

# Pornography and Youth: A Short 2016 Review

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## The Porn Industry

- The professional porn industry is closely knit and self-regulated. It has consolidated to a smaller number of studios and producers over the past 5-10 years.<sup>1</sup>
- Piracy and the availability of free pornographic content has become a large issue for the professional porn industry. This has led to the production of more niche and even extreme content to appeal to audiences.<sup>2</sup>
- Research has shown that when actresses in popular mainstream pornographic movies experience physical aggression, 95 percent of the time they provide either a response of pleasure or no response at all.<sup>3</sup>
- Violence against women is now commonplace in today's most popular pornography films. When adolescents view this combination of violence and sex, they may develop sexual scripts that infuse the two.<sup>4</sup>
- Today's pornography, with its emphasis on men's violence against women, is used by both men and women in an attempt to arouse a sexual partner. In using such violent media, men and women are encouraging each other to be sexually stimulated by images where men physically hurt women and women seem to enjoy it. When users are sexually stimulated by this material, the arousal can serve to reinforce the desirability of men's violence against women in the minds of both men and women.<sup>5</sup>
- Professional porn shoots can last an entire day, and this strenuous physical performance is part of the reason why adult film performers refer to those outside their industry as 'civilians'.<sup>6</sup>
- Discussing consent and the toll on the bodies of performers, adult film performer and sex worker's right advocate Mark Schecter noted: "In some weird sense, every porn shoot that's shot by a profession studio is a BDSM shoot... You're engaging in a sexual act where people are standing around, watching you have sex, telling you what to do in the sex act, and all that... When you're having sex for such an extended period of time, sometimes—this is unreasonable to begin with but I've had shoots that were 11 to 12 hours, I mean it's

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<sup>1</sup> Sssh.com Original Films. *Consent in Porn: Debunking Myths and Managing Realities*. March 2016. Video Recording. <<https://vimeo.com/156978763>>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Bridges, Ana J, et al. "Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update." *Violence Against Women* (2010): 1065-1085.

<sup>4</sup> Wright, Paul J. "Mass Media Effects on Youth Sexual Behavior Assessing the Claim for Causality." *Annals of the International Communication Association* (2011): 343-385.

<sup>5</sup> Foubert, John D. and Ana J. Bridges. "What Is the Attraction? Pornography Use Motives in Relation to Bystander Intervention." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Sssh.com Original Films. *Consent in Porn: Debunking Myths and Managing Realities*. March 2016. Video Recording. <<https://vimeo.com/156978763>>.

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preposterous—but when you’re having sex, performing sex, for such a long time, you’re going in and out of all sorts of different kinds of acts, different positions, whatever... it’s not comfortable, right? And so, I think that’s where a lot of the problems start to show up. It’s being able to navigate, in that condition, what’s comfortable might not necessarily indicate exactly what I’ve consented to.”<sup>7</sup>

- Discussions of pornography tend to focus on larger professional productions, particularly in the media, but there are many other smaller and less regulated kinds of porn out there. The internet hosts for example explicit ‘cam shows’, pornographic content posted to donations sites, short pornographic clips that are sold individually, as well as other kinds of pornographic content that are never published the way pornography has traditionally been done before.<sup>8</sup>

- Mark Schechter, president of Adult Talent Managers-LA, says, “It’s the consumers that drive production, that steer performers into an industry that they can monetize what they want to do, what they’re good at doing. It’s a very

“It’s the consumers that drive production... We’re an industry that evolves and sort of survives based on consumers.” —Mark Schechter

important factor that we have to understand, it’s no different than Hollywood. [For example] that movie where they’re locked in a room and they had to, you know, cut each other’s arms to get out. Now, they produced that movie because there’s an audience that’s demanding it, that they want to see it: it is entertainment. It’s the same thing in [the pornography] industry; there’s an audience out there that craves, desires, and wants to pay for that kind of entertainment, therefore you have a production company that says ‘hey I don’t mind doing that. I’m interested in that. I’m going to put my money and I’m going to film a movie based on what I know I can sell.’ Okay, so now here’s a performer pool that is receptive, willing, able, capable of doing that type of production. It’s not like I’m going to go up to my next door neighbor and say ‘Hey, by the way, I’ve got a client that’s asking for a BDSM performer.’ That doesn’t happen. Same thing, I’d also like to point out, in mainstream... The mainstream actors that do stunts, they have agents. Those agents have to carefully place a stuntman in particular set that that stuntman’s capable of doing, that they consent to doing it. It’s very dangerous, very receptive to ridicule, criticism, and a dangerous environment. We’re an industry that evolves and sort of survives based on consumers.”<sup>9</sup>

## Impact on Youth

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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- Robust evidence has emerged that sensation-seeking adolescents use pornography more often than their counterparts.<sup>10</sup>
- Adolescents who view pornography tend to engage in sexual behavior at an earlier age.<sup>11</sup>
- Adolescents who used Internet pornography more frequently also used the Internet more often and tended to use it for a wider range of activities, such as file sharing, sex education, talking to strangers, Internet gaming, and buying goods.<sup>12</sup>
- Recent research on why adolescents use Internet pornography found that they visit such sites because they are sexually curious (50 percent), by accident (46 percent), and to seek information (17 percent).<sup>13</sup>
- Adolescents who were less satisfied with their lives were also more likely to use Internet pornography, a cross-sectional finding that was replicated in a longitudinal study.<sup>14</sup>
- A study on the use of pornography on mobile phones also showed that popularity with same-sex peers, popularity with opposite-sex peers, desire for popularity, and peer pressure were linked with more frequent pornography use. Attachment to peers, however, has been found to be unrelated to adolescents' use of Internet pornography.<sup>15</sup>
- Adolescents were more likely to use Internet pornography when they were harassed online and victimized in their offline lives.<sup>16</sup>
- Negative attitudes toward school as well as having friends who engage in deviant activities were associated with a greater use of Internet pornography.<sup>17</sup>
- Regarding peers, more frequent online pornography use was found when the majority of adolescents' friends were younger, when adolescents used the Internet at their friends' homes, when they communicated more often with their friends about pornography (for males only), and when peers were perceived to use pornography (for females only).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

<sup>11</sup> Owens, Eric W, et al. "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* (2012): 99-122.

<sup>12</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

<sup>13</sup> Braun-Courville, Debra K and Mary Rojas. "Exposure to Sexually Explicit Web Sites and Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors." *Journal of Adolescent Health* (2009): 156-162.

<sup>14</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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- A recent study reported more exposure to affection-themed Internet pornography for younger adolescents and more exposure to dominance-themed pornography for older adolescents.<sup>19</sup>
- Those who endorse the following motives for using porn were associated with lower willingness to intervene if they saw potential sexual assault: “to make sex more interesting,” “to enjoy a social event,” “for sexual thrills,” and “to learn about sex.”<sup>20</sup>
  - There are a variety of potential explanations for why these four motives predicted bystander willingness to intervene while two did not. A willingness to intervene implies a desire to help others regardless of the consequences to the perceptions of others. For example, others could view someone intervening to prevent rape as a person who is out to ruin the good time of others. These four motives all have an element of risk or enhanced sensation seeking beyond a typical sexual experience.
- Consistent evidence has emerged that adolescents’ use of pornography is related to stronger permissive sexual attitudes. In the studies that were looked at, however, usually indicated that adolescents on average tended to reject permissive sexual attitudes or were undecided. None of these studies found that, on average, adolescents endorsed permissive sexual attitudes.<sup>21</sup>
- Studies indicated that, on average, adolescents did not perceive pornography as (socially) realistic or as a useful source for sexual information.<sup>22</sup>
- The use of Internet pornography not only predicted stronger stereotypical beliefs over time but stereotypical beliefs also predicted a more frequent use of Internet pornography over time. This relation was significantly stronger for male than for female adolescents.<sup>23</sup>
- Both girls and boys who watch pornography become more likely to have oral sex and intercourse in their youth.<sup>24</sup>
- Adolescents with no or little own sexual experience, as well as those who perceived their friends as sexually inexperienced, became more dissatisfied with their sex lives when they watched more Internet pornography.<sup>25</sup>
- The use of Internet pornography predicted greater sexual preoccupation, greater sexual uncertainty, and greater sexual dissatisfaction, but neither sexual preoccupation nor sexual

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, Jane D and Kelly L L'Engle. "X-Rated: Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors Associated With U.S. Early Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Media." *Communication Research* (2009): 129-151.

<sup>25</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

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uncertainty nor sexual dissatisfaction consistently predicted the use of Internet pornography.<sup>26</sup>

## Impact on Boys and Men Specifically

- Boys reported that when they watch pornography that they worry they will not be able to perform as well as the male actors.<sup>27</sup>
- Boys' use of violent pornography is correlated with histories of more severe levels of sexually aggressive behavior; more conduct problems, more juvenile delinquency, and higher levels of depression than boys who avoid violent pornography.<sup>28</sup>
- Pornography use was also associated with a history of sexual harassment perpetration in boys.<sup>29</sup>
- A comprehensive literature review of more than 50 studies found that men who frequently use pornography are more likely to have perpetrated rape and other forms of sexual aggression.<sup>30</sup>
- It appears that men who have attitudes supporting sexual violence seek out violent pornography and that the two are mutually reinforcing.<sup>31</sup>
- In a longitudinal U.S. study, the use of sexually explicit material via movies, magazines, and computers was associated, among boys, with sexual harassment perpetration (e.g., touching or brushing up against a schoolmate in a sexual way, cornering a schoolmate in a sexual way).<sup>32</sup>

## Impact on Girls and Women Specifically

- In a qualitative study, teen girls reported that when they watch pornography they feel their bodies are inferior in comparison with those they see.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Owens, Eric W, et al. "The Impact of Internet Pornography on Adolescents: A Review of the Research." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* (2012): 99-122.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, Jane D and Kelly L L'Engle. "X-Rated: Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors Associated With U.S. Early Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Media." *Communication Research* (2009): 129-151.

<sup>30</sup> Malamuth, Neil M, Tamara Addison and Mary Koss. "Pornography and Sexual Aggression: Are There Reliable Effects and Can We Understand Them? Annual Review of Sex Research." *Annual Review of Sex Research* (2000): 26-91.

<sup>31</sup> Malamuth, Neil M, Gert M Hald and Mary Koss. "Pornography, Individual Differences in Risk and Men's Acceptance of Violence Against Women in a Representative Sample." *Sex Roles* (2012): 427-439.

<sup>32</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

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- While female adolescents, in particular, criticized the unattainable body ideals featured in pornography, they also admitted being influenced by these ideals, considered them a source of sexual information, and more generally felt pressured by sexual messages in pornography.<sup>34</sup>
- Greater pornography use in women is associated with increased assignment of responsibility to victims and less responsibility to male perpetrators of rape.<sup>35 36</sup>
- When female adolescents watched more pornography, they became more strongly involved with the material than male adolescents did.<sup>37</sup>
- When adolescents used pornography more often, they also seemed to be more likely to start having sexual intercourse. This association, however, was stronger for girls than boys and emerged only among adolescents at an early pubertal stage.<sup>38</sup>

## What Parents Can Do

- **Make the church a larger part of your child's life.** Religious adolescents and those in religious schools use pornography less frequently. Religiosity has been shown to be associated with higher self-control, more negative attitudes toward pornography, and the feeling that watching pornography violates social expectations and norms.<sup>39</sup>
- **Create a positive and encouraging atmosphere.** Positive youth development qualities (e.g., social competence, self-efficacy, and moral competence) were related to less frequent pornography use, both on the Internet and in less traditional media.<sup>40</sup>
- **Do activities as a family and help your child feel that they are an important part of it.** Less commitment to the family, poor family functioning in general, and specifically less mutuality in family functioning were all associated with a stronger use of pornography.<sup>41</sup>
- **Do more than just talking about pornography, install filtering software and moderate what your child does online.** Restrictive parental mediation and installed blocking software were associated with less pornography use on the Internet. In contrast, the variables of

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<sup>34</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, Kelly C, et al. "Rape-Myth Congruent Beliefs in Women Resulting from Exposure to Violent Pornography: Effects of Alcohol and Sexual Arousal." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2006): 1208-1223.

<sup>36</sup> Norris, Jeanette, et al. "Victim's Response and Alcohol-Related Factors as Determinants of Women's Responses to Violent Pornography." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (2004): 59-69.

<sup>37</sup> Peter, Jochen and Patti M Valkenburg. "Adolescents and Pornography: A Review of 20 Years of Research." *The Journal of Sex Research* (2016): 1-23.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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parental control and parents talking about Internet pornography with their children were found to be unrelated to adolescents' use of Internet pornography.<sup>42</sup>

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