Children deserve better

2016

A British Naturism report

Campaigning for wholesome body-attitudes

Malcolm Boura

British Naturism is the national body for naturists in the UK. The objects can be summarised as the furtherance of wholesome body-attitudes and representing the interests of the four million self-professed UK naturists and nudists.[1]

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1 Ipsos MORI, 2011, 2,000 sample size. There was a series of questions regarding nudity and naturism the last of which asked if they considered themselves to be a naturist or a nudist.

1 Executive Summary & Policy Statement

British Naturism is the National Organisation for Naturists in the UK, with over 9000 active members, but representing the interests of almost 4 million Naturists nationwide. Many Naturists share a philosophical belief in a natural naked lifestyle, in harmony with nature, with their counterparts all over the world.

The policy of BN on children is simple: we believe that children should be brought up and kept safe in an environment of openness and body honesty. They should know about how their bodies work, what happens to them at puberty and what a normal consensual sexual relationship is, before they experience it as adults. This should be done ideally by bringing up children in a Naturist environment where body honesty is key, but otherwise through good, explicit, factually correct and non judgemental sex and relationships education through the prime educators: parents, teachers and organisations like the BBC.

We believe that bringing children up in such an environment and with wholesome, honest and open body attitudes leads to better sexual health outcomes for young people, fewer body image disorders, and more sensible attitudes to life. Prudery, not openness or nudity, harms children.

We want children to be innocent, but not ignorant.

We believe that body openness and honesty protects children from the possible harmful effects of inappropriate material. They should find out about sex and how their bodies work from good education and openness instead of glamour and pornography. Children are naturally curious and if their curiosity is not answered openly then they will seek answers anywhere they can. Blocking will not prevent them as they can usually circumvent it with a facility that adults may not believe possible.

There is objective evidence that those beliefs are well founded, unlike some other beliefs. The following document sets out our views in considerable detail, with evidence from sound academic sources rather than prejudice or sound bites. It makes interesting and essential reading for anyone concerned with the welfare of children and/or internet censorship.

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2 Introduction

It is vital for a healthy democracy that both the vulnerable and freedom of expression are protected and welfare maximised. That can only be achieved if policy is founded on the best available objective evidence of harm and benefit. Anything else is indistinguishable from myth, prejudice, commercial greed, and political opportunism.

There are well established and verified methods available that would greatly improve many of the body-attitude related outcomes for children in the UK. They cost very little and are easy to implement but first there has to be a willingness to follow the evidence and to do what works.

The countries with a more open approach to the body have vastly better outcomes[2] than the UK across a wide range of indicators. Conversely countries with a more prudish approach have worse outcomes. It is perverse that so much policy is actively encouraging the attitudes associated with the worst outcomes in the western world.[3]

The precautionary principle is a two edged sword. In the absence of objective evidence any action is as likely to make things worse as it is to make things better. If the available evidence is inadequate then rectifying that lack must be a priority. As history so amply demonstrates, anecdote and popular opinion, especially perceived popular opinion on emotive topics, and even expert opinion, are no substitute for evidence, and can result in widespread and all too often serious harm.[4]

Driving in the dark without headlights or at 70mph in thick fog are quite rightly criminal offences. Making policy for children without the illumination provided by adequate evidence and without clearing away the fog of flawed and erroneous information[5] is equally dangerous and every bit as reprehensible. Just as dark can be cured with light, lack of evidence can be remedied by research. Just as the dangers of fog can be reduced by letting it clear, so can the dangers of flawed evidence be reduced by clearing it away. Fog is beyond our control but errors are not.

It is long overdue that "Think of the children" really did mean "think" instead of it being a slogan to stifle debate and hinder progress. It is long overdue that "children" really did mean "children" and not adult "I want" or adult "I don't want". It is long overdue that policy was firmly evidence based; rigorous, objective evidence instead of myth and misconceptions. It is long overdue that "Putting

2 A factor of ten or more between least and most prudish western countries is not unusual. See 4.3 Prudery below.

3 For example the teenage pregnancy rates in many Western European countries are about a quarter those of the UK, but the rate of the USA is nearly double. "Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)" The World Bank http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT Strictly speaking not pregnancy rate but more reliable and indicative.

4 See section 3.6 Uncommonly nonsensical common sense below regarding the several babies a day who were dying due to one such myth.

5 See 3.2 Myths, misapprehensions and prejudice below.

children first" really did mean that the welfare of children took precedence over adult myths, dislikes, and embarrassment.

This document describes some of the mechanisms that have resulted in the present approach to policy, the distinguishing features of good and bad research, the available evidence, and it then reviews a number of child welfare policy areas.

It is a sad reflection on the state of censorship in this country that you may be prevented from accessing some of the documents referred to in this report, or that you will first have to prove that you are over 18. We challenge anybody to find even a shred of remotely credible evidence to justify that.

The UK has been at or near the bottom of the international child welfare league tables for decades and there is nothing to indicate that more of the same tired old failed policies will change that. A paradigm shift is essential.

3 Principles for good policy making

3.1 Introduction

Policy must be evidence based, evidence of harm and benefit for children, not evidence of adult myths and wishful thinking. Children must genuinely be put first and not used as an excuse to promote adult "I don't want ..." and adult "I don't like ...".

The overriding priority must be the best possible outcomes for children. Myth is valueless and dangerous no matter how strongly believed, how widely it is believed, or how strongly it is liked. It is facts that have value and it is what works that counts. Children really must come first.

If the evidence is inadequate then that must be remedied before action is taken. Once measures have become entrenched then obtaining change can be impossible or extremely difficult, see 3.2 Myths, misapprehensions and prejudice below, and without evidence there is a high likelihood of making serious mistakes.

"Something must be done! Think of the children!"
"This is something so it must be done!"
"How dare you disagree with me you pervert! Think of the children!"

3.2 Myths, misapprehensions and prejudice

There is no substitute for rigorous research and much of the material masquerading as research or report is far from rigorous. Government reports have first stated that there is no or inadequate evidence (true) and then proceeded to make recommendations for action (absurd). The precautionary principle only has validity when there is evidence that the recommendations will not do harm. Such lack of rationale is indistinguishable from myth and prejudice and it is a nonsensical way to decide policy. See 3.5 The precautionary principle below.

An appeal to "common sense" is all too often an indication of sloppy reasoning building on inadequate knowledge. That can be very dangerous as described in 3.6 Uncommonly nonsensical common sense below.

Similarly an appeal to emotion, "You wouldn't want your child to ….", often reflects a lack of evidence and thought.

Some myths are incredibly difficult to overcome and it is a recognised problem. As Megan Scudellari[6] wrote in Nature,

> *"Some dangerous myths get plenty of air time: vaccines cause autism, HIV doesn't cause AIDS. But many others swirl about, too, harming people, sucking up money, muddying the scientific enterprise."*

One of the mechanisms leading to problematic myths is described in that article as

> *"That "interpretation creep", as Spitzer calls it, can lead to misconceptions that are hard to excise. ... Scientists need to be effective at communicating ideas and get away from simple, boiled-down messages."*

Scudellari concludes with:

> *"Once a myth is here, it is often here to stay. Psychological studies suggest that the very act of attempting to dispel a myth leads to stronger attachment to it. ... "Myths are almost impossible to eradicate," says Kirschner. "The more you disprove it, often the more hard core it becomes."*

Anybody who has studied the reactions of some people to nudity and children, and the obstacles to providing effective sex eduction will recognise the phenomena described in that article.
It appears likely to us that Group Think is a major contributor to the myth dispelling difficulty described by Scudellari. Group Think is an astonishingly strong psychological mechanism and it, along with the Woozle effect,[7] provides a possible explanation for the path that has been taken by policy development.

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6 The science myths that will not die. False beliefs and wishful thinking about the human experience are common. They are hurting people — and holding back science. Megan Scudellari Nature, Vol 528, Issue 7582. http://www.nature.com/news/the-science-myths-that-will-not-die-1.19022

7 See 3.4 Logic below.

There are numerous examples in the various official reports of "interpretation creep" and "group think". They make conclusions that are either not supported by the evidence cited or the evidence cited has been cherry picked and contrary evidence ignored. We strongly recommend listening to the podcast "Group Thinking" from the BBC[8] before reading the remainder of this document. It does much to explain how some aspects of present child policy have come about.

3.3 Definitions

Definitions are absolutely essential but often omitted. Without them little of the work into body related issues has much validity.

- What is meant by indecent, immoral, pornographic? The definition of Denmark or that of Saudi Arabia?
- What is meant by unwanted touching? Groping or using the rush hour tube?
- What does objectifying women mean? Is David Beckham objectified by the display of his physical attributes in adverts?

Without clarity of what the words mean it is impossible to hold a sensible discussion but important discussions do take place none-the-less. For example a recent House of Lords debate opened by first declining to define the important terms because it was too difficult and then proceeded to discuss it! Unsurprisingly the debate failed to distinguish between harmful and beneficial and failed to distinguish between personal dislike and evidence. The contributions from the experts, people who understand the difference between mythconception and evidence, were ignored by those pursuing their personal feelings.[9]

3.4 Logic

There are many web sites documenting common errors of logic and they should be required reading. One such is Your Logical Fallacy[10] which also provides some excellent posters. It is disturbing that so many of these well known, indeed notorious, mistakes can be found in debates and official documents. We have tried very hard to avoid making such mistakes in this document but if you do find any do please let us know and we will put it right.

False cause – presuming that a real or perceived relationship between things means that one is the cause of the other.

Bandwagon – appealing to popularity or the fact that many people do something as an attempted form of validation.

8 "Group Thinking", The Why Factor, BBC, 25 Dec 2015. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p039zq41

9 Peers are not provided with any training in evidence based policy making, assessment of evidence quality, statistical and research methods, research methodology and related topics but advice is available on request. Correspondence with the House of Lords Information Office, March 2016.

10 Your Logical Fallacy. http://yourlogicalfallacyis.com

Composition/division – assuming that what's true about one part of something is applicable to all, or other, parts of it.

Appeal to emotion – manipulating an emotional response in place of a valid or compelling argument.

Tu quoque – avoiding having to engage with criticism by turning it back on the accuser – answering them with criticism.

Burden of proof – saying that the burden of proof lies not with the person making the claim, but with someone else to disprove.

No true Scotsman - making what could be called an appeal to purity as a way to dismiss relevant criticisms or flaws of an argument.

The Texas sharpshooter – cherry picking data clusters to suit an argument, or finding a pattern to suit a presumption.

Personal incredulity – saying that because one finds something difficult to understand or to accept that it's therefore not true.

Ambiguity – using double meanings or ambiguities of language to mislead or misrepresent the truth

Genetic – judging something good or bad on the basis of where it comes from, or from whom it comes.

The precautionary principle – an excuse for doing what one wants despite the evidence or lack of evidence. See 3.5 The precautionary principle below.

Common sense – close cousin to the precautionary principle. A smokescreen for inadequate evidence and sloppy thinking. See 3.6 Uncommonly nonsensical common sense below.

The Woozle effect – Copying of statements to give a false appearance of consensus and veracity.[11]

3.5 The precautionary principle

The precautionary principle is a two edged sword. In the absence of evidence it is just as much an argument for doing nothing as it is an argument for doing something. The only circumstances in which this principle has any justification is if there is evidence that the proposed course of action will not result in harm.

The maxims "If in doubt leave well alone", "If it ain't broke don't fix it", and "Act in haste, repent at leisure", have a lot of merit.

11 Woozle effect, wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woozle_effect

3.6 Uncommonly nonsensical common sense

Experience shows that supposedly common sense policy without a rigorous evidence base can result in widespread and very serious harm as the SIDS scandal so amply demonstrated.

Until the mid 1990s mothers were given the "common sense" advice to lay babies on their front to prevent choking if they vomited and to keep them well wrapped up to ensure that they did not get cold. When the advice was reversed the SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) rate fell dramatically.[12] That affair also demonstrates that once a false dogma has become established then putting it right can be extremely difficult.[13] The delay before the Ministry of Health was forced[14] to change the advice cost the lives of several babies a day.[15]

That mistake was perhaps understandable given the apparent contradiction with perceived "common sense" but more recent events demonstrate how difficult it can be for a profession to take a fresh look at practice even when it is common sense to do so. As midwife Amanda Burleigh wrote:

> *"There's been a lot of resistance, despite the evidence, because many people simply just don't like to change practice."*[16]

There are similar problems over promoting wholesome body-attitudes. We live in a society, that for learnt cultural reasons, inculcates body-shame from an early age. As Naturist Philosopher wrote:

> *However, since people in the society have no experience with any other customs, they assume the customs must be justified as simply "common sense". Customs are learned by everyone as young children ... even as adults individuals are not inclined to question or challenge society's customs, because to do so risks ostracism and possible harm from others in the society. People who questions customs are seen as nonconformists, who are unpredictable and can't be trusted. And so customs eventually become inflexible "moral" rules, violation of which is considered "taboo".*[17]

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12 The campaigning of Anne Diamond is credited with saving 20,000 lives. After just two years, cot deaths fell by 70% – the equivalent of saving 12 babies a week." http://peoplematter.tv/artistmanagement/Anne%20Diamond/annediamondhome.htm Or to put it another way, the delay by the Ministry of Health cost about 1,200 lives.

13 It required a media campaign before the Ministry of Health would act. "The British authorities knew, but had done nothing." http://www.amazon.co.uk/Gift-Sebastian-Story-Cot-Death/dp/0752205153

14 Footnote 12.

15 Estimates vary but the number of lives saved by the change in SIDS advice is enormous and the number of lives lost due to the reluctance to correct the advice substantial. Set Squared Partnership (Universities of Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Southampton & Surrey) states "The research has prevented approximately 10,000 deaths in the UK, and at least 100,000 worldwide, as other countries have adopted these recommendations." http://www.setsquared.co.uk/impact/health-case-studies/babies-and-cot-death-how-research-led-life-saving-campaign

16 Midwife: 'My 10 year fight to prove that cutting the cord too soon puts babies at risk' , The Telegraph, 22/4/15. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/health/midwife-my-10-year-fight-to-prove-that-cutting-the-cord-too-soon-puts-babies-at-risk/

17 Unreasonable customs become unreasonable moral rules then unreasonable laws Naturist Philosopher. 25 Nov

The psychology is well understood but that does not make it any easier for society to change.

3.7 Conflict of interest

Nobody can make good decisions without accurate information. They must not be misled by:

- commercial interests whose priorities are often appeasing lobby groups, appeasing advertisers, minimising cost, and maximising profit;
- politicians and organisations playing on the emotions to further their own interests;
- the virtuous perpetuating mistakes by repeating misinformation;
- report authors providing the desired outcome to enhance reputation and gain further contracts; and
- emotional capital tied up with past actions and beliefs.

All except the smallest charities are effectively businesses. They have to make the books balance just as a business does and the pressures are very similar.[18] They are selling two products, the need for the work that they do, and the work that they do. Increasing the perceived need for what they do and the perceived effectiveness of what they do, are proven ways to increase revenue. The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee heard from the Charity Commission that some charities have acted unscrupulously in order to raise funds.[19]

> *In the summer of 2015, the Mail on Sunday and Daily Mail carried a series of reports which alleged that many of the best known charities in the UK (including Oxfam, the NSPCC, Save the Children and the RSPCA) had used, often through sub-contractors, exploitative and unethical fundraising methods. These methods included buying and selling personal data, ignoring the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) and putting pressure on vulnerable people to donate.*

And further went on to say:

> *"The Charity Commission told us that the "harsh reality is that competition for funds, particularly for larger charities, large fundraising charities, is fierce and fiercer than it has ever been".*

It seems unlikely that that unscrupulous behaviour has been confined to fund raising and it offers a possible explanation for one particularly dubious press release. Something is very badly wrong when several dozen experts feel it necessary to sign an open letter of refutation to a major charity.[20]

2015. https://naturistphilosopher.wordpress.com/2015/11/25/unreasonable-customs-become-unreasonable-moral-rules-then-unreasonable-laws/

18 "The 2015 charity fundraising controversy: lessons for trustees, the Charity Commission, and regulators".Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. House of Commons. 14 Jan 2016.

19 Ibid.

20 Open Letter to NSPCC re: 'Porn Addiction' Study. *Sex & Censorship* (2015). at http://sexandcensorship.org/2015/04/open-letter-nspcc-re-porn-addiction-study

3.8 Evaluating the quality of information

This may sound paranoid but never take anything on trust. Ask to see the evidence. Even the most reputable of sources sometimes make mistakes, and sometimes sources are less reputable than their reputation would suggest. This is especially a problem when statements are made confirming the generally accepted dogma. Unless the underlying facts, methodology, and logic are checked then dogma can morph until it become nothing more than myth which is provided with credibility by the Woozle[21] effect.

Characteristics of good sources:

1. The sources of information are specified and can be verified;
2. The information gathering methods are specified and appropriate to the task;
3. The logic is clear and correct;.
4. They define the key terms;
5. They are balanced;
6. There is a complete and verifiable chain from the initial research through to every fact, conclusion and recommendation in the document.

Reliability of sources, best first:

1. Peer reviewed academic research;
2. Serious work from charities and government reports;
3. Anecdote and opinion;

The following may refer to reputable sources but they are not themselves reliable:

1. Fund raising and publicity campaigns;
2. “I want”, “I don’t like”, and myth.

That can only ever be a rough guide as mistakes are made and sometimes things are made up.

3.9 Decision making

Putting children first requires a rigorous consideration of the evidence, both for and against, and including the big picture. It does not mean using children as a smokescreen to further adult mythconceptions.

It is very easy to become so focussed on the immediate problem that wider considerations are neglected. Evaluating those wider effects is more difficult than the immediately obvious because

21 Woozle effect, wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woozle_effect

they typically come about via diffuse and longer term mechanisms. Hence short term gain can lead to much greater harm in the longer term. Abstinence-only sex education is a classic example. See 4.3 Prudery below.

The only way to distinguish sensible decision making from prejudice is objective evidence and rigorous logic.

There are many aspect to decision making:

1. How big is the problem really?
2. What is the likelihood of benefit exceeding harm?
3. How large is the imbalance?
4. What is the quality of the evidence?
5. If a decision proves incorrect then how easily can it be rectified?

The precautionary principle is a much abused two edged sword valid in only limited circumstances. See 3.5 The precautionary principle above.

4 The evidence

4.1 International rankings

The position of the UK in the international rankings for the well-being of children varies considerably between studies as might be expected but some patterns stand out.

- The UK is generally mediocre at best, not just amongst wealthy nations, but amongst all nations.
- There are a few indicators for which the UK does score well. They tend to be the ones less directly linked to body-attitudes, for example smoking.
- The USA is typically even worse, often a lot worse, than the UK.
- The Netherlands and the Nordics typically score well, followed fairly closely by the rest of Europe, and well ahead of the UK.

As a recent Children's Society report says:

> *The aspect of life for which children in England ranked lowest was their satisfaction with their appearance – where they ranked 10th out of 11 countries, higher only than South Korea.*
>
> *In fact, further statistical tests show that the mean scores for satisfaction with appearance were much lower among children in England (7.3 out of 10) than in the other 10 countries combined (average score of 8.1 out of 10).*

… satisfaction with appearance declines substantially during the early teenage years, particularly for girls. … suggests that in recent years there has been a growing gap between males and females in this respect. … suggesting that children in England are much less satisfied with this aspect of their lives than children in a range of other countries …[22]

UNICEF reports paint a very similar picture:

A new UNICEF report, Report Card 11, puts the UK in 16th position – below Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Portugal – in a league table of child well-being in the world's richest countries.

An earlier report in 2007 put the UK at the bottom of 21 developed countries for overall child well-being, so there has been minor improvement.

However there are still areas in which the UK ranks significantly low, especially among young people aged 15 to 19.

Teenage pregnancy rates continue to be high, as do the numbers of young people under 19 not in education, employment or training. The UK also has one of the highest alcohol abuse rates in 11 to 15 year olds.[23]

Body attitude problems are serious. They cause misery, they can cause lifelong harm, and they result in deaths.

4.2 Information for children

The provision of information to children can be summarised as too little, too late. Anna Feuchtwang, Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau said:

'Young people tell us time and again that they want better teaching on the essential topics covered within PSHE: sex and relationships, physical and mental health, financial and political education, and bullying. Yet despite this, PSHE is still woefully inadequate, with Ofsted finding that teaching fell short in 40% of schools.[24]

An internet search will find dozens of similar statements by similarly reputable sources but still the Department for Education refuses to act. Actually, the situation is considerably worse than the NCB statement suggests since PSHE and SRE are being judged against a low standard.

Most young people said that they were not getting enough sex education. [25]

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22 P7, "The Good Childhood Report 2014", The Children's Society, 2014. http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/The%20Good%20Childhood%20Report%202014%20-%20FINAL_0.pdf

23 UNICEF report reveals a generation of UK teens ignored by government. http://www.unicef.org.uk/Latest/News/report-card-11-child-wellbeing-uk-teens-ignored-by-government/

24 Statement on announcement that PSHE and sex and relationships education will not be made compulsory. National Children's Bureau. http://www.ncb.org.uk/news/statement-on-annoucment-that-pshe-and-sex-and-relationships-education-will-not-be-made-compulsory

25 Young People and Pornography. A Briefing for Workers Written by: Brook, Centre for HIV and Sexual Health, FPA, The National Youth Agency http://www.cornwallhealthyschools.org/documents/Young%20people%20and%20pornography.pdf

These are a recurring finding of both surveys of young people and of the professionals working in that field.

Society is failing to provide essential information to young people so they are seeking it out for themselves. A 2009 Channel 4 survey is typical in finding that:

> *One third of young people in the Channel Four survey said that they learned about sex and women's bodies from pornography.*[26]

Many parents, probably most, lack the necessary skills and knowledge because they were denied SRE as children and a significant number are wary of what Social Services and others might have to say if they learnt that body-matters were being discussed with children. It does not matter whether or not that is justified, it is the perception that determines behaviour.

> My daughter has one of the most open and sensible attitudes to sex I have ever come across. She is 20 and just embarking on her first proper adult relationship. She never had any material censored by us. Under the age of about 12 she just wasn't interested and between 13 and 18 no doubt satisfied her natural curiosity but didn't dwell on it. She has always talked to both of us openly and sensibly about sex and the body. Unlike most of the under age pregnant girls that I had to deal with in my 20 years as a Head and Deputy Head Teacher!

The media are prevented from supplying information and wholesome role models by both regulation and fear of a public outcry. Regulators repeatedly uphold complaints made by a tiny number of people, often only two or three, despite millions of other people not feeling strongly enough to make a complaint, and despite there being no mechanism to complain about the complaints.
Information inculcating wholesome body-attitudes should be endemic in a child's environment but instead they are systematically prevented from accessing it and adults are systematically prevented from providing it.

4.3 Prudery

Greater body-openness would make it easier for responsible adults, parents, educators and the media to provide guidance, examples, and role models which would provide considerable benefits. Educating children about the body is not something that can be left to the glamour industry but in practice that is what often happens. A few hours per year, if that, of heavily circumscribed formal sex education is woefully inadequate. Positive attitudes must be inculcated in children throughout childhood but that will only happen if adults feel able to do so. As one handbook for youth workers states:

> *Whatever our feelings as individuals, it is clear that censorship, denial or judgemental*

26 Young People and Pornography. A Briefing for Workers Written by: Brook, Centre for HIV and Sexual Health, FPA, The National Youth Agency http://www.cornwallhealthyschools.org/documents/Young%20people%20and%20pornography.pdf

condemnation are not effective tactics in dealing with the issue with young people. …

Some will be curious and seek [pornography] out (including as a source of information about sex in the absence of comprehensive Sex and Relationships Education). ...

Some young people are getting inaccurate information about sexual behaviour from pornography which needs to be corrected. …

Most young people said that they were not getting enough sex education. [27]

Even if the immediate effects of a prudery inspired policy are desirable the longer term effects, which are likely to be diffuse and more difficult to evaluate, can be appalling. A good example is abstinence only sex education. It is superficially plausible, and many people claim that it works, but the evidence otherwise is overwhelming.[28] It appears to delay first intercourse but only to about the European norm and it is followed by increased promiscuity and less use of protection and contraception. The consequences are obvious. Despite that many US states continue to pursue what is known to be a disastrous policy and US government and businesses export those policies around the world.[29]

The effects are not confined to sexual matters. It is apparent that prudery impacts adversely on most if not all body-attitude related outcomes, many of which are considered further below.

There is abundant evidence that societies with less prudish attitudes are much better performers.

4.4 Naturism

There is much anecdotal evidence that Naturism leads to improved body-image,[30] body-knowledge and body-attitudes in general. Preliminary results from current research are showing statistically significant correlations and indicating that more open body attitudes are the cause of better outcomes.[31] Conversely there is no evidence that nudity, either their own or other people's, causes harm to anyone of any age. If there were then by now somebody would have cited it in one of the all too common attacks on Naturism.

The opinion of those who have actually seen the reaction of children to nudity is remarkably consistent. Nudity is only an issue if an adult makes it into one and making it into an issue can cause harm.

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27 Ibid.

28 The Truth About Abstinence-Only Programs. Advocates for Youth. 2007. http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/409-the-truth-about-abstinence-only-programs

29 "Abstinence-only sex education". Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstinence-only_sex_education A good overall summary that is in accordance with our knowledge of the field.

30 For example Michelle Wallen's TEDx Talk On Body Painting Will Make You Want To Try The Body Posi Art Movement. http://www.bustle.com/articles/136050-michelle-wallens-tedx-talk-on-body-painting-will-make-you-want-to-try-the-body-posi?utm_source=FBOnsite&utm_medium=Facebook&utm_campaign=1

31 Some preliminary results from academic research, British Naturism magazine, Winter 2015.

A British Naturism 2001 analysis of Cabinet Office figures for teenage pregnancy and a rank ordering of western countries for attitudes to Naturism found a perfect correlation and enormous effects. The pattern was similar for the other body-attitude related indicators considered. Repeating that analysis using UNICEF data from 2013 found that the international comparisons were very little changed. For example from 2001 to 2013 the difference between the best and worst western countries decreased from a factor of ten to a factor of eight. The causal mechanisms are well understood. We believe that the correlations largely stem from common cause in that the attitudes conducive to good outcomes also favour Naturism. However Naturism reinforces those attitudes creating a virtuous spiral.

The misconceptions of some people regarding harm and benefit stemming from nudity are compounded by misconceptions regarding the law. Those misconceptions are so widespread, even amongst law enforcement and legal professionals, that until recently the acquittal rate in nudity related prosecutions of British Naturism members was well over 90%. In response to the dossier of "mistakes" that British Naturism submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service they published guidance[32] and prosecutions have almost completely ceased. One is forced to conclude that some police officers and some CPS officers have body-prejudice issues.

The case law in the family courts is also clear but again much less widely known than it should be. Naturism and nudity is not a cause for concern as Baroness Butler-Sloss, shortly before becoming president of the Family Division of the High Court of Justice, wrote in a judgement.[33]

> *"This is not abusive behaviour. I absolutely fail to see how an indiscreet and uninhibited attitude could lead to child protection concerns." "… nudity was not abuse, nor was communal bathing and judges must be careful not to overreact and assume problems of potential abuse in such situations unless there was some other factor to cause concern. ... the reaction of the second judge was extreme. His decision was not based upon a proper assessment of the case, but upon his perception of a serious risk to the children which had no substance in fact and no evidence to support it. The judge's criticism of the court welfare officer was unfounded."*

Note that a judge had allowed his personal prejudice to harm a family. It is not the only example that we have encountered and safeguards are inadequate.

5 Reports and debates

Most reports are in the main excellent but a single error in the methodology and logic can nullify the findings. It is a sad reflection on the state of the debate in the UK that official reports and pronouncements provide so many examples of the logic errors described in 3.4 Logic above. The

32 Nudity in Public - Guidance on handling cases of Naturism. Crown Prosecution Service. http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/l_to_o/nudity_in_public/

33 Child access case arising from a family sharing a bath. RE W (MINORS : RESIDENCE ORDER) (1997). CA (Butler-Sloss LJ, Buxton LJ) 16/10/97

psychological processes described in 3.2 Myths, misapprehensions and prejudice above are very powerful but that does not excuse the lapses of objectivity and rigour.

Politicians and government departments often claim that they are pursuing "evidence driven policy making"[34] but in reality it is often "policy driven evidence making".[35] That statement will probably be dismissed out of hand by those who most need to take heed.

These are some of the more serious flaws present in the reports that are impacting on Naturism and body-attitudes, impacting largely through unintended consequences:

1. Evidence of prevalence using a wide definition and evidence of harm using a narrow definition;
2. Aggregating harmful with beneficial material;
3. Reaching conclusions and making recommendations without evidence;
4. Applying evidence appertaining to a part to all of it, and to other things as well;
5. Seeking evidence of harm but neglecting to seek evidence of benefit;
6. Concentrating on the immediate and neglecting the big picture;
7. Ignoring the international comparisons;
8. Failure to adequately consider unintended consequences;
9. Inadequate consideration of the effect on attitudes and the consequent effects on children;
10. Abusing the precautionary principle to justify preconceptions.

The problem of unrealistic and aberrant depictions of sexual behaviour by the pornography industry is mentioned repeatedly in the reports but the almost complete lack of countervailing depictions by any other part of the media or by schools is ignored.

There has been a willingness to accept flawed evidence collecting and flawed analysis because the conclusions meet preconceptions. Astonishingly the Department for Education does not check independent reviews for accuracy and rigour.[36] Parliamentary reports have been published without the Office for National Statistics[37] or any other suitably qualified body[38] being asked to check the methodology. This is despite the eminently sensible advice in the Phillips Report as summarised by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee.

> *Departments should retain 'in house' sufficient expertise to ensure that the advice of advisory committees, and the reasoning behind it, can be understood and evaluated. Government departments must review advice given by advisory committees to ensure that the reasons for it are understood and appear to be sound. ... The public should be trusted to*

34 Evidence-based policy. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence-based_policy

35 Policy Based Evidence Making https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy-based_evidence_making

36 Correspondence with Department. We had made a Freedom of Information request for the departments quality assessment of a report.

37 We asked the ONS if they had been consulted.

38 If any were asked then the report failed to mention it.

respond rationally to openness.[39]

Failure to subject reports to quality control leads to the suspicion that report authors are chosen for the result that they will provide and that the results are accepted if they correspond to the preconceived or desired outcomes.

Interpretation drift has contributed to the problems. Despite the lack of quality control each report has taken the preceding ones at face value, as has the wider debate. The parts that support the expected or desired outcome are cherry picked and any caveats and qualifications are discarded. That has created an illusion of consensus but in the main the reports are not agreeing, they are copying. That process has lead to apparent justification by repetition, the Woozle effect[40]. It has little worth but it has had a profound effect on the development of child policy by allowing a flimsy and inadequate evidence base to be built up into something apparently substantial whilst ignoring contrary evidence.

As Lord Giddens[41] said in a recent House of Lords debate:

> *I have to say that we must be systematic about these issues, not just draw things out of the air and draw extreme conclusions from them. Looking at some of the assertions that are commonly made, I was shocked to see how thin the evidence base actually is. When you look in detail at the research studies across the world, you see how superficial the materials are that support them. … My main point is that a great deal more research is needed, especially if intrusive policy is being considered —as indeed it is. Again, speaking as a practising social scientist, I hope that the Government will provide some funding for such work, as otherwise well-intended policies could simply rebound.*[42]

The Bailey Report stated, and other reports make similar statements::

> *Opinions are divided about the robustness of existing academic evidence that exposure of children to pornography directly causes harm, …"*[43]

The phrase "direct harm" is significant. It indicates that the indirect effects were not considered and the evidence indicates that indirect effects are very important as discussed in 4.3 Prudery above.

As Lord Giddens said, quality research needs to be carried out as a matter of urgency. It is just not good enough for reports to state that the evidence is inadequate, fail to make any recommendation

39 P.10. Scientific Advice, Risk and Evidence Based Policy Making Seventh Report of Session 2005–06 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee 8 November 2006. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmsctech/900/900-i.pdf

40 Woozle effect, wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woozle_effect

41 Lord Giddens is one of the most prominent modern sociologists. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Giddens

42 Lord Giddens, House of Lords Hansard, 5 Nov 2015, column 1773. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/151105-0001.htm

43 "Letting Children be Children. Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood." Department for Education. June 2011. Aka the Bailey Report. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175418/Bailey_Review.pdf

to remedy that lack, and then proceed to make recommendations for action as if there was a sound basis for doing so.

In general the treatments of these complex issues are overly-simplistic, neglectful of important evidence, too narrowly focussed, and extrapolate wildly from inadequate and suspect evidence. Despite that they reach conclusions, presumably because they are the liked, wanted and expected conclusions.

6 Body image

6.1 Introduction

Good body-attitudes foster body-knowledge, body-honesty and body-possitivity. The consequences of getting the attitudes right are both obvious and supported by the international comparisons. Every indicator that we have looked at is better, often vastly better, for countries with a more open and honest approach to bodily matters. For many of the indicators, for example sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy, the difference between most and least prudish western countries is an order of magnitude or more. It is not just that prudery does not work, there are strong indications that it is positively harmful.

We strongly suspect that the major contributory factors to body-negativity are:

- a media obsession with appearance;
- a lack a realistic referents;
- photo-shopping of already atypical bodies into something even more extreme;
- demonisation of some body parts;
- demonisation of skin in general.

The media obsession with appearance is a major contributor to negative attitudes. Whilst it may be possible to reduce the worst excesses, freedom of the profit driven press and simple practicability prevents it from ever being eliminated completely.

Fortunately there are constructive countermeasures available. Simply allow the responsible media to show what people really look like and encourage them to do so..

Much of the regulation of media content, whilst plausible in its immediate intent, is ultimately counter-productive due to the effect on wider societal attitudes. A narrow approach, usually based on adult “I don’t want ...” instead of evidence of harm and benefit to children, fails to adequately consider the big picture and consequently poor decisions are made. Those decisions may result in some direct short term benefit but that can be far outweighed by the longer term harm resulting

from more indirect mechanisms. A good example is provided by Abstinence Only Sex Education which is is wanted by many adults, superficially plausible, and ultimately counter-productive.[44]

The enormous amount expended on unnecessary packaging and on making packaging attractive indicates that packaged goods are perceived as more desirable than unpackaged. Since most people only see other people "wrapped" and themself is the only person that they see "unwrapped" they perceive those other bodies as being more perfect than their own.[45] That the packaging effect of clothing contributes to body-image problems is supported by anecdotal evidence but further research is required.

There have been numerous studies finding that pornography is the main means by which children gain body-knowledge and it is inescapable that media regulation is part of the cause. It has been much more effective at preventing children from seeing real bodies than it has at preventing them from seeing the unrepresentative products of the body exploitation industries.. Should children gain their knowledge of what people look like from glamour and pornography or should they find out from the BBC? But the BBC is not allowed to show them! Should they find out what happens in a loving relationship from the pornography industry or from the BBC? At present the former is a major source and the latter, due to regulation, provides little of any great value.

The BBC provides an example of another significant problem, the gold plating of regulation so that there is effectively a total ban on nudity prior to the watershed,[46] a near total failure to show real people nude after the watershed, and treating regulations requiring accuracy as optional where nudity is concerned.[47]

> Growing up … my exposure to naked people was frequent and unremarkable. When the question of Playing Doctor arose … I declined to participate. Why bother?
> And when a boy I knew offered to show me his if I showed him mine, I also declined. ...that disappointed boy probably had to find some contraband Penthouse magazines to find out what he wanted to know.

It is not just the increasing censorship[48] of the media, there is a general prudification of society in progress, due at least in part to that censorship. One example is the trend from communal changing rooms to cubicles. We would be astonished if

44 See 4.3 Prudery above.

45 It is well known in the packaging industry that packaging (clothing) improves the perceived quality of goods (body). "Aesthetic package design: A behavioral, neural, and psychological investigation", Journal of Consumer Psychology, Volume 20, Issue 4, October 2010, Pages 431-441, Martin Reimann, Judith Zaichkowsky, Carolin Neuhaus, Thomas Bender, Bernd Weber. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S105774081000063X

46 Correspondence with a BBC producer.

47 For example, the otherwise excellent series "Andrew Marr's History of the World" systematically falsified history and it is far from being alone. The motivation was largely commercial. The integrity of the BBC must not be for sale. http://www.bn.org.uk/articles.php/_/campaigning/current-issues/censorship/andrew-marrs-history-of-the-world-r190

48 Censorship is often euphemistically referred to as regulation and filtering. However unless there is evidence that it is necessary in order to prevent significant harm then it is censorship.

there has been any assessment of the impact on body-attitudes and hence outcomes but the government is not just supporting that trend but requiring it.[49]

6.2 Body-honesty

It is no coincidence that the by the far the best outcomes, across a wide range of body-attitude, body-knowledge, and body-confidence related indicators, are found in the least prudish countries. The correlations are near perfect, the causal webs are well understood, and for many indicators the differences in outcomes are enormous.[50]

Pregnancies per 1 000 females aged 15-19, 2013.

Western Europe and the USA

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Switzerland	3.0	Germany	7.8
Netherlands	3.9	Austria	8.0
Denmark	4.3	Greece	8.1
Luxembourg	5.2	Spain	8.4
Sweden	5.3	France	9.4
Norway	5.6	Portugal	10.0
Italy	5.9	Ireland	10.3
Belgium	7.2	Malta	15.9
Iceland	7.4	United Kingdom	17.3
Finland	7.4	United States	25.4*

* Calculated.
Data from United Nations Demographic Yearbook 2014

The Dutch made a deliberate decision to follow the evidence despite the strongly held views of many people and they reduced their teenage pregnancy rate by a factor of four in a generation.[51] In the UK the policies of: forbidding children knowledge; age appropriate; nothing inappropriate; teaching only as part of an approved scheme; only if a school wants to; and leaving it to parents; continued and outcomes remained very much worse than the European norm.

That pattern, more open body-attitudes gives better outcomes, often enormously better, is true for every body-attitude related

49 A headteacher told us that the Government schools capital scheme Building Schools for the Future required that cubicles were always specified because "children won't shower communally and it isn't a good idea." (BSFProject manager) When challenged on the policy the official almost gave the "Why you pervert" response!

50 There are a large number of sources, all with broadly similar findings. For example "Adolescent Sexual Health in Europe and the US", Advocates for Youth. http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/component/content/article/419-adolescent-sexual%20health-in-europe-and-the-us

51 "The Importance of Attitudes – UNICEF", British Naturism, August 2012. https://www.bn.org.uk/articles.php/_/campaigning/current-issues/censorship/the-importance-of-attitudes-unicef-r159 Citing p21, "A League Table of Teenage Births in Rich Nations", UNICEF, July 2001. http://www.unicef-

indicator that we have examined and the causal mechanisms are well understood.[52] It is essential that the magnitude of the effects, and their seriousness, are not underestimated. Sexually transmitted diseases can kill and maim,[53] life chances can be blighted by an unwanted pregnancy, and abusive relationships are encouraged[54], all because society has created a climate which makes it so difficult to provide young people with the information and skills that they need.

It is rare that young people are provided with honest and positive body images, even through Art, in educational institutions. A notable exception is in the Art Exhibition at Murray Edwards College (formerly New Hall), Cambridge, where in the entrance to the main Dining Hall students are treated to a fine painting of a nude by artist Jenny Saville, depicting lovingly and honestly the body of a middle aged woman, probably one who has had children.

How times have changed. The author of this report remembers queuing for the physics lab next to a painting of a nude when he was at school.[55] Would any school dare do that now?

Toddler eye level in Munich.

The teenage pregnancy rate in Germany is less than half that of the UK and the pattern for other related indicators is similar..

Body honesty works.

irc.org/publications/pdf/repcard3e.pdf

52 THE FACTS Adolescent Sexual Health in Europe and the United States The Case For A Rights. Respect. Responsibility.fi Approach. Advocates for Youth, 2011 http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/adolescent_sexual_health_in_europe_and_the_united_states.pdf Advocates for Youth are a USA not for profit.

53 There is a large human cost, and a significant cost to both the NHS and the wider economy.

54 Far too many children have no wholesome role model leaving only pornography, including sadomasochistic pornography.

55 Beverley Grammar School. Circa 1967.

6.3 Body-knowledge

Body-ignorance is a widespread problem, particularly for anything to do with sexual health and sexual behaviour. This quote from Hannah Betts is referring to menstruation but it is applicable to all aspects of body-knowledge.

> *This conspiracy of silence makes it difficult for anyone – the young especially – to distinguish fact from fiction. There are obvious repercussions for pregnancy and disease; but the psychological damage may be no less obvious. As Farage observes, "Girls across cultures view menarche as a negative experience and report being horrified, frightened, confused and embarrassed by [it]." I was not one of those children who imagines herself to be dying on first bleeding, yet the experience was still associated with unnecessary pain, mortification and difficulty.*[56]

The scale of the problem is made clear by the Parliamentary briefing paper on sex education:

> *2.7 The onset of menstruation can be alarming for girls if they are not prepared. Research shows that about a third of girls are not told about periods by their parents and 10% receive no preparation at all before their first period. As with education about puberty, programmes should include preparation for menstruation.*[57]

That quote illustrates not only a significant problem arising from body-embarrassment, it also illustrates part of the cause. The idea that telling girls about menstruation is optional, using the word "should" instead of "must", is absurd.

It is a scandal that some girls commence menstruation without even knowing what it is. It is not the child's fault that so many parents are too embarrassed to talk to them about it and it is not the parent's fault that society reinforces that embarrassment. Children must come first.

If that problem was restricted to menstruation then it would be serious enough but it is not. Analogous problems, and similar causes, apply to almost every aspect of child, adolescent, and young adult psychological and sexual health. We have a society that is too embarrassed about the body to give children the information that they need, teachers who are not allowed to give children the information that they need,[58] and parents who are too embarrassed and/or too unsure themselves of the facts to give children the information that they need.

As Buston, Wright and Scott wrote:

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56 "The P Word: A last taboo", Hannah Betts, The Telegraph, 28 Oct 2013. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10401952/Periods-A-last-taboo.-Why-the-hell-cant-we-talk-about-them.html

57 P6. "Sex and Relationships Education in Schools", Parliament, 5 Sep 2013. http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06103.pdf

58 Teachers are severely restricted. Unless it is part of an approved scheme of study, a scheme that is almost invariably a pale shadow of those deployed in successful countries, then they fear putting their career at risk if they answer a child's question. (Personal experience, the author of this paper was a secondary school teacher for many years, and conversations with serving teachers).

"In a 2001 study researchers found that even where open sex education policies were planned by schools in consultation with parents, teachers often lacked the capacity or confidence to discuss body and sexual matters openly with teenagers. It seems that since 2001 with the emphasis on Child Safeguarding, attitudes have been shaped by an increased prudery making even open minded teachers far more cautious in the climate of tests, targets and punitive inspection which now prevails."[59]

It is not surprising that the UK has such appalling outcomes.[60]

There is evidence that restricting access to body-images and body-knowledge results in an increased interest in pornography and an increase in abusive relationships and sexual violence. Google informs us that the societies which pour the most opprobrium on pornography are also the ones with the greatest demand. For example as L'étrange Madone wrote:

According to Google, among the top 20 countries searching for sex-related sites, six of them are Muslim countries, Pakistan being the first, followed by Egypt. The list includes, surprisingly, Iran and Saudi Arabia, which are both extremely conservative and religious countries (porn is haram, forbidden by religion). What these statistics reveal is the importance of porn in the life of these people and, furthermore, how porn has become the main source for sexual education for young people.

… What they seem to do is describe scenes from hardcore porn and use it in their sexting since they believe that's how sex works. Because of porn, they believe that sex must be rough and that women orgasm as quickly as men and will do everything to please them.

This vision is spreading to women too. It has become the norm for what sex should be like.[61]

Similar patterns have been observed comparing the states of the USA.[62]

There is a clear need not just for much improved SRE but also for much improved knowledge provision throughout the media in general.

6.4 Remedying the body-knowledge deficit

Outcomes could be improved dramatically and with little cost. Society simply has to enable those best able to do it, parents, schools and the media, to educate effectively, and then encourage them to do so. At present many people do not have the knowledge, if they do have the knowledge they are

59 Difficulty and Diversity: The Conduct and Practice of Sex Education: Katie Buston, Daniel Wright & Sue Scott: British Journal of Sociology of Education, Vol 22 no 3 September 2001.

60 THE FACTS Adolescent Sexual Health in Europe and the United States The Case For A Rights. Respect. Responsibility.fi Approach. Advocates for Youth, 2011 http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/adolescent_sexual_health_in_europe_and_the_united_states.pdf Advocates for Youth are a USA not for profit.

61 Pornography and Sex Ed in the Arab World http://www.theradicalnotion.com/porn-sex-ed-arab-world/

62 Red (Light) States, http://blow.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/red-light-states/?_r=0 That study is more reliable than many because credit cards are a reliable way to associate purchases with place of residence and the author of the study, an associate professor at Harvard, knows how to use statistics.

not allowed to impart it, and even if they are allowed to provide information they are heavily discouraged from doing so.

The lack of high quality PSHE and SRE in schools is not just resulting in harm to children and young people now, it is creating a generation of parents who will, like current parents, be unable to educate their children effectively. All schools must provide evidence based SRE to all pupils throughout a child's schooling. The idea that effective SRE can be provided with a few hours of heavily circumscribed sex education lessons would be laughable if the consequences were not so tragic. It is not just the lack of sex education, it is also the almost complete lack of role models and honest depictions in the responsible media.

It is essential that the adult knowledge deficit is rectified, both so that they can educate children and so that they understand why a less censorious approach is so essential. Parents must be given the skills, knowledge and permission to inform their children. The training of teachers and other professionals, including the media, needs to be improved dramatically.

Adults must be allowed to impart knowledge.

1. Parents must be reassured that teachers and social workers will approve if they follow best practice and that they will not be branded a paedophile.
2. Teachers must be able provide education outside of formal SRE lessons without fear of disciplinary sanction and be confident that the school will support them if somebody complains.
3. The media must be allowed to supply information and wholesome role models. That requires changes to the regulations to give evidence of harm and benefit precedence over evidence of adult offence. The regulators must also protect the media from public outcry.

Media regulators routinely uphold complaints even if only 2 or 3, out of an audience of millions, feel strongly enough to complain. That is despite the evidence of harm and benefit and despite the inherent lack of balance. It is easy to complain about a programme seen but it is impossible to complain about invisible censorship. Even when the media do feel able to provide information and role models, over-blocking and scheduling typically prevents children from accessing it.

7 Sex education

The general climate, which is heavily influenced by legislation and government policy, determines how effective sex education can be.

The author of this report was recently at an overseas wedding and as is traditional the best man told a story.

I remember walking home from school with [the groom] after a sex education lesson. He

said "That is disgusting, I am never going to do that."

That illustrates one of several mechanisms by which timely sex education contributes to improved outcomes. In the UK the equivalent conversation might well have have been

"What is this sex thing? Let's go behind the bike shed and find out."

A good example of the effect of allowing appeals to emotion to take precedence over what works was the film "Growing Up". Made in the 70s, it was an explicit, factual sex education film aimed at pre-pubescent children, probably 10-12 year olds.[63] It carefully explains how the normal human body functions work, what happens at puberty, deals with early sexuality including the "normal" nature of masturbation, and concluded with showing a first adult consensual sexual relationship. By present standards it is outdated but at the time it was an enormous step forward.

The Thatcher Government intended it to be shown in all schools but Mary Whitehouse and others protested so violently that the film was abandoned. It is just the sort of thing that German, Dutch or Scandinavian schools were using in sex education programmes. In the UK sex education stalled whilst in the rest of Europe progress was substantial. For example in The Netherlands the Dutch reduced their teenage pregnancy rate by a factor of four in a generation.[64] Effective sex education is self reinforcing across the generations. Parents who had good sex education are much more able to instil responsible attitudes in their children than parents who are uncertain about what does and does not work, fearful of what a child may say to a teacher, fearful of what a teacher may report, fearful of what a social worker might have to say, and too embarrassed to discuss body-matters with their children.

We are not aware of any estimate of how much damage that failure to follow established best practice caused but obviously it was substantial. It set the tone for decades to follow and to this day sex and relationships education in this country is but a pale shadow of that in countries with good outcomes. It seems that the UK has tried everything except best practice so

Denied the chance by Mrs Whitehouse to show the film "Growing Up" to 11 year old pupils entering secondary schools, at least one French religious order supplied an alternative film from Europe, dubbed into English. It covered the same range and content as "Growing Up" but additionally showed the birth of a couple's first baby in graphic detail.
So some Catholic pupils, if they were lucky enough to attend the right convent school, got a very much better sex education lesson than their secular counterparts across the UK who fell prey to the prejudice of Mrs Whitehouse!

63 Puberty now occurs at least 2 years earlier than it did in the 1970s so the corresponding physical developmental age is now 8 to 10 years old. "Onset of puberty in girls has fallen by five years since 1920", Robin McKie, The Guardian, 21 Oct 2012. http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/oct/21/puberty-adolescence-childhood-onset

64 "The Importance of Attitudes – UNICEF", British Naturism, 2012. https://www.bn.org.uk/articles.php/_/campaigning/current-issues/censorship/the-importance-of-attitudes-unicef-r159

it is no surprise that the UK has much worse outcomes than is the norm for western European nations.

The latest figures (March 2016) show that the UK teenage pregnancy rate has fallen by half since 1990 and that is, at first sight, very encouraging. Government has been keen to take the credit but the international comparisons paint a different picture. The western nations in general have seen a similar fall indicating that the fall has a world wide cause. The obvious contender is the internet and there are several plausible mechanisms.

- Improved access to information;
- More socialising online instead of in person;
- Increased use of pornography instead of the real thing;
- Greater openness resulting in greater willingness to discuss with adults.

The failings in the present provision are well known but attempts to rectify them have been prevented at the highest levels. In January 2016 the Telegraph reported that the prime minister had infuriated the women in his cabinet by refusing to let them remedy some of the worst failures of SRE provision.

> *It was a proposal which achieved the extraordinary feat of uniting four parliamentary select committees, five teaching unions, the Children's Commissioner, the Chief Medical Officer, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, two royal societies and no less than six medical royal colleges.*
>
> *But yesterday the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan ruled out making sex education compulsory for all schools. This was a very strange decision, not just because so many wise and knowledgable people wanted mandatory sex education, but also because Mrs Morgan herself did.*
>
> *In fact I can reveal she waged a valiant battle to persuade the Prime Minister to back her – but to no avail. What's worse is David Cameron decided to ignore the entreaties not only of his Education Secretary – and the aforementioned assembled ranks of supporters and experts – but also several other senior women in the*

In the early 2000s parents attended a meeting with the Headteacher and some of the Governors in a Catholic Primary school to work through a new SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) policy. Up for discussion were what parents wanted their children to be taught and at what age.

The Headteacher was a bit nervous because she feared that some parents were going to use "keep the children innocent" or "think of the children" to limit what would be taught. Not so. Parents were unanimous about the need for open and explicit sex education, as long as the relationship aspect was taught alongside. They wanted their children, before puberty and preferably before the age of 10, to know about girls' and boys' bodies and how they work; what happens to both at puberty, dealing with sexual feelings, what happens in an adult consensual relationship and what happens at the birth of a baby.

Cabinet.[65]

What possible reason can there be?

All too often in the UK "Age appropriate" is a euphemism for too little, too late and even if sex and relationships education was made mandatory indications are that it would remain grossly inadequate.

Pornography is filling the vacuum left by absent or inadequate sex education. As described in 12.2 Pornography below there is little or no evidence that pornography is actually harmful but little of it is good sex education. If pornography does have harmful effects then we would expect SRE to reduce them.

> *… researchers Maree Crabbe and David Corlett said children were turning to adult films because schools were not handling the positive aspects of sex.*[66]

All too often in the UK leave it to the parents means leaving the children to find out for themselves from playground myth, pornographers and experiment. That is not the parents fault, society has denied them the necessary skills because they also were denied effective sex education.

Sex education in the UK has improved but it is patchy and lags far behind best practice. It beggars belief that so much public policy encourages the attitudes associated with the worst outcomes in the western world. If children really do come first then we must copy what works[67] instead of condoning and encouraging the attitudes associated with failure.

8 Breasts and breast feeding

Breasts and breast feeding provide an example of how wholesome body attitudes that benefit both individuals and society are being discouraged by censorship (aka filtering or "community standards"). It is not just the health and well-being of individuals that benefits from more openness, there are considerable financial benefits for society as a whole.

The Lancet recently published data showing that the UK is the worst in the world for breast feeding at 12 months; 50 times worse than Germany and 200 times worse than Senegal.[68] A recent UNICEF report estimated that the easily quantifiable savings to the NHS if breast feeding rates could be improved would be over 30 million pounds per annum with probably several hundred million

65 David Cameron just blocked compulsory sex education - and the women in his Cabinet are furious. The Telegraph. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/david-cameron-just-blocked-compulsory-sex-education---and-the-wo/

66 Reported in "Pornography is replacing sex education", Donna Bowater, The Telegraph, 16 Dec 21011. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8961010/Pornography-is-replacing-sex-education.html

67 "The Importance of Attitudes – UNICEF", British Naturism. https://www.bn.org.uk/articles.php/_/campaigning/current-issues/censorship/the-importance-of-attitudes-unicef-r159

68 Reported by James Gallagher, "UK 'world's worst' at breastfeeding", BBC News, 29 Jan 2016. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-35438049

pounds in benefits to the economy.[69] The report identifies societal attitudes as one of the major direct causes of low breast feeding rates[70] and it appears likely that societal attitudes make a considerable indirect contribution to many of the other adverse factors identified. It is the least body censorious areas of the UK[71] that have the best breast feeding rates.[72]

For many years Facebook refused to distinguish between nudity, breast feeding, mastectomy, body image resources, and pornography. In the face of enormous pressure it has modified its policies to be slightly less irresponsible but serious problems remain.

It is unsurprising that breast feeding rates remain low in the USA and UK and that breasts are widely perceived as something by which women should be judged, when breasts are effectively demonised and fetishised by major internet industries, the media, the law, and Parliament. There are indications that attitudes are worsening, and many people suspect that the influence of United States big business[73] is a large part of the cause.

A good example is provided by the Facebook treatment of Laura Dodsworth's page promoting her widely acclaimed[74] book depicting real breasts. They suspended her account.[75] As Laura wrote:

> *The shocking thing about Laura Dodsworth's pictures of 100 women's breasts isn't the flesh on show, or the many shapes and sizes, but the realisation that images of unairbrushed, non-uniform breasts seem to be so rare. "We see images of breasts everywhere," says the 41-year-old photographer, "but they're unreal. They create an unflattering comparison but also an unobtainable ideal. I wanted to rehumanise women through honest photography."*[76]

As Jo Swinson wrote whilst Minister for Women and Equalities:

> *"So often representations of women's bodies that both men and women see depict a very narrow impression of what is normal or natural, with breasts displayed almost exclusively in a sexualised context. This book is a breath of fresh air. It celebrates the diversity of women's bodies, and refocuses us to the stories that our bodies can tell and the value they*

69 "Preventing disease and saving resources: the potential contribution of increasing breastfeeding rates in the UK", UNICEF, Oct 2012, p13. http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Baby_Friendly/Research/Preventing_disease_saving_resources.pdf Forward by Professor Mike Kelly PhD, FFPH, Hon FRCP, FRCP Edin Director of the Centre for Public Health Excellence, The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

70 Ibid. p14.

71 From regional variations in the 2011 Ipsos MORI poll regarding Naturism.

72 Breast feeding is multi-factorial so whilst this indicates a need for further research it does not demonstrate causality.

73 Denmark: Apple's puritanical censorship creates a movement http://artsfreedom.org/?p=4624

74 DIVA magazine, Marie Claire Australia, Cosmopolitan … http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1780662602 Breast Cancer UK, Jo Swinson MP and Minister for Women and Equalities, Susie Orbach https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVP6fTgrHKI

75 In Facebook Jail Again - Over Female Nipples http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/laura-dodsworth/nipples-on-facebook_b_7620278.html Laura makes many good points that are relevant to this report.

76 "United front: breasts without the airbrush", Laura Dodsworth, The Guardian, 6 Sep 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/sep/06/womens-breasts-laura-dodsworth-photography

hold, rather than the various ways they can be judged."[77]

The author of this report was appalled to find that he could not access that quote without first proving that he was over 18.[78] That book is exactly the sort of material that young people must be allowed to see.

9 Slut Walk

This movement was sparked by a police officer in Toronto who on an educational visit in 2011 advised students on how to stay safe. He told them "I've been told I'm not supposed to say this – however, women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimised."

The comments were posted online and provoked outrage, leading to events in more than 20 US states, plus Argentina, Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK.

Organisers were protesting against a culture which puts the blame for rape and sexual assault on to the victim, makes women less likely to report rape and contributes to low conviction rates for those accused of rape and sexual assault.

> *"Rape is never OK," said an organiser of a London slutwalk, Anatasia Richardson, a 17-year-old student. "This is an issue that has resonated around the world with people who reject the idea of blaming a victim of sexual assault rather than the criminal."*
>
> *Holly Dustin, from the End Violence Against Women Coalition, said the police officer's comments were "deeply disturbing" but rife in society. "Polls show that this kind of victim-blaming attitude is prevalent throughout UK society."*[79]

If a school makes a rule that skirts must not be more than three inches above the knee then the pupils adjust their behaviour. In the eyes of the school adults a skirt more than three inches above the knee indicates a daring trollop and two inches above the knee a chaste paragon of virtue.[80] Change the rule to knee length and the other measurements follow suit. The psychology is self adjusting and the rules ultimately futile and counter-productive.

Clothing rules also encourage deceit, for example skirt lengths magically shrinking as the girls walk out the gate. It would be far more constructive to provide high quality sex and relationships education. If children are given the information then in general they do act responsibly.

The skirt phenomenon illustrates another process. The end result of the skirt lengthening spiral is the burqa. At every stage the next step appears obvious to people of a particular mindset.

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77 An age bar free source of the quote. http://www.pinterandmartin.com/bare-reality.html and one with an age bar https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVP6fTgrHKI Note the lack of any way to complain about the censorship.

78 Ibid.

79 'SlutWalking' phenomenon comes to UK with demonstrations in four cities. The Guardian. British cities to host mass anti-rape demonstrations as part of global movement sparked by Canadian policeman's remarks The Guardian. 9 May 2011. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/09/slutwalking-phenomenon-comes-to-uk

80 Research to find out if skirt length correlates with outcomes would be most interesting.

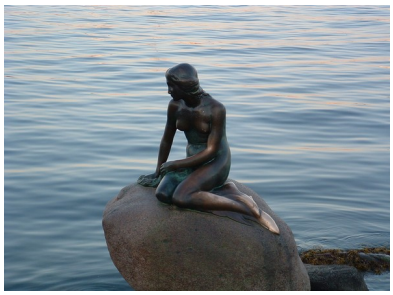
It may be tempting to assume that if no one is wearing a skirt then no message, imagined or otherwise, is sent and the problem is completely solved. But trousers are not the answer: Too tight? Too clingy? Wrong shade of grey? All "problems" reported in the media in the first few weeks of September 2015.[81]

10 Freedom of Expression

There is a general principle, enshrined in numerous conventions and laws, that freedom of expression is important and that it must be respected. There are several principles stemming from that:[82] [83]

- Any restriction must be necessary. Merely plausible, convenient or useful is not sufficient.
- The onus is on those seeking to restrict freedom of expression to demonstrate that the restriction is necessary;
- It applies not just to writing and publishing but also to transmission and receiving.
- Any restriction must be well defined in law.

Censorship is the denial of freedom of expression without objective evidence that harm exceeds benefit sufficiently to justify restriction. It is plausible that the motivation for the government insistence on internet businesses imposing filtering voluntarily is that that makes any legal challenge more difficult.



Not even MPs are safe from censorship as the Danish MP Mette Gjerskov found out. Facebook decided that her photograph[84] of the "Little Mermaid" had "too much skin and sexual undertones". The decision was reversed but ordinary users have found Facebook much less tractable. Like most other censors Facebook typically refuses to enter into any discussion of their edicts and refuses to provide any evidence regarding the harm that they claim to be preventing. Facebook has a near monopoly in their market sector and it is not feasible to use any other service. Hence the free

81 This is just one example, an internet search finds many articles. "Crisis Continues: Pupils Sent Home From School After Being Told Trousers Were 'Too Tight'", Huffington Post, 10 Sep 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/09/10/pupils-sent-home-trentham-high-school-sent-home-trousers-tight_n_8115028.html

82 Freedom of Expression. Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015. http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/FoE%20legal%20framework%20guidance.pdf

83 Freedom of Expression in Europe. Case-law concerning Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. 2007. The Council of Europe. http://www.echr.coe.int/LibraryDocs/DG2/HRFILES/DG2-EN-HRFILES-18%282007%29.pdf

84 The illustration here is not the actual photograph.

market does not operate and other means of accountability are absent. It is analogous to a newsprint cartel dictating what the newspapers are allowed to print.

11 Internet filtering, blocking and censorship

In this section the term filtering is used to denote all restrictions on the provision and delivering of internet based content. That includes both communications providers and service providers such as Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft. Some filtering is justified but much of it is both indistinguishable from censorship and demonstrably harmful.

Filtering could be a powerful tool for good but only if it is evidence based and adequately resourced. At present neither appertains and the current Online Safety Bill is a missed opportunity to remedy those defects. Government reports such as the Bailey Report[85] failed to establish any justification for increased filtering. More recently major work carried out on behalf of the Children's Commissioner, described in 3.2 Myths, misapprehensions and prejudice above, similarly failed to find any causal relations.[86] If action is taken against the wrong cause then it risks making outcomes worse. Despite the lack of evidence, and despite the risks, there has been an enormous growth in restrictions.

Most of the problems with filtering centre around body-honesty and a simplistic approach to complex problems. The shortcomings result in harm both directly and indirectly.

If filtering is provided at the objectively determined harm versus benefit threshold then parents will no longer have to choose between harmful over-blocking and harmful under-blocking. We believe that the lack of objectivity is part of the reason for the poor take up of internet filtering. People know from their own experience that some aspects of the classification schemes bear little relation to harm and benefit. Hence filtering is often perceived as nothing more than the killjoy Mary Whitehouse tendency attempting to impose alien and aberrant values.

With permission from Jose Arellano

85 Letting Children be Children. Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood by Reg Bailey. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175418/Bailey_Review.pdf

86 Jo Fidgen, Do we know whether pornography harms people? BBC. 25 June 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22987051

Internet filtering is largely based on what is shown but, for most values of "it", it is how it is shown that actually matters. Nudity can be body-image education, or pastoral innocence, or objectifying meat market. Sexual intercourse can be sex education, wholesome role model, misleading pornography, or sadomasochistic misogyny. Facebook and many other internet businesses ban innocent nudity but pornography is acceptable provided that it has clothes on. Most filtering fails to make these essential distinctions and consequently material that may well be harmful is allowed and large amounts of beneficial material is banned. The result is filtering and community standards that send completely the wrong message and bring filtering into disrepute.

Parents and others responsible for the take up of filtering are not provided with objective information so they can not make informed decisions.

Appealing against over-blocking remains a problem or impossible. There is now a means of appeal for the communications companies but it is a different one for broadband and mobile, ensuring inconsistency and potentially doubling the effort to get an unjustified block removed. Finding out about the procedures is difficult[87] and the criteria used are not firmly founded on the evidence of harm and benefit.

Most of the organisations doing the filtering (Facebook, Apple, The Cloud etc.) remain unaccountable. Some will not even respond to complaints and requests for the evidence to justify their decisions are met with irrelevancies or a wall of silence. There is little or no protection for children against the harm done by over-blocking and little or no protection for Freedom of Expression. Authors and publishers must be able to find out who is filtering or censoring them and there must be an objective, harm/benefit based, practicable and impartial means of appeal.

It should be up to parents what their children can access unless there is evidence that harm clearly exceeds benefit, or vice versa. Many parents, especially in other European countries, don't seem to have any great concerns over nudity or concerning sexual material, and outcomes in those countries for the related indicators are very much better than in the UK.

There is a double standard at play. Moves to make relationships and sex education mandatory are denied despite the overwhelming evidence of benefit but censorship is being pursued despite the evidence that it will result in harm. The common theme is adults who are too embarrassed by body topics to provide young people with the information essential for making sensible decisions. That results in the next generation also being too embarrassed and the vicious circle continues.
Young people will always find ways to access pornography so it is fortunate that a more positive approach, as evidenced by our continental neighbours, can at the very least greatly reduce any ill effects and at best may reverse them..

87 The author was unable to find anything about unblocking or an appeals procedure on the Vodafone web site and after an hour of online chat, including asking for referral to a a manager, no information could be obtained.

Something must be done!
This is something so it will be done!
What! You want evidence? You pervert!

Filtering will never be perfect but it could be very, very much better. Better outcomes are achievable but it requires a much more nuanced approach than at present and above all it requires an objective and evidence lead approach. Emotive rhetoric founded on myth is not the way to optimise outcomes.

12 Not Naturism

12.1 Sexting

British Naturism's interest arises because of the adults who fail to distinguish between nudity and sex. Sexting is a complex phenomena which needs a lot more thought than it has usually received. The perceptions of children and the perceptions adults differ radically and the law hinders as much as it helps. The University of New South Wales has published an excellent report[88] which is in the main applicable to the UK. It covers the topic much better than space permits us to do here.

12.2 Pornography

British Naturism should not need to be concerned with pornography but unfortunately measures ostensibly to protect children are having a considerable adverse impact on both the welfare of children and on Naturism. Overly broad definitions, simplistic definitions, inadequate consideration of indirect effects, and worse, are all acting to make achieving improved outcomes more difficult.

In general the quality of the supposed evidence is very poor. Research for the Children's Commissioner classified less than 1% of available studies as reliable.[89] It was unable to find a causal relationship between pornography and harm. Conversely the connection between prudery and harm is well established. See 4.3 Prudery above.

13 Conclusions

The prudification of society is a serious and growing problem. It denies children essential knowledge and skills which leads to greater sexualisation, objectification, and violence.

88 Albury, Crawford, Byron, Mathews. Young People and Sexting in Australia. University of New South Wales. Apr 2013. http://www.cci.edu.au/sites/default/files/Young_People_And_Sexting_Final.pdf

89 Jo Fidgen, Do we know whether pornography harms people? BBC. 25 June 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22987051

Good intentions are not an excuse, especially for people in positions of influence and responsibility. They have a duty to look at the evidence objectively, apply logic and rigour, and then act on it. Prudery is no better than encouraging children to smoke, just less obvious in the harm caused.

The attitudes associated with poor outcomes (e.g. USA teenage pregnancy rate nearly 50% greater than UK) are being encouraged at the expense of the attitudes associated with the best outcomes (e.g. Denmark and several other European countries, a quarter of the UK teenage pregnancy rate). NB it is not just teenage pregnancy that shows such differences in outcomes, the pattern is similar across all related indicators.

Decades of failure to follow best practice has resulted in the UK consistently being one of the worst performing countries, not just amongst western nations but amongst all nations.

Prudery is a form of child abuse, just less directly and less obviously so than many other kinds.

There is little doubt about the processes that have resulted in the promotion of so much harm. The psychological mechanisms that make it so difficult to modify opinion in response to evidence are well understood and apply to everyone. There is serious cognitive dissonance between what the evidence shows and perception.

A paradigm shift is needed. It is long overdue that we stopped paying lip service to “children come first” and “evidence based policy making” and actually did it. We need to start doing what works. It will take a generation or more to correct the harm so the time to start is now.

14 Sound bites

1. Prudery is child abuse and good intentions are not an excuse.
2. Evidence based policy making works. Policy based evidence making fails.
3. Think of the children! Two important words. “Think” and “children”.
4. Children first means rigorous evidence based thought first
5. Children first means adult myths, wants and dislikes last.
6. Should young people enter puberty and then adulthood largely unprepared?
7. Should young people enter puberty and adulthood not just unprepared but mis-prepared?
8. "The idea of nudity is far more shocking than nudity itself"
9. "The fear of doing something is scarier than actually doing it "
10. Human beings are mostly afraid of what we don’t know..
11. A prudish view of the body is a pornographic one.
12. Policy founded on misconceptions will cause far more harm to children than it prevents, if it prevents any at all.
13. Mistakes are human. Repeating those mistakes despite the evidence is unforgivable.