts to the film.

Deodato's *The House on the Edge of the Park* is a product of the Italian horror tradition and is dubbed in English. The film was refused classification in the UK. The lead character in the film, Alex (David Hess), is a sadistic and violent character who rapes a girl in the opening scene of the film. Alex and a friend are later invited to a party at an opulent home where Alex beats and ties up the male guests before violating the females. It is later revealed that the party is an elaborate set-up to take revenge on Alex for the earlier rape that he committed. According to Barker et al, fans of *The House on the Edge of the Park* and the exploitation genre "enjoy embracing something which [they] know to be socially unacceptable" (Barker et al. 2007: 95). They note that:

Knowing that the film's depictions of the sexual encounters are inappropriately ambiguous, and possibly even designed to arouse, is integral to the film's ability to be properly – indeed appropriately – disturbing (Barker et al. 2007: 96).

The purposes of the prolonged and graphic scenes of sexual violence, according to the responses of the film's embracers, are to "shock", cause "reflection and retrospection", to show the awfulness of the acts, and to demonstrate beyond doubt how "irredeemably bad" Alex really is (Barker et al. 2007: 100).

The "badness" of exploitation films in terms of production, acting and script quality is often directly linked, by enthusiasts, to the belief that exploitation is "an overtly political genre" (Barker et al. 2007: 111). Unlike art films, exploitation films lack pretension and appeal to a more blue-collar audience. In the case of *The House on the Edge*

*of the Park*, many embracers suggest a direct class conflict between the working-class Alex and the upper-class party guests which emerges through rage, violence and sex. Barker et al. note that fans of the film or the genre see in *The House on the Edge of the Park*

a central conflict over class, rather than gender – and see the film as taking, to a degree, the side of the lower class against rich and hypocritical upper-class people. The cinematic form of ‘exploitation movies’ has to reflect this – they are disreputable films fascinated by the lives of disreputable people.

For exploitation fans, “all censorship is political censorship”, and the cuts made to exploitation films in the UK are a reflection of “the snobby attitude of the BBFC” that penalises “bad film-makers” (Barker et al. 2007: 119, 120). Barker et al’s panel members were also critical of the concept of the “other,” “deviant” audience. In summary, exploitation fans generally felt that censors did not understand the genre and, in fact, constituted part of the problem that exploitation films set out to challenge (Barker et al. 2007: 119).

Miike’s *Ichi the Killer* (2001) is similar to *Last House on the Left* and *The House on the Edge of the Park* in that its notoriety is largely based on its portrayal of extreme violence and sexual violence. Like *The House on the Edge of the Park*, *Ichi the Killer* is part of a distinctive horror tradition, in this case J-horror or Japanese horror, and as such has garnered a following from fans of director Miike’s other works, ‘otaku’ (fans of J-horror), as well as more general horror and action audiences (Barker et al. 2007: 127). *Ichi the Killer* is a complex story about deception and murder in the world of the Japanese yakuza. The film’s protagonists are Kakehara (Tadanobu Asano), a murderous, sadistic yakuza enforcer, and Jijii (Shinya Tsukamoto), an older man who manipulates Ichi (Nao Omori), a young, homicidal sadist motivated by the false memory of viewing a high school gang rape. Barker et al. found that fans of the film were “likely to perceive the film as constructed around a series of set-piece extreme scenes, measured first by their impact on Self” (Barker et al. 2007: 140). As was the case for many fans of *Last House on the Left*, *The House on the Edge of the Park*, and to a certain extent *Irreversible*, viewers watched the extreme violence and sexual violence to test their own endurance and tolerance. However, there remained

some tension between different types of Embracers. Those who wanted to enjoy the film purely [for the] exhilaration and endurance horror were often looked down on by those making elaborate [psychological and genre-based] readings. Conversely, the [first] audience

could make accusations of “pseudo-intellectualism” and hollow one-upmanship (Barker et al. 2007: 130).

While both types of fan audience generally agreed about the importance of the violent content of the film, one audience reported enjoying the film at this more visceral level while the other sought a more philosophical, psychological and contextualised reading.

The sexual violence in *Ichi the Killer* occurs within an important contextual framework: firstly, within Japanese culture; and secondly, within the context of sadomasochism. The film’s embracers often invoked the “distancing factor of ‘Japanese-ness’” (Barker et al. 2007: 128). Put simply, for some members of Western audiences “if this film bears relation to real world attitudes about sex and gender they are not ours, they are Japan’s – therefore it is OK to enjoy it as entertainment” (Barker et al. 2007: 128). While, at a glance, this may seem to absolve the viewer of responsibility for viewing the film, Barker et al’s panel participants noted that Japanese culture allows us to “confront the taboos in our own culture” as it “explores that which is almost unexplorable in our own culture” (2007: 137).

Sadomasochism as a theme also constituted a key context of the violence in *Ichi the Killer* for embracers of the film. Barker et al. indicate that fans

did not appear to want to see all extreme scenes involving women as ‘sexual violence’.

Because the film as a whole is identified as being about sado-masochism, and both men and women are both givers and receivers of violence (2007: 42).

Generally, fans did not believe that particular scenes needed “separate consideration as ‘sexual violence’” (Barker et al. 2007: 42). Rather than making a distinction between sexual violence and violence, some viewers indicated a distinction between the treatments of different types of violence by Miike. One fan of the film indicated that:

by juxtaposing violence played for laughs with scenes of distressing violence (almost every scene with a woman) I felt that Miike was questioning why it should be acceptable for some form of torture pain to be funny in some instances but not in others (Barker et al. 2007: 131).

They suggest that Miike’s portrayal of violence and characters who are both the victims and perpetrators of violence reveals a “world of complex ethical judgments”; judgments which the viewers are invited to make for themselves (Barker et al. 2007: 136).

## Art Film Sexual Violence

Art films generally break with the conventions of popular Hollywood cinema; they are typically serious, produced by an “auteur” director, with limited distribution through specialty cinemas and film festivals. The Film *Baise Moi* (2000), along with *A Ma Soeur* and *Irreversible*, is often classified as belonging to the French art film tradition. *Base Moi* was featured in all three studies under consideration here due to the difficulties it caused in terms of classification, the controversial nature of the film and its relative notoriety. Also meaning “fuck me” or “kiss me” in English, *Baise Moi* follows the story of two women, Manu and Nadine, that meet after Manu is gang-raped (Townsend 2006: 65). *Baise Moi* includes a number of explicit sex scenes and scenes of explicit violence and humiliation as well as a rape scene which occurs at the beginning of the film. Townsend notes that one difficulty in classifying the film, for officials and audiences alike, was the problem in determining “whether the film was art or pornography” (Townsend 2006: 72). Similarly, the BBFC queried the possibility that “the shot of penetration in the rape scene was pornographic”, and eventually decided that, because of this concern, this shot had to be removed from the version of the film released to the public. The BBFC’s contention was overwhelmingly supported by 84% of the participants in Cumberbatch’s (2002) panel (19). Drawing upon a New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification audience consultation, Townsend notes the more redeeming features of the film, including:

- 1) strong social issues; 2) the women had power in the sex scenes – apart from the rape; 3) the sex was not gratuitous; 4) people who watch pornography probably wouldn’t choose this film; and 5) the sex was not entertaining (Townsend 2006: 72).

While much of the internet discussion of *Baise Moi* was dedicated to debates over whether the film was pornography or art, fans of the film praised the “raw” and “realistic” aesthetics of the film, its external connections to “certain inner-city environments in France and other countries”, its feminist and class critique, and the internal logic to the seemingly indiscriminate killing within the film (Barker et al. 2007: 71-72).

*A Ma Soeur* (2001), which is also often placed within the French art film genre, includes a single scene which incurred considerable concern in terms of its classification, though the film garnered less controversy than *Base Moi*, possibly due to having a smaller audience and less publicity (Barker et al. 2007: 41). The film is about two sisters, Anais (12 years old) and Elena (15 years old), and their “rivalry and sexual awakening while on holiday with their mother” (Townsend 2006: 76). Two provocative rape scenes



punctuated the slow-paced film. In one scene the older sister, Elena, is coerced into sexual activity by an older boy (Fernando) while Anais is in the same room, and toward the very end of the film, the three protagonist females are brutally attacked in their car by a man who kills the mother and Elena before raping Anais (Townsend 2006: 76). Though the scene in which Elena is coerced into sex includes implied sex with a minor, the major contention for the classification of the film was the final scene in which Anais is raped (Townsend 2006: 77). While the BBFC had concerns about the sexual violence and sex with minors in the film and subsequently cut the scene in which Anais is raped, many critics also voiced concern about what the young actresses had to endure while making the film (Barker et al. 2007: 42). Many critics of *A Ma Soeur* also felt that the rape and murder scene was gratuitous and pointless, and that the actions and dialogue of the young sisters were unrealistic (Barker et al. 2007: 43). Viewers that embraced the film were most often aware of the director Breillat's other works, her feminist politics, and the focus on sexuality that she brings to her films. Embracers usually identified with the character of Anais and found the rape scene imperative to the plot in the way that it revealed Anais's point of view and commented, in hindsight, on the earlier scenes in the film (Barker et al. 2007: 43).

*Irreversible* had a wide cinema release and led to a high level of public attention and “debates on the wisdom of releasing a film built around such a long and challenging rape scene”. It was accompanied by an extensive and sustained presence on general and specialised internet discussion boards and film review websites, and has been positioned within various genres such as “art, horror, exploitation, or any combination thereof” (Barker et al. 2007: 147). The narrative of the film is shown in reverse chronological order and is about the rape of a young woman, Alex, and the attempt by her boyfriend and friend to avenge the attack. As the plot unfolds in reverse order, the film begins in the aftermath of the revenge assault (directed at the wrong man), before depicting the rape which occurs when Alex leaves a party at night. The film ends by showing intimate moments between Alex and her boyfriend (Marcus) and the revelation that Alex is pregnant. The reverse order of the film complicates the rape revenge narrative and means that the audience must view the horrific aftermath of the rape and the resultant, brutally violent assault before they see the rape itself.

Classifying bodies and critics of the film focused upon two scenes, the rape scene and the murder/assault wherein a man's face is “beaten to a bloody pulp” (Townsend 2006: 74). The rape scene runs unedited for approximately 9 minutes and focuses on the pained expressions on Alex's face and the calloused bored expressions of her attacker from a fixed camera angle. However, classifying bodies, including the BBFC, generally

conceded that the film argued against rape and violence, despite the sexualisation of Alex prior to the sexual assault. The President of the BBFC stated:

The board recognizes that elements in the film may be shocking and for many viewers unpleasant. These, however, are not by themselves reasons for censoring them for adults (Thomas, cited in Townsend 2006: 74).

However, a variety of reactions to the rape scene in *Irreversible* were reported by viewers.

Three main concepts emerged in the discussions of *Irreversible* analysed by Barker et al. These included arousal, tolerance and resonance. Several types of arousal were reported and discussed by viewers of *Irreversible*. Among the rarest responses was the claim that a viewer was aroused by the rape scene, such as “the rape scene is Hot”, and confrontational comments such as “up the bum, no harm done”, “ass-fucking is great” and “surprise sex” (Barker et al. 2007: 161, 166). Also rare was the admittance of initial arousal to the scene exemplified by the comment

[I] was initially aroused by the first 30 seconds of the rape. But then it just kept going. And going. By the end I just wanted it to stop. I wasn't turned on, just horrified that I'd felt that way. This is exactly how rape should be portrayed (Barker et al. 2007: 161).

More common among viewers' responses was the claim that any arousal by the scene is a sign of “prior deviance”.

I wouldn't expect any titillation from *Irreversible* if I were you, unless you are some kind of sex offender. It's grim and nasty and supposed to be that way (Barker et al. 2007: 159).

Tolerance and the length of the rape scene formed a common thread of discussion between critics and embracers of the film. Many of those that disliked the film criticised the length of the rape scene: “just too horrific, I couldn't watch it” (Barker et al. 2007: 154). Embracers of the film had similar visceral responses to the prolonged representation of sexual violence, but were more likely to see this as pivotal to showing the horrific violation of rape: “As simultaneously unwatchable and needing to be watched, as unbearably voyeuristic and proof of our helplessness to intervene” (Barker et al. 2007: 159). Also related to the length and unbearable nature of the rape scene was the concept of resonance. Viewers who embraced the film reported flashbacks about it and feeling profoundly affected by it for a long time (Barker et al. 2007: 153). Viewers also found a problem with rewatching the film. While many viewers reported that they just

would not view the film more than once, others indicated that “the film should only be rewatched if it continues to have its visceral, unnerving, ‘guilty’ effect” (Barker et al. 2007: 181).

### **Availability and Effects**

Cumberbatch’s (2002) survey of 277 video rental customers found that respondents saw the right for adults to view sexual violence as more controversial than the right to view just sex or just violence. However, people thought context important in establishing whether sexual violence should be left uncut in a film. Typically, respondents worried about the effects of sexually violent media on other people but thought that such media would not adversely affect them. This finding conforms to the “third-person effect” phenomenon first identified by Davison (1983) who argued that people perceive media effects on others as greater than on themselves. Lee and Tamborini (2005) cite several studies confirming this finding. Thirty-four percent of Cumberbatch’s sample did not think “people over the age of 18 have a right to see graphic portrayals of sexual violence.” The same number of respondents agreed that “the problem of rape in our society is bound to be made worse by the easy availability of videos which show sexual violence” (Cumberbatch 2002: 7). Only 11% and 10% of Cumberbatch’s respondents thought an adult audience should not have the right to view explicit sex and explicit violence respectively (Cumberbatch 2002: 8). More men (24%) supported the right to view sexual violence than women (14%). More heavy film viewers and video renters supported the right of adults to view sexual violence. Respondents who preferred fantasy films (including horror, science fiction and pornography) tended to support adults’ right to view sex, violence and sexual violence according to a combined measure termed “right to see graphic images” (Cumberbatch 2002: 16).

The survey also included a section about accidental consumption of explicit images of sexual violence and possible negative effects. Cumberbatch found that almost a quarter of respondents were “very likely” to view a film without knowing anything about it and another 44% reported that they would be “quite likely” to view a film without previous knowledge. Sixty percent of the respondents also reported that they had viewed a film which they had subsequently regretted seeing (Cumberbatch 2002: 19). However, few noted sexually violent content to be the cause of their regret despite respondents’ claim to have seen the films *Deliverance* (30%), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (38%), and *I Spit on Your Grave* (10%). Furthermore, reports of actual distress caused by viewing a film were very rare amongst the video respondents despite their relatively extensive experience of films.

Lee and Tamborini (2005) noted that the availability of sexually explicit internet content causes public anxiety in countries where many people are online, and that cross-culturally, people worry that internet pornography is more dangerous than pornography in other media. The easy accessibility of the internet and its unregulated nature heighten public anxiety about other people accessing sexually explicit and violent material online. Popular and scholarly knowledge note that sexually explicit material provides the commercial engine of the internet. Furthermore, anyone, regardless of age, can access extreme explicit material for free online, including representations of child sexual abuse, while filter software such as SurfWatch and SurfNanny have limited effectiveness and typically block so much material that schools and libraries cannot use them (Lee and Tamborini 2005: 294-295).

In their comparative study, Lee and Tamborini (2005) surveyed 232 US and South Korean university students to test how cultural collectivism compared with cultural individualism, along with “internet self-efficacy” (how confident people are using the internet), affected their concerns about sexually explicit internet content (both sexually explicit and sexually violent material). They found that all participants worried about the effects of sexually explicit internet content on other people, but did not think that they were affected (as noted above, this is called the “third-person effect”). The more people worried about the effects of sexually explicit internet content on other people, the more likely they were to call for censorship. More collectivist participants estimated less difference between sexually explicit internet content’s negative effect on themselves and other people. People who worried about the effect of sexually explicit internet content on themselves also supported censorship. Consistent with a previous study by Lo and Wei (2002), women estimated a greater effect of sexually explicit material on others than themselves. Lo and Wei found that women thought men were more affected by sexually explicit internet content. Internet self-efficacy had no measurable impact on support for censorship; however, the more people exposed themselves to pornography on the internet the more in control of the internet they felt and the less they thought this exposure would negatively affect them (Lee and Tamborini 2005: 303-304). Interestingly, South Korea has possibly the world’s first internet-specific censorship laws. According to Lee and Tamborini

article 53 of the Telecommunications Business law authorizes the Minister of Information and Communication to reject, stop, or restrict telecommunications activities that disseminate, sell, rent or exhibit salacious (obscene) symbols, documents, audios, images, or video (Lee and Tamborini 2005: 294).

Internet Service Providers who do not comply can be fined a substantial sum or sentenced to two years in prison (Lee and Tamborini 2005: 293).

## Expert Opinions

The British Board of Film Classification commissioned a report in 2006 to explore specific areas of concern for experts in psychiatrics, psychology, law and sociology of the more explicit and violent cases of pornography. The experts expressed concern about four aspects of the material viewed in relation to the propensity for at-risk and underage individuals to access such material:

1. Acts which could result in death.
2. Acts which could result in serious injury and or prosecution.
3. Lack of consent, or ambiguous consent, particularly when the nature of the sex changes. This is felt to legitimise lack of consent – i.e. rape – and the suggestion that abuse will result in victim compliance.
4. Degradation and humiliation, as these legitimise offending behaviours, particularly scenarios involving humiliation (BBFC 2006).

The panel of nine experts with professional interests in sexually explicit media, or sexual behaviour, or who had been involved with previous BBFC research, viewed a selection of sexually explicit video vignettes. The vignettes included types of material that are often submitted to the BBFC for classification because of their representations of abusive acts. The clips included:

narrative fantasy where the sex takes place within a storyline or fantasy scenario; Gonzo<sup>3</sup>, where participants asked to be roughly treated or state their enjoyment of roughness; and Gonzo without any special requests (BBFC 2006).

Three “strong and explicit”, but non-abusive, control clips were shown prior to the actual sample to provide context for the experts’ analysis. The experts were asked to watch each of the clips with three possible viewing groups in mind: “an ‘average’ adult; an adult with a predisposition to sexual offending; and a 16-18 year old – legally able to have sex, but not old enough to legally obtain ‘R18’ Material” (BBFC 2006). The experts were asked to rate each clip from “likely to be harmful” to “completely harmless”, “flag”

---

<sup>3</sup> Gonzo: In terms of sexually explicit media, gonzo includes sex works that have little or no structure and are often depicted as the perspective of the director who may also perform, giving the scene a realistic or documentary feel.

the clips most likely to be harmful, indicate the activities likely to be most harmful, and indicate any mitigating factors (BBFC 2006).

One particular clip was rated likely to be harmful to any audience. This clip involved

a Gonzo scene where the actress requested 'rough sex'. The sex then involved slapping, choking, gagging during fellatio, the use of the woman's head as a foot rest, and penetration while her head was held down in a lavatory (BBFC 2006).

In this case it was felt that the consent was overridden by the severity of the activity, that there was a real risk of suffocation or drowning, and that the activity was legally an assault (as an individual cannot consent to be assaulted). Five additional clips were classified as possibly harmful for underage and vulnerable groups. One clip was given this rating due to the presence of "elements of force, violence and physical restraint, presented as apparently normal and pleasurable" (BBFC 2006). In another clip "playing out abduction and the asphyxiation 'breath play'" caused concern (BBFC 2006). In the third clip a change in behaviour toward the inclusion of violence and aggressive asphyxiation without a renegotiation of consent caused concern. And in the final two clips, combinations of humiliation, alcohol use, degradation and multiple men to one woman all caused concern. The experts found that the usual mitigating factors such as comedy, enjoyment, storylines or even expressions of consent were contingent on the severity of the activity. It was thought that consent, whether explicit or implied, could be overridden by the possibility of harm to the performer or to the audience when classifying material.

In conclusion, the BBFC believed that such material, even though it represented sexual practices such as asphyxia or violence as consensual, was potentially harmful if copied. The panel of experts shared the BBFC's belief and expressed further concern about the likelihood of underage persons finding these materials online.

## Perpetrators' and Victims' Experiences of Sexually Violent Media

*Perpetrators and victims, main findings:*

- *A significant proportion of sexual violence victims report being forced to view, imitate or participate in producing sexually explicit or sexually violent material, or that their abuser used such material.*
- *Rapists consume no more sexually explicit or sexually violent material than the general population.*
- *Child sex abusers report early exposure to sexually explicit and sexually violent material, usually as part of a sexualised childhood.*

### Perpetrators' Experiences of Sexually Violent Media

The study of institutionalised sex offenders' experiences of sexually explicit and sexually violent media is an ongoing area of interest for media researchers and policymakers. In the US the 1970 Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography spurred a myriad of studies into sex offenders' experiences of sexually explicit media (Cook and Fosen 1971; Davis and Braucht 1971; Goldstein and Kant 1971; Johnson Kupperstein and Peters 1971; Walker 1971). Overwhelmingly, these studies found no more exposure to sexually explicit material amongst sex offenders when compared with the general population. Bauserman, in his review of the literature, stated that

in most studies the offenders had non-significantly less exposure, and at later ages on average, than did non-offenders. This difference included exposure to the most graphic depictions and to depictions with such aggressive elements as whips and spankings (Bauserman 1996: 411).

Findings from a second wave of research in the late 1980s paralleled those of earlier studies (Condrón and Nutter 1988; Langevin Lang Wright Handy Frenzel and Black 1988; Marshall 1988). The new research distinguished between different types of sexually explicit material, but found "no evidence of unusual access to materials depicting children or sexual aggression in [sex offenders'] early experiences" (Bauserman 1996: 413). However, Marshall (1988) found that some rapists used consenting sexual images to stimulate rape fantasies or to instigate an offence. Thus, consenting sexual portrayals were integrated into deviant fantasies and behaviours.

In a recent study, Simons, Wurtele and Durham (2008) found that “child sexual abusers reported significantly more frequent exposure to pornography before age 10” than convicted rapists, while child sexual abusers and rapists both reported frequent exposure to violent media during childhood (2008: 556). The increased exposure to sexually explicit media reported by child sexual abusers constituted part of a more sexualised childhood which included their own “sexual abuse, early exposure to pornography, early and frequent masturbation, and sexual involvement with animals” (Simons et al. 2008: 557). Rapists, on the other hand, reported more violent experiences during childhood, including physical and “emotional abuse, parental violence, and cruelty to animals” (Simons et al. 2008: 557). Importantly, this study did not include a control group from the general population; thus, we do not know the frequency or age at which most people are exposed to violence or to sexually explicit media.

### **Victims’ Experiences of Sexually Violent Media**

Research motivated by feminist concerns about sexual violence committed in both the production and use of sexually explicit material analyses victims’ accounts of sexual violence and abuse (Bergen and Bogle 2000 and Cramer et al. 1998). Bergen and Bogle identified a relationship between pornography (no definition of pornography is offered in the study) and the abuse of women in their study of 100 women who had contacted a rape crisis centre due to experiencing violence or abuse. Of the 100 respondents in their study 28 reported that their abuser used pornography, and of those, 40% stated that pornography was used as part of the abusive incident (Bergen and Bogle 2000: 230). Moreover, 21% of respondents who indicated their abuser’s use of pornography believed it to have increased the frequency of violence that they experienced and 14% believed that it increased the level of violent behaviour that they experienced (Bergen and Bogle 2000: 231). Five women from the study reported being forced to participate in making pornography while 12 indicated that they had imitated pornography in some way during an abusive situation (Bergen and Bogle 2000: 231). Bergen and Bogle concluded that victim accounts of instances in which sexually explicit material is used as a “training manual for abuse”, cause considerable “concerns about all pornography that is dehumanising but particularly that which is sexually violent and sadistic in nature” (Bergen and Bogle 2000: 231-232).

In a similar study, Cramer et al. (1998) found support for many of Bergen and Bogle’s conclusions, but questioned the general link between sexually explicit material and sexual violence. Using a sample of 198 women who reported abuse by a male partner in the year prior to or during pregnancy, Cramer et al. found that 40.9% of the women



reported that their abuser used pornography, 18.1% of women were forced to view pornographic material by their abuser, and 17.1% of the participants reported they had been forced to imitate pornographic scenes (Cramer et al. 1998: 326). It is interesting to note that this study defined pornography as “sexually violent scenes where a woman is being hurt. For example, the woman is held or tied down” (Cramer et al. 1998: 323). This definition of pornography differs from most and is more congruent with definitions of heterosexual violent sexually explicit material. Unlike Bergen and Bogle, Cramer et al. found no evidence to support “an association between pornographic usage and violence against women”, in that there was no increase in violence reported by women whose partners used pornography compared with women who reported no use of pornography (Cramer et al. 1998: 329). Cramer et al. state that measures of violence were

higher when the abuser forced the women to look at, act out, or participate in the pornographic acts such as posing for pornographic scenes/pictures. Severity of violence was not related to the abuser simply using (looking at) pornography (Cramer et al. 1998: 327).

Thus, where pornography was directly related to the abusive acts in that “the woman is asked or forced to participate in pornographic activity” there was a significant increase in the level of violence, but the same could not be said about the use of sexually explicit material more generally (Cramer et al. 1998: 324).

## **Attitudes and Characteristics of Viewers of Sexually Violent Material**

*Audience studies, main findings:*

- *Women who watch a lot of TV or have been exposed to pornography early in life are more likely to accept rape myths.*
- *Men who enjoy sexually violent material are more likely to report having engaged in sexually aggressive behaviour in the past and report more possibility of doing so in the future.*

The audience studies discussed here try to correlate viewing sexually violent material (determined by responses to questions about viewing habits, or apparent preferences for such material in an experiment) with other variables, either responses to personality tests administered by questionnaire or socio-economic variables. Such research tries to discover if viewers of sexually violent material share particular attitudes or characteristics.

## Female Viewers and Rape Myth Acceptance

Kahlor and Morrison (2007) found a significant correlation between television viewing time and rape myth acceptance in their study of 96 female undergraduate students. While the study was limited in application, as it did not sufficiently distinguish between the types of television viewed, Kahlor and Morrison suggest that the strong correlation between time spent viewing television and rape myth acceptance supports a social learning position in which distortions and biases in the media may lead to actual misconception about reality. Specifically, the study found that “the more one watches television, the more one is likely to accept rape myths”, and that the more television respondents watched, the higher percentage of rape accusations they believed to be false (Kahlor and Morrison 2007: 734). Contrary to the cultural climate thesis, which suggests that the large number of portrayals of rape on television should increase the perception of the prevalence of rape in society, a statistically insignificant trend was found in which respondents that viewed more television perceived there to be less rape in society. Moreover, respondents that viewed more television were less likely to see sexual assault as a relevant issue for themselves. However, the correlation is tempered by the reports of respondents that had knowledge of real life sexual assault, for whom the reality appeared to have more influence than the media representation (as they perceived a lower percentage of rape accusations to be false). It is also difficult to discern whether television is a major cause of rape myth acceptance or whether it reflects commonly held social myths.

Corne, Briere and Esses (1992) found that early exposure to sexually explicit media, defined as the “portrayal of erotic behaviour designed to cause sexual excitement”, may be a factor in the development of rape supportive attitudes and subsequent fantasies about rape in a sample of 187 female undergraduate college students (456). Forty-six percent of the sample reported having viewed sexually explicit material during their childhood. Subsequently, a significant correlation was found between childhood exposure to sexually explicit material and rape-supportive beliefs in the sample. A similar pattern emerged for rape fantasies. However, there was no significant relationship found between childhood exposure to sexually explicit material and acceptance of interpersonal violence or adversarial sexual beliefs. Corne et al. suggest that fantasies about forced sex for females may constitute a “mirror image” in which certain forms of sexual media may encourage aggressive fantasies for men while encouraging fantasies of passivity and submission in women (Corne et al. 1992: 458). The authors propose two models to interpret their findings: first, sexually explicit material may serve as a model for male/female relationships; second, sexually explicit material may eroticise and/or

romanticise violence, especially when sexual arousal is produced by the material. One implication of Corne et al's findings is that sexually explicit media may foster "sexual victimisation of women" as well as encourage violence in men (Corne et al. 1992: 459). Corne et al. caution that the study does not prove a direct or unique causation. Rather, it indicates the way in which sexually explicit material may be an example of the types of socialisation that endorse rape-accepting attitudes in women.

### **Male Viewers and Sexual Aggression**

Demare, Lips and Briere (1993) and Boeringer (1993) both found relationships between exposure to violent sexually explicit material and self-reported engagement in sexually coercive behavior and proclivity to engage in sexually coercive behavior. Demare et al. (1993) found significant intercorrelations between measures of anti-women attitudes, use of sexually violent explicit material, and reported hypothetical and actual sexual aggression in a sample of 383 male undergraduate students (Demare et al. 1993: 288, 290). Participants in Demare et al's study completed a questionnaire that included four measures:

- (a) Anti-Women Attitudes as measured on the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale and Attitudes toward Women Scale;
- (b) Pornography Use as tested on 7-point scales to indicate the frequency that participants viewed sexually violent explicit material and non-violent sexually explicit material;
- (c) Likelihood of Sexual Aggression as tested on 5-point scales indicating propensity for participants to rape or use sexual force if they knew they would not be caught; and
- (d) Actual Sexual Aggression as tested by the Sexual Experiences Survey.

Twenty-eight percent of the respondents reported a hypothetical propensity to use sexual force and 11% reported a hypothetical propensity to rape. In terms of actual sexual aggression 16% of subjects admitted to using "coercion to achieve sexual intercourse with a woman and 12%" admitted to using physical force (Demare Lips and Briere 1993: 291).

For the purposes of the study, sexually violent media was defined "as a man forcing a woman to perform a sexual act against her will" and "rape of a woman (or women) by a man (or many men)" (Demare et al. 1993: 288-89). Non-violent pornography was

defined as “mutually consenting sex between a man and a woman” (not involving the above themes) (Demare et al. 1993: 288-89). Overall, 86% of the respondents reported having viewed non-violent sexually explicit material; 36% reported the use of “depicted forced sexual acts against women”; and 25% reported viewing material that depicted the rape of women/a woman (Demare et al. 1993: 291).

Demare et al. found a relationship between “anti-women attitudes and the use of sexually violent pornography” as well as “separate influences over hypothetical and actual sexual aggression” for both independent variables (Demare et al. 1993: 296). The use of sexually violent explicit material emerged as a stronger predictor of self-reported hypothetical and actual sexual aggression than anti-women attitudes. However, a model which includes use of sexually violent explicit material and anti-women attitudes best fits the data. Consumption of non-violent sexually explicit material, on the other hand, was not “associated with potential and actual sexual aggression”, suggesting that it is the combination of sex and violence in “explicit material that supports sexual aggression” (Demare et al. 1993: 296-297). While causation is always difficult to determine in correlative studies, Demare et al. explain that “violent pornography use is specifically associated with sexual violence above and beyond any links it shares with anti-women attitudes”, indicating a stronger case for a causal relationship to be inferred between sexually violent material use and sexual aggression (Demare et al. 1993: 297).

Boeringer (1993) found that naturalistic exposure to: (a) “hard-core pornography”, where “graphic sex acts are shown or described”; (b) “violent sexual depictions”, including “bondage, whipping, and spanking but without an explicit lack of consent”; and (c) “sexually explicit rape depictions”, where “force is used and there is an explicit lack of consent”, were all related to increased actual and hypothetical rape and coercive sexual behavior in a sample of 477 male, undergraduate, college students (Boeringer 1993: 293). Exposure to sexually explicit violence and sexually explicit rape representations was most significantly correlated with increased “likelihood of rape and coercive behavior”, and correlations were stronger for those that indicated higher exposure. The group reporting higher exposure to violent pornography was almost six times more likely to report rape behavior than the low-exposure group (13.8% and 2.4% respectively) (Boeringer 1993: 297). Boeringer suggests that these findings provide evidence that “exposure to sexually violent materials may lead to greater antisocial sexual beliefs and assaultive sexual behavior” (1993: 299). However, it is conceivable that “the causal arrow runs in the direction opposite to that which is suggested” (Boeringer 1993: 300). In other words, individuals with a “prior attraction to violent sex” may choose to view more violent pornography (Boeringer 1993: 300).

## Preferences for Sexually Violent Material

Bogaert (2001) investigated whether eleven “personality and individual difference variables [could] predict preferences for content in sexual media” and found that antisocial tendencies/low desirability, “low intelligence” (IQ measured by the Multidimensional Aptitude Battery), sexual variation and self-reported arousal to sexually violent films, all predicted a higher likelihood of viewing such films in his sample of male undergraduate students (Bogaert 2001: 33). The participants were pretested for eleven independent personality and individual variables, including:

aggression, attraction to sexual aggression, dominance, erotophilia, hypermasculine sex roles, intelligence, Machiavellianism, psychoticism, previous sexual media exposure, sensation seeking, and sexual experience (Bogaert 2001: 33).

Then participants were asked to indicate their likelihood of viewing a range of films presented as “a pool of ‘promotional’ descriptions”. The film descriptions covered five different content categories: “sexually violent; insatiable or sexually eager non-discriminating female; erotic or affectionate relationship; child sexuality; and sexual novelty (e.g. bestiality)” plus two control categories: violent non-sexual and non-violent non-sexual (Bogaert 2001: 36). Finally, the participants were asked if they could return for a fictive second session and to indicate which two films they would prefer to view regardless of their actual availability for the second session.

Low intelligence (IQ measured by the Multidimensional Aptitude Battery) emerged as the best predictor of the preference to view sexually violent material. Surprisingly, the sexual experience independent variable was “unrelated to any sexual media preferences” (Bogaert 2001: 49). Overall, Bogaert found that only 5-6 percent of the participants would choose to view sexually violent material given an array of options; Bogaert drew solace from this finding, but noted the possibility that participants may have been inhibited to choose the more antisocial material because of the laboratory conditions (2001: 50).

Frost and Stauffer (1987) examined “the relationship between social class, gender, and personality, and responses to ten different forms of dramatized violence”, finding that inner-city housing project residents were more aroused<sup>4</sup> than affluent college

---

<sup>4</sup> Arousal: Heightened emotional, psychological and/or physical alertness and responsiveness. Arousal should not be taken to mean purely sexual arousal. However, “arousal” in the colloquial use of the term has come to mean sexual arousal and it is plausible that research participants may have interpreted it in this way.

students by all the representations of violence tested in the study (Frost and Stauffer 1987: 29, 31). Their study included two samples which acted as proxies for class: the first consisting of white college students from affluent families; the second of racially mixed, inner-city housing project residents with no college education and incomes under \$18,000 p.a. Participants in both samples included an even number of men and women aged between 17 and 24. Self-reported arousal differed significantly from the other measures used, with inner-city and college samples reporting similar levels of arousal. However, the inner city and college students differed significantly on physiological measures. The physiological measures (skin conductance and blood pulse volume) found “that inner-city subjects were significantly more aroused... by viewing [all] ten types of violence”, and were considerably more aroused by the rape than the college sample (Frost and Stauffer 1987: 41). Gender and personality differences (“extroversion/introversion, instability-stability, and psychoticism-reality”) had insignificant effects on the physiological measures (Frost and Stauffer 1987: 32). The representation of a female killing a female produced most arousal while rape and rape/murder also rated highly.

Frost and Stauffer suggest that their findings support a theory that resonance between representations of violence and experiences of real violence increases arousal to these representations. They argue that the “environment of the inner-city residents is indeed more violent than that of the college students” and that the significantly higher levels of arousal to violence in the inner-city sample may result from a stronger resonance between the violent representations and their day-to-day surroundings” (Frost and Stauffer 1987: 41). In addition, they say that the stronger arousal to rape representations by inner-city residents compared to college students may stem from “different perception of the likelihood of encountering this type of violence in the real world” (Frost and Stauffer 1987:41).

## Experimental Research

*Experimental studies, main findings:*

- *Experiments suffer from attrition problems: people who are really offended or upset by sexually violent material will not participate.*
- *Behavioural experiments have serious problems with internal validity because the experiment requires participants to act aggressively.*
- *Under experimental conditions participants exposed to images of sexual violence against women consistently display more aggression toward women.*
- *Two separate experiments produced some support for the desensitisation hypothesis: male and female viewers repeatedly exposed to sexually violent material reacted to it with less criticism, anxiety or depression over time.*
- *Two separate experiments supported the hypothesis that viewing sexually violent material would make viewers less sympathetic to complainants of rape in the courtroom.*
- *Social cues matter in how people interpret somewhat ambiguous sexually violent and sexually explicit material.*

A plethora of laboratory research into the effects of sexually explicit media emerged toward the end of the 1970s, at the end of a decade of new sexual openness (Jaffe, Malamuth, Feingold and Feshbach 1974; Jaffe and Berger 1977; Baron 1978; 1979; Cantor, Zillman and Einsiedel 1978; Zillmann and Sapolsky 1977; White 1979). Many of the earlier experimental designs tested models such as the Excitation Transfer Model in which arousal or dis-inhibition caused by one situation was hypothesised to “spill over” into the next. The focus on possible “spill over”, “dis-inhibitory”, and “modelling” effects of sexually explicit media prompted researchers to devise tests to measure the aggression displayed by subjects after viewing such material. Early experimental designs took a monolithic view of sexually explicit material, not distinguishing between differing content. However, experimental research that focused on sexually violent media or compared different types of sexual representations (i.e. violent, degrading and mutually consenting) quickly began to appear. The study of the effects of sexually violent media, thus, garnered a considerable amount of attention in and of itself.

### **Experiments on Aggressive Behaviour as a Function of Sexually Violent Media Consumption**

A number of experiments attempt to establish a causal link between viewing particular kinds of material and aggressive behaviour by showing subjects particular kinds

of clips and then, in what they believe is a separate experiment, asking them to send an electric shock to a female confederate<sup>5</sup> when she makes a mistake in performing a task (Fisher and Barak 1991: 77). Fisher and Grenier point out that this method lacks internal validity since it requires participants to engage in the very behaviour under observation. Therefore, any aggression that participants display has been produced by conditions of the experiment, not necessarily by the film clip (1994: 26). The infamous Milgram experiment in which researchers required participants to administer increasingly powerful electric shocks to confederate “learners” who acted out extreme pain showed that most people will submit to an authoritative figure instructing them to inflict pain, even against their own better judgement (Milgram 1963). Furthermore, these experiments typically suffer from high levels of selective attrition in which participants who are offended by sexually violent material remove themselves from the study while participants in the control group do not. When these methodological limitations are combined with a tendency to look for specific effects and a possible prejudice against publishing null findings, we must agree with Fisher and Grenier’s conclusion that the findings of such experiments have limited value. Nevertheless, under experimental conditions researchers do find that men exposed to clips showing sexual violence consistently show more aggression toward a female confederate.

Two of the most cited such experiments are Donnerstein’s (1980) study “Aggressive Erotica and Violence Against Women” and Donnerstein and Berkowitz’s (1981) study “Victim Reaction in Aggressive Erotic Films as a Factor in Violence against Women”. Both studies found a relationship between viewing four to five minutes of “aggressive-erotic” film clips and increased levels of aggression against a female confederate. Donnerstein found that

paired with a male target, both the erotic and aggressive erotic film increased aggression beyond the neutral film, while not differing from each other. For those subjects paired with a female, only the aggressive-erotic film increased aggression (Donnerstein 1980: 274).

Donnerstein concluded that aggressive-erotic stimuli “can lead to increased aggressive behaviour toward women” (Donnerstein 1980: 275). Similarly, Donnerstein and Berkowitz (1981) found that exposure to an “aggressive-erotic film increased the level of aggression toward the female [confederate] target” (Donnerstein and Berkowitz 1981:716). Two variations of the aggressive erotic film, one with a “positive” ending (the

---

<sup>5</sup> Confederates: An individual involved in experimental research that, unbeknown to participants, is not a participant in the research and has been employed by the research team to test actual participants or to add a variable to the experiment.



female eventually enjoys situation) and one with a “negative” ending (the female continues to protest) did not produce significant variation in the level of aggression targeted at female confederates. Donnerstein and Berkowitz (1981) also tested the effect of angering the participants before they administered shocks to the female confederates and found that “the viewers apparently had to be disposed to hurt someone before the movie victim’s suffering could evoke heightened aggression from them” (Donnerstein and Berkowitz 1981: 720).

While Donnerstein and Berkowitz’s (1981) study is among the most cited examples of such research, a number of other experiments and reviews have confirmed similar findings (Russell 1988; Linz and Malamuth 1993; Felson 1996; Malamuth Addison and Koss 2000). Malamuth et al. (2000) concluded, from a comprehensive meta-analysis of laboratory research, that: “Exposure to both non-violent pornography and violent pornography affects both aggressive attitudes and behaviours, and that violent pornography does so to a greater degree” (Malamuth et al. 2000: 52). However, based upon much of the same research, Fisher and Grenier concluded “that exposure to violent pornography is not a reliable cause of anti-woman ... acts within the experimental procedures that are commonly used to study such effects” (Fisher and Grenier 1994: 27).

Rauch (2001) studied men’s attitudes toward imposing sexually violent media on women. She found that men exposed to a 45-minute video clip of sexual violence had no more propensity to show a sexually violent video to a female confederate than men exposed to a violent or sexual or generally arousing (non-violent non-sexual) 45-minute video clip. Thus, she reported that her “study did not support the primary hypothesis that exposure to different types of 45-minute video clips (sexually violent, sexual, violent, and generally arousing) would affect the likelihood of men to impose sexual material on a woman” (Rauch 2001: 67).

### **Experimental Research on Attitude Change as a Function of Sexually Violent Media Consumption**

Experimental research about the effects of sexually violent material on aggressive behaviour continued to be produced after the 1970s; however, in the 1980s the emphasis shifted to examining the effects of sexually explicit media on (mainly men’s) attitudes toward women and their perceptions of women (Glascock 1996: 39). Malamuth (2000) posits that this new emphasis was spurred, in large part, by feminist arguments that sought “evidence of changes in attitudes about violence against women or sexism as a

function of exposure to pornography” (Malamuth 2000: 29). Another reason for the change could be that more stringent ethics rules in tertiary institutions made it more difficult for researchers to undertake research involving deception and possible physical or emotional harm to participants.

A new generation of research tested possible effects of sexually violent media through psychological self-report measures, including the Bem Sex Role Inventory, Attitudes toward Women scale, Sex Role Stereotyping Scale, Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale, Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale, and the Rape Myth Acceptance<sup>6</sup> Scale, or variations thereof. Researchers also used Likert scales<sup>7</sup> to investigate participants’ perceptions of victims and perpetrators of sexual violence in literary pieces or mock rape trials after viewing in experimental or control conditions. Others tested “long-term” attitudinal effects of exposure to sexually violent material by measuring responses over a period of time. The results of studies into the attitudinal effects of viewing sexually violent media have been mixed at best.

### **Attitude Change in Men**

Linz and Donnerstein (1988) report a link between the consumption of sexually violent media and attitude/perspective change in men in their study “Effects of Long-Term Exposure to Violent and Sexually Degrading Depictions of Women”. Using a sample of male undergraduate students, the authors found a significant decrease in self-reported anxiety and depression for viewers between the first and last day of a five-day period in which one R-rated violent film was viewed each day. Films were categorised as

violent R-rated, full-length, commercially released films [containing] explicit violence primarily directed toward women, often during or juxtaposed to mildly erotic scenes” (Linz and Donnerstein 1988: 759).

Furthermore, there was a significant decrease in perceptions of the amount of violent content, negative arousal and perceived degradation of women between the first and last day of viewing. Significant effects were not found for participants that viewed “X-rated,

---

<sup>6</sup> Rape Myth Acceptance: Indicates the level of an individual’s belief in common myths about rape and rape victims. These include beliefs about certain women deserving rape (“asking for it”), secretly wanting to be raped, or lying about being raped. Rape myths may also include the idea that rape is usually committed by “psychotic” strangers, and that a sex act can only be called rape when the victim provides sufficient physical resistance and is sufficiently injured in the assault.

<sup>7</sup> Likert Scale: A psychometric scale which allows the respondent to indicate their level of agreement with a particular statement.

non-violent, sexually explicit films” or non-explicit “teenage sex films” (Linz and Donnerstein 1988: 760). Linz and Donnerstein suggest that this data supports a desensitising effect for viewing non-explicitly sexual, explicitly violent media.

By contrast, Bauserman (1998) found “no significant effect of exposure category on any measure” based upon a survey measuring attitudes and beliefs regarding “Rape Myth Acceptance, Attraction to Sexual Aggression, Adversarial Sexual Beliefs, and Sex Role Egalitarianism”, completed approximately one week prior to and then directly after exposure to either an “egalitarian, sexist, sexually aggressive or control” scene (247, 249). Bauserman concluded that

there is minimal evidence for different attitudinal effects of egalitarian, sexist, and sexually aggressive scenes on measures of sexist beliefs and beliefs about sexual aggression (Bauserman 1998: 250).

Smeaton and Byrne (1987), similarly, found “no evidence that non-sexual violence or non-violent erotica has any impact on the likelihood of subsequent acquaintance rape” in their investigation of “the effects of film material commonly found in popular R-Rated films” (181). However, their research did not investigate the effects of sexually violent material. Smeaton and Byrne pretested male subjects on a number of psychological scales (Hyper Masculinity Scale, the Coercive Sexual Fantasies Scale, and the Sexual Experience Survey), before exposing them to a 30-minute film clip depicting non-violent, non-explicit erotica; non-erotic violence sourced from two ‘slasher’ films; or a neutral clip which they viewed with a female confederate. Participants were then tested for self-reported rape proclivity. The study found no film effect on any of the rape proclivity variables. However, they found that high measures of hyper masculinity<sup>8</sup> and self-reported previous sexual aggression and coercion in participants correlated with a greater self-reported likelihood of committing rape and acquaintance rape. The null findings for film exposure effect were found despite the non-violent erotic clip containing almost twice the amount of erotic material found in a commercial X-Rated video, and the violent clip containing the same amount, or more, of violent scenes than found in a full-length slasher film.

---

<sup>8</sup> Hyper masculinity: an assemblage of three ‘macho’ personality components: (a) callous sex attitudes toward women, (b) violence as manly, (c) danger as exciting as measured by Mosher and Sirkin’s (1984) Hyper Masculinity Inventory (HMI) (Smeaton and Byrne 1987: 175).

## Attitude Change in Women

Emmers-Sommer, Pauley, Hanzel and Triplett (2006) asked research participants to complete a questionnaire which included the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, the Sex Role Stereotyping Scale, demographic questions, and questions about film preferences. They then assigned participants to see one of four films: some saw an uncut version of *The Accused*, others saw *The Accused* with explicit features blurred, a third group saw a cut version, while the final group saw the control film *Free Willy*. All participants then completed the questionnaire a second time. They found that only the uncut version of the film changed how some participants scored on the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Specifically, women who said they preferred love stories scored significantly lower on rape myth acceptance than a control group after seeing the uncut film. The change in rape myth acceptance almost reached significance for women who said they liked sex and violence in films while other male and female participants showed no change. Emmers-Sommer et al. concluded that the change in rape myth acceptance observed for women in their study indicates that graphic representations may help in educational forums.

Krafka, Linz, Donnerstein and Penrod (1997) exposed “sexually experienced” female participants to four films from one of three classifications over a four-day period (using methods similar to Linz and Donnerstein’s (1988) study of men):

(a) non-violent sexually explicit stimuli [*The Other Side of Julie*, *Indecent Exposure*, *Summer Lovers* and *Emily*], (b) sexually violent, sexually explicit stimuli [*Baby Cakes*, *Skintight*, *The Story of O* and *Emmanuelle*], and (c) commercially released slasher films showing graphically violent attacks on women preceded or followed by mildly sexual scenes [*Tool Box Murders*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Vice Squad* and *Nightmare*] (Krafka et al. 1997: 156).

Similar to Linz and Donnerstein’s (1988) results, the female groups exposed to the sexually explicit violence and the slasher films recorded less hostility, anxiety and depression on the last day than on the first, while the measures remained relatively unchanged for the group exposed to non-violent sexual representations, thus supporting a model of desensitisation for images of sexual violence. Moreover, those exposed to the two violent film categories “became less critical of how female characters were depicted” (Krafka et al. 1997: 165). Interestingly, despite viewing a considerable amount of violence against women, the slasher film group perceived themselves as being less at risk of non-violent sexual crime, non-violent non-sexual crime, and violent non-sexual crime, and believed that injury in violent non-sexual attacks could be more easily avoided than

did the control group or the other film groups for which the differences were statistically insignificant.

Mayerson and Taylor (1987) found some variation in the impact of sexually violent stories on women's self-esteem, depending upon whether the women scored high or low on a Sex Role Stereotyping measure. Mayerson and Taylor divided their female student participants into those who scored high on a Sex Role Stereotyping measure and those with low scores. The women were exposed to one of five fictional circumstances: (a) consent, in which the woman was portrayed as consenting to sexual activity; (b) no consent, in which the woman was portrayed as not consenting to sexual activity and was raped; (c) arousal, in which the woman was depicted as becoming sexually aroused by sexual activity for which she did not give consent; and (d) no arousal, in which the woman was depicted as not sexually aroused by sexual activity for which she had not given consent; and (e) control, no story (Mayerson and Taylor 1987: 327, 333). Overall, no significant differences resulted from the story manipulation (Mayerson and Taylor 1987: 333). However, they did find differences in how the low and high sex role stereotypes reacted to the stories. After reading the non-consenting story, low Sex Role Stereotyping women "assigned less responsibility for the sexual activity to the female" and said they found the story less sexually arousing than the high Sex Role Stereotyping women (Mayerson and Taylor 1987: 329). Furthermore, "low Sex Role Stereotyping subjects' self-esteem decreased ... and high [Sex Role Stereotyping] subjects' self-esteem increased" after reading the non-consent stories (Mayerson and Taylor 1987: 330). Mayerson and Taylor concluded that sexually violent stories may have contradictory effects on women with low Sex Role Stereotyping; while the explicit stories negatively affected their self-esteem, these women also sympathised with the victim and condemned the sexual violence.

### **Attitudinal "Spill Over" and the Rape Trial Test**

To test the possible "spill over" effects of viewing sexually violent material, and gather results with more application to the world outside of the laboratory, some researchers have devised mock rape trial attitudinal tests. Linz and Donnerstein (1988) found that participants that viewed a course of R-rated violent slasher films scored lower on measures of sympathy and empathy for the victim of a rape trial than other subjects (Linz and Donnerstein 1988: 764). However, cognitive appraisals of the trial were not affected; thus, the authors suggest that films showing violence toward attractive women; "may undermine emotional reactivity to victims portrayed in more realistic contexts" (Linz and Donnerstein 1988: 764).

In their similar study, Krafska et al. (1997) exposed “sexually experienced” females to three categories of film and found that only slasher films produced a statistically significant effect on responses to rape trials. Participants in this group were more inclined to

(a) acquit the defendant, (b) absolve him of responsibility, (c) view the complainant as responsible for what happened, (d) see her resistance attempts as inadequate, (e) derogate her credibility, and (f) restrict the behaviour they were willing to classify as rape (Krafska et al. 1997: 173).

Some important limitations should be noted when interpreting Krafska et al’s results. The study had a large attrition rate, especially from the sexually violent and sexually explicit conditions. Thus, differences between the film groups in perceptions of the rape trial may have resulted as much from the selective attrition of subjects as from any media effect.

### **Social Influence on Changes in Attitudes and Behaviour after viewing Sexually Violent Material**

A number of researchers have investigated effects of sexual and sexually violent media in tandem with the effects of social influences and social comparisons on individual behaviour and attitude changes (Coyne and Cross 1988; Noris 1991; Sinclair Lee and Johnson 1995; Apanovitch Hobfoll and Salovey 2002). As Apanovitch Hobfoll and Salovey (2002) point out, sexually violent material is often “depicted in R-rated movies that are viewed in groups and seen by audiences of both men and women” (Apanovitch et al. 2002: 443). Thus, such experiments attempt to simulate the different kinds of social contexts in which people might view sexual violence and investigate how context mediates the effects of viewing controversial material.

Sinclair, Lee, Thomas and Johnson (1995) assessed “the impact of social-comparison information on responses to aggression in the context of sexual and violent films”. Participants were assigned to one of three film depictions: (a) erotic, “mutually pleasurable sexual acts”; (b) violent, sexual “rape scenes”; and (c) violent non-sexual, scenes of violence against women, and to a cue or no cue condition (Sinclair et al. 1995: 823). In the social cue condition a male confederate stated: “This is really disgusting. It’s incredibly degrading toward women” one minute before the conclusion of the film (Sinclair et al. 1995: 823). The results showed that the social cue impacted on participants’ interpretation of the sexually explicit and the sexually violent scene,

prompting participants to perceive them as more violent and degrading to women. However, the social cue had little impact on interpretations of non-sexual violent scenes, possibly because participants already saw these scenes as violent (Sinclair et al. 1995: 821). This may suggest that people find sexual material ambiguous as to whether it is violent or not and look for social cues to help them interpret it. After viewing the film and completing a questionnaire, participants were given the opportunity to apply electrical shocks to a female confederate as punishment in what they were led to believe was an unrelated experiment. Subjects that received the social cue delivered shocks of lower intensity and shorter duration than those in the no cue condition. When analysed by film, both the erotic and violent non-sexual films were associated with a low level of punishment across the duration of the learning trials, while punishment in the violent sexual example gradually increased in intensity over the 16 trials for which a single participant could apply an electric shock.

Similarly, Apanovitch et al. (2002) found that social cues affected both men's and women's reactions to the ten-minute gang rape scene from *The Accused*. In the first experiment, participants viewed the clip and were assigned to a gender-homogenous group of between three and six people for a five-minute discussion or to spend five minutes in silence. Two significant results were recorded: first, women who discussed their reactions "rated the men (perpetrators) in the film as more responsible for the rape compared with people in all other conditions"; and second, men who were excluded from the group discussion "reported higher ratings of positive affect [enjoyment and pleasurable arousal] compared with participants in all other conditions" (Apanovitch et al. 2002: 452).

In a second, similar experiment, all participants engaged in a five-minute, single-sex, group discussion in which a confederate expressed either:

- (a) a perceptual and affective response consistent with the men being responsible for the rape;
- (b) a perceptual and affective response consistent with the woman being responsible for the rape;
- or (c) a response consistent with neither the men nor the woman being solely responsible" (Apanovitch et al. 2002: 453).

Results indicated that "participants [of either sex] in the men-responsible condition placed more blame on the perpetrators" than the other two conditions (Apanovitch et al. 2002: 454). The other two conditions were not statistically different from each other; however, those in the "woman-responsible condition [attributed] the least amount of blame to the perpetrators" (Apanovitch et al. 2002: 455).

Thus, both Sinclair et al. (1995) and Apanovitch et al. (2002) found a significant effect for social cues on participants' reactions to sexual violence. Sinclair et al. concluded that "direct social comparison information may be a more potent mediator of viewer reaction to violent erotica than film cues related to victim outcomes" and that the effects for social cues were most significant in ambiguous situations when individuals draw upon the attitudinal anchorage of others (Sinclair et al. 1995: 835). Apanovitch et al. conclude that habituation and desensitisation regarding sexual violence could occur when viewers watch sexually violent representations in a social context where others express their approval of the material. Conversely, if such material is viewed in a context where "nonacquainted peers" encourage empathy for victims of violence, then individual attitudes may change (Apanovitch et al. 2002: 458).



## Correlation Research

*Correlational research, main findings:*

- *These studies do not distinguish between sexually explicit and sexually violent material and so have limited use for our purposes.*
- *These studies take sexual violence rates reported to police as their measure of sexual violence, further limiting their relevance.*
- *These studies have mixed findings.*

## The Availability of Sexually Explicit Material and the Official Rape Rate

Macrosociological investigations, also termed aggregate studies, of the possible relationship between media and rape usually compare the availability or distribution of sexually explicit material and official rates of sexual offences. This type of research has serious limitations. Importantly, the researchers treat reported rapes and sexual assaults or rape convictions as a measure of rape. However, crime victimisation surveys since the 1990s show that only a tiny percentage of incidents that meet the legal definition of sexual violence ever get reported, let alone result in convictions. These surveys also show that a large number of woman who have experiences meeting the legal definition of rape do not describe them as such. Thus, reported rapes and sexual assaults provide poor measures of actual rates; in fact, low rates of reporting may indicate high social tolerance of sexual violence (see Kelly, Lovett and Regan 2005 for a review of this literature). Furthermore, attempts to correlate sexual offences with the consumption of explicit material typically do not distinguish between sexually explicit and sexually violent material.

Scott and Schwalm (1988) investigated the relationship between rates of adult magazine distribution and reported rape using state-level data, finding:

that states with low rape rates tend to have low adult magazine circulation. Likewise, states with high rape rates tend to have high adult magazine circulation rates (Scott and Schwalm 1988, 244).

They isolated *Hustler* magazine (which was assumed to be the most violent and explicit of the tested magazines), but found *Hustler* to have the least significant (non-significant) association between circulation and reported rape. They say their results could be interpreted in two ways. First, higher readership could lead to a higher number of actual

rapes. Second, the more sexually liberated or permissive environment of some states, as measured by adult magazine circulation, may be more conducive to women reporting rape than more sexually restrictive or conservative states.

Jaffe and Straus (1987) and Baron and Straus (1987; 1989) discuss a number of intervening variables which may be important in explaining the statistical relationship between the distribution of sexually explicit magazines and increased rape rates. Jaffe and Straus (1987) suggested two factors which could produce an artificial relationship between pornography distribution and rape, these were: social disorganisation, including “poverty, high urbanization, and divorce”; and, “hyper masculinity”<sup>9</sup> in gender roles and sexuality” (cited in Bauserman 1996: 416). Thus, Jaffe and Straus (1987) suggest that the correlation between pornography and rape may be a function of increased hyper masculinity in a given geographical area which may cause an increase in the other two variables. Baron and Straus (1989) also tested a Violence Approval Index which intended to capture the extent to which violence could be perceived as meeting socially acceptable ends within 41 different states. When the Violence Approval Index was added to the statistical model, the correlation between pornography distribution and rape disappeared, supporting the notion that pornography distribution and rape rates are only spuriously linked. Other US studies find no correlation between rape rates and pornography at all (Gentry 1991; Winick and Evans 1996).

Kutchinsky (1991) also failed to find a correlation between increasing availability of sexually explicit material and reported rape rates. These findings were produced despite Kutchinsky’s claim that “increasingly hardcore” and “aggressive” sexual material had become more prevalent (Kutchinsky 1991: 51). Kutchinsky observed trends of reported rape in four countries and concluded that “in none of the countries did rape increase more than non-sexual violent crimes” (Kutchinsky 1991: 61). Only in the US did increases in reported sexual assault keep pace with reports of non-sexual assault, while in “Denmark, Sweden and West Germany, rape increased less than non-sexual assault, and in West Germany rape did not increase at all” (Kutchinsky 1991: 61).

Diamond and Uchiyama (1999) present a case study of Japan in which they compared reported numbers of rapes, sexual assaults and public indecency with a qualitatively and quantitatively observed increase in the availability of sexually explicit material over a 23-year period (1972 to 1995). Despite the increased availability of sexually explicit and sexually violent material in Japan during the period under review, the

---

<sup>9</sup> Hyper masculinity: An assemblage of three ‘macho’ personality components: (a) callous sex attitudes toward women, (b) violence as manly, (c) danger as exciting as measured by Mosher and Sirkin’s (1984) Hyper Masculinity Inventory (HMI) (Smeaton and Byrne 1987: 175).

raw number of reported incidences of rape “steadily and dramatically decreased”, the number of rapes committed by groups/gangs of perpetrators decreased at a greater rate than rapes in general, the percentage of rapes committed by juveniles decreased significantly, as did sexual assaults and public indecency (Diamond and Uchiyama 1999: 9). Even more surprisingly: “despite the wide increase in availability of pornography to children, not only was there a decrease in sex crimes with juveniles as victims, but the number of juvenile offenders also decreased significantly” (Diamond and Uchiyama 1999: 11). Despite the relatively high levels of aggression, violence and fetishism present in Japanese sexually explicit material, compared with that in Western countries such as the US, “Japan has the lowest number of reported rape cases and ... is known as one of the safest developed countries for women in the world” (Diamond and Uchiyama 1999: 14). However, Diamond and Uchiyama’s conclusion should be treated with caution. According to Dussich (2001), many women in Japan decide not to report sexually violent incidences to police.

Two unpublished studies report a correlation between access to the internet and a decrease in the official rape rate. Both Todd Kendall (2006) and Anthony D’Amato (2006) suggest an association between the arrival of the internet and a fall in the official rape rate. Both studies assume that access to the internet means that, as Kendall puts it, “pornography is a substitute for rape” for young men, and this explains why young men in the US appear to commit fewer rapes than their fathers and grandfathers did (Kendall 2006: 24). However, a more compelling explanation for the finding that young American men are less likely to commit rape than previous generations could be that boys born since the 1970s have grown up in a more sexually egalitarian society. A more cynical explanation would be that the US war on drugs has put many men behind bars who would otherwise be committing rapes. Furthermore, the apparent reduction in sex crime needs further investigation since it could be an artefact of the FBI reclassifying sex crimes.

## Directions for Further Research

*Directions for further research, main findings:*

- *More research is needed about people who participate in online sexually violent fantasy activity.*
- *The internet blurs the distinction between representation and performance, raising new questions about media effects and requiring innovative research methods.*
- *Future research should investigate aspects of sexually violent representations available on new media such as mobile phones and digital games.*
- *Another area where research is lacking is representations of sexual violence against homosexual men.*
- *Finally, future research should investigate whether sexual violence is prevalent in texts introduced into New Zealand by diasporic groups and whether there is a large New Zealand audience for non-Western sexually violent material, such as some Japanese manga.*

## Sexual Violence Online

The lack of research about sexual violence between adults on the internet provides the most glaring gap in the scholarly literature sourced for this study. Much of the literature dealing with sexually explicit material on the internet concerns itself with sexual violence toward children or with pornography. As we have noted above, studies highlight the volume of sexually violent material on the internet and worry about its easy accessibility. Before the internet, sexually explicit images of children or sexual violence moved through illicit social networks and some people mildly interested in such material probably never came across it. Now anyone can click on such images from their own home, and many have done so accidentally. One journalist reported on a woman who searched for a “sweet spicy hot” Thai soup recipe and ended up on a paedophile site and subject to police attention (Quinn and Forsyth 2005: 198). Quinn and Forsyth point out that the internet allows the development of subcultures around deviant sexual preferences, including violence, and provides spaces where people can act out their fantasies.

This raises with a new urgency the old question of whether nurturing violent fantasies increases the likelihood of someone acting on them. Research on fantasy, sexually explicit material and propensity to commit sexual crimes suggests that a subset of men who entertain sexually violent fantasies may be spurred into committing sexual crimes when exposed to sexually violent material. Studies of sexual offenders report that many fantasised about sexual violence before acting on their fantasy (Scully 1994). The

link between fantasy and behaviour is best established in the case of sexual violence (Williams et al. 2009: 200-202). Williams et al. (2009) investigated the link between fantasy and behaviour for male undergraduate non-offenders regarding nine “deviant” sexual fantasies: object fetishism, transvestism, voyeurism, sadism, bondage, frotteurism, exhibitionism, paedophilia, and sexual assault. Using questionnaires and personality tests, they also investigated the pornography use of the students. In the case of bondage, sadism and sexual assault, they found that “sexually deviant fantasies translated into sexually deviant behavior only for individuals scoring high in psychopathy.” Furthermore, “the association of pornography consumption with deviant sexual behaviour held only for individuals with high psychopathy scores” (Williams et al. 2009: 214-215).

Quinn and Forsyth (2005) suggest online interactions “can provide the logistical, emotional and social support needed to cross the line from contemplation to action”. They also suggest that exposure to new kinds of content could inspire new interests in “predatory behavior” (Quinn and Forsyth 2005: 199). Fisher and Barak hypothesise that most people will avoid “antisocial” sexually explicit material on the internet; however, those people attracted to antisocial sexual behaviour may become obsessive about it and lose touch with real-life constraints on such behaviour (Fisher and Barak 2001). Some studies of internet pornography in general focus upon male cybersex “compulsives” who spend a lot of time and money on their online sexual experiences and suffer depression anxiety, and problems in their real-life relationships (Philaretou, Mahfouz and Allen 2005; Manning 2006).

Such concerns, combined with research findings that suggest fantasizing about sexual violence and viewing sexually violent images can spur some men to rape, suggest that viewing sexually violent material on the internet could contribute to real-life sexual violence. However, little research has been done on people who access sexually violent material on the internet. In a recent conference paper, Kibitlewski (2009) presented findings on the question “Are BDSM internet sites a breeding ground for violence?” The paper discussed the possibility of sexual predators seeking out victims on BDSM lifestyle sites; however, those findings have not yet been published. Further research could look into online sexual violence fantasy activity.

Such research calls for internet sociology rather than more traditional forms of media analysis. The internet blurs the distinction between sexually explicit representation and sexually explicit performance because people can interact sexually online by sending each other sexually explicit images and text in real time and manipulating avatars. This opens up a new arena for sexual violence as well as sexual pleasure (Kibby and Costello

2001). Scholars with a theoretical interest in the legal and psychological status of virtual personhood and community discuss “virtual rape” as a problem. Williams argues that

to argue that an act of racial or sexual harassment carried out online through text is any less serious than an equivalent verbal act in the off-line world is to grant the would-be offender the right to defame and humiliate individuals on the basis that it is simply not ‘real’ (Williams 2001: 152).

Williams discusses the infamous “Bungle Affair” described by Julian Dibbell, who originally published on this case of “a Rape in Cyberspace” in the *Village Voice*, and later wrote a book about online community and identity (Dibble 1998). In the Bungle Affair, a participant in an online environment took control of other avatars and forced them to perform sexually humiliating acts. The other participants eventually took control and banished Bungle. Scholars interested in this question seem to agree that online sexual violence can cause serious harm to people in real life, although they also question the virtual/real life distinction.

The internet has become a platform for content that was previously stored on other mediums but it has also birthed new forms of media content. Movies, music, still pictures and text can be displayed on the internet, downloaded from websites or traded between web users. Analysts have expressed concern about the increased accessibility of sexually explicit and sexually violent material offered by the internet in the domestic setting, especially the ability for minors to access this material. Also of concern is the ability for clips of sexually violent material from film and DVD to be viewed out of context through video-sharing sites like *YouTube*.

### **Other Areas for Further Research**

Future research should investigate the prevalence of sexually violent representations available on new media such as mobile phones and digital games, how these are used by consumers, and what effects they may have. Another area where research is lacking is on representations of sexual violence against homosexual men and this could be an important avenue for future research. Finally, future research should investigate whether sexual violence is prevalent in texts introduced into New Zealand by diasporic groups and whether there is a large New Zealand audience for non-Western sexually violent material such as some Japanese manga.

## Reference List

- Alcoff, L. and Gray, L. (1993) "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *Signs*. Vol. 18:2, pp. 260-290.
- Apanovitch, A. M.; Hobfoll, S. E. and Salovey, P. (2002) "The Effects of Social Influence on Perceptual and Affective Reactions to Scenes of Sexual Violence". *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. Vol. 32:3, pp. 443-464.
- Barker, M.; Egan, K.; Hunter, R.; Mathijs, E.; Selfe, M. and Sexton, J. (2007) *Audiences and Receptions of Sexual Violence in Contemporary Cinema*. British Board of Film Classification. <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/downloads/index.php>.
- Baron, R. A. (1978) "Aggression-inhibiting Influences of Sexual Humor". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36, pp. 189-97.
- Baron, R. A. (1979) "Heightened Sexual Arousal and Physical Aggression: An Extension to Females". *Journal of Research in Personality* 13, pp. 91-102.
- Baron, L. and Straus, M. A. (1987) "Four Theories of Rape: A Macrosocial Analysis". *Social Problems*. Vol. 34, pp. 467-489.
- Baron, L. and Straus, M. A. (1989) *Four Theories of Rape in American Society: A State Level Analysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bauserman, R. (1996) "Sexual Aggression and Pornography: A Review of Correlational Research". *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*. Vol.18, pp.405-427.
- Bauserman, R. (1998) "Egalitarian, Sexist and Aggressive Sexual Materials: Attitude Effects and Viewer Responses". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 35, pp. 244-253.
- Bergen, R. K. and Bogle, K. A. (2000) "Exploring the Connection between Pornography and Sexual Violence". *Violence and Victims*. Vol. 15:3, pp. 227-234.
- Bevacqua, M. (2000) *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Boeringer, S.B. (1994) "Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Associations of Violent and Non-Violent Depictions with Rape and Rape Proclivity". *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Vol. 15, pp. 289-304.
- Bogaert, A. F. (2001) "Personality, Individual Differences, and Preferences for the Sexual Media". *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Vol. 30:1, pp. 29-53.
- British Board of Film Classification (2006) "BBFC Expert Consultation: Violence and Abuse in 'R18' Sex Works". <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/downloads/pub/Policy%20and%20Research/BBFC%20Expert%20Consultation%20-%20Violence%20and%20Abuse%20in%20'R18'%20Sex%20Works%20-%202007%20.pdf>.
- Brinson, S. L. (1992) "The Use and Opposition of Rape Myths in Prime-Time Television Dramas". *Sex Roles*. Vol. 27:7-8, pp. 359-375.

- Cantor, J; Zillmann, D. and Einsiedel, E. (1978) "Female Responses to Provocation after Exposure to Erotic and Aggressive Films". *Communication Research*. Vol. 5:4, pp. 395-412.
- Cheney, D. (1993) "Visual Rape". *Law and Critique*. Vol. 4:2, Pp. 189-206.
- Condron, M. and Nutter, D. (1988) "A Preliminary Examination of the Pornography Experience of Sex Offenders, Paraphiliacs, Sex Dysfunction Patients, and Controls on Meese Commission Recommendations". *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*. Vol. 14, pp. 285-298.
- Cook, R. and Fosen, R. (1971) "Pornography and the Sex Offender: Patterns of Exposure and Immediate Arousal Effects of Pornographic Stimuli". *Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. Vol. 7, pp. 149-162.
- Corne, S.; Briere, J. and Esses, L. M. (1992) "Women's Attitudes and Fantasies about Rape as a Function of Early Exposure to Pornography". *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol. 7:4, pp. 454-461.
- Coyne, B. J. and Cross, H. J. (1988) "Effects of Social Pressure on Erections and Evaluations of Erotica". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 25, pp. 395-411.
- Cramer, E.; McFarlane, J.; Parker, B.; Soeken, K.; Silva, C. and Reel, S. (1998) "Violent Pornography and the Abuse of Women: Theory to Practice". *Victims and Violence*. Vol. 13, pp. 319-332.
- Cuklanz, L. M. (1998) "The Masculine Ideal: Rape on Prime-Time Television, 1976-1978". *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*. Vol. 15:4, pp. 423-448.
- Cuklanz, L. M. and Moorti S. (2006) "Television's 'New' Feminism: Prime-Time Representations of Women and Victimization". *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. Vol. 23:4, p. 302.
- Cumberbatch, G. (2002) *Where do you Draw the Line? Attitudes and Reactions of Video Renters to Sexual Violence in Film*. Report for the British Board of Film Classification. London.
- D'Amato, A. (2006) *Porn Up, Rape Down*. Northwestern Public Law Research Paper No 913013.
- Davis, K. E. and Braucht, G. N. (1971) "Exposure to Pornography, Character, and Sexual Deviance: A Retrospective Survey". *Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. Vol. 7, pp. 173-243.
- Davison, W. (1983) "The Third-Person Effect in Communication". *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 47, pp. 1-15.
- Demare, D.; Lips, H.M. and Briere, J. (1993) "Sexually Violent Pornography, Anti-Women Attitudes and Sexual Aggression: A Structural Equation Model". *Journal of Research in Personality*. Vol. 27, pp. 285-300.



- Dibbell, J. (1998) "A Rape in Cyberspace". *My Tiny Life: Crime and Passion in a Virtual World*. Revised Edition. New York, NY: Holt. The article is available at: <http://www.owl.net.rice.edu/~comp300/documents/ARapeinCyberspace.pdf>
- Diamond, M. and Uchiyama, A. (1999) "Pornography, Rape and Sex Crimes in Japan". *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*. Vol. 22, pp. 1-22.
- Donnerstein, E. (1980) "Aggressive Erotica and Violence Against Women". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 39:2, pp. 269-277.
- Donnerstein, E. and Berkowitz, L. (1981) "Victim Reactions in Aggressive Erotic Films as a Factor in Violence Against Women". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 41:4, pp. 710-724.
- Dussich, J. (2001) "Decisions Not to Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study Among Women Living in Japan Who are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking". *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. Vol. 45:3, pp. 278-301.
- Emmers-Sommer, T. M.; Pauley, P.; Hanzal, A. and Triplett, L. (2006) "Love, Suspense, Sex, and Violence: Men's and Women's Film Predilections, Exposure to Sexually Violent Media, and their Relationship to Rape Myth Acceptance". *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. Vol. 55:5-6, pp. 311-320.
- Felson, B. (1996) "Mass Media Effects on Violent Behaviour". *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 22, pp. 103-128.
- Fisher, W. A. and Barak, A. (1991) "Pornography, Erotica, and Behavior: More Questions than Answers". *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry. Special Issue: Socio-Legal Studies of Obscenity*. Vol. 14:1-2, pp. 65-83.
- Fisher, W.A. and Grenier, G. (1994) "Violent Pornography, Antiwoman Thoughts and Antiwoman Acts: In Search of Reliable Effects". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 31, pp. 22-38.
- Frost, R. and Stauffer, J. (1987) "The Effects of Social Class, Gender, and Personality on Physiological Responses to Filmed Violence". *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 37:2, pp. 29-45.
- Gentry, C. S. (1991) "Pornography and Rape: An Empirical Analysis". *Deviant Behavior*. Vol. 12:3, pp. 277-288.
- Glascock, J.A. (1996) *The Perception and Effect of Degradation and Violence in Commercially Released Videos*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Michigan State University, Michigan.
- Goldstein, M.; Kant, H.; Judd, L.; Rice, C. and Green, F. (1971) "Experiences with Pornography: Rapists, Paedophiles, Homosexuals, Transsexuals, and Controls". *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*. Vol. 1, pp. 1-15.

- Gossett, J. L. and Byrne, S. (2002) "'Click Here': A Content Analysis of Internet Rape Sites". *Gender & Society*. Vol. 16:5, pp. 689-709.
- Greenberg, B. S. and Busselle, R. W. (1996) "Soap Operas and Sexual Activity: A Decade Later". *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 46:4, pp. 153-160.
- Harmon, D. and Boeringer, S. B. (1997) "A Content Analysis of Internet-Accessible Written Pornographic Depictions". *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 3:1.
- Hubler, A. E. (2002) "Girls' Town Challenge to 'Do It Yourself' Feminism". *Women's Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 30:1-2, pp. 77-87.
- Jaffe, Y. and Berger, H. (1977) "Cultural Generality of the Relationship between Sex and Aggression". *Psychological Reports*. Vol. 41, pp. 335-336.
- Jaffe, Y.; Malamuth, N.; Feingold, J. and Feshbach, S. (1974) "Sexual Arousal and Behavioural Aggression". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 30:6, pp. 759-64.
- Jaffee, D. and Straus, M. A. (1987) "Sexual Climate and Reported Rape: A State Level Analysis". *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Vol. 16:2, pp. 107-123.
- Johnson, W.; Kupperstein, L. and Peters, J. (1971) "Sex Offenders' Experiences with Erotica". *Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. Vol. 7, pp. 163-171.
- Kahlor, L. and Morrison, D. (2007) "Television Viewing and Rape Myth Acceptance among College Women". *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. Vol. 56:11-12 Pp. 729-739.
- Kelly, L.; Lovett J. and Regan L. 2005 *A Gap or a Chasm? Attrition in Reported Rape Cases Home Office Research Study 293*. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Kibby, M. and Costello, B. (2001) "Between the Image and the Act: Sex Entertainment on the Internet". *Sexualities*. Vol. 4:3, pp. 353-369.
- Krafka, C.; Linz, D.; Donnerstein, E. and Penrod, S. (1997) "Women's Reactions to Sexually Aggressive Mass Media Depictions". *Violence Against Women*. Vol. 3:2, pp. 149-81.
- Kendall, T. D. (2006) *Pornography, Rape, and the Internet*. Law and Economics Seminar Stanford Law School, Thursday September 28, 2006.
- Kibitlewski, J. (2009) *Are BDSM internet sites a breeding ground for violence?* Abstract for a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Royal York, Toronto.
- Kimmel, M. S. and Barron, M. (2000) "Sexual Violence in Three Pornographic Media: Toward a Sociological Explanation". *The Gender of Desire*. New York, NY: New York University Press. Pp. 97-110.

- Kunkel, D. K.; Eyal, E.; Donnerstein, K. M.; Farrar, E.; Biely, V. and Rideout (2007) "Sexual Socialization Messages on Entertainment Television: Comparing Content Trends 1997-2002". *Media Psychology*. Vol. 9:3, pp. 595-622.
- Kutchinsky, B. (1991) "Pornography and Rape: Theory and Practice? Evidence from Crime Data in Four Countries Where Pornography Is Easily Available". *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*. Vol. 14:1-2, pp. 47-64.
- Langevin, R.; Lang, R.; Wright, P.; Handy, L.; Frenzel, F. and Black, E. (1988) "Pornography and Sexual Offenses". *Annals of Sex Research*. Vol. 1, pp. 335-362.
- Lee, B. and Tamborini, R. (2005) "Third-Person Effect and Internet Pornography: The Influence of Collectivism and Internet Self-Efficacy". *Journal of Communication* (June). Pp. 292-310.
- Linz, D. and Donnerstein, E. (1988) "The Methods and Merits of Pornography Research". *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 38:2, pp. 180-184.
- Linz, D. and Donnerstein E. (1994) "Sex and Violence in Slasher Films – A Reinterpretation". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Vol. 38: 2, pp. 243-246.
- Linz, D. and Malamuth, N. (1993) *Pornography*. Newberry Park, CA. Sage.
- Lloyd, A. (1976) *Rape, an examination of the crime in New Zealand: its social and emotional consequences*. Auckland: Wilson and Horton.
- Lo, V. and Wei, R. (2002) "Third-Person Effect, Gender, and Pornography on the Internet". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Vol. 46, pp. 13-33.
- Lunsing, W. (2006) "Yaoi Ronso: Discussing Depictions of Male Homosexuality in Japanese Girls' Comics, Gay Comics and Gay Pornography". *Intersections: Gender, History & Culture in the Asian Context*. Vol. 12.  
<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue12/lunsing.html>.
- MacKinnon, C. and Dworkin, A. (1997) *In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.
- Malamuth, N.; Addison, T. and Koss, M. (2000) "Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are there Reliable Effects and Can We Understand Them?" *Annual Review of Sex Research*. Vol. 11, pp. 26-91.
- Malamuth, N. and Spinner, B. (1980) "A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Best-Selling Erotic Magazines". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 16:3, pp. 226-237.
- Manning, J. C (2006) "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Marriage and Family: A Review of the Research". *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*. Vol. 13:2, 3, pp. 131-165.
- Marshall, W. (1988) "The Use of Sexually Explicit Stimuli by Rapists, Child Molesters, and Nonoffenders". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 25, pp. 267-288.

- Mayerson, S. E. and Taylor, D. A. (1987) "The Effects of Rape Myth Pornography on Women's Attitudes and the Mediating Role of Sex Role Stereotyping". *Sex Roles*. Vol. 17:5-6, pp. 321-338.
- McLelland, M. (2006) "A Short History of 'Hentai'". *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*. Vol. 12.  
<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue12/mclelland.html>.
- Milgram, S. (1963) "Behavioural Study of Obedience". *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. Vol. 67:4, pp. 371-378.
- Molitor, F. and Sapolsky, B. (1993) "Sex Violence and Victimization in Slasher Films". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Vol. 37 Pp. 233-242.
- Monk-Turner, E. and Purcell, H. C. (1999) "Sexual Violence in Pornography: How Prevalent Is It?" *Gender Issues*. Vol. 17:2, pp. 58-67.
- Mosher, D. and Sirkin, M. (1984) "Measuring a Macho Personality Constellation". *Journal of Research in Personality*. Vol. 18:2, pp. 150-163.
- New York Radical Feminists (1974) *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*, Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilson eds, New York: New American Library.
- Norris, J. (1991) "Social Influence Effects on Responses to Sexually Explicit Material Containing Violence". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 28:1, pp. 67-76.
- Philaretou, A. G.; Mahfouz A. Y. and Allen, K. R. (2005) "Use of Internet Pornography and Men's Well-Being". *International Journal of Men's Health*. Vol. 4:2, pp. 149-169.
- Quinn, J. F. and Forsyth, C. J. (2005) "Describing Sexual Behavior in the Era of the Internet: a Typology for Empirical Research". *Deviant Behavior*. Vol. 26, pp. 191-207.
- Rauch, S. A. M. (2001) "The Influence of Media Type on Sexually Impositional Behavior". *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*. Vol. 61:9-B P. 5059.
- Russell, D. E. H. (1988) "Pornography and Rape: A Causal Model". *Political Psychology*. Vol. 9, pp. 431-73.
- Russell, D. E. H. (1998) *Dangerous Relationships: Pornography, Misogyny, and Rape*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scott, J. E. and Cuvelier, S. J. (1987) "Sexual Violence in *Playboy* Magazine: A Longitudinal Content Analysis". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 23:4, pp. 534-539.
- Scott, J. E. and Cuvelier, S. J. (1993) "Violence and Sexual Violence in Pornography: Is It Really Increasing?" *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Vol. 22:4, pp. 357-371.
- Scott, J. E. and Schwalm, L. A. (1988) "Rape Rates and the Circulation Rates of Adult Magazines". *Journal of Sex Research*. Vol. 24, pp. 241-250.
- Scully, D. (1994) *Understanding Sexual Violence*. London: Routledge.

- Simons, D. A.; Wurtele, S. K. and Durham, R. L. (2008) "Developmental Experiences of Child Sexual Abusers and Rapists". *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Vol. 32:5, pp. 549-560.
- Sinclair, R.C.; Lee, T. and Johnson, T.E. (1995) "The Effect of Social-Comparison Feedback on Aggressive Responses to Erotic and Aggressive Films". *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. Vol. 25, pp. 818-837.
- Smeaton, G. and Byrne, D. (1987) "The Effects of R-Rated Violence and Erotica, Individual Differences and Victim Characteristics on Acquaintance Rape Proclivity". *Journal of Research in Personality*. Vol. 21, pp. 171-184.
- Townsend, L. (2006) *Rape Representations in Cinema Film: A Study of the Classification of Controversial Films in Several Western Democracies*. Unpublished Dissertation. University of Technology, Sydney.
- Walker, C. (1971) "Erotic Stimuli and the Aggressive Sexual Offender". *Technical Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*. Vol. 7, pp. 91-147.
- Weaver, J.B. (1991) "Are 'Slasher' Horror Films Sexually Violent? A Content Analysis". *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. Vol. 35, pp. 385-392.
- White, L. A. (1979) "Erotica and Aggression: The Influence of Sexual Arousal, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect on Aggressive Behavior". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 37:4, pp. 591-601.
- Williams, M. (2001) "The Language of Cybercrime" in David Wall (ed). *Crime and the Internet*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, K. M.; Cooper, B. S.; Howell M. J.; Yuille, C. and Paulhus, D. L. (2009) "Inferring Sexually Deviant Behavior From Corresponding Fantasies: The Role of Personality and Pornography Consumption". *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. Vol. 36:2, pp. 198-222.
- Winick, C. and Evans, J. T. (1996) "The Relationship between Nonenforcement of State Pornography Laws and Rates of Sex Crime Arrests". *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Vol. 25:5, pp. 439-453.
- Yeates, H. (1998) "A Shameful Spectacle". *Peace Review*. Vol. 10:4, pp. 553-557.
- Zillmann, D. and Sapolsky, B. S. (1977) "What Mediates the Effects of Mild Erotica on Annoyance and Hostile Behaviour in Males?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Vol. 35:8, pp. 587-596.

## Search Strategy

### Key Search Terms

We chose search terms which would reflect the variety of content which may include sexual violence, and the variety of media platforms in which such content may be available. The key search terms were entered in various combinations and the country names Australia and New Zealand added in order to find relevant local research.

### Content Search Terms:

Sexual Violence, Abuse,  
Rape  
Sadomasochist, S&M, BDSM, Bondage, Bondage Discipline and Sadomasochism  
Violent Pornography

### Media Search Terms:

Media  
Representation  
Film, Cinema  
Video, DVD  
Television  
Video Games, Computer Games  
Mobile Phone, Cell Phone, Portable Phone  
Internet, Web, Online  
Magazine