Sexual Exploitation by Health Professionals in Cartoons of a [Playboy] Popular Magazine

by

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in

Sexual Exploitation of Patients by Health Professionals

Edited by Ann W. Burgess, R.N., D.N.Sc., and Carol R. Hartman, R.N., D.N.Sc. ¹

The Following Opening Remarks, Explaining the Title Change in the Burgess and Hartman Book are Not in the Original Book Publication

The Burgess and Hartman text, Sexual Exploitation by Health Professionals is now a classic in the sexual abuse literature. It is especially telling then that the title of the Reisman, Reisman and Elman report, “Sexual Exploitation by Health Professionals in Cartoons of a Popular Magazine” was originally entitled “Sexual Exploitation by Health Professionals in Playboy Cartoons.” It is argued that the attached constitutes evidence of Playboy’s premeditated “Social Contagion” given support by Praeger’s censorship.

At the midnight hour before publication, Praeger threatened to exclude this research report unless the authors censored Playboy as the subject of this chapter on the US Department of Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Grant content analysis of Images of Children, Crime & Violence in Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler, 1989, US Dpt of Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Grant No. 84-JN-AX-K007. No justification was given for Praeger’s decision to censor Playboy as the media under investigation. In addition, the six sample Playboy cartoons, dated with page number and cartoonist signature were excised by Praeger effectively eliminating the hard evidence that supported the DoJ/OJJDP research findings.

Two cartoon “jokes” below typify the systemic display of Playboy cartoons that preceded the epidemic of sexually exploitive behavior by health professionals documented in this text by Burgess and others. The authors state that ‘Acts of sexual exploitation are generally repeated with multiple patients hence the overwhelming and frightening recognition that many thousands of patients are exploited sexually every year.”²

Chronology is a critical evidential datum for social contagion. Although some doctors will have been sexually predatory Sexual situations in which an adult in an authority position uses sex to take advantage of another person with less power may be termed sexual exploitation. The victim is used primarily for individual gratification, profit, or other selfish reasons. "sexual misconduct" often triggers debate over the precise


²Harold Lief, quoted in the Foreword to Burgess, ibid, p. xiii.
type of sexual activity, in this book it is used specifically to denote a health professional's intention to misuse the clinical setting for sexual contact.  

Kenneth Pope writing in Sexual Involvement with Therapists, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 1994 reports that While the scientific and professional literature had contained carefully documented individual case studies and theoretical papers describing the harm that therapist-patient sex could cause, larger scale studies began to emerge in the 1960s and 70s.

William Masters and Virginia Johnson, for example, gathered data from many research participants for their 1966 report Human Sexual Response and the 1970 report Human Sexual Inadequacy. They were surprised at the number of participants in their samples who had engaged in sex with therapists.

“[T]herapists--psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and marriage counselors” lost their insurance coverage for sexual malpractice cases in the early 1980s before the Catholic Church lost theirs. Therapist malpractice insurance was capped at $25,000 five years later to prudently eliminate most victim lawsuits since that time.

“In 1994 the American Psychological Association reported that 50% all therapists surveyed said they counseled patients who were sexually exploited by a prior therapist.” Below, the actual insurance industry data are rating that number of reports at 20% --this means the unreported abusers could easily be another 20%-30%.

[Both] the size and the numbers of such awards have led insurance companies for psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers to reduce substantially or eliminate altogether liability coverage relating to sexual intimacies with patients … Insurance industry data suggest that 20 percent of all therapists will, some time during their careers, become sexually intimate with at least one of their patients” (Emphasis added, Los Angeles Times, February 14, 1976, p. 1).

Since such insurance estimates, of necessity are understated, a 50% abuse rate gains some currency. In contrast to “therapists--psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and marriage counselors,” despite the fallout of widespread pornography, a parental incest rate of 20% to 50% is still far removed from reality. This comparison is included here since sex with patients is commonly equated in the mental health literature with incest due to a similar trust, dependency and unequal power relationship, resulting in major trauma for a sexually betrayed patient (more detail is fully available). Dr. Pope writes

[I]t remains rare for therapist-patient sex cases to reach the courtroom…. The trebling of malpractice insurance premiums for psychologists between 1984 and 1985 and the sharply escalating number of lawsuits being filed

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against members of all the mental health disciplines [require] changes in educating, controlling, disciplining, and licensing therapists.

This epidemic is reflected in the July 1980 Playboy cartoon at right. Under the sign “Marriage Counselor,” the bespeckled, slightly older counselor zips up his pants having just had sex with his patient -- the wife of another patient, her husband, who, in suit and tie, has sat obediently observing his wife being sexually ‘satisfied’ by their marriage counselor.

In this originally full color cartoon, the pretty young wife lay naked (redacted here) on the counselor’s narrow, apparently leather couch, a delighted expression on her face. The Playboy cartoonist draws her young hubby as a confused, impotent dummy. The “doctor” caption says, “And you, you stupid bastard, show a little tenderness,” as though copulating with a client, during a marital therapy session, in front of her husband is a show of “tenderness.” (Gardner Rea artist).

Sexual Exploitation by Health Professionals in Playboy Magazine Cartoons

Judith A. Reisman, Deborah F. Reisman, and Barry S. Elman

Popular sexually explicit magazines reach millions of readers each month and transcend virtually all socioeconomic boundaries. Although some such magazines are known for their sexual content, others are diverse publications carrying articles, commentaries, advise columns, letters, illustrations, cartoons, and special features on many contemporary subjects.

Our research focused on the exploitation of patients by health professionals as a popular cartoon theme in Playboy, a prominent, “sexually explicit” publication. The purpose of our research was to analyze such depictions of exploitation using a formal content analysis instrument to study what appears on the surface to be light and guileless humor. Instead, cartoons are most certainly an art form that communicates concepts that describe people and events September 1, 1959, p. 86, in short and visually dynamic language.

The cartoon has served and continues to serve as a powerful propagandist and educator. It has been used by great European artists such as Goya, Daumier, and Philipon to articulate and advocate the rights of the downtrodden and oppressed. It has also been used effectively to disparage, debase,

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demean, humiliate, belittle, or otherwise victimize the subject of the "joke" (e.g., Bogardus 1945; Zillmann, 1983; Zillmann, Bryant, and Cantor 1974; Zillmann and Cantor 1972).

During World War II, for example, the Allies circulated thousands of propaganda cartoons mocking and ridiculing our Axis enemies, while at the same time, Germany, Japan, and Italy circulated thousands of propaganda cartoons mocking and ridiculing the Allies. The general and scholarly literatures are replete with cross-cultural examples of nationalistic, racist, and sexist cartoon humor.

Scholarly investigations of the cartoon as a powerful and influential form of mass persuasion can be traced at least to the 1930s with the works of Schaffer (1930) and Johnson (1937). Scores of scholars have since entered this field of study, each contributing to the literature from a range of disciplinary perspectives (e.g., Bogardus 1945; Bryant, Gula, and Zillmann 1980; Gombrich 1980; Harrison 1981; Ryan and Schwartz 1956; Saenger 1955).

A great deal of recent scholarly attention and public concern has centered on the possible effect that cartoons and other forms of mass media communication may have on human attitudes and behavior. While there is considerable debate regarding the precise nature and degree of different mass media effects on receiving publics (e.g., Austin and Myers 1984; Cantor and Sparks 1984; Singer, Singer, and Rapaczynski, 1984), few would contend that mass media does not have some effect on the human mind (e.g., Comstock et al. 1978; Eysenck and Nia 1978; Gerbner et al. 1978; Runco and Pezdek 1984).

In light of the cartoon's historical role as a tool of propaganda and mass persuasion and of the growing real-life problem of patient sexual exploitation by health professionals, it seems meaningful and appropriate to examine any continued, wide scale circulation of cartoon messages about the health professional-patient relationship. For this reason, our research characterizes the quantity and quality of cartoons depicting exploitation by health professionals in [PLAYBOY] the leading sexually explicit magazine.

**METHODS**

To carry out the *Playboy* investigation, content analysis was used. As a research methodology, content analysis has a long and distinguished history. Standard practice in scholarly content analysis has been to investigate media materials that command the largest circulation and respect within a given genre as well as those materials that have similarities in audience, purpose, and content.
In this investigation 141 issues of Playboy, dating from January 1973 through December 1984, were analyzed for their health professional cartoon content. Three magazine issues from this time period were unavailable and, therefore not included in the analysis. Any Playboy cartoon depicting or referring directly to one of the following health professionals was selected for examination: general physicians, nurses, psychiatrists/psychologists, marriage counselors, sexologists, gynecologists/obstetricians, dentists, sex therapists, social workers, and others (e.g., surgeons, pharmacists, dermatologists). A total of 187 Playboy cartoons were analyzed.

Following the Reisman Model for Child Cartoon Analysis (1984), a preliminary cartoon content analysis coding instrument (CCACI) and standard coding sheet were designed to classify and record information contained in the Playboy health professional cartoons. The final version of the CCACI consisted of a set of 28 questions regarding the activities, setting, and individual characters depicted in the Playboy health professional cartoons. Although we minimized the need for subjective judgment on the part of the trained coders, no analysis technique currently available can guarantee complete objectivity in any examination of effective material—hence the cartoons are available for study and validation.

RESULTS

Cartoons portraying health professions were a prevalent feature in Playboy during the 12-year study period, with the regular reader encountering 187 such cartoons. Although a few of the Playboy cartoons contained complex imagery, most cartoon imagery was simple and direct. Hence, most Playboy cartoons readily lent themselves to the classification and codification of the textual and visual activities, setting, and characters.

**Playboy Activities**

The majority (87 percent) of Playboy health professional cartoons during the period of study involved activity that was illegal, unethical, sexual, morbid, or violent in nature [Figure 1 below] Such activity was explicit in approximately 93 percent of the Playboy cartoon cases in which it occurred.

**Playboy Illegal or Unethical Activity**

More than 55 percent of the 187 Playboy cartoons portrayed some form of illegal or unethical activity (see at left Figure 1) nearly 100 cases, this involved misconduct on the part of the health professional. The Playboy health professional in 25 of these misconduct cases employed some type of trickery or deception. The positive illicit use of drugs was the subject of two Playboy cartoons, extortion was the subject of one cartoon,
and exhibitionism was the subject of one cartoon. There were two cases of blatant
Playboy sexual assault: a male gynecologist publicly raped a female, and a female patient
sexually assaulted a male physician. There were also two cases of Playboy child sexual
abuse.

Approximately two-thirds of the Playboy health professional cartoons involved an
activity or interaction that was sexual in nature (see at left Figure 2). More than 55
cartoons related to sexual intercourse. Nearly 50 additional cartoons contained nudity, a
sexual overtue, or some sexual activity or interaction short of intercourse. Another 16
Playboy cases involved masturbation, venereal disease, or some other sexual motif.

**Playboy Sexual Activity**

![Percentage of Playboy Cartoons Exhibiting Sex Acts and Other Activities](chart)

Of the Playboy sexual cartoons that could be classified, 87 percent involved
heterosexuality; 5 percent more involved homosexuality, 4 percent involved bestiality,
and 4 percent involved group sex activity. Nudity (partial or complete) was depicted in
more than one-third of the Playboy health professional cartoons. While the provision of
drape cloths, gowns, or smocks is common practice in the medical environment, in very
few cases was a patient provided with any
covering. While nudity would be regarded as a normal, nonsexual phenomenon in the
real medical environment, it was regarded as inherently sexual in the context of the
Playboy health professional cartoons.

**Playboy Violent or Morbid Activity**

![Percentage of Playboy Cartoons Exhibiting Violent or Morbid Activities](chart)

Traditional forms of violence occurred in only a small number of Playboy health
professional cartoons. Identified were two cases of hitting, kicking, or
grabbing; two cases of ripped or pulled clothes; five cases of whippings or
bonding; one case of decapitation; and one case involving the consumption of
human flesh. No case of shooting or stabbing was found in the Playboy
cartoons. Quite common, however,
Playboy cartoons were morbid in nature.

During the period under study 26 such cartoons were published (see Figure 3)
Nearly all of the *Playboy* cartoon activity occurred within the conventional health care environment (see Figure 4). In 152 of the 187 *Playboy* cartoon cases, the setting was either a hospital, doctor's office, or therapy room. Most of the remaining cases occurred in the waiting room of a health professional's office, a medical studio or lab, or another institutional setting. Fewer than 10 percent of the *Playboy* cartoons occurred in a nonmedical environment.

**Characters**

The number of characters in most of the *Playboy* cartoons was small: one or two health professionals and either one or two patients, depending on the specific health profession depicted. The specialty of the *Playboy* health professional was easily discernable. If the profession was not evident by means of explicit cues (e.g., couch and notebook, dentist chair, gynecological stirrups), then this information was provided directly by the display of diplomas, door signs, or reference to the specific profession in the *Playboy* cartoon caption.
Health Professionals

A spectrum of health professionals was represented in Playboy cartoons (see Figure 5). Most commonly depicted (37 percent of Playboy cartoons) was the general physician (i.e., no noted specialty). Also found, however, were Playboy nurses (16 percent), psychiatrists/psychologists (14 percent), marriage counselors (10 percent), sexologists (10 percent), gynecologists/obstetricians (5 percent), dentists (3 percent), sex therapists (2 percent), social workers (0.5 percent), and other health professionals (12 percent). The "other" category included Playboy surgeons, pharmacists, coroners, dermatologists, and proctologists. The sum exceeds 100 percent because occasionally a single Playboy cartoon depicted members of more than one health profession.

The 255 Playboy health care professionals identified and coded in the 187 cartoons have one general characteristic in common -- they are white. There are no clearly depicted racial minority group members cast as Playboy health professionals. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (1982), races other than white constituted 14 percent of the total population of practicing physicians in 1981. Similarly, nonwhite dentists, pharmacists, therapists, and other health professionals constituted a substantial portion of their respective fields. In the same year, more than 14 percent of all registered and practical nurses were nonwhite. Yet, minority racial group health professionals were not represented in Playboy cartoons.

Playboy women are both stereotyped and statistically underrepresented in the health professional cartoons. Of the 255 identified Playboy health professionals, 52 were women. Of these Playboy female health professionals, 35 were nurses and 14 were sexologists or assistants to sexologists. In only three instances was a Playboy female health professional portrayed as anything other than a nurse or sexologist: one was a social worker, one was a health researcher/administrator, and one was a physician. In this last case, the female doctor was the Playboy victim of acute sexual harassment—as humorous.

According to statistics published by the American Medical Association (1983), the percentage of female licensed physicians in the United States increased from 7.7 percent in 1970 to 12.8 percent in 1982. Nevertheless, Playboy females constituted less than 1 percent of all medical doctors depicted in the cartoons.

Clients and Other Characters

In cases in which the sole or principal Playboy patient was female, about 80 percent of the cartoons were sexual in nature. Playboy Female patients were two and one half times more likely than male patients to be depicted as partially or completely naked. Of the Playboy cartoons with female patients, two-thirds involved some form of misconduct by the (nearly always male) health professional. Almost 40 percent of the time this entailed some form of male trickery or deception.
Playboy male patients are somewhat less likely to be cast in a sexual scenario. Less than half of the cases in which the sole or principal Playboy patient was male involved sexual activity. Of the Playboy cartoons with male patients, 40 percent involved some form of misconduct by the (usually male) health professional. Only one-tenth of the time did the misconduct entail trickery or deception. Morbidity was a common Playboy motif, appearing in approximately one-fifth of Playboy cartoons involving male patients.

Playboy minorities rarely appeared in any situation in the health professional cartoons. Although in 1980 minorities accounted for 11.1 percent of the total visits to physicians in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1982, p. 110), in no case was a Playboy cartoon patient identifiably portrayed as nonwhite. In the two instances where minority members were clearly depicted in a Playboy cartoon, they were background characters within a group of ten or more people. In one Playboy cartoon, two racial minority group members were included in a group sex scenario involving white children.

Playboy children and adolescents appeared in 9-11 percent of the Playboy cartoons. Included were two infants, 12 children, five adolescents, and four young characters of ambiguous age. Girls and boys were both represented.

Where Playboy boys were represented, they were generally the subject of nonsexual humor. With the exception of one case in which two boys witnessed a rape, the only Playboy boys found in a sexual setting were in the company of girls.

Where Playboy girls were represented, the cartoons were uniformly sexual in nature. The specific Playboy themes involved child pregnancy, sexual intercourse, group sex, and child sexual abuse by foster parents. One case involved the devouring of little girls by a wolf.

In nine instances, Playboy animals were portrayed as characters. The animals were anthropomorphized in eight cases, and in four of these cases they were the recipients of sexual attention from a Playboy human female.

**Cartoon Scenarios by Specific Health Profession**

Clear stereotypes were manifest in Playboy cartoon scenarios pertaining to each individual health profession. Some of the common stereotypes are described below.

**General physicians.** The Playboy general physician (commonly male) was normally depicted with a single patient. Male and female Playboy patients were represented with approximately the same frequency. Male Playboy patients commonly suffered from venereal disease or impotence. The Playboy general physician was frequently cast in a demeaning or derogatory light in cartoons involving male patients.

In nearly every Playboy cartoon involving a female patient, the patient was young, white, attractive, and the subject of sexual activity, behavior, or innuendo. Over half of Playboy patients were completely or partially naked. The Playboy female patient was directly
engaged -- willingly or unwillingly -- in a sexual interaction with her personal physician in roughly half the cartoons. The nature of these *Playboy* interactions ranged from a sexual overture on the part of the female patient to sexual assault by the *Playboy* physician.

**Nurses.** The *Playboy* nurse was typically portrayed as an initiator or recipient of sexual involvement with patients and/or physicians, as a passive or helpless bystander, or as a negligent caretaker.

**Psychiatrists/Psychologists.** The *Playboy* psychiatrist/psychologist (always male) was depicted with both male and female patients in approximately equal numbers. About half the *Playboy* cartoons with male patients were sexual. In some of these, homosexuality or a sex change was discussed during therapy.

Another common *Playboy* motif involved the verbal disparagement of a patient by a psychiatrist/psychologist. Almost all *Playboy* cartoons with female patients were sexual. Frequently the *Playboy* psychiatrist/psychologist was the recipient of a direct sexual overture from the patient. In other cases, he was engaged in a reciprocal sexual relationship with his female patient, or he derived sexual gratification from personal confessions of the patient during the course of therapy.

**Marriage counselors.** The *Playboy* marriage counselor (always male) often engaged in sex with a patient who was a female spouse -- commonly in the presence of her husband.

**Sexologist.** *Playboy* sexologist cartoons were mainly a comic-strip series. Typically in these *Playboy* cartoons, either sex histories were collected via interviews or sexual experimentation was conducted on human subjects. (In two cases, a *Playboy* male sexologist was engaged in the sexual part of the experiment.)

**Gynecologists/obstetricians.** The *Playboy* gynecologist/obstetrician (always male) generally accosted, seduced, or otherwise engaged in sexual activity with his female patients.

**Dentists.** The *Playboy* dentist (always male) typically used local anesthesia or some other pharmaceutical agent to numb or render his *Playboy* female clients unconscious during a sexual attack.

**Discussion**

The results of this investigation suggest that there is a systemic, clear and consistent sociopolitical advocacy subsumed in *Playboy*’s sexually explicit magazine's health professional cartoons. The 187 *Playboy* cartoons analyzed communicate several *Playboy* beliefs regarding health professionals and their patients:

1. Male health professionals are untrustworthy and sexually exploitive.
2. Female patients are often openly responsive to or solicitous of sexual relations with male health professionals.
3. Patients, especially female, are legitimate sexual targets.
4. Women are seldom high-status health professionals [in later years they are sexually aggressive]
5. Racial minorities are not represented as either health professionals or patients.

Health professionals assume enormous responsibilities. The execution of these responsibilities requires the exercise of wisdom and well-considered judgment. The health professional must be free from influence of stereotyped views or sexual interest. Moreover, the safe and effective delivery of health care services demands the patient's full confidence in the proficiency and commitment of the health professional.

While the debate continues over the nature and extent of the link between mass media imagery and human attitudes and behavior, recent research suggests at least some cause for concern. The specific question here is whether or not Playboy's repetition of sexually and racially stereotyped ideas may in some measure help to subvert the effective delivery of health care treatment or the essential trust between patient and health professional.

Within only a 12-year period, millions of adults and youths have encountered nearly 200 Playboy cartoons that depicted health professionals as self-serving, incompetent, and unreliable sensualists. It is important for those in the health professions to be aware of the exploitative manner in which their roles, and that of their patients, have been repeatedly defined.\

Several Typical Playboy cartoons celebrating forms of sexual harassment and patient violations.

\[\text{http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=27609434}\]
The May and September cartoons are redacted for viewer assessment. All color cartoons are full page, page right.

2. “Good News Honey! The doctor has cured me of my erectile dysfunction!!” April 2005, p. 115.
3. “You can’t sue me for malpractice! I’m not even a real doctor!” November 1976, p. 103.
4. “He can’t see you now—we’re playing doctor,” March 1968, p. 165. (It is also not clear if the doctor is copulating with his nurse or someone, a patient, dressed as a nurse as in playacting.)
5. “Surely, there’s no need of our both saying ‘Ah,’ doctor.” September 1956, p. x.

Women as stupid, harassed, or as sexually predator especially by 2005.

The following page is a copy of the US Department of Justice, National Criminal Justice Reference Service credentialed summary of Judith Reisman, PhD, DoJ/OJJDP report on Images of Children, Crime & Violence in Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler, 1989, US Dpt of Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Grant No. 84-JN-AX-K007.
Title: Role of Pornography and Media Violence in Family Violence, Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, and Juvenile Delinquency, Part 4

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Annotation: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has compiled the products and the research from "Images of Children, Crime and Violence" from PLAYBOY, PENTHOUSE and HUSTLER Magazines under cooperative agreement # 84-JN-AX-K007. This was a research activity entitled ROLE OF PORNOGRAPHY AND MEDIA VIOLENCE IN FAMILY VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION, AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, awarded to American University School of Education.

Abstract: The research package consists of four parts. PART 1 consists of three volumes submitted by the Principal Investigator, Judith A Reisman, Ph.D., to the Grantee, American University. PART 2 consists of three volumes that were delivered to OJJDP by American University to represent the final report of the Grantee, American University, and was submitted without the Grant Advisory comments. PART 3 consists of a single volume that is the Principal Investigator's final report and includes the reviews of the Principal Investigator's research methodology, findings, and usefulness. The reviews were by five experts chosen by the Grantee, American University, and OJJDP to review the Principal Investigator's research. PART 4 consists of three volumes which provide an Overview of the research; Methods and Procedures concerning the research by the Principal Investigator; and The Data Book. OJJDP has decided, with the concurrence of the Grantee, to make these products available to the public upon request. The research was an investigative analysis of PLAYBOY, PENTHOUSE and HUSTLER over the period of December 1953 to December 1984 to examine for nonviolent, violent, and criminal image portrayal and scenario involvement of children. The research reported the findings of 14,854 images of crime and violence and 6,004 images of children (with the predominate group being girls between ages 3 to 11 years) as part of the overall sexual and violent scenario. There were 989 sexual scenarios which included children actively involved with adults; and each magazine portrayed children as unharmed and/or benignly affected by the child/adult sex. For related volumes, see NCJ 107147-107149.

Main Term(s): Pornography

Index Term(s): Sexual assault ; Domestic assault ; Child pornography ; Child sexual abuse ; Media violence ; Pornography as crime factor ; Child abuse as delinquency factor ; Media-crime relationships.