

Fostering boys' and men's resistance to pornography

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Pornography

- Pornography: “sexually explicit media that are primarily intended to sexually arouse the audience”
- Includes representations of nudity or semi-nudity, implied sexual activity, and actual sexual activity
- Can be textual or visual
- This definition: neutral rather than normative

Patterns of pornography consumption

- Most everyday users of pornography are heterosexual men.
- Most of the commercial pornographic industry caters to heterosexual men.
- Men are more likely than women to view pornography frequently, to be sexually aroused by it, and to have favourable attitudes towards it.

Consumption *continued*

- Among boys and men;
 - Significant proportions consume pornography;
 - They do so in greater numbers and with much greater frequency than their female peers.
- Pornography is “a cornerstone of the autoerotic sexuality of males”.



Consumption *continued*

- Boys and men are more likely than girls and women to:
 - Use pornography for sexual excitement and masturbation;
 - Initiate its use;
 - View it alone and in same-sex groups.



Shifts in young people's exposure

- Increase in overall rates of exposure
- Exposure at younger ages
- Shifts in the means of exposure: increasingly, via the internet, and mobile phones
- A changing cultural context: the increasing normalisation of pornography use and the pornographication of mainstream culture.
- Shifts in pornography's content

Research into pornography's effects

- Types of studies:
 - Experimental
 - Correlational
 - Longitudinal
 - Other...
- Experimental studies are criticised as artificial. But...
 - They may in fact *underestimate* pornography's effects.

Mediators of effects

- Three types of factor mediate the impact of exposure of pornography:
- (1) The characteristics of the viewer
 - E.g., age, gender, maturation, sexual experience, parental involvement
- (2) The viewer's engagement with the material
- (3) The character and context of exposure
 - The type of material involved, the duration and intensity of viewing, and the context (whether voluntary or involuntary, and whether solitary or collective).

Pornography's effects

- Pornography as *sex education*: (i) Sexual knowledge and attitudes
 - Sexual knowledge, including about bodies and practices
 - Liberalised sexual attitudes (from both correlational and longitudinal studies):
 - Greater acceptance of pre-, extra- and non-marital sexual relations
 - More positive attitudes towards casual and recreational sex, and premarital and extramarital sex
 - Acceptance of pornography itself

Pornography's effects

- Pornography as *sex education*: (ii) Sexual practices and relations
 - Shifts in heterosexual boys' and young men's sexual expectations, practices, and repertoires.
 - E.g., interest and participation in anal intercourse. And perhaps other sexual practices such as extra-vaginal ejaculation, deep fellatio, group sex, etc.
 - Unsafe sex
 - Affirmations of same-sex sexualities

Pornography's effects *cont'd*

- Pornography as *betrayal*
 - Much of heterosexual men's porn use is hidden.
 - A substantial proportion of female partners who are aware of their partners' porn use experience hurt and distress.
- Pornography as *addiction?*
 - Some men's use is compulsive and damaging.
 - But it is problematic to frame this as 'addiction'.



Pornography's effects *cont'd*

- Pornography as *sexist education*
 - Sexist and stereotypical constructions of gender and sexuality.
 - Sexually objectifying understandings of and behaviours towards girls and women



Pornography's effects *cont'd*

- Pornography as *rape training*
 - Sexually aggressive and violence-supportive attitudes (in both experimental and correlational studies)
 - New evidence...
 - Sexually aggressive behaviour
 - New evidence, including longitudinal studies and a meta-analysis...
- There is a circular relationship between pornography and sexual aggression.

Beyond simplistic accounts of effects

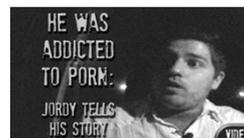
- Let's go beyond simplistic, deterministic, behaviourist, accounts.
 - E.g., regarding sexual violence and abuse
- Pornography is one risk factor, among many, for sexual violence perpetration.
- Integrative models: Pornography consumption is one factor, which combines with others, to predict men's sexually aggressive behaviour.
- Pornography increases the risk of sexual violence perpetration for *some men* much more than others.

Beyond simplistic accounts *cont'd*

- The user / consumer matters
 - How users interpret form and content
 - What users do during and after consuming pornography
- The content matters
 - Violent pornography has stronger associations than non-violent pornography with sexually violent behavior.
- The form matters
 - There is some evidence that pornography's form – online versus online, video versus print – matters.

50 ways to leave your lover

- (1) Abstinence: (a) Christian abstinence



50 ways to leave your lover

- Abstinence: (b) Other, more secular approaches:
- Focused on 'porn addiction' and 'sex addiction'
- Including large, online communities:
 - NoFap, with over 130,000 participants

THE FAPSTRONAUTS:
A COMMUNITY STRUGGLES TO BREAK THEIR HABIT

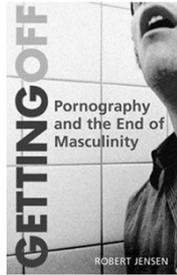
Amid millions of porn users, a community on Reddit.com, known as NoFap, is fighting back against their problem and lending support to others who share their struggle.

THE GLOSSARY OF NOFAP

FAPPING	The act of masturbation.
FAPSTRONAUT/FEMSTRONAUT:	Male and female NoFap users.
PMO	"Porn, masturbation, orgasm," the cycle of porn use that constitutes the core of addiction.
DEATH GRIP (MALE) / DEATH SCHLICK (FEMALE)	Overly intense stimulation during masturbation in conjunction with porn use, which can compromise sexual response.
REBOOT	Abstaining from porn for long enough for your brain to return to normal - can take 60-120 days.

50 ways...

- Abstinence: (c) Pro-feminist
- E.g., Jensen's *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity* (2007)
- A radical feminist analysis
- Appeals to men on the bases of justice and self-interest
- Does little to engage the sexual and emotional desires shaping pornography use
- Seeks to mobilise men's shame



50 ways...

- (2) Sexuality education
 - The provision of alternative, more age-appropriate content on sexuality
 - Will not satisfy young people's and particularly young men's interests in sexually explicit materials for stimulation and masturbation.



50 ways...

- (3) 'Pornography education'
- Media literacy...
 - Evidence: 'Inoculating' viewers against violence-supportive themes in pornography
- Integrating pornography education into school curricula
- A Victorian example: The 'Reality and Risk' project

Reality & Risk

- Education resources for young people, schools, community organisations, etc.
- Engagement in public discourse and debate (including a documentary film, first broadcast on SBS in July 2013).
- Advocacy and training across a range of sectors.



50 ways...

- (4) Ethical pornography: Use better pornography
 - What does 'good pornography' look like?
 - Criteria for an ethical pornography, including in relation to its:
 - Conditions of production
 - Content
 - Use

Shifting boys' and men's relationships to pornography

- A feminist agenda
- A spectrum of prevention
 - Use primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies.
 - Adopt a multi-level approach, addressing individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors.
- Engage men (with women) in community mobilisation.

Shifting boy's and men's relationships to pornography

- Appeal to and engage boys and men
 - Begin with the positive.
 - Meet boys and men where they are *at, and* involve them in critical reflection on their experiences and social locations.
 - Explore benefits and harms.
 - Foster males' support for and commitment to gender equality.

- Appeal to and engage boys and men *continued*
 - Draw on boys' and men's existing resistance to pornography.
 - Find effective educational appeals or 'hooks' for males.
 - Create safe spaces for boys and men to talk, share, and learn.
 - Match the intervention to males' stage of change.
 - From average, to aware, to activist

Educational appeals or 'hooks' for young men (and young women)?

- Porn as unrealistic
- Porn as sexist
- Porn as degrading. Vs respect for girls & women
- Porn as teaching bad sex
- Porn as turning males into bad lovers
- Porn as controlling or influencing them for commercial reasons. Vs being independent and in control (Crabbe 2014: 122-23)

Dilemmas

- Recognising and engaging young people as sexual subjects with sexual agency
- Negotiating sexual explicitness e.g. in a school context
- Addressing sexual harm without reinforcing sex negativity
- Supporting sexual diversity

Conclusion

- Some general principles for this work...
- Our tasks:
 - Foster empowerment and minimise harm.
 - More widely, build a gender-just and sexually ethical culture.

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Some further reading

- Young Men Using Pornography (Flood's 2010 book chapter): <http://www.xyonline.net/content/young-men-using-pornography>
- Fact Sheet: The extent of exposure to pornography among children and young people: <http://www.xyonline.net/content/extent-exposure-pornography-among-children-and-young-people>