

# The anatomy of arousal: three Internet portals

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*ABSTRACT Internet sexual behaviour offers a unique opportunity to understand processes which influence arousal. This paper studies the internet as a source of accelerated perception for researchers by examining three different genres of internet behaviour: 'Lolita' sites, 'chick trick' sites, and 'granny' sites. Across all three sites are examples of stimulation that result in compulsive cycles, risk to participants, and unique patterns of arousal without previous precedent. All three examples share commonalities that have implications for both researchers and therapists. Specific recommendations for clinical intervention and further research are made.*

## **The anatomy of arousal: three internet cases**

A classic graduate school story about 'accelerated perception' is told about a video taping of a playground to study child interaction. When the video was played at normal speeds no unusual patterns of social interaction could be discerned amongst the children. By playing the tape at high speed, patterns emerged which were not discernable at 'normal' speeds. In the video, for example, there was one girl who clearly was a catalyst for all the activity of the playground. Her role was easily missed at normal speed. At high speed she became pivotal to all the interactions on the playground. The story is told to illustrate how technological shifts can reveal patterns in human sciences. Sexual activity on the internet is a classic example of accelerated perception where we are able to see sexual patterns more clearly than before. The speed and the impact of cybersex have literally opened a whole new field of sexual research, the outlines of which are just emerging.

In many ways the impact of cybersex has been positive. Substantial shame reduction has occurred for those who are now able to contact others with similar sexual interests. Matching programs have facilitated people meeting others, which would never before have been possible. Sexual information and resources are now easily accessible. In short the internet is helping break down sexual stereotypes and negativity in a myriad of ways. On the dark side of this scenario there are emerging patterns of exploitation at a level not seen before. This paper explores three examples in which the utilization of cybersex can become exploitive, compulsive, or both. First,

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are the 'Lolita sites' which present themselves as innocent but for many serve as a gateway to the nightmare of child pornography. Second, is the 'chick trick' sites which are legal scenarios of abusive behaviour. Third, are the 'granny sites' which, while on the surface pass as elder erotica, can also create opportunities for exploitation. They all share in common the following:

- normalization of behaviour which is illegal, dangerous, and exploitive
- eroticized rage in which extreme anger becomes sexualized
- erotic fantasy built on the vulnerability of the fantasy object
- erotic scenarios constructed around victim precipitation
- perversion in the classic sense of arousal through the breaking of the rules
- obsessional behaviour that can lead to compulsive cycles which not only can be disruptive to life but also lead to arrest and jail.

Clinicians who have clients who use these sites in an obsessive fashion need to be aware of the potential pitfalls for their clients as well as strategies for intervening. In addition the patterns that emerge, some of which have been around for a long time, raise critical questions for sex researchers. Yet some questions are new and exist only because the technology of the internet allows us to pose them. Like those researchers viewing the kids on the playground, we are seeing sexual behaviour in new ways. Further, while the internet has opened the doors for many, it has also created traps for others. Given the numbers of people involved, both clinical and research questions about the nature of arousal on the internet become critical. Posing and clarifying some of those questions is the purpose of this paper.

### *Background*

In 2002, sex related sites became the number one economic sector of the internet recording sales that exceeded both software and computers. Pornography alone has become a problem in the workplace. Seventy per cent of internet pornography traffic occurs between nine and five. Seventy-two per cent of companies who have faced Internet misuse reported that 69% of those cases were related simply to pornography. Leading software publishers estimate as much as eighty-three billion dollars a year in lost productivity for American companies (Greenspan, 2002). Serious researchers (Cooper, 2001) showed in large samples that one in six employees were now having trouble with sexual behaviour online.

Researchers have noted problems with compulsive and addictive behaviour on line especially in the areas of gambling and sexuality (King, 1999). Others have noted other behaviours such as online trading, gaming, and compulsive computer use (Shaffer *et al.*, 1987; Young *et al.*, 2000). In addition to Cooper's original articles, people who work with compulsive sexual behaviour documented problematic on line sexual behaviour in which people's daily ability to function was being affected by their cybersexual activities (Schneider, 2000 and Schwartz & Southern, 2000; Carnes, 2001b). Some of these authors utilize an addiction model that includes sexual compulsivity and others use the conceptual framework of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Yet the commonality is sexual

compulsivity as evidenced by loss of control, life comprising consequences with an inability to stop, and significant intimacy problems.

This author summarized specific patterns of arousal that emerged in these compulsive scenarios (Carnes, 2001a). Among them were:

*Rapid escalation of amount and variety.* Patients report consistently that they experienced a rapid increase of both the amount of behaviour and the diversity of sexual behaviour. People who have significant problems often find that the problems start almost immediately. Consider the clergyman who started viewing pornography on July 4. Five weeks later he was discovered and had already embezzled eight thousand dollars from the church to pay for his online activities. That pattern, while not true of all cases, is common enough to be noticed by clinicians. Factors that contribute to the escalation include the appearance of anonymity and ease of access. Also a pattern of denial quickly emerges in which the behaviour is seen as having no consequences even though clear consequences are inevitable (such as discovery of embezzled funds).

*Escalation becomes obsessional with new specific behaviours becoming quickly fixated.* Patients report that they will become obsessed with specific behaviours that they had never experienced nor even knew of before their internet experiences. This pattern is very intriguing given that sexual science has long taken the position that the arousal template or 'lovemap' is established early. John Money (1985) for example suggests that arousal patterns are firmly established between five and eleven years. Patients however report not being able to stop thinking about behaviours that they did not know existed until they were in their sixties and on the computer. Thus under the influence of the computer, users are experiencing high degrees of arousal that are difficult to stop and of which they have no history. This finding also goes counter to much of the literature in traditional addiction and compulsion literature which traces obsessive behaviour in adults to experiences of childhood or adolescent sexual abuse. (Carnes, 1991; Schwartz, 1998).

*Relational regression occurs in which absorption in internet sexual activities results in serious withdrawal from sexual contact with partners and overall intimacy withdrawal.* Patients report that sex with spouses or partners declines in both frequency and appeal. Further they note a withdrawal from social contact with family, friends, and colleagues. In part that is a result from many hours on the computer and the emotional depletion that accompanies internet bingeing. There also appears to be a 'shame' component which leads to isolation and despair. While some have reported that pornography in general leads to a decline in intimate sexual interaction (Zillmann & Bryant, 1988) this intimacy avoidance with cybersex appears to be quite profound and needs to be studied systematically.

*Internet sexual behaviour can accelerate existing addictive/compulsive behaviour as well as precipitate new compulsive offline behaviour.* A very common finding is that patients who were already having trouble with compulsive sexuality found the internet was a significant catalyst which intensified that behaviour. The internet not only intensified

the eroticization that was problematic but also added new resources. So if compulsive prostitution was a problem, it became even more so as a result of internet activity. Some patients report having no history of compulsive sexual behaviour until they discovered the internet. When their sexual behaviour escalated on the net they started behaviours offline that became compulsive as well.

One theory that is used to explain the escalation, the intensity of arousal, and the compulsive behaviour is that through the internet patients will 'access the unresolved'. All of us have sexual experiences that leave us unfinished. Sexual play, for example, as children may leave us with unfinished experiences. As we mature we realize that either we no longer have interest or those experiences are no longer appropriate for adults. Yet a person might experience the right image or story that is an absolute overlay of something unfinished from childhood or adolescence. The nature of marketing for pornography sites is to bombard potential clients with a variety of images to stimulate the purchase of memberships. Thus when that which is unfinished is accessed, the person starts to search for more of the same genre. The marketing loops of the sex sites are literally a labyrinth in which each choice may bring you closer to the types of images that most closely 'fit' that unresolved, unfinished aspect of the sexual self. Patients often report the phenomenon of a 'burned-in image'—a specific scene out of their internet experience about which they cannot stop thinking. This phenomenon is very similar to the intrusive images post-traumatic stress disorder patients describe. Patients report that preoccupation with a specific image became so troublesome they would delete it from their files only to go back to the original source and retrieve it. This in fact, will happen over and over again.

A good example of accessing the unresolved is the case of Carl:

*Carl was fifty-four when he was admitted for treatment for his depression. His father was alcoholic and so was Carl although Carl had been in recovery for close to nine years. The chaos of his youth made him particularly vulnerable around issues involving addiction and intensity. A few weeks into his treatment his therapist learned from Carl that he collected books by David Hamilton and other photographers who used nude children and adolescents as models. He appreciated the young barely pubescent female form as an expression of art. The therapist noted that Carl taught Junior High School and asked if he did any other activities with young girls. Carl reported that he was active as an Alateen sponsor and was an adviser to numbers of seventh and eighth grade girls. He frequently had breakfast or lunch with them outside of school to talk over their problems.*

*The therapist observed that if ever one of these girls accused him of a sexual initiative and investigating officers found all the books with nude children in them he would be in a difficult position. Carl was very upset and angry with the therapist for pointing out the obvious problems. Over the next few sessions more of the story came out including that Carl had discovered his interest on the internet, accessed the books over the internet, and had a problem with looking at child pornography.*

*A significant part of Carl's history occurred when he was fourteen. His family would vacation at a resort in which they would meet every year with all the other families in the*

*extended clan. So cousins, aunts, uncles, and grand parents would gather annually at the seashore. The particular summer of this event, Carl was out on the lawn with a younger female cousin and they were wrestling. This turned into sexual play and exploration. The kids did not know the entire family was watching from a nearby porch. Carl's father came out, grabbed Carl, and beat him publicly. He took Carl, put him in his room without supper, told him he had destroyed the family, and locked him in. In the morning, he was allowed out, but told that he could never speak to his cousin again. Shortly thereafter, all the families packed up and left. They never gathered again—including holidays. Carl tried to call his cousin and was not allowed to talk with her. He felt tremendous shame. Since the families never saw each other, he felt his father was right. He had destroyed the family.*

*When Carl got on the internet and stumbled on to a nudist site in which there were pre-pubescent girls he experienced a level of arousal unlike anything he ever remembered. From the nudist sites he went to the Lolita sites that talked of the female form as art. He found that this was a way that he could explore his sexual feelings with no risk since these sites were 'legal'. Yet he admitted to going to look at child pornography although he had never bought any. He was also able to admit to the therapist that he did know that his Alateen and teaching activities put him at risk. He was angry at the therapist for starting to unmask his secret.*

Carl's story illustrates part of the seduction the internet affords in accessing the unresolved. For many people part of the value of the internet is to explore parts of their sexual selves without shame. They can find others who like the same things and learn about sexual practices and information without worry. Yet for some accessing the unresolved becomes supercharged with arousal in ways that are high risk, compulsive, or both. Carl was exploring something that was unresolved but contextually was also about a pivotal emotional event in his life. There were the forbidden, shameful messages he received about his sexuality plus an emotional substrata of fear and anger over what happened. Carl in fact was able to verbalize that his anger for his therapist drew upon those deep profound feelings that he was being treated unfairly about sexuality growing up. He, in effect, felt robbed.

Eroticized rage has been discussed extensively in sex offender literature in which part of the genesis of exploitation and assault is anger and hatred that is sexualized. Eroticized rage has been described in non-offending compulsivity as well (see Carnes, 2001a,b). Carl was typical in the sense that he was aware of his sexual feeling but he was unconscious about the anger component. An important element of sexualized anger is breaking the rules, being unconventional, or going against socially approved norms. Stoller (1995), in his classic treatment of anger and perversion, writes: *I, however with the idea that hostility in some form and degree is present in perversions, feel that the very opprobrium in which perversion soaks, expresses a dynamic essential for those aberrant erotic excitements.* Similarly, Carl's fascination with prepubescent girls in fact was heightened by the breaking of the rules that were the source of so much pain in his life. Often this breaking of the rules and its angry precursor emotions are buttressed by fear because the rules are being broken or there is significant risk. Thus an affective cocktail of supercharged emotions fuses with sexual arousal.

In addition, cognitive distortions emerge that support and also are reinforced by powerful emotions. One of the distortions that frequently excuses angry or exploitive behaviour is victim precipitation. The notion that whoever is the focus of the anger 'asked for it' or 'wanted it' is a significant cognitive distortion rooted in sexual beliefs and experience. A further extension of this internal logic is providing 'more than was bargained for' especially if it provides pain or hurt, draws its power from internalized rage.

This paper proposes that the internet provides stimulation that accesses unresolved issues in some people. In turn these tap into affective states with cognitive overlays, which occur in such ways that they become obsessed and compulsive in their behaviour. These compulsive behaviours in turn put them at risk. For the clinician, the underlying processes are critical in order to provide treatment. For the researcher, focusing on the underlying mechanisms of escalation and incredible intensity could further advance understanding of the nature of arousal in general. To start, three types of sites will be examined: Lolita sites which feature young often prepubescent girls; the chick trick sites in which young women are misled or tricked or seduced into sexual acts which are angry and abusive; and the granny sites which depict elderly women in various sexual acts. While different in their focus they share very common themes. Exploring those themes opens new understanding for clinicians and researchers alike.

#### *The Lolita sites*

Significant progress had been made against the trade of child pornography by the middle 1980s. With the advent of the internet, child pornography as 'digital contraband' is now a major problem. Over 100 000 websites are involved in some way in the distribution of sexual pictures of children. Estimates vary from two to four million children are currently depicted in sexual acts on the internet. Sites that cater to pictures of children or adolescents are also the most profitable segment of the sex sites. A recent bust of an international pornography internet-based ring revealed that in order to join members had to document over 10 000 images in their possession.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has spearheaded an active effort to intervene in this process with their Innocent Images program. FBI testimony before congress pinpoints concern at a federal level for the welfare of children (Heimbach, 2002). They are concerned about the welfare of the children being photographed because of the high probability of sexual abuse of those children. In addition, they are concerned how child pornography would be used to seduce other children. Specifically, child porn is used to demonstrate sex acts to children, to lower their sexual inhibitions, to desensitize children to sexual acts, and to sexually arouse children.

The FBI's target is paedophiles. Typically the arrests made are of white males of middle class to upper middle class background. They are often professionals such as paediatricians, teachers, or active in youth oriented groups who have access to children. The preferential child sex offender has a long history of obsession with children. For example, they have a collection of pornography that is one of their most important possessions and much thought has gone into protecting their 'stash'. This profile is very



consistent with traditional models of sexual arousal such as Freund and Watson (1990) on courtship disorders or Money's (1985) concepts of lovemaps.

Yet with the internet a different kind of user is emerging and getting caught in FBI stings. They are judges, physicians, attorneys. They also are high school dropouts. They are sometimes quite elderly. In conversations with professionals in law enforcement, profiling, and prison administration there is a growing realization that few are willing to be public about. There are new varieties of offending patterns emerging that they are not sure how to handle. For example, some of these people do not have the history of preoccupation with children and the usual circumstances attendant to that. They are not antisocial, sociopathic, or people with a history of impulse control problems. In fact, except for the pursuit of child pictures on the net, they have led exemplary lives. Another example is a very introverted person who is socially inept but technologically gifted. In that sense, someone who would fit the notion of a computer 'geek'. They are often very young, very obsessed, and almost ruthless. And they are extremely difficult to catch. The point is, out of internet child pornography, we are seeing a whole new set of profiles.

In order to understand some of the dynamics it is important to follow the path of how many people who would not typically pursue child pornography end up obsessed with it. Part of that lies in the marketing skills of those who specialize in sex and children on the web. It is helpful to break it down into layers:

*Barely legal, petite, and teen sites.* This type of site specializes in young and very young looking women. They are legal because all models are over eighteen. Some sites push this age limit down to 16 as opposed to 18. These sites are differentiated from college age girls and portray models who could be mistaken for 13–15 year olds. The marketing hooks are 'first time', sweet, or innocent. You can purchase videos or still pictures, being sexual or simply posing. Clearly the intent is to portray youth without the risk of arrest. Sometimes these sites also call themselves 'Lolita' sites but emphasize their legality.

*Lolita sites, nudist sites, art sites.* These sites clearly depict children who are underage. They all say that they are legal under 18 c of the federal code which protects freedom of speech and artistic expression. Most of them describe values of appreciating the beauty of nude children and adolescents. Most also declare their distaste for child pornography while insisting that it is about art or freedom. The language is again about innocence, beauty, and naiveté. This is one of the most profitable segments of the sex industry on the internet. Finding these sites is simple. First, the barely legal sites serve as a portal. Also there are dedicated bulletin boards or portal sites that specialize in Lolita, young naturists, and art sites. They provide links and free samples. Doing a simple search using the word Lolita generates literally thousands of links. Many of the portal sites provide counters that detail how many (often thousands) are accessing a specific site at the same time as the visitor. Between the searches, the counters, and the language of the websites, they make viewing children in erotic poses seem very normal.

*Illegal sites.* The marketing of these sites plays on their illegality. Looking at 'innocent models' is replaced with 'little bitches' who want you. The language becomes angrier

and the subjects are portrayed as experienced and desiring. The FBI notes that often in the Lolita promotional sites are pictures that are pornographic depictions of genitals. If you select one, the viewer suddenly gets deluged with spam of sites that clearly are beyond legal parameters. The Lolita sites are one of the portals to the underworld of child pornography despite their protestations to the contrary.

*Hardcore sites.* At this level the language becomes very graphic and very angry. The effort is also to shock and show the very worst. Rape, pain, and incest are frequent themes. Creating pain in a child can be an explicit goal at this level. Clearly in addition to the angry language is the expectation of sexual 'performance' of children. There are also binary sites and bulletin boards in which people trade wide varieties of hardcore material. Here is where the most illegal behaviour thrives. It is an easy path to get here requiring very little technological sophistication.

Thus, there is an explicit trail that patients who fall into the Lolita trap follow. It starts with innocence and the unresolved, but progresses into anger, shock, and victimization. Doing this in the privacy of your home allows repeated exposure and ultra high levels of arousal are achieved that are not experienced in normal human sexual interaction. Patients consistently report that once into the process it is virtually unstoppable, that it happened extremely quickly, and that they were obsessed with things they never knew about or had no prior experience with. Further they are very clear that 'normal sex' could never compete with the internet. Here are some case examples:

*Walter grew up watching his alcoholic father batter his mother. His father as a sideline business was a distributor of eight-millimeter pornographic film. Walter started watching pornography when he was eight years old and throughout his adolescence already knew he had a pornography problem. This persisted even though he was married. Once he had a job in which he could travel, his sexual behaviour went out of control with prostitution, affairs, and anonymous sex in bookstores with men. He tried his best to stop but simply could not.*

*'When I discovered the internet it was like being on a skyrocket. Within a matter of months I burned through all the traditional porn, which was doing less and less for me. So then I turned to every fetish I could find including bestiality. But even that did not last long. Then I found the Lolita sites and from there chat rooms of people who traded pictures. I watched how they did it and started to trade too. I did that for two and a half years without letup. Every spare moment that is what I would do. Finally I was in a chat room monitored by a police department in another state. The police came and seized my computer and disks. Out of hundreds of images they picked twenty, for which I was facing two hundred years (court guidelines were ten years for each image). Even my bail was over a million dollars.'*

*Walter had a good lawyer and got out after serving minimal time. He has great therapists who helped get him into recovery using an addiction model. He still faces the trials of having to be identified as an offender on the internet and in his neighbourhood. He reports however three and a half years of problem free behaviour and that it really is a 'joy' to be alive. His wife has stayed with him and his work is going well. Reflecting on*



*his days cruising the net he says, 'I thought I was bullet proof and it exploded on me. I had no touch with reality.' When asked about how he experienced sex he talked about the role of anger and shock. 'I know some of the stuff was so shocking to me but it did not stop me.' Doing therapy around his childhood trauma, his own anger and fears, and how that affected sexuality was critical to having a peaceful life.*

*Scott was born with cerebral palsy. He was very bright and could talk normally. Yet his club foot and awkward walk caused people to perceive him as retarded. He was ridiculed at school and had few friends. His family was loving, and he understood what was happening, he still was very shy and introverted. He had two dates in high school despite growing tall and attractive. He also somehow managed to preserve a sense of humour, which balanced his feelings of shame and rejection. Yet he experienced periodic bouts with depression. As a junior in high school he discovered the computer and the internet. In college, he started using pornography on the internet to masturbate. After college his depression grew. He was still living at home and was enmeshed with his parents. At twenty-five he went into treatment for his depression.*

*His primary therapist focused on his childhood experiences and emancipation issues. During treatment his therapist expressed his concern about Scott spending at least 6 to 8 hours every day on the internet masturbating. He had no social life, very few friends, and only a part time job. Yet he was a college graduate, had aspirations of working in the computer field, and desperately wished to leave home. His therapist suggested that his internet behaviour was now sexually compulsive and Scott became irate. He yelled at his therapist and was furious that this topic came up. When he settled down, he asked his therapist what he was supposed to do with his sexual feelings. His therapist explained that he was replacing real life with what he was doing on the internet. Further, he needed to stop his internet behaviour and start getting involved with work and people.*

*The therapist went on to ask what Scott was looking at when he masturbated. Scott said he looked at young girls. It turned out that Scott was looking and saving images of preteen girls and his hard drive was full of them. His therapist explained to Scott that he could be arrested and that a twenty-five year old man collecting images of children would be perceived as a sex offender. Scott was stunned. He never thought of himself as an offender and immediately agreed to start work on changing his behaviour. His therapist explained to him that his attraction to ten to twelve year olds made sense since in many ways his family and his reclusiveness had prevented him from maturing much beyond that age.*

*Scott was an ideal candidate for treatment and now has two years freedom from any acting out on the net. He is working full time in a job he enjoys and living on his own. He has a girlfriend and is enjoying dating. He reports no interest in children. The therapist and treating staff have found him not to be deceptive and almost naïve in his candor. His career aspirations have shifted because he found it difficult to go back on the internet. His therapist and treatment team believe strongly that his was not sociopathic, paedophilic, or antisocial in his behaviour. Rather it is clear case of significant developmental delay in some part sustained by spending years in a preadolescent trance on the internet. His statement describing that period of his life: 'It was like being in a bubble. Nothing came in; nothing went out. Until it popped.'*

Robin was a successful real estate lawyer with a large practice married to a successful politician. They raised three children to adulthood. He had a drinking problem but had been through an intensive outpatient programme and had eighteen years of alcohol sobriety. He continues to be active in Alcoholics Anonymous. He had no history of sexual acting out, remaining faithful to his wife of thirty-three years. When she started a campaign for public office he had a great deal of time alone plus he had sold his practice to his younger partners. His goal was to enjoy retirement and wait for his wife to complete one more term.

He was spending a lot of time on the internet. He started each day with managing their investments. He had some initial successes and so he became adsorbed in day trading. As a diversion he wandered into some of the pornography sites through some emails that had appeared. Very quickly the pornography replaced the e-trading as the priority. He started off with pornography in the morning downloading pictures of young girls and masturbating. The rest of the day he continued to e-trade but was now losing significant amounts of money. Further, his behaviour further escalated when he discovered a Lolita site and then joined several pay 'art' sites. Through a chat room he started a conversation with a girl he thought was thirteen. In fact, he was talking with an FBI agent. He went to a Denny's thinking he was to meet her. Instead six squad cars convened and he was arrested.

He went to treatment while his case was pending. His wife withdrew from her campaign. She was involved in treatment but still decided to divorce him. He is currently in prison. He serves as an example of someone who does not fit the traditional paedophile model. While in treatment he talked of his disgust for his interest in kids. In treatment he learned how much his anger for his wife created an entitled eroticized rage. He acknowledged the power of the angry language on the sites he visited. And he talked of how it was so different than how he perceived himself. He had helped raise all the kids and never had a thought about sexual behaviour with children. And he found the distortion of his judgement staggering. Here he was an officer of the court who 'should know better.' He even had a premonition about meeting this girl. He said, 'I asked myself what interest she would have in me as a man in my early sixties. But then I had told her I was forty something. Yet I knew there was something wrong. I could not believe I was doing it but I went anyway.'

Walt, Scott, and Robyn all share commonalities that do not fit traditional profiles of offenders. Further, they all experienced rapid escalation, incredible intensity when exposed to children, and sexually compulsive behaviour. Classic paedophilic behaviour, which is clearly offending behaviour does occur on the internet. This author has had patients even in their late forties who found young teenage girls who were willing to have sex with them. Some of them were frequently successful. Some of these could be characterized as having compulsive/addictive behaviour patterns and some would not. In that sense, they would parallel what other researchers have found looking at 'traditional' paedophiles in a prison setting (Blanchard, 1991). Yet what these examples show is a potential diversity of offender types that go beyond well-established categories. They have a potential to be a much more treatable population. They, in many cases, are not a real threat to others.

In his research on internet sex, Cooper (2001) concluded that there were now people who were struggling with sexual compulsivity that would never have had the problem had it not been for the internet. An extension of that statement would be: there are now people who are struggling with compulsive sex offending behaviour that never would have happened had it not been for the internet. Clearly, their arousal focus was substantially changed by their internet experience. Plus there is evidence that many of these patients had a history that clearly affected and in turn was influenced by the affective context in which the pornographic images were presented. Rejection, abandonment, and trauma create a filter that potentially can magnify the impact of images presented in a context of anger, fear, and shock.

A further problem is that many therapists would gloss over internet sex as a 'real' clinical issue. They would believe the patient's denial statements that it was not a problem and not probe further. They might not ask what the patient was viewing, whether they were masturbating to images, or how much time was involved. Worst of all they might collude with the patient into dismissing Lolita sites as not serious since they are 'legal'. There are people in prison today because therapists did not probe enough nor take seriously the risks the patient was taking.

### *The 'Chick Trick' sites*

The scenario starts with a van and a couple of men cruising. They have set out to convince a young woman to get into the van and have sex with them while being filmed with a video camera. They find a woman walking down the street and approach her. They engage her in conversation and manage to convince the woman get into the van with them. The film then is of her being talked into undressing, having oral sex, and finally intercourse. In the finished product voice-overs appear commenting on her lack of intelligence, and balloons come on screen containing derogatory and angry, sexual talk. She is derided being stupid, seducible, and over sexed. The sex becomes rough. She is obviously hurt and sorry she got into this situation. She got 'more than she bargained for.' The unexpected, ambush theme is made explicit in the words she never hears or sees. The final scene portrays her being let out of the van far from where she was with no way to get back. She is crying and angry saying 'you tricked me.' The men are laughing at her making comments about how she got what she deserved as they drive off. The final image is of her collapsed on the ground sobbing and the men are laughing.

There are a growing number of websites that offer this scenario. Their growth in part is because they are very successful and profitable. So the 'knockoffs' of this approach are proliferating. Usually they offer a gallery of jpeg images from the video with a description of how they found the woman, who the man was that she had sex with, a narrative of what happened, and her physical description. Each story is somewhat different because the man is different and the woman is different. Women are rated on their level of cooperation and whether money was involved in inducing the woman to participate. Being sexy and an 'airhead' is 'how we like them.' While each story is different the themes of degradation and anger are common to all. By joining the site you can download all the videos.

The theme of tricking a woman into sex and then filming it goes far beyond the 'van' scenarios. There are dedicated sites to particular types of woman such as older women or big-breasted women. There are different types of inducements including women being desperate for money, auditioning for a movie part, trading rent for sex, or daring to be sexual in a public place. Yet what they have in common is that a woman is approached in a public place such as a supermarket, sidewalk, or bookstore, that she is willing to have sex or in fact really desirous of sex, and that she is tricked into doing more than she ever intended. Some of these are simply pornography but many also show women clearly being pushed into things that they did not intend or understand. In addition to the explicit eroticized rage, 'she asked for it' and her 'no really means yes' are variations of victim precipitation themes. Like the Lolita sites, the attribution of desire and 'deserving it' emerge. Similarly, there are portal sites with extensive linkages to similar sites. Often these related sites are part of the same company of producers who specialize in this genre of pornography. Sometimes these sites will brag that out of the sites offered, this is the one 'most likely to get us arrested.'

Many of these sites link to 'spying' and 'stalking sites.' They are sites in which women are targeted to be observed, followed, or approached. The link is the woman being in public or in some place where she can be observed even if she thinks she is being private (i.e. a dressing room in a department store, a rest room, or a beach). This is more than voyeurism. It is following a woman with the thought of somehow inducing them to be sexual. Or even doing something sexual to them without them knowing it hoping it might lead to sex with them.

Cyberstalking, as a significant problem is growing in recognition both in the criminal justice literature as well as the clinical literature. Riviera (2000) surveys the wide variety of ways cyberstalking appears and that data is difficult because of underreporting of incidents. The incidents that get reported are often those with either violent results or harassment or threats by someone known to the victim. Already taxonomies of stalking such as Boon and Sheridan (2002) differentiate between ex-partner, infatuation, delusional (fixated), and sadistic. Suggested here is that another category exists in which a person is targeted and followed with the intent of 'tricking' or propositioning that person into a sexual encounter. This category is in fact based on the scenario that you could find a person in public, follow them, approach them to have sex with you either in your car or pose for you in public, and that they would be willing partners. Such activity has some risk but you also will get 'lucky.'

*Russ owned a series of auto parts stores. His wife died in a plane crash and his ten year old son died two years later in an auto crash. He came from an ethnic heritage where many of his relatives died of 'ethnic cleansing.' He found himself a single parent overwhelmed with business and parental responsibilities. To lose his troubles he got on the internet and became fascinated with videos of 'guys who would go out and pick up girls and have sex with them right away.' He got on the net after his children would go to sleep and stay on net late into the night. Some nights he did not sleep at all. He would make efforts to control his behaviour because it was affecting his work. He decided that one way to control it was to do it. Instead of watching it and wasting endless hours he could not afford, he decided to do it. With time he reported, 'I came*

*up with my own gimmick. I had fixed up an old limousine and I would wait on the street outside of a lingerie store.' He would offer customers leaving the store money if they would model their lingerie in the back of his limo. Of the first five woman he propositioned two agreed to model for him and he had sex with one of them. Like the gambler hooked on the early wins, he started to take pride in his system.*

*The process was quite time consuming and he became obsessed with it. He found he would work establishments like Victoria's secret in a mall rather than a street in which it was harder to follow but the customer flow was better. Then the challenge was to position the limo for the proposition. His preparations and his stalking of customers started to dramatically cut into his work time. Given he had multiple stores, he could always play the card of being at one of the other stores. The result was that he was not going to work but a few hours a week and his business was deteriorating rapidly. In addition his parenting duties were being neglected sadly despite the best efforts of a nanny. Finally, he was arrested three times in one week. Two for propositioning women and a third for trespassing on the property of a woman he followed persisting in his propositioning. The flaw in his scenario was that while the 'classic' limo attracted women, it also was identifiable. He spent six months in jail.*

*When released, he initiated treatment. With time he was able to see that his preoccupation with lingerie came from fascination with the lingerie section of the Sears catalogue as a kid. He had been faithful to his wife and had no unusual behaviours prior to going to the internet. His therapist was able to help him see that the trauma of the deaths in his family of origin and his immediate family were overwhelming to him. The pornography created a relief but quickly became obsessive. It also tapped into his profound rage at all that had happened to him.*

Another offshoot of the 'trick sites' is the rape simulation sites. These sites simulate the rape of a woman. While the woman is in fact a paid model, a common scenario is portrayed in which she is approached in public, induced into a situation where she is then raped. Freedom of information proponents who are also feminists find the rape simulation sites to be extremely disturbing because they are not illegal. Yet they are in fact a simulation of sexual violence (see Scherer, 2002). For our purposes it is important to notice again the cascade of links. Like the Lolita sites, the 'trick' sites are more or less legal in the sense that all participants are willing and of legal age. Technically those that involve money could be prostitution. Yet, they are portrayed as fun sport and role-playing. Yet one of the derivative paths is to more violent sites including those that simulate rape. Again the language of rage becomes even more explicit.

*Clint was the chief operating officer of a large agricultural company. His father-in-law was the chief executive officer and board chairman. Clint was the designated heir apparent, but there were no plans for transition. He had an MBA from an ivy-league university and had a successful career in an 'elite' management crisis consultation firm. Yet, whenever Clint made decisions of any importance, they were frequently reversed by his in-law, which cost the company vast sums of money on two separate occasions. He chafed under these work conditions and longed for the day when he could lead the company into new areas of growth. To complicate matters, his wife had inherited a*



major portion of her family's money in trusts. She was very grudging about providing Clint with funds for outside projects or things he wished to buy. She felt no reservations about spending money on very expensive clothes, cars, and trips. Clint found himself shoplifting one day as a diversion. Soon it was a compulsion. He found it enervating to pull off these thefts of things he could easily afford. He was arrested for two separate events that immediately appeared in the press. This was both a business crisis and a family crisis. He kept his job but the family's response was to suspend all his credit cards both corporate and personal, which he found degrading. Yet he also was deeply ashamed of his behaviour and baffled as to why he did it.

During this drama Clint sought comfort in losing himself on the internet. Because of his position he had control over the corporate firewalls and access to the internet with no corporate supervision. He was technically gifted and had access to high-speed internet facilities. He was intrigued by sites in which videos of women, who were approached in public, would have sex. Eventually he graduated to sites in which violence was simulated but appeared very real. He reported, 'I preferred sites in which young teens submitted to power. I even gravitated to wanting to see black males with big penises doing it to girls who were being hurt by it.' That his behaviour had become compulsive there was little doubt. 'I would arrive at work in the morning and do real work for about a half hour. The rest of the day I would spend downloading videos.' He also felt that watching such videos ran counter to deeply held values. He saw himself as becoming depraved.

Eventually this drama played out when Clint offered one hundred dollars to a teenage girl in a park to show him her breasts. His arrest combined with the charges of shoplifting brought jail time. After his release, he went to therapy but it did not prevent a divorce and the loss of his position in the company. Because of the teenager issue, his time with his children was carefully supervised by his very angry wife. He later reflected, 'It was like waking up in a horrible dream. I could not believe what I was doing. I lost the opportunity of a lifetime, a marriage, and access to my children.' His therapist helped him to see how his anger for his wife and father-in-law, resulted in behaviour which were efforts to get even. The shoplifting behaviour was a way to create a internal 'parity' in which he could feel equal and in charge. His sexual activities on the internet similarly became a vehicle for misplaced anger but at a very high price. His propositioning the fourteen-year-old in the park, felt normal given the context of all that he watched on the internet. More fundamentally he now was able to see how his behaviour was anger and power driven, how he had many options to help with this that he did not explore, and that he had a right to be angry.

Russ and Walt were picked as examples of men who were characterized by self-discipline and a desire to succeed. Within the life of each however were emotional dynamics that found compatible parallels on the internet. The result was risky behaviour that was atypical from the rest of their lives. They both experienced powerful arousal that incorporated risk, fear, and anger. Yet their inhibitions were lowered because of 'normalizing' scenarios they were compulsively viewing on the internet. The portraying of women in public welcoming harassing and exploitive activities created and affirmed a scenario that eventually was acted upon with life changing results.



### Granny sites

Elder erotica on the internet breaks many societal assumptions. At one level it helps dispel the myth that sex is an activity reserved for the young. Robust, enjoyable sex is a lifelong activity to be embraced by seniors. On the internet there is much activity that supports seniors in their quest for sexual acceptance. Voyeur posting sites, nudist sites, and partner finding sites show the elderly as still interested and actively enjoying their sexuality. Within the pornography sites, elder erotica is celebrated in the form of the 'granny', 'mature', or 'old slut' sites. Older women are presented as 'experienced', hungry for sex, and in some cases 'superior' because of their extensive knowledge. Many sites actually organize their pictures on the basis of age so you have fifty and over, sixty and over, seventy and over, and over eighty.

Professionals concerned about 'vulnerable adults' question where all these women in their eighties and nineties come from whose pictures are on the web. Given the nature of dementia, the fear is that they are being filmed without understanding what they are participating in. Or if they do understand, do they understand what appearing on the internet really means. The granny sites also serve frequently as portals to underage pornography. One route for example is sites in which old women are depicted with young men. These in turn lead to old women with underage boys, which are found commingled with pictures of underage girls being sexual with older men. Many of these promote themselves as 'incest' sites purportedly depicting real family members having sex. A further interesting connection is that the granny site producers and the Lolita site producers often are not only linked but come out of the same corporate umbrella. One is reminded of Stoller's (1995) early research into pornography producers who shared the common attribute that they probably would not be in the business if it were culturally sanctioned. A further thought is what commonalities exist between those producing and those consuming.

The granny sites parallel the chick trick and the Lolita sites by portraying women as vulnerable, by using anger and degradation as a context, and by constructing themes of victim precipitation. Victimization themes appear in many forms. Sometimes the older woman is the expert in hurting the younger person.

*Don at the age of eight found his father's pornography in the trash. He was discovered cutting pictures out and was beaten severely by his mother. He continued to find his father's castoffs and was repeatedly discovered by his mother. By the age of fifteen he was a 'connoisseur' of pornography and sex toys. He was always attracted to much older women. When he got the internet he discovered the 'grannie' sites and thought this was the solution for the satisfaction he was never able to get. He became totally obsessed within a year. And then he met a woman on the internet three times his age and they became a couple of sorts. They lived together and were constantly seeking threesomes and swinger situations. She played out his fantasy of being sexual with an older woman watching him be sexual especially with overweight women. She introduced him to cocaine and other drugs. His twenties became a blur of sex and drugs. Sex also became*

*more dangerous with him being injured and hospitalized from various forms of sexual pain inflicted by his partner. He was absolutely captivated by the porn industry and the internet. More than anything else he wanted to produce and perform films depicting young boys and old women—the kind he saw on the net.*

*Finally he ended up in a residential facility for addiction treatment. His family had for years been trying to break up the relationship he had with this older woman. In treatment he acknowledged out loud what he had known for years: she was actually a danger to him. She refused to stop using drugs and he knew that if he did not stop he would be dead. His whole history was filled with danger, disease, lost work opportunities because of his sexual compulsion and his drug addiction. At one point he observed, ‘Getting herpes, losing time and money, getting hurt all the time—I feel like I lost my entire twenties due to sex addiction. I also think I have paid with my character and my soul and values.’ With time his therapist was able to help Don to make sense of the early beatings by his mother, the anger, and the repetition of violence. In the midst of all of this, Don pointed out that accessing the pictures of the grannie sites felt like the keys to the kingdom but were in fact the beginning of a compulsive nightmare.*

*Sean was admitted to treatment for severe depression, substance abuse, and cutting on himself. There was also a diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder. Sean clearly remembered extensive sexual abuse by his grandfather. In his late teens he was very aware of being attracted to mature women in uniforms—especially in white medical uniforms. Searching for examples of that on the internet led him to the elder erotica sites. Very old women became his ‘usual attraction’ on the internet. He found the ‘rape fantasy’ sites ‘somewhat of a turn-on.’ He had real difficulty completing graduate school in physical therapy because of it. He worked for a while in a hospital setting but found the structure to confining. So he started working for a service that provided in home health services. He liked being able to keep his own schedule. With unstructured time his drinking and his internet obsession intensified dramatically. When he would sexually act out on the net he would have episodes of self-harm. He lost his job with the service. He decided to go on his own. He specialized in helping the elderly and was giving massages to elderly women. He was also initiating sex with them.*

*Sean’s therapist helped him to see the connections between his sexual abuse and his compulsive behaviours. It took some time for him to see that his being sexual with his clients was exploitive. The process was even longer for him to put together that this his compulsive behaviour pattern had an eroticized rage component. His obsession with older women was actually in part rooted in his early sexual abuse experiences. Yet he was also clear how the sites with older women were what heightened his obsession. He declared a moratorium on internet use while he was consolidating his life. With time he also realized that in order to relapsing into old self-destructive patterns, he needed to shift his career so that his work did not converge with the troubling obsessions.*

Sex in the elderly is a wonderful thing. Yet even here the internet can serve as a catalyst for compulsive and exploitive behaviour. Both Don and Sean serve as examples of the internet tapping into the extraordinary events in ordinary people’s lives. Anger and victimization supply evolving obsessions with extraordinary arousal creating unfortunate results.

*Discussion: cybersex as catalyst*

This paper does not intend to debate further about regulation of the internet. From an addiction perspective, it has never worked to restrict the supply or people's freedom. The lessons of the Prohibition experiment on alcohol have yet to be learned in our national drug policy. Gambling and sex may in fact be similar. Given the tremendous reaction to the exploitation of children and its place in the popular media (Grove & Zerega, 2002, Nordland & Bartholet, 2001), controversy intensifies even further. The recent Supreme Court decision which struck down the elements of the Child Pornography Protection Act, which criminalized 'virtual' child pornography has added to the complexity of opinions (Brown, 2003). Further, there is emerging very strong new evidence linking pornography and violence (Bergen & Bogle, 2000).

It is important to take the long view. A good example of this perspective is those who write on attraction to children. The case is made that we are essentially on the divide between epochs of belief. The old cultural construct was that sexual contact with children did not exist. The new is that children are exploited and that attraction to children is common. We must understand and use this information to protect children but also to understand and prevent perpetration (See Olafson *et al.*, 1993). Trauma therapist Anne Stirling Hastings (1994) argues further that this issue will push us to a deeper understanding of sexual health and wounding but it may take a century for us to get there. Internet sexuality will similarly push us into thinking and researching many sexual issues and it may take us a century to get there. The internet is accelerating arousal in ways that will open the door to new understandings.

The purpose of this article was to specify examples of internet sexuality in which the cybersex served as a catalyst to sexual behaviour which was compulsive and exploitive. These behaviours were rooted in the tragedies of people's lives and were fueled by anger, victimization and obsession. While the examples are not empirical, they literally beg for systematic study. The current funding climate does not see sexual research as useful (see Clay, 2003) yet given the sheer numbers of people on the internet and the seriousness of the social issues at stake, a compelling case exists for research into what happens to sexual arousal on the internet. Cooper and his colleagues have opened the door to the enormity of the impact of cybersex. We need to focus now on the actual mechanisms of arousal. These three genres of sites (Lolita, chick trick, and grannie) and the cases described underline researchable issues:

*Compulsion and addiction.* Clearly cybersex generates and intensifies reactions to sexual stimuli. Recent research into the neurochemistry of addictions may open new avenues of understanding people who start specific behaviour voluntarily but lose their ability to control their behaviour. Recent breakthroughs in understanding intermittent responses and dopamine, for example, could have significant correlations with surfing and getting a 'hit' (see Shizgal & Arvanitogiannis, 2003).

*Cybersex and eroticized affect.* Affect has a biological basis that somehow appears to be intensified by cybersex simulation. Feelings such as intense fear, anger and shame become significant modulators to arousal. The mechanisms by which arousal happens are critical for understanding the advent of new behaviours that do not fit developmental formulas that have been accepted in traditional sexology and psychology. Affect modulation of arousal appears to be a significant factor in sexually compulsive behaviours and especially for those with catalytic internet experiences. Further, can any of these mechanisms be harnessed to help sexual aversion.

*Cybersex and trauma.* Trauma specialists have long been interested in the unresolved, the reenactment of behaviour, or as some have described it as 'addiction to the trauma' (van der Kolk, 1988). Clearly victimization and early experiences activated in privacy, in the internet medium has some galvanizing impact on mobilizing sexual response. The aetiology of that process would have very significant implications for both sexuality and trauma researchers.

*Cybersex and exploitation.* The intensity of the internet medium may play a significant role in the etiology of exploitive behaviour. The cases presented above suggest a variety of offending profiles which do not fit the prototypical criminalized minds nor the essential components of the paraphilias. They in fact however are breaking social rules, becoming self-destructive, and vulnerable to serious legal consequences. Therefore, new profiles may emerge making much more complex the process of differential diagnosis. Just as understanding the aetiology of compulsive/addictive internet behaviour is important, so is the genesis of new types of offenders for both clinical and legal systems.

Clinicians simply must become aware of the pitfalls the internet creates. Lack of knowledge of the internet itself can serve as a barrier to understanding when a client may in fact be in over their head. Further, they must accept (whether they agree or not) that their clients may be in serious jeopardy because of their behaviour. Finally, they must be prepared to assist the client in intervening in self-destructive cycles of behaviour. Some clear strategies are emerging including:

*Confronting the myth of anonymity.* Part of the foundation of compulsive sexual behaviour on the net is the assumption that no one knows what each of us does. Explaining to the client the realities are that the sites you have been to know where you have been as well as the internet service provider. A useful strategy is to have the client acquire software that identifies various surveillance products that their computer has acquired during the client's surfing the net. When they discover they are being watched by many, it has a chilling effect on their presumed anonymity.

*Clinical assessment of use.* When signs of sexual problems on-line emerge, the clinician needs to first assess the extent, rituals, and focus of internet sexual behaviour. This means carefully exploring with the client the paths being traveled, the arousal experience, and the risks being taken. Also the use of alcohol and drugs as part of concomitant behaviour must be taken into account. This assessment affords the

opportunity for the clinician to explain risks, underline potential compulsive issues, and refer to additional resources such as twelve step programs.

*Detail arousal template.* Once the groundwork is laid, the clinician can help the patient identify specific affect responses, which modulate arousal. These can be related to life experiences including trauma and loss, which can be part of the filtering mechanisms which intensify arousal. The therapist helps the patient to create 'psychological distance' to defuse and understand behaviour which has become obsessional. Core to this process is determining a governing 'scenario' or 'ideal fantasy' which has now become problematic. Further research is necessary to validate approaches in helping to deconstruct these dysfunctional, internet generated online behaviours.

Above all, therapists must understand that failure to stop illegal behaviour can mean serious life consequences. Therapists who 'move on' to developmental issues or other life events without reviewing possible problems can literally enable prosecutable behaviour. Nor does the fact that you happen to disagree that this should be problematic prevent the arrest of your client. Finally, if therapist is not familiar with relapse prevention strategies or twelve step programs, it is important to develop these resources. When you have the client in your office, there may not be time to 'refer out.'

As of this year, over five hundred million people will have access to the internet. In the United States, fifty-one million households (140 million people) will be part of the world wide web. By 2005, seventy-seven-million people under the age of eighteen will be part of the internet (Byfield, 2001). Seven million new pages are added each day. In the center of this transformation of the culture, are profound sexual shifts. Few technological advances will have such far reaching concrete impact on the sexual lives of the participants. For the long term, it will take many years for us to assimilate our understanding of the impact on human sexuality. For the short term, as the above cases show, we must simply have a better understanding of what the risks are when sexual exploration on the internet goes awry.

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