

Check says film may boomerang

By Lois Corbett
for Canadian University Press

HALIFAX (CUP) A professor from York University in Toronto says showing *Not a Love Story*, a film about pornography and the industry's exploitation of women, to men produces a

"boomerang effect" and makes them more likely to buy pornography in the future.

Dr. James Check, a psychologist and a consulting editor of the *Journal of Sex Research*, says men who watch the National Film Board Studio D's production become "more favourable in their attitudes

towards pornography and less likely to believe that pornography has negative effects."

"The film has those unfortunate consequences. When people watch it they get terribly upset, and then they get more upset when they think about it. They are likely to lose sleep over it.

"Men start to feel attacked. They think the film attacks their personal sexuality. And women start re-thinking their attitudes towards their lovers," says Check.

Check was in Halifax Thursday to address the Canadian Mental Health Association's national conference. He reported on research he recently conducted that shows a steady increase in sexually violent and abusive themes in pornography and that such themes have a number of antisocial effects.

Check says violent and dehumanizing pornography increases acceptance of rape myths, violence against women, sexual callousness and men's willingness to rape, and decreases sensitivity to rape victims.

Check "debriefs" his subjects after they have been exposed to pornography, to "discount false messages and myths about rape that the material includes."

"We found that men who receive the debriefing were the least willing to accept the rape myth that 'women like it' and reject violent and degrading pornography more readily than people who have never seen the material," he says.

Myths about rape are not confined to what men read, says Check, but are often part of "popular female literature, especially Harlequin romances."

"Just go out and buy any one of those, and I'll bet it will have a scene that has a woman who resists the sexual pressure from a man at first, but then goes along with it because it is so enjoyable," he says.

Those are rape scenes "fancied up," says Check. "I believe people can market anything, including rape. You can sell it if you have enough money," says Check.

His research also shows that young people aged 12 to 17 are the primary consumers of pornography in Canada. He says 37 per cent of that age group reported watching sexually explicit videos once a month or more, and the same percentage expressed an interest in watching sexually violent scenes, including rape, bondage and torture.

"I don't think it's a matter of preference to them, but just that they want to watch everything about sex," he says.

But that interest concerns Check and other sex educators. "Pornography is 'sex education' for young people, and it is often their first exposure to highly intimate sexual behavior," says Check.

He adds that sex education in schools must change, from the simple, biological emphasis it has traditionally taken, to focusing on the social aspects of human sexuality.

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