

Portrayal of femininity and gender in pornography



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From the beginning of time, women have been portrayed as subordinates of men or the “weaker gender.” This essay will show the portrayal of femininity as the weaker gender through the discourse on pornography and femininity portrayed in popular culture. Pornography is the printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings (*Merriam-Webster*). Sometimes pornography equates sex with power and violence. More often than not, women seem to be the main subject matter in pornography; this can be very dangerous to the future of womankind. As studies show, it increases likelihood of rape, reduction in women’s self-respect, and reinforces negative stereotypes of women. For these reasons, pornography can be considered harmful towards women and their perception of themselves.

Pornography’s largest consumers, to no surprise, are men. In order for rape to occur, a man must not only be inclined to rape, but his internal and social self-consciousness against acting out his rape urges must be damaged. Studies have shown that pornography entices the male to commit the rape. It predisposes some males to rape women and intensifies the predisposition in other males already predisposed. There is almost any category you could think of when searching for porn; some men ‘get off’ to the idea that they are dominating a woman in a way where she cannot fight back or stop him from dominating her. The most prevalent theme in pornography is one of utter contempt for women. In scene after scene, women are raped, ejaculated on, urinated on, beaten, sodomized, and left permanently scarred.

Pornography's common theme is sexual degradation, and women are the objects of the degradation.

Women being seen as “ objects” is a very controversial issue in the history of pornography. The sexuality of women is looked highly upon, but the actual dehumanization is completely overlooked. Even though there is nothing at all degrading about sexual explicitness, to women or to anyone else, the perception of women has traditionally suffered. It is evident that the image of the nude woman's body would be reduced to her uncovered body parts; this is sexual degradation to the female. Men are often praised for expressing their sexuality and their sexual desires in everyday life; whereas, women are often ridiculed for expressing their sexualities and will be called vulgar names such as whore, hoe, slut, etc. On the other hand, women who do not express their sexualities will be called things like a prude, a goody-goody, etc. There is such a dichotomy when it comes to women expressing themselves sexually in comparison to men. I've seen posts on Twitter of an attractive male who's 20-something post shirtless pictures of themselves and females will gloat over the pictures; meanwhile, when a female does the equivalent to this, she is automatically seen as a whore by both males and females. This is so wrong and backwards.

This “ battle of the sexes” would also apply for the male domination in the social life we live in. Men seen in pornography are looked at as careless, dehumanizing creatures of the female gender. Respect for the woman's body is lost by the way the male treats a female in pornography. This proves that porn can be detrimental to both genders because of the way people take advice from the actions in the pornography.

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Violent sexual crimes were prevalent long before explicit magazines and pornography websites developed. According to one report, “ in spite of the lack of formal research, though, the FBI’s own statistics show that pornography is found at 80% of the scenes of violent sex crimes, or in the homes of the perpetrators (Anderson). The everyday person would find this impossible to ignore, while those who promote porn think this is easy to overlook. I’m not saying that consuming porn will automatically make someone a serial rapist. Although, looking at the raw data, porn is connected with sexual violence. Proving this point is kind of tough, because an accurate study, as one researcher put it, “ would require a sampling of much more than a thousand males, exposed to pornography through puberty and adolescence, while the other group is totally isolated from its influence in all its forms and varying degrees. Each group would then have to be monitored —through the commission of violent crimes or not” (Anderson).

Obviously, a study that invasive and complex would be next to impossible to set up. But that doesn’t mean the facts don’t exist. There is more than enough evidence, like findings from the FBI, that prove there is a link between pornography and sex crimes. For example, The Michigan State Police Department found that pornography is used or imitated in 41% of the sex crimes they have investigated (Campbell). The University of New Hampshire did a study that showed that the states with the highest readership of pornographic magazines like Playboy and Penthouse, also have the highest rape rates (Baron). This last example may leave you feeling uneasy—Dr. James Dobson interviewed Ted Bundy, one of America’s most notorious serial killers, on the day before his execution. Bundy had stated

that the “ most damaging kinds of pornography are those that involve sexual violence... the wedding of those two forces, as I know only too well, brings about behavior that is just, just too terrible to describe (Anderson). Just to be clear, yet again I am not stating that everyone who consumes porn is going to go out and turn into a rapist; that would be illogical. Although, I am stating that the porn industry is not as harmless as society would lead you to believe; pornography is harmful, and research has been proving it as so.

Pornography breeds unrealistic expectations for both partners. Just like we wouldn't want people to think that the photoshopped images on Instagram represent a realistic beauty standard, we should not accept the sexual standards that porn shows consumers. Porn producers choose performers that are already more attractive by society's standards than the average person. Then they take those people and airbrush them, give them stylists for hair and makeup, and then work the lighting and camera angles to make them look as good as possible. We see this happening everywhere we look; on the news channels, in movies, on TV shows, so what's the harm when it's done on a porn set? Normally, people don't exactly look to feature films to learn about something so personal like sex, but the majority of our generation does this when wanting to learn about sexual acts (*Fight the New Drug*).

In many stories that we've seen, people have talked about getting interested in porn because they were curious about sex. It's completely and totally normal and natural to develop a curiosity about something natural—human sexuality—but learning about sex from scripted, exaggerating and airbrushed performers on screen is not actually the best idea. Healthy

sexuality isn't found in the extreme, unprotected, violent, manufactured sex in porn. Porn separates sex from respect, dignity, kindness and enthusiastic consent, which is the exact opposite of what healthy relationships are about. Also, consuming copious amounts of porn can lead to sexual health issues like porn-induced erectile dysfunction that makes normal sex with a real human being much more difficult. These are just a couple of the many issues that arise because porn is looked to as the sexy ideal and can set especially young consumers up to have crazy unhealthy expectations for future relationships (Expectations vs. Reality).

Pornography is the printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings. Pornography sometimes equates sex with power and violence. Women themselves have differing opinions as to whether pornography is harmful or not. For some reason, every person has their outlook on whether pornography is good or bad and it seems the main contributing force behind this are the feminists and many women's organizations. Pornography can have its great effects on people, when used in the way the pornography industry intends it to be used. Nonetheless, pornography is shown to have its terrible effects on women both socially, physically and emotionally.

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