The new porn landscape for young people in Aotearoa: the need for discourse

Nikki Denholm & Jo Robertson
“The pornography landscape has completely changed for young people. There isn’t a single school or demographic that isn’t affected.

We have to understand the reality of today’s porn to help protect youth – but it is very difficult for anyone over 25 to comprehend...”

Susan Mclean
Director Australia Cyber Safety Solutions
Changing Landscape

INDUSTRY

• Porn is Prolific across social media sites: Playboy to Pornhub, 64M hits per day

• NZ 5th biggest user per capita (Pornhub 2016 Year in Review)

• ‘Teen’ largest search item

• 18-24 yrs highest users (no U18 measure)

• 4-30% internet traffic

• Old historic protective factors: privacy, cost & access gone. Porn is now accessible, affordable, anonymous and acceptable.
Heterosexual PIA (45%), DP (19%), ATM (41%), multiple partners (28%) choking & DT normalised, coercion (10%), Condom use: 3% in PIV sex, 10% in heterosexual PIA and 78% in homosexual PIA.
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CONTENT

Proliferation hardcore sites ONE CLICK:

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YOUTH CONSUMPTION

• **High Consumption** - Older data 77% (7 studies) now 80-98%.
  **Sweden**: 96% 16 yr olds, 80% frequently (Donevan and Mattebo, 2017)
  **Australia**: 100% of boys and 67% girls, 85% of boys and 24% girls watched either daily or weekly (Lim et Al, 2017)

• **Accidental** - 70% unintentional; 1/3 10yr olds stumbled on hard-core pornography online (The New Norms, IPPR Survey, 2014)

• **Early First Exposure**

• **Porn “normalised”** - 24% 12-14yr & 29% 15-18yr watch with friends (Young Minds, Young Minds vs tackling sexual pressure, 2014)
“Pornography has transformed young people’s sexual landscape. It has become a primary source of sexual education for young people.

Research in Sweden reveals that nearly all adolescent boys (96%) have viewed porn by the time they reach 16, and the average age they began to actively search for porn is 12yrs old.” (Donevan and Mattebo, 2017)
How is it affecting youth?
**Impacts**

**SHAPES YOUNG PEOPLE’S SEXUAL ATTITUDES, BELIEFS & BEHAVIOIRS**

“Pornography is becoming the most prevalent learning experience or sex educator for young people today. It teaches them about consent, sexual health, pleasure, performance, power and aggression” (Flood, 2010).

- **Primary and powerful sex educator:** 60% of 2,500 UK students ‘watch porn to get information about sex’ (UK National Union of Students, 2014); 51% ‘learnt about sex from pornography’ (Hooley, 2017)

- **Shaping sexual attitudes and beliefs:** Powerful messaging to youth on sexual pleasure, consent, performance, coercion and sexual equality. Youth lack skills to critically evaluate messaging, as it normalises and erotises sexual aggression. (Maree Crabbe, 2017)

- **Shaping sexual behaviours:** strong association between exposure to porn and sexual behaviours in young people. (Smith et al. 2016)
“We had frequent accounts of both boys’ and girls’ expectations of sex being drawn from the pornography they had seen. We also found compelling evidence that too many boys believe that they have an absolute entitlement to sex at any time... in any way...”

UK’S Children’s Commissioner, 2013
Impacts

INCREASES RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

• Earlier sexual experimentation

• **Risky sexual behaviours**: Porn exposure correlated with:
  - increased risky & unprotected sexual practices (Guy et al, 2012)
  - higher rates of sexual harassment & forced sex (Hovarth, 2013)
  - adolescents’ willingness to engage in casual sex (van Oosten et al. 2016).

• **Poor boundaries re coercion & consent**: Association between regular porn viewing and perpetration of sexual coercion and abuse by boys (Stanley et al. 2016) (Rothman et al. 2012).

• **Increased probability of sexual coercion** (Stanley et al. 2016)

• **Unrealistic sexual expectations**: 8 studies show young people see Porn as a ‘realistic’ template for sexual activity and expectations
“If I watch porn and, like, I see a male porn star, and sometimes like, if I’m with a female, I try to do the exact same thing as they’re doing, ‘cause I figure that they’re stars.”

Male, 17 (Rothman et al. 2015)
Impacts

INCREASES SEXIST ATTITUDES AND VIEWING OF GIRLS AS SEX OBJECTS

• Porn use associated with stronger gender-stereotypical sexual beliefs, sexist attitudes and notions that women/girls are sex objects. (Peter and Valkenburg, 2016) (Hald et al. 2013)

• 70% youth interviewed believed porn encouraged “society to view women as sex objects”. (IPPR survey, Parker, 2014)
When just one gender is being dominated or exploited, it leads to the “eroticisation of inequality” (Nicola Gavey, University of Auckland)

“Rather than discussing simple causation, we should consider how various factors...‘make something inviting.’ In those terms, pornography does not cause rape, rather it helps make rape inviting”

(Dines, Jenson & Russo, 2013, The Production and Consumption of Inequality)
Impacts

INCREASES SEXUALLY AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDES & BEHAVIOURS

• **Associations with sexually aggressive behaviours**: Longitudinal studies & meta-analyses show associations between porn consumption and:
  - Sexually aggressive behaviours (Allen et al., 1995b; Kingston et al., 2009; Malamuth et al., 2000; Hald & Malamuth 2015)
  - Higher rates of sexual harassment & forced sex (Hovarth, 2013)
  - 4x greater levels of sexual aggression amongst males (Ybarra and Mitchell 2005)
  - Increased likelihood of sexual aggression (Meta-Analysis of 22 studies, Wright et al, 2015)

*Note: Porn one risk factor for sexual violence perpetration and increases risk for some youth more than others – “behaviour accelerator”*

• **Expert feedback showing associations with child-on-child sexual offences**
  - 75% of 7-11 yrs in treatment for PSBs reported ‘early sexualisation through online porn’ (Etheredge, 2015 citing Lemon 2014)
  - 80% increase in child-to-child offence over last 3 years (Barnados, UK 2016)
  - Child to child offences quadrupled in the last four years (Australian bureau of statistic Susan MacClean, Director Cyber safety, Australia)
“Porn is now screenwriting the sexual scripts for our young people... coercion, subordination, persistence and aggression has become normal.

The pervasive and problematic messaging of porn sexualises violence and erotises inequality. I assure you we will see an unprecedented rise in sexual violence in the next five years.”

Dr Joe Tucci

Director sexual violence counselling service, Australia Childhood Foundation
Impacts

POOR LONG TERM SEXUAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Sexual Dysfunction:

• Difficulty transitioning to real life partners and preference for porn over live partners (Donevan and Mattebo 2017, and Park et al, 2016, review of multiple clinical reports)

• Erectile Dysfunction 30% among 18-24 year olds (Mailon et al, 2012)
  ED rates doubled in last 10 years (AFHSC, 2014) - largely psychogenic ED. “Internet pornography consumption during early adolescence, or before, may be a key variable” (Park et al, 2016)

• Reliance on porn to become and remain excited - the need to integrate porn into dyadic sexual encounters & less likely to enjoy intimate behaviour’s such as cuddling and kissing (Wright et al, 2015)
“Pornography? It's a new synaptic pathway. There have probably been days when I saw 300 vaginas before I got out of bed.

Yeah. Internet porn has absolutely changed my generation's expectations.... How does that not affect the psychology of having a relationship with somebody? It's got to”.

John Mayer, Musician
• **Pain v Pleasure**: Higher incidence and normalisation of painful anal sex, imitating aggressive pornographic scripts. (Marston & Lewis, 2014)

• **Increased tendency to compulsive and problematic porn usage**: ‘It is striking that 1/3rd of frequent users admitted they watch pornography more than they want to. Since adolescents’ brains are still in their development phase, young people may be especially vulnerable to problematic pornography use’. (Donevan and Mattebo, 2017)

• **Associations with lower mental health outcomes**
“I’m always watching porn and some of it is quite aggressive. I didn’t think it was affecting me at first but I’ve started to view girls a bit differently recently and it’s making me worried.

I would like to get married in the future but I’m scared it might never happen if I carry on thinking about girls the way I do.”

Boy, aged 12, Child Line survey 2014
Where to from here?
The Light Project aims to equip youth, their whanau, and professionals to positively navigate the new porn landscape.

thelightproject.co.nz
Please email us for stakeholder survey:
hello@thelightproject.co.nz