

*INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY AND THE
EROSION OF EMPATHY*

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- *"The technology is just gonna get better and better. And it's gonna get easier and easier, and more and more convenient, and more and more pleasurable to sit alone with images on a screen, given to us by people who do not love us but want our money. And that's fine in low doses but if it's the basic main, staple of your diet, you're gonna die ... in a meaningful way, you're gonna die..."*
(David Foster-Wallace)

- *“We have created these technologies but it’s not obvious how they evolve in and shape our culture” (Ito, 2004).*

GRRGGHH SNORT

STAY CALM
DONT PANIC
HE IS
COMPLETELY
UNDER MY
CONTROL

VIDEO & PHOTO
POSTING

INTERNET SOCIAL
MEDIA SITES



- The porn industry is worth around \$5 billion per year worldwide
- 12% of websites on the internet are pornographic (around 25 million)
- Every second: 28,000 users are viewing porn and \$3075 are spent on porn
- 25% of all search engine requests are porn related
- Men are over five times more likely to look at porn
- 70% of 18-24 year old males use porn
- The average visit to a porn site lasts 6 minutes 29 seconds
- The average age at which a child first sees pornography is 11 years

Vega and Malamuth (2007) in *Aggressive Behaviour...*

- What predicts male sexual aggression? What is the role of porn consumption?
- **General Hostility Traits** (Impulsive Irritability, Negative Masculinity, Empathic Concern)
- **Sex-Specific Hostility**
 - Hostile Masculinity (Attitudes towards violence against women, Rape Myth Acceptance, Adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual dominance, hostility to women)
 - Impersonal Sex
- **Pornography consumption** (frequency of use)
- **Sexual aggression** (frequency of engagement in aggressive sexual acts)

Vega and Malamuth (2007) in *Aggressive Behaviour...*

- **General hostility** was a weak predictor of **sexual aggression**
- **Hostile Masculinity** was a strong predictor of **sexual aggression**
- **Pornography consumption** was a strong predictor of **sexual aggression**
- **Risk for sexual aggression** was increased dramatically in men who had high use of pornography **AND ALSO** had high levels of hostile masculinity and general hostility.

- “You wake up in the morning, open a thumbnail page, and it leads to a Pandora’s box of visuals...There have probably been days when I saw 300 vaginas before I got out of bed.” (Male, aged 41)

- "I get on SpankWire or X Videos—you could carve ice sculptures with my manhood. I take a girl home from the bar, though, and I'll be up for a minute while she's going down on me, but once I put a condom on and we start going at it, it's like the Challenger exploded—all the flags are at half-mast." (Male, aged 34)

- “In order to cum, though, I’ve got to resort to playing scenes in my head that I’ve seen while viewing porn. Something is lost there. I’m no longer with my wife; I’m inside my own head.”
(Male, aged 43) .

- “How could you be constantly synthesizing an orgasm based on dozens of shots? You’re looking for the one photo out of 100 you swear is going to be the one you finish to, and you still don’t finish ... How does that not affect the psychology of having a relationship with somebody? It’s got to.” (Male, aged 41) .

- "Mondays are for Gia Jordan, Tuesdays for Sasha Grey. I always look forward to Thursdays the most—Kasey Kox. Then, on the weekends, I hang out with my girlfriend. I don't like to believe that porn is replacing anything I have with my girlfriend, but I've always loved sex, and I've always had a lot of it, so I really had to stop and think about it when she asked me recently why she always has to be the one to initiate things. And she was right; I guess I've been fading from her. It's like all that time with these porn stars was subduing any physical desire for my girlfriend. And, in some weird way, my emotional need for her, too." (Male, aged 27) .

Key features of empathy...

- Being able to “see” another as a separate, valuable human being
- Recognition and understanding of another’s emotional state
- Affectively responding to another’s emotional state
- Unconditional positive regard
- Emotional understanding: Understanding a situation from another’s point of view
- Respect: recognition and full acceptance of the other as a person
- Authenticity: honesty, real expression of views without hypocrisy

Bridges et al. (2010) in *Violence Against Women...*

- "Findings indicate high levels of aggression in pornography in both verbal and physical forms.
- 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 invariably male, whereas targets of aggression were overwhelmingly female. Targets most often showed pleasure or responded neutrally to the aggression."

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- “In ‘democratic’ societies, we can imagine and grasp ever more refined cruelties and yet remain fundamentally baffled by them.” (Dean, 2003) .