

Activity 11.2

Some paraphilias become sexual offences when the individual acts on their sexual urges against non-consenting people, and this is true of Exhibitionism, Voyeurism, Frotteurism, Pedophilia, and, under circumstances where a partner is not consenting, it also includes Sexual Sadism. In 2006, the UK Government sought consultation with a view to making it a criminal offence to download sexually violent pornography. This prompted a letter published in *The Psychologist* in May 2006, an extract of which is provided below:

“The government is considering making it a crime to download sexually violent pornography. This will extend the legislation on child pornography to adult material that is defined as the realistic depicting or acting of a scene that would, if acted out, cause grievous bodily harm. This would include a variety of bondage and masochistic scenes acted out by consenting enthusiasts Simply viewing the material will now constitute a serious criminal offence. And anyone looking at bondage scenes where somebody is wearing a mask and might suffocate (if this scene were acted out ‘in reality’) must be prepared to defend themselves in court.

The ‘evidence’ focuses on the effects of pornography on either children or disturbed offenders. We do not dispute that psychopaths may be kick-started into action by all manner of things, including pornography. But there is no evidence at all that those not already predisposed to such action will be similarly affected. The reason the government is concerned about sexually violent pornography is that atrocious crimes may be committed in the making of the material. But of course, this is already a crime, and rightly so. The government’s aim here is to punish consumers, not perpetrators.”

You might like to consider the issues raised by this debate. In particular:

- Are there grounds for considering downloading sexually violent pornography either a sexual offence or a psychopathology?
- If a behaviour is a sexual offence in law, should it also be considered a psychopathology?
- Could being a “consumer” of internet pornography contribute to paraphilic behaviour?

Extract from [Extreme pornography consultation... The Psychologist May 2006 6:268-273](#)