

Sex, the Media and Pornography in Sex and Relationships Education

A starting point resource for teachers.

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Why is it important to address pornography and sex in the media as part of Sex & Relationships Education?

For more information and background please see the TES Article “Why we need to talk about pornography” written by Alice Hoyle published 31st August 2012 in TES Resources.

The reason it's important to cover topics such as pornography or sex in the media, is that virtually all students will have seen “sexy imagery” used within advertising and other media and many students are likely to have encountered some forms of pornography by the time they hit Year 9: often being shown it via a friend's computer or mobile. They may even be encountering their parents' copy of 50 shades of grey. The exact age and exact level of exposure in terms of amount and type of pornography will vary widely: but we are living in a different age to ‘finding a dirty magazine under a bush’. Combined with the pervasive messages about sexuality in the mainstream media it's easy for young people to confuse the very specific messages being conveyed by a lot of pornography with the other messages they're receiving about sexuality from other media outlets. It is crucial that students get support to develop their media literacy so that they can understand that sex in the media and pornography can construct an unrealistic “normality” of sexual expectations. They also need to explore their own attitudes and values relating to sexual ethics and recognise that pornography and sexualised media may impact on these.

Before you start

Before starting any sessions on sex and the media including pornography it is important to consider the following questions, and put in the necessary preparation for this type of lesson. An ill prepared inexperienced teacher teaching about pornography could potentially be damaging to both the young people and the teachers' career.

- **Does the teacher delivering the sessions have sufficient training and expertise?** In an ideal world, SRE would be statutory and every school would deliver it using specially trained staff. After all, knowing how to put a condom on properly could save your life – (more than can be said for quadratic equations!). We don't live in an ideal world, however, and it often falls under the remit of general PSHE teaching. No-one - and this cannot be emphasised enough - *no-one* should try and deliver SRE without specialist training.
- **Are you confident in covering the very basics of SRE- Relationships, Consent, Sexual Activity, Contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), Pregnancy, Birth and Parenting.** If you cannot get these most important basics right then you should not be covering more “cutting edge” SRE. As an absolute minimum young people need to know about relationships

and consent, how to protect themselves from STI's and unwanted pregnancy and where to get help if they need.

- **Do you know how to establish and maintain safe learning environments including setting strong ground rules?** This is exceptionally important. Sample ground rules could include:

Openness – we will be open and honest but not to disclose our own or others' personal/private lives. Discuss general situations as examples but do not use names or identifying descriptions.

The classroom is a safe space- we feel safe discussing general issues relating to sex and relationships within this space and know that as long as we are not at risk teachers will maintain a certain level of confidentiality. Outside of the classroom we are aware that other people may feel uncomfortable with such discussions. Also our friends may sometimes give us misinformation so we are aware of the "safe" sources of information such as www.scarleteen.com and our local young person's clinic.

Non-judgemental approach- It is okay for us to disagree with another person point of view but we will not judge, make fun of, or put down anybody

Right to pass- Participation is important, however we have the right to pass on answering a question or participating in an activity.

Make no assumptions- we will not make assumptions about people's values, attitudes, behaviours, life experiences or feelings.

Listening to others point of view and sharing your own- we will listen to the other person's point of view and expect to be listened to

Using language- We will use the correct terms for the things we will be discussing rather than the slang terms as some people can find them offensive. If we are not sure what the correct term is - we will ask our teacher.

Asking questions- we know that there are no stupid questions. We do not ask questions to deliberately try to embarrass anyone else because this means that our questions may not be taken seriously in the future, even if they are genuine ones. There is a question box available for anonymous questions.

- **Are you confident in safeguarding procedures and when/if to make a referral?** If in doubt always ask advice from the child protection lead in your school. You do not necessarily have to identify students when making an initial query unless it turns out the child protection lead thinks there needs to be more follow up.
- **Are you confident in answering difficult questions and do you have techniques to utilise to keep your and your learners safe from inappropriate disclosures?** Maintaining the ground rules, using an anonymous question box (which you can take away and prepare answers next lesson if you need). In some circumstances answering certain questions on an individual rather than whole class basis maybe more appropriate. If the question has come from the anonymous question box you can say "I haven't answered all

the questions today- if your question hasn't been answered do feel free to come and find me at breaktime”.

- **Are you aware of the level of pornography available and feel able to talk confidently about it?** Although you do not need to have expert knowledge of all the types of porn currently available, it would be an idea to know some of the following basic aspects of pornography to help you cover the subject in SRE confidently:
 - You need to appreciate the underlying business model of porn distribution leads to a premium being placed on rarer acts, thus making those acts appear more common than they are; eg. anal sex is much more prevalent in porn.
 - Condoms are rarely featured in heterosexual porn,
 - The focus is often on the man's pleasure and ends with his ejaculation “cum shot”,
 - Sex with multiple partners, anal sex and deep throat oral sex are often common features of easily accessible pornography.
 - Males tend to have much larger than average penises and be able to sustain erections for much longer than average.
 - Women tend to be slim with large breasts and most or all of their pubic hair removed.

- **Do you have an understanding of human sexuality?** Young people need help to compare and contrast the realities of human sexuality with the myths created by pornography. For example:
 - Condoms are much more common than portrayed in porn.
 - Most people do not have sex with multiple partners.
 - Most people do not have anal sex or deep throat oral sex- the actors performing these acts have practice and training in doing these acts. The preparation for such acts is not portrayed as part of the film.
 - The average erect penis size is 5.5inches and average time to ejaculation is 4-6minutes of vigorous thrusting.
 - Women come in all shapes and sizes and although some may remove their pubic hair many don't.(The Bishtraining Planet Porn activity (described below) is fantastic for comparing and contrasting Planet Earth with Planet Porn).

- **Can you provide an inclusive non-judgemental confident approach to discussions of sex and sexuality?** Beware that your discussions with young people are not too hetero-normative (focusing on the idea that everyone is heterosexual) or sexist- it isn't just males who may use porn. Try to offer a balanced approach as focusing solely on the negatives of porn use will not engage with learners who maybe using porn for masturbation or

trying to increase their understanding of sexual pleasure for themselves or their partners. Remember also that not all young people will be using porn, but addressing some of the issues of sex in the media and sexual ethics are relevant to all young people.

- **Is your sex and relationship education policy in the school robust and does it permit you to discuss pornography?** As a teacher you are bound to follow your school policies, otherwise your head teacher can instigate disciplinary action- you need to make sure the SRE policy gives you scope to discuss the topic. While it doesn't need to mention discussions around pornography directly you should ensure that you will not be falling foul of school policy by bringing it up as a topic.
- **Do you have support of your line manager and senior management to deliver this topic?** Ensure you have support of your line manager and senior management before you cover this topic. Without it if anything goes wrong, (parental complaints, press involvement etc), then you are in a very isolated precarious position. Having the necessary back up is essential.
- **Have you discussed with a focus group of staff, parents and young people to establish a needs analysis of the sorts of things that need to be covered.** Your school may not have as much of an issue with pornography as you think, it maybe that sexting is the specific concern, or body image. It would be an idea to get an idea of parental and student concerns as well as issues raised by the pastoral team so that you can work out ways of addressing the specific needs of your setting.
- **Have you worked with parents to get them on board with the curriculum?** A good idea is to invite the entire parent body to an information evening once a year where you can update them with what you are doing on all risky behaviour work – SRE, Drugs, pornography. There is a good chance that parents will not be aware of what is available to their children or what their children might have come into contact with. Engage them, make them part of the process and – most importantly of all – equip them with the confidence to build on at home what you start in school.

Developing a Scheme of Work around Porn and Sex in the media

When developing pornography education as part of a comprehensive sex and relationships education program, these are the four main areas that can be developed to support young people.

- **Sex and the media- how pervasive is it?
What effect is it having?**
- **Body image and sex and the media**
- **Pornography and the law**
- **Attitudes & Values around sex, relationships
and pornography**

There are many ways you can cover these areas and we have outlined some suggestions below:

Sex in the media

- For sex in the media you can show students a range of adverts using sex to sell a product and ask them to guess what they are trying to sell. Students are surprised when sex had been used to sell things like bread, milk, cars, clothes etc. Follow up with a class discussion about how pervasive sex in the media is and students keep tally charts for homework for how much they feel they are exposed to “sexy imagery” for 24hours which can be discussed the following lesson. The lesson plan and powerpoint used for this can be found in the members area of the PSHE Association website or it is very straightforward to develop yourself. Discuss what effect the young people think such sexualised media might be having on them, if any, and what actions they might take if they are concerned.

- **Media Literacy-** You need to create an awareness with students that sexualised media including pornography is the same as all other media in that the positions, the actions, the reactions - all of them have been selected for what *looks good* on camera, not to reflect what people in a sexual relationship would actually *do*, or how people actually look in real life. “Media codes” are common themes that may appear such as portraying the bad guys in black or women as objects. The key issues to cover here are, in general, how sexualised media including pornography relates to women and male relationships to women. It’s usually worth starting with talking about movies; if you were making a film to appeal to a male audience, would it be different to a film appealing to a female audience? You could show them a clip from Transformers http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8R1etpN-LA&feature=player_detailpage#t=7s to kickstart a discussion about this. In this clip, the character is not presented as a person, but as a collection of attractive attributes – she is sexually attractive and can fix cars – both designed to appeal to the male character. The

camera lingers on her body in a way designed to excite the male audience and to simulate the way the male character is looking at her.

The question becomes: outside of her value to the male character, does she have any worth?

The key issues to address are:

- Are women presented as being of equal worth to men?
- Is the presentation of female sexuality honest or are they just there to satisfy the male partners?
- Discussions about how sexualised media including pornography can create unrealistic expectations – an analogy might be that you just have to look at the way an action hero walks down the street in a movie to see how reality is different in film. Students tend to respond very positively as soon as they're made to realise that you stand as much chance of learning about how to have good sex from porn as you do from learning how to rob a casino from watching Ocean's 11 or drive a car from watching The Fast and The Furious. There is a snippet of an old Bob Monkhouse routine about the 'sounds of sex' which tends to work well with Year 11s: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ajUTu58KV4&feature=player_detailpage#t=139s The simple truth that sex can be messy, funny, involves stupid noises, cramps, laughter and falling off the bed will not necessarily cross the mind of people who are used to Hollywood sex scenes.

Body Image

- The Dove Campaign for real beauty has a great video clip showing the before during and after of getting a model ready for a photoshoot highlighting how much makeup and photoshopping is used giving rise to these unreal expectations of beauty. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U> students are always shocked when they watch it to see how much they are deceived by the media as to what women really look like.
- The exaggeration of sexual characteristics – large breasts, shaved pubic areas – can create unrealistic body image expectations in young people who are inexperienced with the opposite sex.. Another activity you can do with some groups of young people involves them considering what average length of an erect penis is using a series of different sized lines drawn on a piece of paper. Of course all the young people go for the 12inch line whereas the reality is the average length of an erect adult male penis is 5.5 inches with average length of an adult non erect penis being 3-4inches. We then discuss why many people think that the average penis size is so much bigger and why that is. Of course many of

them answer this is due to porn and we then move onto a discussion about that. Some of the videos on the Channel 4 sexperience website (Part of the sex education show) may help you with this activity as they show the activity with young people and pictures of penises but watch in full to assess suitability before showing any groups.

Pornography and Law

It is crucial that teachers need to be clear on the law and child protection issues. Both the resource packs (Fantasy Versus Reality and Planet Porn) described below cover this issue well but in summary:

- In the UK pornography is legal to look at so long as it does not feature under 18's sex with animals, scenes or rape or sexual assault. Torture or violent scenes which are life threatening or likely to cause serious harm.
- You have to be 18 or over to buy porn magazines or videos and many websites try and prevent under 18's from accessing them either by a disclaimer on front page or by charging a credit card for access.
- It can be illegal to watch porn with someone under the age of 18 (this is intended to protect young people)
- Anyone under the age of 18 who film or take sexual pictures of each other can be done with making child pornography, anyone who shares such images can be potentially be charged with distributing child pornography. This could put them on the Sex Offender's Register for *life*. Individuals could also be found guilty of this offence if someone emails you or texts them a copy of such a picture or video – even if they did not ask for it. Tell young people if they receive such a picture or video, they should *delete it immediately* and *absolutely should not* pass the picture or video on to anyone else. If as a teacher you suspect images are being shared- you need to consult with your child protection leads for advice in your setting, always follow your settings behaviour and child protection policies.

Attitudes & Values around sex, relationships and pornography

One of the key things that students need to be to understand is what pornography is for, what role it plays in human sexuality and the difference between healthy and unhealthy approaches to human sexuality. As long as they are aware people may use pornography as a masturbatory or fantasy aid, either in a relationship or on their own, then you can start to address the

problems of pornography. You could get the class to consider some of the following questions.

- Is pornography healthy? In what way could it damage a relationship?
- How might one partner in a relationship using pornography make the other partner feel?
- What do they think about the accessibility of pornography these days. Is it okay or harmful?
- Does pornography realistically depict sex? If not why not.
- How might pornography affect the person watching it?
- Is Pornography a good way to find out about sex?

Sexting

- You can start by discussion of celebrity sex tapes and how can you know for a fact that your partner will never release any pictures or video of you that you never want them to? There is a lot of good material on the CEOP website about sexting and you need to again emphasise the law as it pertains to under 18s.
<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/Teachers/> The CEOPS sexting video is also interesting to start discussion
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ovR3FF_6us

Consent

- Most importantly: Consent is an important issue to address. A lot of pornography makes the assumption that women are always sexually available – the sexually frustrated housewife is a tired old trope – which can be confusing for both young males and females. For pornography to happen, there has to be an assumption of *yes* – but in the real world, you have to assume *no* unless you're told otherwise.

Final Word

Alice

We can no longer avoid this subject with young people. Pornography is out there and young people are seeing it and using it. Young people need support to develop codes of sexual ethics that support them to stay happy, healthy and safe as they develop into adulthood. To avoid tackling such topics because of professional fears is doing young people a great disservice. You can and should deliver education around such topics in a way that meets the needs of young people whilst keeping professionally safe and we hope this document will go some way to support you with that. We will continue to develop and update this resource over the coming years.

Spencer

My final word on this is word for word what I say to the students the first time I have them for SRE: There is no part of my job that I take more seriously or that matters more than sex education: because this is the stuff that can change your entire life for the better.

We *have* to get this right.

Further resources to support with education around porn and sex in the media

If you want further resources and support for pornography education there are two main resources currently available in the UK to support teachers FPA resource Fantasy Versus Reality and BishTraining Planet Porn. Both are incredibly helpful to use as a resource bank and as a starting point but it is important to develop your local program to meet your student's needs.

The resources compared

	Planet Porn Resource Pack	Fantasy Versus Reality
Produced by	BishTraining	Family Planning Association
Author	Justin Hancock	Liz Dean and Hugh Garling
Price	£10.50 for online PDF £25 for CD	£14.99
Format	PDF (or CD)	Booklet plus CD of powerpoints
Number of activities	6 activities for KS4+	4 lessonplans for KS3 5 lesson plans for KS4
Feedback	A great resource of 6 activities to try in lessons including the brilliant, informative and fun "Planet Porn" activity to get students critically thinking about the differences between sex on "Planet Porn and Planet Earth". Students need to sort out whether statements like "women usually have thin waists and big breasts", or "where people are not really turned on" occurs on planet porn or planet earth. The "Is it legal, is it right" activity is great for getting students to assess the legal and moral ramifications of pornography. Some activities in the pack may be more suitable for youth work settings or for targeted interventions with identified	A really good comprehensive scheme of work for both key stages with loads of different ideas and activities about how to approach the issue with young people. The lesson plans have aims and outcomes provided with resources, activities, keywords and extension tasks all described in detail. The sex in the media section and pornography and the law aspects are a particular strength to the resource, and the Quiz answers are very detailed which is really helpful for teachers who may not be familiar with all the aspects of the laws relating to sex and the internet. However the tone can be a little hetero-normative and

	individuals. In places the tone maybe too “porn positive” which could be problematic when trying to get the go ahead to cover these materials in schools.	in places somewhat “porn negative” which, whilst that may make it easier to get the go-ahead to tackle the topic in schools, this could make it harder for some young people to engage with the topic.
Conclusion	If you can afford it, buy both of these resources to support offering a balanced approach to pornography education in your school. Both offer complimentary but different activities and your sessions would really benefit from using both resources and developing your own on consultation with young people, parents and the school.	

Training available to support delivering education around porn and sex in the media:

- **Centre for HIV and Sexual Health Research- Young people and pornography**
<http://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/courses/young-people-and-pornography/>
- **Fantasy vs reality: the impact and influence of pornography on young people**
<http://www.fpa.org.uk/professionals/trainingcourses/coursesinenglandscotlandandwales/youngpeople/fantasy-vs-reality-impact-and-influence-of-pornography>
- **Bishtraining’s –Working with young people around porn.**
<http://bishtraining.com/index.php/working-with-young-people-around-porn/>

Other useful resources

Gareth Cheeseman

<http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Lesson-The-distortions-by-media-Films-and-amp-Porn-6167655/>

Exposed – a video about sexting and how quickly it can get out of control
CEOP

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ovR3FF_6us

Other Useful Links & Further Reading

Teaching about Porn V1
Alice Hoyle and Spencer Williams
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Womens Support Project Summaries

<http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/content/groomingandsexualisation/303,172/>

Mark Limmer (2009) *Young Men and Pornography- Meeting the Challenge Through Sex & Relationships Education*. Education and Health 27:1, 6-8
<http://sheu.org.uk/x/eh271ml.pdf>

Clare Bale (2011): *Raunch or romance? Framing and interpreting the relationship between sexualized culture and young people's sexual health*, Sex Education, 11:3, 303-313
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2011.590088>

EU Kids online Survey

[http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20II%20\(2009-11\)/EUKidsOnlineIIReports/Final%20report.pdf](http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20II%20(2009-11)/EUKidsOnlineIIReports/Final%20report.pdf)

NSPCC- Premature Sexualisation- Understanding the risks

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/policyandpublicaffairs/consultations/2011/premature_sexualisation_pdf_wdf81574.pdf

UNICEF 2009

http://data.unaids.org/pub/ExternalDocument/2009/20091210_international_guidance_sexuality_education_vol_1_en.pdf

If you know of other useful resources or links please let us know and we will update this document