

Written submission from Dr Jane Meyrick Senior Lecturer and Dr Kieran McCartan, Associate Professor, University of the West of England (SPP0041)

Dr Jane Meyrick is a Health Psychologist and Public Health Specialist at the University of the West of England (UWE) carrying out research work around sexual health and sexual violence services across Bristol and has previously given written evidence to the Harassment in Schools Inquiry around our research on the effect of pornography.

- *Member of the Joint Forum against Sexual Violence and Harassment implementing a zero-tolerance approach within Universities in the region.*
- *Research collaborator with the Bridge, Sexual Assault Referral Centre.*
- *UWE LEAD and on the Sexual Health Integration Team (SHIPP) for Bristol/ Research and Innovation Group of the combined area sexual health services, UNITY.*

Dr Kieran McCartan is Associate Professor in Criminology and Leader of the Social Science Research Group at UWE. Relevant appointments include:-

- *Adjunct Associate Professor in Criminology, School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)*
- *Association the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) Executive Board Member (2017 – 2020)*

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Effects of pornography

- 1.1. Research evidences the problematic content of pornography around messages about gender and power.
- 1.2. Consumption has been linked to sexual aggression but the link may be mediated by vulnerability and buffers (background factors, sex education/family openness).
- 1.3. Research indicates a problematic relationship between viewing pornography and sexual violence/abuse, an increase in pornography consumption results in a mis-perception of “normal, healthy” sexual relations and normalization of such perceptions.
- 1.4. Solutions lay both in the tackling of the wider cultural sexism, more informed, practical education as well as social norms training and practical programmes such as making reporting the norm.

2. THE PROBLEM

- 2.1. Sexual violence is a major public health problem (3) the latest population level based research from the USA shows that 81% of women and 43% report experience of sexual harassment (19), the consequences of which have major life-course consequences for victims and perpetrators.

- 2.2. Sexual harassment in public places represents one point along a continuum of behaviour such as rape, domestic violence and gender based murder that occurs within many settings such as school, work and online. This evidence will address the issue within this wider framework.
- 2.3. Social media platforms are public places, work by Amnesty (6) evidences that women are shut down and driven off social media by online abuse and harassment. Social media provides a sense of anonymity that public, in person, spaces do not which exacerbate the issues around sexual violence.
- 2.4. Factors perpetuating sexual harassment draw on the complex interplay of power, gender and sexism and male sense of entitlement. This evidence will address the specific questions of pornography, harmful attitudes and men and boys sexual harassment of women and girls.

3. EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY

- 3.1. Key findings around the effects of pornography show that "the most dominant, popular and accessible pornography contains messages and behaviours about sex, gender, power and pleasure that are deeply problematic" (5)
- 3.2. A comprehensive review of 20 years of research around the links between consumption of pornography and behavior (11) show effects on both genders, and in relation to sexual harassment. They found greater sexual aggression, both in terms of perpetration and victimization. In addition, research indicates that pornography is impacting girls/women's views of sexual abuse, encouraging a view of acceptability and normality.
- 3.3. Our own qualitative research here at the University of the West of England submitted to the Inquiry on Sexual Harassment in Schools (18) suggested a potential model of the effects of pornography whereby harmful consumption might be mediated through protective factors of good sex education, open family approaches. This was mirrored by research by other UWE colleagues which highlighted that students accepted that sexual harassment, bullying and sexism was a natural, as well as familiar, part of contemporary youth culture.
- 3.4. An Australian study (1) of N= 517 young heterosexual people draws attention to the gendered ways that behaviours in pornography are seen and identified by young heterosexual audiences (Davis, Carrotte, Hellard and Lim, 2018).
- 3.5. The strongest form of evidence, (a meta-analysis or overview of all relevant original research), by Wright et al 2016, found that consumption of pornography "was associated with sexual aggression in the United States and internationally, among males and females, and in cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. Associations were stronger for verbal than physical

sexual aggression, although both were significant. The general pattern of results suggested that violent content may be an exacerbating factor".(17)

3.6. Qualitative research by Rothman et al, 2015 entitled "Without Porn, I wouldn't know half the things I know now" suggests that young people use pornography for 'instructional purposes' and having consumed pornography feel pressure to imitate it (15).

3.7. Research in the UK shows areas of high deprivation offering limited access to positive masculinities and found "undertones of simmering resentment" towards women from young men rooted in norms of Intimate Partner Violence & peer acceptance of 'sex with lots of women'(20).

4. SOCIAL NORMS FUEL SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT (7)

4.1. An international study (2) around the making of sexual violence looked at a range of factors but emphasized the interplay of males 'assumed right' versus female 'awaited permission'.

4.2. They reported "Sexual violence emerges from a mindset that grants men a sense of sexual entitlement and devalues women's bodies and agency". Factors include a background of witnessing domestic violence, alcohol use and paying for sex. <http://menengage.org@/2014/07/The-Making-Of-Sexual-Violence-June-2014.pdf>. Which is reinforced by the development for new sentencing guidelines/laws on sexual abuse and the emergence of new offences (i.e., stealthing and upskirting).

4.3. US research on consent suggested that women do not feel they have the 'right to say no', whereas men just feel they have the 'right' to sex (21).

4.4. International research (9) shows that gender expectations and norms reinforce myths and non-conforming peers face pressure, developed during adolescence. Thus emphasizing the need for informed resources, target resources and adolescent informed responses (i.e., www.itstimewetalked.com.au).

5. RECCOMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

5.1. TACKLE THE CULTURE - The 'Making of Sexual Violence report' (2) points to a focus on addressing attitudes and entitlement through:-

5.2. Programmes that tackle issues of power, gender norms, sexism especially with men and boys.

5.3. Violence prevention should focus on settings that propagate men's sense of sexual entitlement including sports teams, other male social spaces in education, workplaces, military, religious and mass media.

- 5.4. The flip side of which is ensure PROMOTION OF DIVERSITY through all sectors and levels within those sectors as a means of prevention.
- 5.5. Engaging with victims and perpetrators post sentencing to better understand the context and actualities of abuse to better inform prevention, especially the role that pornography, accessibility and entitlement played.
- 5.6. Programmes should start in schools (2).
- 5.7. Health policies can engage men as fathers and caregivers (2).
- 5.8. ADDRESS ONLINE HARASSMENT – the internet is also a public space making social media sites more responsible for what happens on them as well as via them.
- 5.9. Evidence based sex education programmes should address pornography, (e.g. 12) and should be part of statutory delivery of PSHE across schools. In addition, this should be standardised, research informed and evidence led. This should be for all students respective of the type of school they attend, their culture or learning ability.
- 5.10. MAKE REPORTING THE NORM. - This model is being introduced across Universities following the UKK Standards, e.g. Joint Forum against Sexual Violence and Harassment are introducing standardised/online 'Report and Support' mechanisms(14).
- 5.11. HARNESSING SOCIAL NORMS THAT REJECT SEXUAL HARASSMENT A WHO report on Violence against Women (8) includes a gender equality target for men and boys. I would go further and in harnessing the visibility of men's who don't harass and having them discuss, debate and inform why this is the case.
- 5.12. International research across 5 countries found "An urgent programmatic, research, and policy challenge as we attempt to curtail sexual violence is, to involve, encourage, and learn from those many men who do not use sexual violence" (2). Organisations already addressing this include the International Centre for Research on Women ICRW. <https://www.icrw.org/>
- 5.13. This might include harnessing the potential of bystanders to intervene through evidence based 'Bystander Interventions' (13) such as that being introduced at University of the West of England.
- 5.14. SUPPORTING THE SERVICES THAT WOMEN USE Reverse the cost cutting in sexual health and specialist sexual assault services, including cuts to sexual assault /abuse services (10) and stop forcing these services into divisive, competitive bidding for their own work (22).

6. REFERENCES

1. What Behaviors Do Young Heterosexual Australians See in Pornography? A Cross-Sectional Study .Angela C. Davis, Elise R. Carrotte, Margaret E. Hellard & Megan S. C. Lim. *The Journal of Sex Research* Vol. 0, Iss. 0, 2018
2. Heilman, B.; Hebert, L.; and Paul-Gera, N. *The Making of Sexual Violence: How Does a Boy Grow Up to Commit Rape? Evidence from Five IMAGES Countries.* Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Washington, DC: Promundo. June 2014.
3. Tackling sexual violence at universities - *The Psychologist*
<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-2018/january-2018/tackling-sexual-violence-universities> via @psychmag
4. <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/women-and-equalities-committee/womens-experiences-of-everyday-sexism-and-sexual-harassment/oral/75330.html>
5. Quadara, A., El-Murr, A. & Latham, J. (2017). *The effects of pornography on children and young people: An evidence scan.* (Research Report). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.<https://aifs.gov.au/publications/effects-pornography-children-and-young-people/key-themes-research-literature>
6. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/amnesty-reveals-alarming-impact-of-online-abuse-against-women/?utm_source=TWITTER-IS&utm_medium=social&utm_content=1165949079&utm_campaign=Other_issue
7. https://theconversation.com/we-need-to-talk-about-the-social-norms-that-fuel-sexual-assault-87123?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=twitterbutton
8. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/82753/1/WHO_NMH_VIP_PVL_13.1_eng.pdf?ua=1
9. It Begins at 10: How Gender Expectations Shape Early Adolescence Around the World Blum, Robert W. et al. *Journal of Adolescent Health* , Volume 61 , Issue 4 , S3 - S4
10. <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/research-publications/local-commissioning-of-services-addressing-child-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-in-england/local-commissioning-of-services-addressing-child-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-in-england/>
11. Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2016). Adolescents and pornography: A review of 20 years of research. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4-5), 509-531.
doi:10.1080/00224499.2016.1143441
12. Crabbe, Maree and Corlett, David. Eroticising inequality: Technology, pornography and young people [online]. *Redress*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Apr 2011: 11-15. Availability: ≤ <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=132445715718161;res=IELAPA> A> ISSN: 1039-382X. [cited 05 Feb 18]. <http://www.itstimewetalked.com.au/>
13. Public Health England A review of evidence for bystander intervention to prevent sexual and domestic violence in universities Dr Rachel Anne Fenton, Dr Helen L Mott, Dr Kieran McCartan, Professor Philip NS Rumney, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK.
14. Universities UK (2016) Changing the culture: Report of the Universities UK Taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students. <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/changing-the-culture.pdf>
15. Rothman, E.F., Kaczmarek, C., Burke, N., Jansen, E. and Baughman, A., 2015. "Without Porn... I Wouldn't Know Half the Things I Know Now": A Qualitative Study

- of Pornography Use Among a Sample of Urban, Low-Income, Black and Hispanic Youth. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 52(7), pp.736-746.
16. Arrington-Sanders, R., Harper, G.W., Morgan, A., Ogunbajo, A., Trent, M. and Fortenberry, J.D., 2015. The role of sexually explicit material in the sexual development of same-sex-attracted Black adolescent males. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 44(3), pp.597-608
 17. Wright, P.J., Tokunaga, R.S. and Kraus, A., 2015. A meta-analysis of pornography consumption and actual acts of sexual aggression in general population studies. *Journal of Communication*, 66(1), pp.183-205.
 18. <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/women-and-equalities-committee/sexual-harassment-and-sexual-violence-in-schools/written/37444.html>
 19. <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-National-Sexual-Harassment-and-Assault-Report.pdf>
 20. Lorimer K, McMillan L, McDaid L, Milne D, Russell S, Hunt K. Exploring masculinities, sexual health and wellbeing across areas of high deprivation in Scotland: The depth of the challenge to improve understandings and practices. *Health & place*. 2018 Mar 31;50:27-41.
 21. Jozkowski, K.N., Marcantonio, T.L. and Hunt, M.E., 2017. College students' sexual consent communication and perceptions of sexual double standards: a qualitative investigation. *Perspectives on sexual and reproductive health*, 49(4), pp.237-244.
 22. <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-our-sexual-health-services-1>