

Elena Laguarda • Ma. Fernanda Laguarda • Regina Novelo

YOUR CHILD IS ONE CLICK AWAY FROM PORNOGRAPHY

Do you know what to do?



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WHY THIS BOOK?

During the course of more than 15 years, since we began to teach sexuality workshops to girls, boys and adolescents, we have noticed a transformation in minors' views on the subject. The students' needs and concerns are changing. Much is due to the information to which they now have access through the media and new technology. However, nothing had prepared us for the shock that we experienced one particular morning with a group of 11-year-old boys and girls. It was our first time working with them. We were just beginning to introduce ourselves and explain that we would lead a sexuality workshop when the barrage of uncomfortable questions began: How are women turned on? What is the vibrating ring? What sex toys exist? What is a blow job? Are you a virgin? Did you have relations before you married? What is your favorite position? Do you like oral sex? Have you ever sexted?

While we had been asked similar questions before, they had come out of the mouths of high school students. Now the questions were being asked by children who let us know, with their words, that pornography was already present in their lives. From then on these types of questions became more and more frequent. We visited classrooms in which girls complained that their male classmates interpreted everything with a dirty mentality and used vulgar and foul language: "Teacher, I'm tired of my classmate telling me all the time *I want to shove it inside you.*" We had to start approaching the subject of pornography at an earlier age, devising prevention and intervention messages with children and families. To our surprise, one of the most recent

interventions we had was with 8-year-old girls who, upon learning that we would soon discuss the topic of sexuality, quickly showed unease. When we started the workshops talking to them about babies and pregnancy, they began to cover their eyes and ears as if we would teach them something inappropriate, dirty. They had a strong aversion to any reference to the subject. Later, when they managed to verbalize their fears, we were able to help them: “Why do men put their penis in the vagina?” “How is it that such a large penis fits in such a small hole?” Unfortunately, in this case we realized these young girls had been in constant contact with hard pornography that not only had displayed a distorted view of sexuality at their tender age, but had made them witnesses of child sexual abuse, through the screen of a computer.

There is no doubt that technology coupled with the massive pornographic industry that makes this type of material increasingly more accessible to children at an earlier age is winning the game. This book is an effort to close ranks and open our eyes to an issue that impacts the lives of boys and girls. It is an effort to provide tools to parents to ensure that their children’s approach to sexuality is lived naturally, free from coercion and violence. Ultimately, the responsibility for this rests with us.

WHY AN UPDATE?

Five years have passed since we wrote the first book, *A Click Away: Strategies to Approach the Matter of Pornography with Children and Adolescents*. When it first came out, the book left an impression on many, as it confirmed what they were already sensing: that pornography was having an impact on the sexual education of minors; at the same time it generated great confusion in others. “Is there really a problem with pornography?” they questioned. “Pornography has always existed, all you have to do is explain what they see”, they suggested. The fact of the matter is that pornography was changing, it was not the same as when we were young, and there was almost no research on it, even less so on its impact on minors. Over the course of these years, more studies have been conducted in the psychology, neurology and even the clinical fields. In the last two years, in several countries many have begun to talk about the “New Pornography”, which contains many of the characteristics that we discovered from our research. This update integrates recent figures on its impact and collects research that can help better understand this complex problem. It also broadens the perspective of violence that is implicit in pornography, which is a reflection of our society, and also one of many causes of sexual violence that we experience today and that women especially suffer.

FACTS AND FIGURES ON PORNOGRAPHY

The history of pornography is a reliable record of the attitudes that society holds towards sexuality, the human

body, different erotic practices and their representations.¹

The word pornography has its origin in two Greek words: *pórn*, (prostitute) and *gráphein*, (record, write, illustrate) to which the suffix *y*, a progression of *ia*, is added (condition of, property of, place of). Based on its etymological origin, it could be defined as “a depiction or illustration of prostitutes or prostitution” and it has been present throughout history from ancient times in writings, codices and paintings, which sought to transgress taboos and provoke the viewer.

However, pornography is a more recent term. It was used for the first time in 1769 by the French novelist Nicolas Edme Restif and it was not widely used until 1819. In English it became a familiar word in the middle of the 19th century. In 1899 the term in Spanish was incorporated into the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of the Language.

There are multiple definitions of pornography, all written from the perspective of an ideology that either exalts or demonizes it, unable to leave aside the inevitable discussion on whether or not it should be tolerated. For the purpose of this book, we will define it as all those materials, writings, images or reproductions that represent nudes or sexual acts with the purpose of provoking sexual arousal in those who watch them. However, on a deeper level, we coincide with the opinion of Peter Wagner, one of the first pornography historians, who defines it as a realistic written or visual presentation of any sexual behavior with the deliberate intention of violating existing and widely accepted social and moral taboos.²

Since its most ancient origins, the function of pornography has been to break with social conventions; it has always been a space of dissent from the established order. Just as the Bible and religious texts began to be distributed in the year 1450 with the birth of the printing press, the circulation of texts, engravings and books with

sexual content also began its propagation. Starting in the 1800s, the invention of photography, and later cinematography, fueled access to provocative images of desire to a much higher number of spectators. Pornography represented a radical and transgressive approach to the body and sexuality that drew on the progress of science and technology. It questioned the moral rules and religious dogmas of its time, demystifying the body and sexual relations, recognizing the existence of female and male desire. Pornography was a banner of the revolutionary and free-thinking movement. Paradoxically, throughout history, pornography has also reflected established patterns of sexual behavior and gender roles, representing women as submissive and passive while men are depicted as dominant and aggressive. Furthermore, much of it reflects the exploitation of women without this issue being questioned at all, as it wasn't being questioned in society itself.

Throughout history, many political and religious leaders have positioned themselves as defenders of public morality and against pornography to which they have attributed all past, present and future social evils, rendering it legal or illegal in accordance with the ideology in power. Thus, at one time it was illegal, for example, for Black men to view pornography in which white women were depicted, or for women's nipples to be visible. Nowadays, the convention of what is allowed to be shown varies from country to country. For instance, in Cuba, Iceland, Turkey and North Korea pornography of any kind is illegal. Throughout much of Europe and the Americas, including in Mexico, it is legal with the exception of violent or non-consensual acts, human trafficking or when it involves minors. Not surprisingly, pornography involving minors is prohibited worldwide. But it seems that pornography feeds on prohibition and taboos, because that is where it latches its impulse to push boundaries. Wherever there is a prohibition, pornography will do whatever it takes to break it and continue with a

dizzying questioning of morality and pursuing the staging of the most intimate fantasies.

The defenders of “morality” contend that the perverse desires that lead to violence and rape can be eradicated if the source that feeds them -pornography- is annihilated; they consider it as the legitimizer of violence against women and a crime in and of itself as it incites misconduct. On the other hand, there are the defenders of freedom of sexual expression who claim that trying to avoid the existence of pornography speaks of a repressive society unable to tolerate differences. Currently there is a school of thought that intends to establish a dialogue with existing pornography to try, from within the industry, to generate higher quality content - with no sexism, racism, violence or coercion - to use it as a part of a sex ed program. Even sites such as Pornhub -the largest porn site worldwide, born in Montreal, Canada, and which shares statistics for analysis and research- created the portal Pornhub Sexual Health Center, with the help of a diverse group of experts, to offer information over a variety of sexuality related topics, from how to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) to the commitment people acquire at the onset of becoming sexually active. Of course, a topic absent in their platform is the impact of pornography on people’s sexual life.

There are also studies that focus on trying to find the real impact that pornography has on adults’ experiences. For example, a study carried out in Spain in June 2019 by the Universitat de les Illes Balears and the Madrid Youth and Inclusion network, collected almost 2,500 interviews of teenagers between the ages of 16 and 19, analyzing the impact of pornography in their erotic experience, autoeroticism, sexual practices and relationship with violence. Several of these studies analyze pornography as a