

US Government Report

As part of the serious and comprehensive debate in Danish and English on this site concerning the topic of children & sex we cite briefly from pages 259-262 in the esteemed anthology Children & Sex: New Findings, New Perspectives". Little, Brown & Co., Boston 1981. Edited by Larry L. Constantine & Floyd N. Martinson:

„The issue of children and pornography is twofold:

the effect of pornography on children and the participation of children in pornography. There simply are no adequate research studies on the effects of pornography on children. Even the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (1970), with socially justifiable cowardice, failed to conduct studies on children, although this did not deter them from concluding (from research on adults) that pornography did not harm children. Somehow it seems reasonable to suspect that the effect of graphic or written erotica on children should not be worse than the effect of „precocious“ sexual experience, but in the final analysis this question probably reduces to personal views on the intrinsic goodness or evil of sex. A case should be made that too little of a healthy erotic nature is accessible to children, not too much. The poor quality, dehumanizing character, and paraphilial emphases that are the hallmarks of contemporary pornography are byproducts of its socially marginal and only quasi-legitimate status. Were sex sufficiently acceptable in our culture so that healthy and affectionate but erotic portrayals of human sexuality could become an integral part of children's literature and television, the likelihood of interest in, exposure to, or negative effects from poor quality pornography would be reduced. Currently the basest and most degrading material is forbidden in our society but available, while affectionate, healthy erotica is censored.

Child pornography has become, almost overnight, an American outrage (Dudar, 1997; Behavior Today, 1977a, 1977b). It is a complex issue to which few seem capable of bringing reason and balance (Constantine, 1977d). That the abuse and exploitation of children by certain pornographers is detestable and unconscionable should not obscure other issues involved: the sexual rights of children or their ultimate best interests, for example. But the public outrage has indiscriminately attacked and ultimately may undermine the rights of educational innovators such as McBride and Fleischhauer-Hardt (1975), talented serious photographers like Davis Hamilton (1976), and legitimate minority groups such as nudists. Indeed, materials such as these are often experienced as sexually exciting by children (Constantine, 1977b), and therefore to have access to them should fall within the rights of children.

Few commentators have considered whether erotica portraying minors may represent the only acceptable outlet for the sexual preferences of pedophiles and, as such, may be a substitute for actual child molestation. The experience in Denmark appears to support this hypothesis. If this hypothesis is valid, then by inference legal scapegoating of the publishers, sellers, and buyers of child-oriented pornography could actually contribute to a rise in crime against children.

Were the actual rights of children to be defended, pornography using children would undoubtedly continue, but its production could be made more accessible to policing. Child actors in legitimate media are protected by the scrutiny made possible in a legal industry in which rights to participate are recognized; if it were legal to produce and sell pornography, children who did not wish to participate could better be protected from exploitation at the hands of parents and other adults. The extremes of exploitation, kidnapping, rape, and other excesses of the pornographer

using children are at the present time products of the illegality of the enterprise. It might show more concern for children to permit some children to participate willingly in pornography under monitorable conditions, than to have others brutally exploited because of their status as runaways or mere chattels of their parents.

INCEST

No topic seems more capable of disabling the rational faculties of the most intelligent adult than the subject of incest. From a radical perspective, children have the right to express themselves sexually even with members of their own families. Is incest as some has argued, categorically a harmful experience? Popular supposition to the contrary, careful research has produced no definitive conclusions. Nearly all the published literature derives from studies of clinical and criminal cases and is therefore hopelessly biased, yet the only general conclusion warranted is that not even prolonged incest is necessarily harmful. Again it has been shown that the absence of force or coercion; openness of communication in the family, especially about sexual matters; and knowledgeable, positive attitudes about sex appear to contribute to positive (or less negative) perceptions of the experience, and to favorable outcomes. Recent studies of incest on nonclinical, noncriminal populations (see, for example, Ramey, 1972, and studies by Finkelhor, Symonds et al., and Nelson, Chapters 11, 12, and 13 in this volume, respectively) and accumulating anecdotal data indicate that many people have incestuous experiences that they regard positively and that do not appear to have impaired them socially or psychologically. The basic rationale for the incest taboo may be tied to assumptions about human relations and family structures that were once, but are no longer valid (Constantine and Constantine, 1973: 218-227)- namely, that family roles (husband, sister, son, and son on) must be sharply delineated and that one can successfully maintain only one intimate sexual relationship within a family or living group.

Conclusion

It must be emphasized that this analysis is not a work of advocacy. Rather, what is attempted in this chapter is an exploration of the implications of extending a presently radical view of children's rights into the area of childhood sexual experience. Almost certainly this extension will be found repugnant, perhaps even frightening, by some; it is unlikely to be looked upon with favor by more than the few. There is little doubt that between contemporary Western sexual mores and full recognition of the sexual rights of children lies a social gulf of awesome magnitude. Nevertheless, the serious and open-minded appraisal of such farfetched possibilities can be useful as we tread, small step by small step, toward healthier acceptance of the sexuality of all, young and old.

**Kilde: Side 259-262 i antologien "[Children and Sex: New Findings, New Perspectives](#)".
Little, Brown & Co., Boston 1981. Redigeret af Larry L. Constantine & Floyd N.
Martinson.**