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Sex and Age: male adolescents

Aspect: media (specifically pornographic media)

Key elements: availability of technology, the gaze, objectification, internalization, socialization

Adolescent Males and Pornographic Media

In this paper I will examine the relationship between pornographic media and adolescent males. I will specifically be focusing on the availability of technology and how viewing graphic content correlates to objectification and internalization in adolescent males. To specify which group of adolescent males I will be examining, my focus will be on American males between the ages of 10 and 16.

Pornography, also referred to as porn for short, is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “material (such as books or photographs) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement”. Pornographic content can be found in many different types of media including: magazines, books, television, of course movies. The porn industry began to flourish in the 1970s and it is still rapidly growing today. According to Forbes, the porn industry is worth somewhere between \$2.6 and \$3.9 billion today in the United States.

Back in the 1970s, to watch a pornographic movie a person had to rent a video from an adult video store. To enter said video store and purchase a video, the person must be at least 18 years of age. To purchase a pornographic magazine, such as Playboy, the buyer must be at least

18 years of age as well. The strict rules in purchasing pornographic media made it much more difficult for adolescent males to view it.

With the ways of the world changing and technology rapidly advancing, the access to pornographic media became much easier. Nowadays almost everybody has a computer, tablet, or smart phone, including adolescent males ages 10 through 16. According to the Covenant Eyes 2015 pornography statistics, “1 in 5 mobile searches is for pornography and 24% of smartphone users admit to having porn on their mobile device”. In regards to adolescent males, their availability of technology increases their risk of being exposed to explicit content at a much younger age than generations before them.

With pornography at the touch of our society’s fingertips, the normalization of pornography has rapidly progressed. Overtime it has become increasingly socially acceptable to watch pornography. In fact, our society has even normalized the fact that adolescent males watch porn as it is “part of their puberty”. According to Covenant Eyes, research indicates “the first exposure to pornography among boys is 12 years old, on average and 9 out of 10 boys are exposed to pornography online before the age of 18.”

The issue with adolescent males viewing pornographic content is the ability it has to influence their development and behavior. Adolescent males are going through puberty during this stage of their life and as their bodies make changes so do their minds. During adolescences, males are extremely impressionable and outside factors have the ability to influence who they become as a person.

Porn is not sex. Pornography is unrealistic and does not depict actual sexual encounters. For young males who have not experienced sex yet, this can distort their perception and view of what sex really is. Pornography also promotes things such as incest which is far against societal

norms. There are often different categories on porn sites such as “step-sister” or “daddy daughter”. Categories like these contain content that presents unrealistic, inappropriate, and most importantly illegal relationships among family members. Adolescent males may associate what they see in pornographic media as socially acceptable due to their lack of experience and impressionability.

Pornography also glorifies rape, physical violence and aggression. Researchers studied 50 of the most popular porn films and of the 304 scenes the movies contained, 88% contained physical violence and 49% of the scenes contained verbal aggression. The typical scene averaged 12 physical or verbal attacks (Fight The New Drug). The verbal aggression and physical violence scene in pornography can definitely influence the way a young male views sexual activity and how he should treat sexual partners. When adolescent males view pornography they are increasing their risk of accepting or partaking in physical violence, verbal aggression, and sexual assault.

Another way pornographic media can affect the male adolescent is that it can increase their likelihood of teen pregnancy. “Teenagers with frequent exposure to sexual content on TV have a substantially greater likelihood of teenage pregnancy; and the likelihood of teen pregnancy was twice as high when the quantity of sexual content exposure within the viewing episodes was high” (Chandra and Martino 1052). Not only is porn putting young males at risk for developing a distorted view of sexual interaction but it is also putting them at risk for impregnating adolescent females.

One of the most controversial issues regarding porn is that it encourages and accepts the male gaze. The male gaze is the act of depicting the world and women in the visual arts and literature from a heterosexual, masculine point of view in which women are presented as objects

of male pleasure. Pornographic content teaches young males that women are objects made and used to please men, thus reinforcing the feminist philosophy of the male gaze.

When adolescent males are viewing pornography they are being taught how to objectify and degrade women. “Objectification occurs when people are socialized to view women and their bodies as objects that need to be corrected and molded into the acceptable social norms” (Paquette and Raine 1050). Viewing pornographic content can severely distort a young man’s perception of women and ultimately lead to the way he behaves towards women.

The way adolescent males internalize pornography can differ but ultimately viewing this content at such an impressionable age puts them at risk for internalizing the content in a way that will affect them negatively. Viewing pornographic content at such a young age teaches these impressionable males unrealistic views on sexual activity. It also puts young males at risk for developing a tolerance and acceptance for things such as rape culture and incest. Lastly, it can affect the way they socialize. Being exposed to pornography at a young age can affect the way an adolescent male treats and views women.

In order to reduce the number of adolescent males being exposed to pornographic media, the pornography industry must implement and enforce stricter age policies. In order to view a pornographic website, the website will often require the visitor to confirm their age, but will not require actual proof of their age. With the porn industry continuing through the internet, the industry must take the necessary steps to ensure their website visitors are of appropriate age. Parents and legal guardians must also help protect young males, and even females from viewing explicit content by monitoring their web use.

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