

Books Reviewed

THE INFLUENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY ON BEHAVIOR. By M. Yaffé and E.C. Nelson. London: Academic Press, 1982. 276 Pp., \$26.

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The influence of media and their contents on behavior is one of the most controversial issues in contemporary society. The debate is perhaps no more impassioned than in the study of pornography and its effects on behavior. This topic has stimulated a large volume of complex research with inconsistent results while society continues to react to pornography in an emotional way, often unable to synthesize a coherent understanding of such exploitative erotica. This particular book begins that synthesis by offering a broad perspective. It brings together an edited collection of papers representing several disciplines (psychiatry, psychology, law, theater, art history, education, and general medicine). It also has a sample of black-and-white plates illustrative of erotica and pornography from different civilized cultures.

Each of the authors debates the central issue: do media cause, shape, or merely reflect behavior? All the chapters are well written, but several of them stand out as clinically significant. Nelson's chapter, "Pornography and Sexual Aggression," is the most comprehensive review of that topic in several years. It gives a concise but exhaustive presentation of most major research in the field and should be read by anyone seeking an overview of the area. Roth's contribution, "Pornography and Society: A Psychiatric View," gives a nice summary of historical trends in pornography and discusses their implications. This book also has several unique chapters, including one by Picard concerning female responses to sexual material. Dallas's chapter on using visual media in sex education and Yaffe's chapter on the therapeutic use of sexually explicit media are very refreshing and offer clinically useful information. There is further valuable information in the chapters on censorship, free speech, obscenity, forensic psychology, and an important piece that helps differentiate erotic art from pornography. Space precludes a more detailed summary of each contribution.

This book offers a broadly based collection of essays and succinctly surveys the major perspectives on pornography and its behavioral consequences. I recommend it as a useful and informative addition to the libraries of forensic psychiatrists, forensic psychologists, and especially those who work with sex offenders or patients suffering from psychosexual disorders. □