Law Anthropology: Interrelation between Pornography and Domestic Violence (a Theory)

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Abstract - Pornography is a social cancer of the global society. Its contemporary roots can be traced in the enormous opportunity of Internet to develop pornography as free or cheap industry. One of the aspects of pornography is its negative role in the family relationships by contributing to the increasing of the disbalance of mutual respect defined in this project as domestic violence. There are still missing many detailed publications focusing especially on pornography and domestic violence, but the information is enough to have a priority task to analyze in depth the problem and to search for a successful methodology to prevent pornography as a risk factor in the family relationships.

This research project proposes instead that by developing vast and even global program of sex drive and affirmative attachment as cultural constructs would reinvent in society the emotional intimate relationships based on commitment, secure attachment, mutual respect, and positive interactions. Despite its popularity in the psychological literature, the attachment theory is not popular even among the specialists in the other social sciences, while the secure attachment is the best means against any family risk factors including pornography.

1. Goal and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to determine to which extend it is possible to connect pornography with domestic violence. Today the last varies from bulling and insulting to killing, then, it requires special attention. Victims could be from newborn babies to elderly people. However, in many cases the role of the invisible factors like watching pornography is neglected because the focus is on the visible behavior like alcoholism, use of drug or psychopathological disorders, for instance. Pornography has been seen as a consequence and not as a reason for an aggressive behavior.

The objective of this research includes:

1. Clarification of terminology.
2. Overview of exemplary literature.
3. Theoretical approach toward communication strategies that reveal pornculture as a risk factor in human relationships.
4. Proposing preventing strategies.

The project consists of introduction, clarification of the basic terms, literature overview, revealing pornculture as a risk factor, proposing preventing strategies, and references of selected literature.

2. Introduction

This assignment is a challenge since exposure to pornography has not been reported as a risk factor in all cases of domestic violence. It is presumed mostly based on more general and indirect facts. In case of Utah the correlation is between the reported general high rates of exposure to pornography and to domestic violence, although it cannot be straightforward concluded a direct relationship. The problem is significant since it concerns the security of the family members while pornography is free or a very cheap and easily accessible “entertainment” with possible tragic consequences in some cases including even damaging the brain and addiction. It will be not a surprise of the investigation documents an exposure to pornography of the most recent triple-murder-suicide case from West Jordan (Reavy, 2009). If so, the complex visible-invisible theory should be proposed, because the visible factors are the ownership of guns, couple separation and financial problems.

Because of the Internet that stimulates enormous increases of porno-sources, pornography may soon occur in DSM as a disorder. The scale of pornography is visible by the fact that from 8 billion-per-year industry, as it is indicated in the 1,960 pages report of the Attorney General’s commission on pornography (online) from 1986, today it is a multibillion business.

3. Terminology

It is essential to define the two terms used in the title: pornography and domestic violence (see also Nikolova, 2009).

3.1. Pornography

The offered definitions are usually ambiguous and not precise since they do not define pornography as a specific and unique cultural unit. The definitions overlap pornography with erotic and nudity.

According to the first type of definitions, pornography is any sexually explicit material (e.g. Pornography and Censorship, 2004). Pornography has been defined by two polisemantic words – sexually and explicit.
The second type of definitions (e.g. Pornography, online; Pornography and Censorship, 2004) includes three interdependable encoded components: depiction (1), erotic behavior (2) and sexual excitement (sexual arousal) (3). Such definition relies on decoding of the message as pornography, but it is unclear why it should be decoded as pornography and not as an erotic excitement.

Because of debating and not discussion character of the relation to pornography, pornography is usually described as something negative in compare to erotic.

It is in fact difficult to make precise difference between erotic and pornographic since pornography may include erotic as encoding message for decoding a pleasure or sexual desire.

In this project it can be offered the following working definition: Pornography is a depicted sexual intercourse, which is only or dominated focus point of non-digital or digital presentation without any other leading contextual meaning.

This definition tries to avoid the overlapping with erotic presentation and nudity.

3.2. Domestic violence

The definitions of domestic violence are also controversial and ambiguous (see e.g. Domestic violence, Definition(s) of, online). FBI includes in the definition “pattern of behavior” and aggressiveness (physical, emotional, sexual, economic) of the “intimate partner”. Other definitions also include possible abuse of other that the intimate partner members of the family. The definitions usually include attempting control of one partner over another.

The following working definition of domestic violence can be accepted:

Domestic violence is any verbal or non-verbal act, which attempt disbalance of mutual respect and integrity in the household.

Control is a word that was avoided in this definition, since many acts of the violence are in fact means of punishments and not means of control. Violence includes physical aggressiveness, but it could be masked by invisible even respectful behavior. Typical instances are the stolen credit cards, which act may connect members of families.

4. Overview of Exemplary Literature

To approach the problem it should be discussed the general and specific literature. The results of the overview would be a base for working conclusions to answer the question whether it is appropriate to think about connection between the exposure to pornography and domestic violence and to propose prevention strategy.

The basic initial step is the 1,960 pages report of the Attorney General’s commission on pornography (online). Among the pervasive dangers emerging from the evidence are:

1. The addictive and progressive in nature character of pornography and its reflection on the sexual relationship between husbands and wives.
2. Psychotherapists are seeking increasing numbers of disturbed young patients who may never enjoy healthy attitudes about sex.
3. … Pornography is damaging to the family in countless ways… Society has an absolute obligation to protect itself from material that crosses the line established objectively by its legislature and court system. That is not sexual repression; that is self-preservation (Attorney General’s commission on pornography, online).

Based on analysis of behavior of recidivists Kingston et al. concluded, “pornography exposure was a significant predictor of aggression when examined in confluence with other risk factors” (2008, p. 350). It is based on a review of a large amount of literature on the aggressive consequences of the pornography exposure including the Hierarchical-Meditational Confluence model (HMC). In contrast to pass-oriented models, the last provides both a cumulative and conditional-probability explanation for the causes of sexually aggressive behavior (Kingston et al., 2008, p. 343).

It is important for the topic the statistics according to which more women who are victims of domestic violence have been reporting that their abusers view pornography. Abuse starts with put-downs, progresses to physical abuse, sexual insults, sexual abuse and rape (Park, 2009). However, McKee (2007) suggests that consuming pornography is not a significant factor in the generation of negative attitudes towards women. His conclusion is based on more than 1000 interview with pornography consumers in Australia. Seto, Maric, & Barbee (2001) critically analyzed the available literature and concluded that the causal link between pornography use and sexual offending remains equivocal. At the same time they propose correlation between individuals who are already predisposed to sexually offend and the strongest effect of pornography exposure. In contrary, the authors believe that men who are not predisposed would show transient effect and would not normally seek violent pornography.

Other general sources on the topic include sexual stratification and pornography (e.g. Barron & Strauss, 1984), understanding sexual addiction (e.g. Carnes, 2001; Johnson, 2007), the interrelation between television, sexuality and violence (e.g. Malamuth & Check, 1981; Arthurs, 2004), violence and media (e.g. Carter & Kay Weaver, 2003), pornography and violence (e.g. Russell, 1980; Padgett et al., 1989; Jensen, 2004; Scottish, 2007), the variety of pornography (e.g. Check, 1985; Demare et al., 1993;
Eckersley, 1987; Sarracino & Scott, 2008), and the theory of domestic violence (e.g. Jackson, 2007), of victims and victimology (Walklate, 2007), and of psychology of criminals (Bartol & Bartol, 2004).

Essential direction of research is the deeper analysis of the domestic violence (e.g. Dotton, 2006). From perspectives of the social learning theory (SLT), physical abuse is a habit, a learned means of coping with stress (2006, p. 156). This conclusion can be also expanded to psychological abuse. However, physical and psychological abuse can be not only learned, but they can be spontaneous and emotional response to a behavior, which contrasts to the expected model. Probably similar is the ideas about the uncontrollable response to the aversive life events (2006, p. 157). In SLT In SLT, aggression is a response that seeks to control or eliminate an aversive situation (2006, p. 158). Instigators of aggression are Situational modeling influences (disinhibitory, facilitative, arousing, and stimulus-enhancing) and aversive treatment through physical attacks, verbal threats and insults, and adverse reductions in reinforcements (2006, p. 163). Dotton does not work specifically on the role of pornography, but some of the general characteristics of the perpetrator are helpful for general consideration. Of specific interest is the role of the dysfunctional attachment. The attachment has been generally distinguished in four categories – secure, fearful, preoccupied or dismissing (2006, p. 196). Pornography would relate the most to dismissing attachment.

Other group of research of primary importance is focus of the damage of the social brain as a result of pornculture (e.g. Kastleman, online). The neurobiology today using the computer technology shows that the brain stores the observed or imagined images as encoded information. On case of pornimages cellular-memory groups storing pornographic images and the neural pathways leading to them “are so deep and entrenched that their influence can permeate the whole mind body network.” (Kastleman, online) The porn images can be activated from a thousand different kinds of outside stimuli-or, many times, for no apparent reason at all. (ibid.)

The exemplary literature shows that direct correlation between pornography and domestic violence would requires further in depth research. But such correlation is very possible based on indirect data including the interviews of victimized wives. Since there are different kinds of pornography including violent pornography and different kinds of domestic violence, this future research may answer also which specific aspects of both phenomena correlate the most. It can be assumed direct relationship between violent pornography and domestic violence related to sex offenders, for instance.

5. Pornography as a Risk Factor or Alternative Methodology and Preventing Strategy

5.1. Sexuality and Pornculture as a coined subject

The tremendous development of pornculture as a result of Internet has been changing dramatically our view on sexuality. Sexuality and pornculture become a coin, which sides are alternatives and competing in the real life.

As the recent research shows, even the deepest analysis of pornography as a risk factor and the vastest social movements do not stop it, since the industry of pornography can go through any social filter, especially because of Internet. Pornography is a legal industry. Then, it can be thought about alternative methodologies by development of preventing strategies that make people go away from pornography by changing their behavior.

Recently the literature on pornculture and sexuality are two different streams of research and media expressions. A successful alternative methodology would stress on the positive effect of the sexual intercourse and on the role of culture in the sex drive of the people. It would reveal strongly the negative effect of pornography not as propaganda but as a research analysis. Propaganda never has a success itself and this one of the weaknesses of the feminist movement, which in many cases is based not on deep research (see e.g. Newbrough, online), but on common sense ideas that can be debated from the scientific point of view.

This alternative methodology should not propose replacement of one addiction with another addiction but attempt to develop understanding of pornography as an addition and to make the victims consciously switch to an alternative style of life. Possible steps are:

Conferences with public panels on sex drive and culture in past and present by including of pornculture as a risk factor;

Poster-exhibits distributed in different social and educational centers;

Development of network of interrelated programs opposed to domestic violence that includes pornculture as a risk factor;

Increasing of the role of the schools in education on sexuality and domestic violence.

The target population does not have age limits, since domestic violence is a common problem for all ages. The program should be long-term and to develop gradually by involving more and more media sources. The cost depends on donations and eventually state and federal funding.
6. Conclusion

Early 21st century is a period of general changes of human style of life under the influences of media and direct involvement of almost every teen and adult in Internet network. Although connectivity between people increases, humans create their own cognitive world in which the cultural constructs depend on childhood, education, family traditions, and actual multi-layered environment. Pornography disintegrates family and can develop even antagonistic relationships since it attacks directly the core of the family clue – the attachment between the spouses. Disattachment is the main reason for domestic violence. Then, a focus on sex drive and affirmative attachment is a way to get rid of pornography as a personal cultural construct that in turn may create opportunity to decrease the cases of domestic violence. Further surveys on the role of pornography in family conflict may help to develop the theory of the direct interconnection between pornography addiction and domestic violence in early 21st century.

References


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