

Young Women's stories of pornography, sexual learning and sexual subjectivity formation

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"The public debate about pornography has been raging hot and heavy for the past few years. At one extreme, we have anti-pornography campaigners such as Gail Dines insisting that pornography is "a never-ending universe of ravaged anuses, distended vaginas and semen-smeared faces". On the other hand, we have sex-industry lobbyists who [...] promote porn "as a kind of sexual paintball, a fun addition to a well-balanced relationship". Between the two extremes, though, is where the really interesting discussion is taking place."

Maguire, 2012, p. 39

{Introducing Lara }

"That's [pornography] mainly where he gets his sexual information from. [...] I think that certainly his first experiences of sex were through porn [...] He's had so many sexual experiences through porn and relatively few sexual experiences with women."

{Lara }

"It often makes me feel like I'm not a normal human being... Compared to these 'other women' who allegedly exist having all this awesome penetrative orgasmic sex."

{Lara }

"To have orgasms, I'm up against a kind of sort of like I have to defend it. I've said that before I feel like I'm in a defensive position because like instead of being able to say 'oh this gets me off', I have to say 'unlike everyone else this gets me off' but that's despite the fact that all my female friends and almost every woman I've spoken to shares my view. And so I can't help but think that the representations of women who are enjoying all of this penetrative sex are sort of like like coming out of pornography."

{Introducing Natalie}

"He is 25 and has only been with one other person beside me. So he has had to learn, if you know what I mean, which is where this pornography thing has come into place because he knew what to do anyway, so I think that's been how he learnt. Well that's my assumption. Where else would you get it from if you haven't done it much? I've been his only fulltime girlfriend, he didn't know what to do, so porn's been a teacher really, and a guide."

{Natalie}

"There'd be nothing there ... if he had never watched porn in his life and he had only slept with that other person which was once I don't think he would know, I'd have to walk him through step by step."

{Natalie}

"I started looking at it [porn] just to see what these people do, what is there to do, how do they do... it's not like I would sit there and be like oh this is exciting me, really turning me on..."

{Pornography and sexual learning}

Values:

- Young people may value pornography for its explicit detail
- Young people may also value pornography for the way it presents sex within a discourse of pleasure

Dangers:

- Pornography may have frustrating repercussions if and when it is a dominant reference point for young people - leading to an inaccurate pathologisation of sexual desires and functionality and consequently damaging for sexual subjectivity
- Pornography may act as a homogenising influence for young people's sexual subjectivities

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