

To the Senate Inquiry for "the Harm being done to Australian children through access to pornography on the Internet"

You Are What You Eat

As a teacher of English - the study of how people communicate ideas using language and various other mediums - one of the first concepts I constantly try to cement for my students is that they are what they eat. In this regard it is what they consume through visual and written media. This is true of any human being, what we are exposed to, whether by choice or 'accident', stays with us. If a child or an adult is exposed to violent acts, unless they are also exposed to ideology that counters reacting or acting out what they have seen, they will exhibit similar behaviour.

Consider the language children and adults use when playing MMORPGs. Without saying, most of threats (sexual and physical) voiced or typed the players have no intention of really carrying out, it is simply the culture of the game. This seems to be known and understood by everyone involved or even those outside of the MMORPG community, however consider also the growing trend of sexual and physical threats that are been typed across social media. Threats of murder, dismemberment, disfigurement and rape that are streaming from keyboards around the world, threats that are being taken far more seriously than hyperbolic disgust when something doesn't go a person's way. How did this become okay?

If children are exposed to pornography they come under the ideology that what they see is how sex is supposed to be. Even films that express this with slightly more taste (Hollywood) and the growing trend to have graphic material on cable television (Game of Thrones, anyone?) still depict sex in an unrealistic manner. It does not prepare children for the realities of life and pornography in particular depicts sex in such a way that teaches the watcher to consider the opposite sex (or same, depending on orientation) as a 'thing' to supply pleasure or to act upon.

In a society that is opening a dialogue about domestic violence, rape culture, consent, and the objectification of people into sexual objects, why would we, as a culture, continue to not address how pornography can influence people to participate and act out such scenarios?

Tales of the Young and Clickable

This is a concern for me because porn is so easily available to children. I know that there are people out there who say that if some one wants to watch it they need to go looking for it. If that is the case, how did my ten-year-old boy stumble across it?

As a parent I have always monitored what my son watches and is exposed to. However somehow he started watching porn. This was brought to my attention by his school when a teacher over heard him talking to another student about what he had seen. We discussed what he had seen, how he managed to watch it and that it was definitely not okay for him to continue to watch things like that.

He stumbled across it through links on YouTube and games he would play online.

For weeks afterwards he would ask me to put him to bed and talk to him. He said he kept thinking and 'seeing' what he watched before bed and it made him feel uncomfortable. I told him that things like that are for when he is older and in a relationship (at which I received the typical 'ewww' response of little boys). He seems to

have recovered fine but he finds it hard to discuss such things with us. We are a very open family; happy to discuss different orientations, expressions of sexuality and sex in general when necessary, but when raised he avoids it.

I have no idea how this one event has affected him, but he is not yet grown and who knows what kind of man he will ultimately be. However what I have taken away from this experience is it is far, far, far too easy for children to click their way into pornography.