

Violence Against Young Women and Girls

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Committee

Violence Against Young Women and Girls in Canada

A key factor in the reality of violence perpetrated against young women and girls in Canada is pornography. This Brief will show the connection between escalating violence against young women and girls and the viewing of sexually violent online images. It also includes suggested recommendations for the Status of Women Standing Committee to consider in response.

The use of pornography is common among college students.¹ Substantial research shows that there are a wide variety of harms associated with this usage.² The internet has unleashed a tsunami of images that is violent, misogynistic and fuel rape culture.

A. Violent

The language and images in pornography are almost entirely violent and contribute to violence against women. A study called “Aggression and Sexual Behavior in Best-Selling Pornography Videos: A Content Analysis Update” from 2010 concludes:

Of the 304 scenes analyzed, 88.2% contained physical aggression, principally spanking, gagging, and slapping, while 48.7% of scenes contained verbal aggression, primarily name-calling. Perpetrators of aggression were usually male, whereas targets of aggression were overwhelmingly female. Targets most often showed pleasure or responded neutrally to the aggression.³

Porn viewers soon begin to absorb the images into their belief systems. They become not only consumers of these violent images, but their own sexual behaviour becomes violent towards women due to the normalization of this kind of pornography.

Dr. Mary Anne Layden, Director, Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program Center for Cognitive Therapy, University of Pennsylvania has researched the violent nature of today’s pornography and concludes that the adult use of pornography leads to the following beliefs and practices⁴:

- More acceptance of violence against women
- More adversarial sex beliefs
- Increasing their estimates of how often people engage in sex with violence
- Engaging in more sexual harassment behaviors
- Using physical and verbal coercion to have sex

B. Misogynistic

Today’s pornography is based on the domination and hatred of women. Prominent themes are the humiliation and degradation of women. Women are referred to with derogatory terms and always reduced only to sexual objects. It’s important in the world of pornography that women are to be used and abused by men. “[Pornographers] offer men sexual gymnastics and circus acts that are saturated with cruelty toward women; they sexualize the degradation of women.”⁵

C. Fuels Rape Culture

Pornography portrays women deriving pleasure from physical abuse and therefore enables men to develop attitudes that allow for violence against women. Men become increasingly more comfortable with the idea of rape.

A common image in pornography is that of the woman saying “no,” but really meaning “yes.” It blurs the lines around consent. Particularly with children, it influences young boys to falsely believe that girls want to be raped, that they are meant to be sexually objectified and used. Pornography users think that women are ‘rape-ready’ because the

¹ Carroll, J.S., Padilla-Walker, L.M., Nelson, L.J., Olsen, C.D., McNamara, B.C. & Madsen, S.D. (2008) Generation XXX: Pornography acceptance and use among emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 23, 6-30

² Brown, J.D., & L’Engle, K.L. (2009) X-rated sexual attitudes and behaviours associated with U.S. early adolescents’ exposure to sexually explicit media. *Communication Research*, 36, 129-151

³ <http://pornharmsresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/Violence-Against-Women-2010-Bridges-1065-85.pdf>

⁴ <http://pornharmsresearch.com/2013/12/talking-points-porn-sexual-violence-research/>

⁵ Jensen, Robert “*The Cruel Boredom of Pornography*”, Last Exit, September 24, 2008, <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/boredom.htm> (accessed January 2, 2009).

domination of men and degradation of women is a common theme. It influences girls to believe that their sexuality exists only for the benefit of men. Pornography normalizes rape.

Rape and sexual violence reporting is rapidly escalating in high schools and colleges. There is a direct correlation between that and the viewing of pornography. The 2014 reporting of a group of Dalhousie University students using misogynistic and rape culture language on social media is indicative of the reality of pornography outcomes.⁶

A 2011 study published in *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* analyzed the effects of pornography use on sexual attitudes and behaviors of fraternity college men. It found that 83% of those who used “mainstream” pornography expressed greater intent to commit rape, should they be assured they wouldn’t get caught. This change in attitude towards rape among college-aged men remained consistent across *all* genres of pornography. Men who used sadomasochistic- and rape-themed pornography were significantly more likely to report belief in rape myths.”

In the compilation of research on sexual violence and pornography, Dr. Mary Anne Layden finds that porn consumers develop the following beliefs and practises⁷:

- Believing a rape victim enjoyed rape
- Believing women in general enjoy rape
- Believing a rape victim experienced pleasure and “got what she wanted”
- Believing women make false accusations of rape
- Believing rapists deserve less jail time
- More likelihood of future rape
- Having engaged in rape

D. Recommendations

A public health response should be enacted by the Ministries of the Status of Women and Health. “Porn is a social issue because the harm it creates affects individuals or groups beyond their capacity to correct it.”⁸

- Provide support to Motion M-47⁹ which will begin the process of considering porn as a public health crisis.
- Put warning labels on all pornography – digital and print, just as there are health warnings on tobacco products. Pornography is harmful and addictive and the public should be informed
- Require age verification on all pornography whether digital or print. This is being implemented in the United Kingdom. This verification must be more stringent than clicking a box that says the viewer is 18 years of age.
- Require all public Wi-Fi to put filtering in place that would block pornography. This is largely in place at all places where public Wi-Fi exists in the United Kingdom.
- Require all internet service providers to block pornography unless the consumer opts in. This is also being implemented in the United Kingdom.

E. Conclusion

Dr. Gail Dines, Founder of Culture Reframed, has said “The pornographers are laying waste a whole generation of boys, and when you lay waste a generation of boys, you lay waste a generation of girls.” Pornography’s influence on our culture must be stopped. The health and safety of our young women and girls and our young men is at stake.

⁶ <http://www.metronews.ca/news/halifax/2014/12/16/allegations-of-sexually-charged-comments-at-dalhousie-university-disturbing-not-surprising-expert.html>

⁷ <http://pornharmresearch.com/2013/12/talking-points-porn-sexual-violence-research/>

⁸ Anderson, Cordelia “Why Pornography is a Public Health Issue, Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation Summit, 2014

⁹ [http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members/Arnold-Viersen\(89211\)/Motions?sessionId=152&documentId=8136502](http://www.parl.gc.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members/Arnold-Viersen(89211)/Motions?sessionId=152&documentId=8136502)

Defend Dignity exists to end all sexual exploitation in Canada. Our work includes awareness and education, advocacy for law and policy reform, aid to individuals and agencies.

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