



The Naked Truth

An Interview with Dr. Judith A. Reisman

by Bobby Maddex

Just a brief glance at Dr. Judith Reisman's *curriculum vitae* is enough to make you wonder what you've been doing your whole life. The author of four books (her fifth is on its way), a guest lecturer at more colleges and universities than most of us can even name, and the source of testimony before so many governmental hearings, committees, commissions, and task forces that you'd swear she was the last expert witness—of any kind—on the planet, Reisman also publishes regularly in the journals of at least seven different academic disciplines and has been cited in over 25 scholarly and popular books. Oh, and did I mention?—she was also once a writer for the *Captain Kangaroo* television show.

So how come you've never heard of her? Well, it just so happens that Reisman is the foremost authority on the negative effects of pornography, and this is something that the porn industry would rather you knew nothing about. Indeed, for some thirty years now, she has devoted her life to demonstrating—through irrefutable scientific evidence—that pornographic images actually alter the chemical structure of the human brain, and not in a good way. Moreover, she has proven beyond question (and to anyone who cares in the least) that pornography can be as addictive as crack cocaine and is a key contributor to

rape, incest, pedophilia, and other forms of sexual assault. Is it any wonder that *Playboy* magazine accused her of “propagating a new witch-hunt mentality”?

And that's the problem. Pornography generates \$12 billion a year and is indispensable both to the field of sexology (any Dr. Ruth fans out there?) and to the profits of pharmaceutical companies, billion-dollar industries in their own right. To attack porn is thus to attack a whole sex-industrial complex, the nearly infinite power and resources of which can make bad buzz disappear in a hurry, not to mention the brave souls who generate it. Of course, none of this changes the truth of Reisman's claims, nor has it prevented that truth from being heard repeatedly by our legislators (now if only they would actually *listen* to it). But what the porn industry *has* managed to do is keep Reisman out of the public imagination, obscuring her findings with the same relentless PR machine that transformed pornography into a mainstream amusement.

With that in mind, we asked Dr. Reisman to give us the naked truth about pornography—to explain in plain language what porn does to us, and why, consequently, it should not be protected under the First Amendment.

How do pornographic images affect us?

There are four scientific disciplines to which we can appeal for an answer to this question. The first is the field of “proxemics.” Proxemics tells us that the way we use space is critical to our survival. People don’t take off their clothing in the middle of the street; they don’t display themselves to strangers. And the reason they don’t is that they can be killed or raped or put into the insane asylum. We don’t display our intimate behaviors to strangers because strangers are not trustworthy. When photographs display a person in this way, whether in *Playboy* or another magazine, some percentage of the millions of people who see these photographs will want to do harm to the person displayed. Nudity should only be displayed in close intimate spaces with either a beloved or a doctor. An organism becomes extremely vulnerable whenever it displays private-space behavior in the public forum. And so one way that pornography affects us is by obliterating the private/public distinction that’s designed to protect us from harm.

Pornography elicits an antagonistic response?

Oh, definitely. If we look at the scientific discipline of “ethology,” which is the study of animal behavior, we see that the nude display of females in pornography pretends to the male viewer that the female is in estrus—in heat—educing a sort of primitive aggressiveness in men. No human females actually go into estrus; only female animals present such mating signals. But pornography approximates estrus in order to elicit the mating instincts of males. The pupil dilation, the open eyes, the open mouth, the presentation of buttocks: these are all mating signals; they indicate to the male that the female is soliciting him. Now if you believe in evolution, you are between a rock and a hard place on this one because the male who sees the female soliciting him in this way *must* respond. He has a normal male appropriative response to the soliciting female.

But the female in this case is just a picture.

Wrong. The male has had a physiological response to the centerfold that confirms her reality. The problem is that he is designed to procreate now. So either he will find someone else with whom to procreate—someone who may or may not share this desire—or he’s going to be angry. Actually, he’s going to be angry regardless because whomever he finds will not be the same as the one who solicited him. And at whom does he become angry? Does he get angry at the guy who took the photograph? Does he get angry at Hugh Hefner? No, of course not; he gets angry at Female. Female is the one who solicited; Female is the one who did not do what she promised. That’s why pornographic images are called “provocative.” We do not provoke to love; we provoke to lust or anger. We provoke to an arousal state that is hostile.

When we say that pornography dehumanizes the female, it really does. It actually pretends that she is an animal in heat. Now, additionally, when female animals go into heat, they solicit a specific male, or maybe two. They don’t solicit 200 million



The First Amendment

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or of abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

males or they would be destroyed; they would be attacked. So this whole solicitation process calls upon the female—upon all females—an overwhelming throng of angry and hostile men.

So what does this mean in terms of how the brain works?

Well, according to the field of neuropsychology, the brain has both excitatory and inhibitory transmitters, located in the right and left hemispheres of the brain, respectively, and the pornographic image triggers the former at the expense of the latter. Indeed, we now know that sexual imagery is more powerful and more indelible to the brain than even fear-inducing imagery.

Pornography thus causes our inhibitory transmitters to shut down, allowing the right brain, which is responsible for our emotional reflexes (lust, fear, shame, etc.), to override the logical left-brain activities that maintain control—homeostasis—in the body. This disrupts the entire process of human cognition and health. In fact, what we are looking at are erototoxins restructuring the human brain. The brain actually changes to accommodate the stimuli it experiences.

This brings us to the fourth scientific discipline involved in the study of pornography's effects: psychopharmacology. Erototoxic materials trigger testosterone and endorphins. We actually get a high from sexual arousal. The big problem with this is that things that are vile and associated with sex become, over time, more arousing than things that are loving.

Porn and the Damage Done

Think pornography is a harmless diversion? Think again. Exposure to provocative photographs or films—particularly when nudity is involved—has the power of a heroin injection, as well as its toxic effects, assaulting the senses and manipulating the mind at both the chemical and the psychological levels. There are basically four different scientific disciplines that inform our understanding of what pornography does to the human organism. To fully comprehend the dangers of porn, one must take a look at each of them.

Proxemics

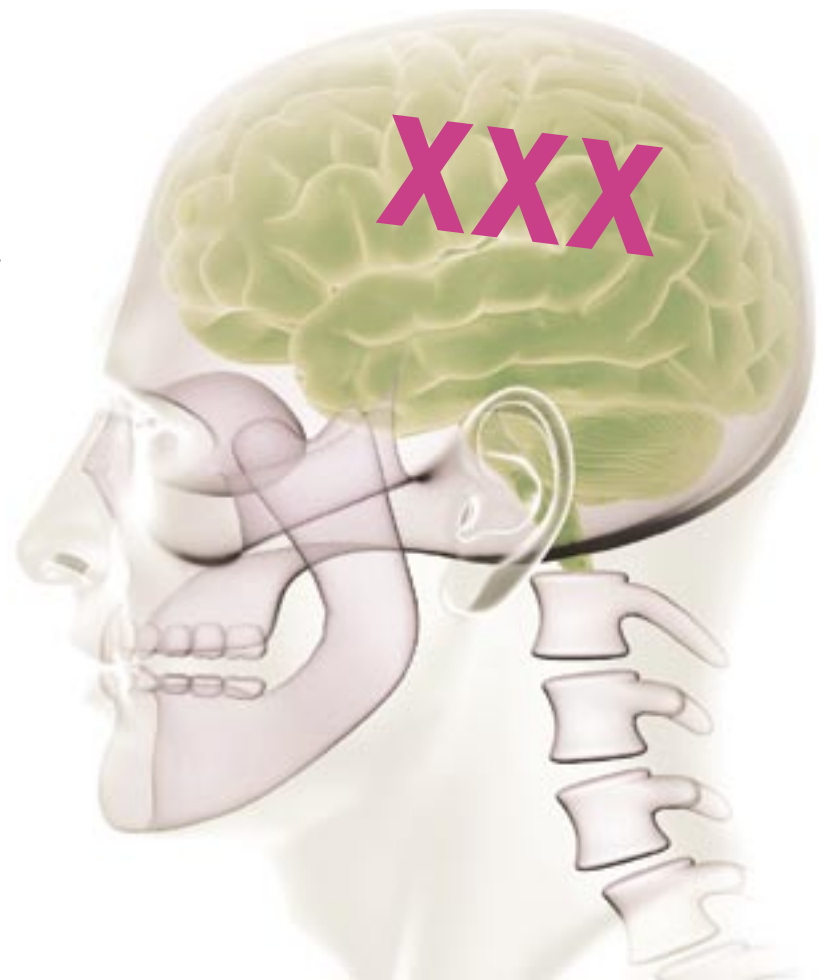
According to proxemics, the way we use space is critical to our survival. The reason why humans do not routinely expose themselves to strangers is that such private-space behavior results in a vulnerability that invites attack. Thus, a pornographic image such as a centerfold, by obliterating the usual spatial relationships between individuals, feigns an openness to aggression to which the user not only becomes accustomed, but upon which he may eventually act in the public sphere.

Ethology

Ethology is the study of animal behavior, and pornography essentially reduces the nude female to the status of an animal by presenting her in poses that mimic estrus (or “heat”). It does so to elicit the mating instincts of males but without the possibility of sexual intercourse. Consequently, the user experiences an anger and frustration that can become habitual, manifesting itself in his interpersonal relationships later on down the road.

Neuropsychology

The human brain has both excitatory and inhibitory transmitters, located in the right and left hemispheres of the brain, respectively. Pornography causes the latter to shut down, allowing the right brain, which is responsible for our emotional reflexes (lust, fear, shame, etc.), to override the logical left-brain activities that maintain control—homeostasis—in the body. This disrupts the entire process of human cognition and health.



Psychopharmacology

Pornography causes the user to experience a broad spectrum of drugs that the human body automatically produces on its own (testosterone, endorphins, etc.), and it triggers them all in one shot. Such endogenous chemicals produce a high as addictive as that generated by such exogenous drugs as cocaine or heroin. In order to replicate the intensity of the high with each subsequent use, the porn addict must seek out progressively more graphic material.

How so?

Pretend for a moment that a man named John and a woman named Jane get married and have babies. After a while, the arousal that each produced in the other begins to deplete; it decelerates because with trust comes less fear. And, hopefully, there's no hostility in the relationship, so that's not going to shoot them up. In short, the couple is learning to really love each other.

One day, John and Jane get exposed to a dirty movie. (By the way, I've interviewed scores of people to whom this has happened.) Jane sees it and gets more aroused than when she's with John, and John sees it and gets more aroused than when he's with Jane. The sense of shame has now intruded upon their relationship as part of the arousal state. Hostility, fear, guilt, all sorts of emotions that come with viewing sexually explicit material cause their arousal states to shoot up. And Jane and John are then confused about their relationship. The next thing you know, they don't believe they love each other any more. Both are the victims of the poly-drug rush they experienced with erototoxic stimuli.

So pornography is like a drug.

Not *like* a drug. It is a drug—a poly-drug, to be more precise. Pornography causes you to experience a broad spectrum of drugs that the human body automatically produces on its own. And it triggers them all in one shot. It also triggers the bonding chemical oxytocin, known as the “cuddle chemical” or the “love chemical,” which is even more confusing to the body and causes arousal to increase even further. Erototoxins induce lust, fear, shame, and hostility, and these trigger an endogenous drug high (endogenous meaning a drug you produce internally) that the organism mislabels as sexual arousal because it doesn't know what else to label it. The confusion leads to all sorts of dysfunctions in both males and females: hence the increase in sex-related crimes—sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, incest, pedophilia, and so on. And you have to understand that this is not an exclusively heterosexual problem. It can result from homosexual stimuli as well. An individual is exposed to homosexual material, and—due to confusion, shame, and hostility—he or she feels aroused. The



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individual is really just in a state of crisis, but the brain interprets it as arousal, which causes him or her to self-identify as homosexual.

You often argue that pornography violates the right to free speech. But pornography is usually defended on free-speech grounds . . .

Yes, it's crazy; people use speech to defend non-speech. They can't defend pornography via images, can they? Nobody can defend pornography just using images. So you revert to speech—to text. But you can't do that. An image is an image. An image is not text. If it were, then you could defend it with an image. There is a crossover to some extent between words and pictures but not a sufficient one.

Our founding fathers were by no means ignorant of language; they talked very well and argued about everything. So what they wrote was what they meant. The definition of “speech” in Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary, the one used by the founding fathers, is “the power of articulate utterance.” Johnson then defines the “press” as merely “the instrument

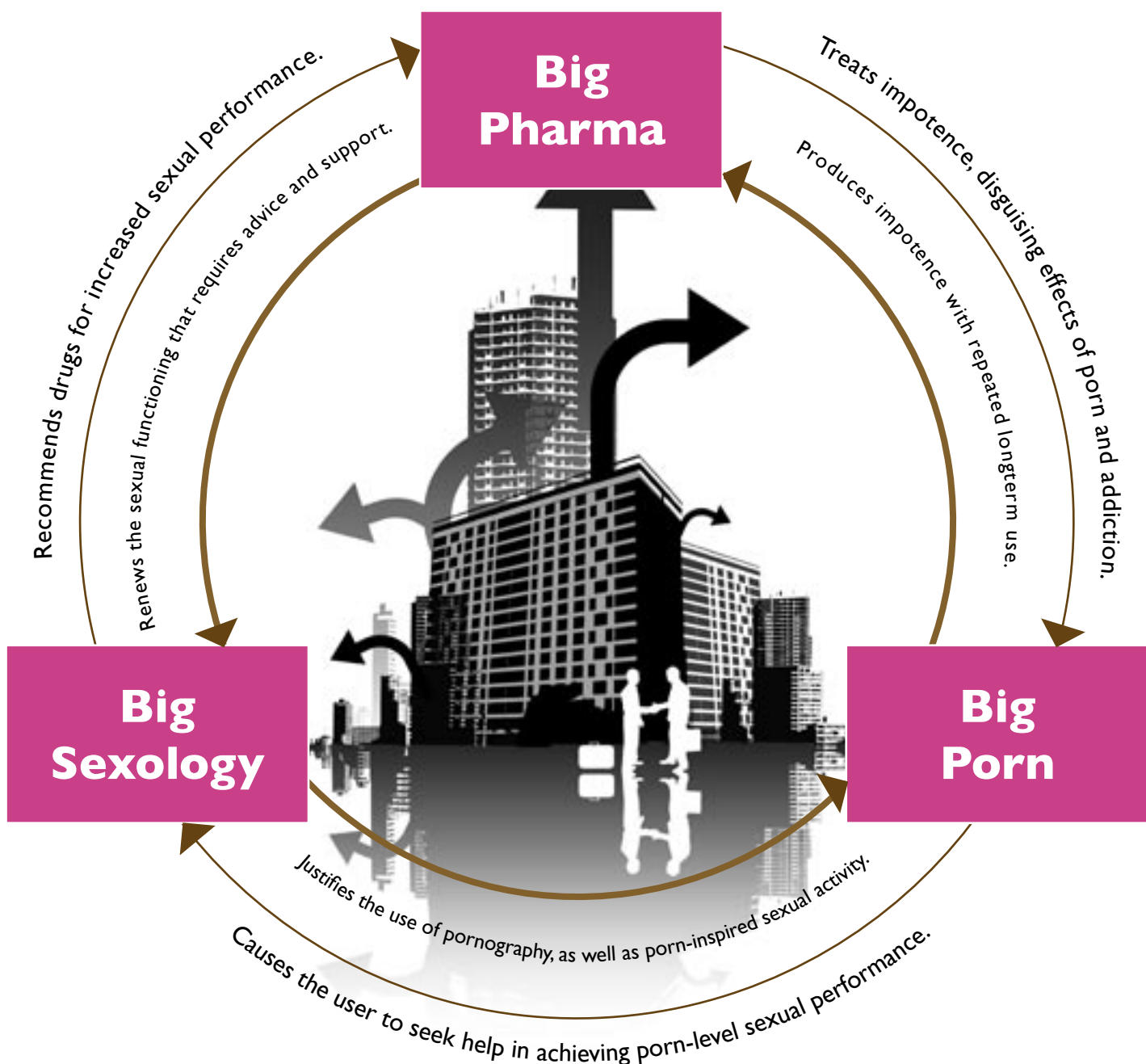
by which books are printed.” Now since these two critical words—as they were defined in 1789, the year Congress proposed the first twelve amendments—do not include “images” in their definitions, it could be argued that the First Amendment’s authors chose not to include pictures in the protection of expression. Having already used images themselves to arouse the people to revolution—think of Ben Franklin’s “join or die” snake woodcut—they may have wanted to limit pictorial expression in public discourse so that matters could be decided cognitively

rather than through emotion. I really think some research could be done to support this position.

But even if images are protected by the First Amendment, it doesn’t change the fact that anything so super-normally arousing to the brain-mind-body—to the organism—will by its very nature undermine that organism’s ability to think and process cognitively—to be free in thought and speech. Pornography violates the First Amendment because it inhibits the left-brain activity that is crucial to thinking and acting freely.

The Sex-Industrial Complex

The pornography industry is a part of a much larger sex-industrial complex that likewise includes pharmaceutical companies and the field of professional sexology. Each constituent helps feed the other, resulting in billion-dollar profits for all.



You've described pornography as being part of a larger sex-industrial complex. What do you mean by this?

The sex-industrial complex is comprised of sexology (the so-called “systematic study of sexual behavior” that is forever pushing the boundaries of what constitutes a “normal” sex act), pornography, and the pharmaceutical industry. Big sexology has always been a part of big pornography. From Kinsey on, in both the courtroom and the court of public opinion, it took sexology to change the laws to say that pornography is not harmful.

As men increasingly use pornography, in keeping with its legitimization, they become increasingly impotent. You see, that's part of the pornographic experience; you become impotent in the sense that you cannot function without having images and stimuli outside of your marital—your loving—relationship. “Impotent” means without power, and the male is indeed without his own power after becoming addicted to pornography; he has to rely on the power that's given to him by one of these pictures or films. The addicted male develops impotence because he also entertains this bizarre notion that the female with whom he is copulating should really look like one of his stapled centerfolds. He feels that his lover is supposed to be under 24; she's supposed to have blond hair; her skin is supposed to be flawless; she's supposed to have an 18-inch waist and a 40-inch bust. All of these impossible images come to dominate his brain-body—his organism.

At this point, big pharma steps in and helps the man to function, despite the “shortcomings” of his partner. And the more pornography he consumes, the more big pharma can step in with the palliatives that will help this guy think he's still a man.

This is but one example of the sex-industrial complex: sexologists legitimizing pornography, pornography producing impotence, and pharmaceutical companies treating the impotence caused by pornography. These businesses are all interconnected and dependent on one another for combined profits in the billions.

Can you give us another example?

Sure; just look at child vaccines. The more pornography and sexology increase juvenile sexual activity, the more big pharma can step in with an Hepatitis B vaccine for infants. HepB is a sexually transmitted disease, and there is no reason to give the vaccine to babies. But big pharma has been making a fortune on it ever since states have begun mandating that all of our little darlings,

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with their wee tiny hearts and lungs and no immune system functioning, be shot up with it (and recently small girls with Human Papilloma Virus, HPV vaccines) all in the name of protecting them. What we don't want to do is turn off the pornography flood (no administration has chosen to do that) because it fuels so many other things. And in the wings are vaccines for syphilis and gonorrhea and a whole host of other sexually transmitted diseases.

You have consulted with four different US Department of Justice administrations, the US Department of Education, and the US Department of Health and Human Services. What has resulted from all of your work? Has anything changed?

To be honest, I don't think anyone has really listened to me. Under Reagan, I did have a crack at changing things. I did a huge research project in this area under Reagan, but it was attacked from every angle and from every person who could possibly do so. I think Reagan was rendered impotent in that regard.

Since then? No. Let's put it this way; I'm very unimpressed with what our administrations have done since Reagan. There's a lot of rhetoric but no real action. Our politicians know full well that you will never shut down sex trafficking or child pornography unless you shut down adult pornography as well. That's not a secret.

Is there any hope?

Well, yes. Considering that *Playboy* premiered in the early fifties, the fact that it has taken us this long to become as depraved as we are tells me that we have a lot of potential for doing right. I'm very serious about this. That the nation is only as traumatized as it is tells me that we are a powerful people. It also tells me that the moral imperative that lies latent in each of us can be awakened if we could just get past the mass media control to the minds and hearts of the American people. ☉

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Fact Finds

Tom Reichert of the University of Alabama evaluated 2,863 full-page ads in six consumer magazines published in both 1992 and 1998. He found that ads geared to young adults in their twenties, relative to ads geared to older adults, were 1.65 times more likely to feature models dressed sexually and 2.28 times more likely to feature models engaged in sexual behavior.